Doctoral Thesis

Organic Farming Policy Networks in Europe

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ORGANIC FARMING POLICY NETWORKS IN EUROPE

A dissertation submitted to

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for the degree of

Doctor of Sciences

presented by

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This thesis represents a collection of papers that have been submitted to different peer-reviewed journals as follows:

Chapter 2 is a paper submitted to ‘Food Policy’, and has been accepted for publication in July 2007.

Chapter 3 includes a paper submitted to ‘Food Policy’ in June 2008.

SUMMARY

In Europe, organic farming has increasingly become a focus of policy interest, and policies targeting organic farming will continue to influence the development of the organic sector. The aim of this thesis is to explore the underlying processes and address the following two questions: First, how are organic farming policies shaped in Europe? Which factors influence these policies in the national states and who are the actors that participate in the policy-making process? Second, the consequences of such an increasing political intervention for the organic movement are addressed.

To explore these questions, the organic farming policy networks in eleven European countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland) are compared. Thereby, a policy network is defined as a structure created by a number of policy actors who have established relations among them. The analytical framework for the thesis is a model developed by Marsh (1998) which takes account of the dialectical relationships between context, actors, and networks to explain policy outcome.

The three papers compiled in the thesis each focus on one major dialectical relationship. The first paper deals with the influence of contextual factors, such as the political and the economic environment on organic farming policy networks in Europe and seeks to explain variation between these networks. The second paper applies the policy network approach to explain differences in outputs of organic farming policies in two new EU member states, the Czech Republic and Poland. The third paper considers the relation between networks and the actions and decisions of actors. Starting from the perspective that organic farming organizations are embedded in policy networks, potential strategies for political action are outlined and possible consequences of these strategies for the organic movement are conceptualized.

Concluding, the variation across European countries in organic farming policies can best be explained by the dominant regime of the state and the strategies and resources of the involved interest groups. The strategies of the organic movement in turn depend on the position of its participants in the policy network and the political opportunity structure.
ZUSAMMENFASSUNG


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1 INTRODUCTION

While throughout Europe the total number of farms is steadily decreasing, the number of organic farms is increasing, as is the surface of organically managed land. Since the mid 1980s, the share of organically farmed land in the European Union (EU) has increased to currently more than 4% of the total agricultural area (2006), with a range from 0.9% in Ireland to 13% in Austria, whereby the share of organic farms ranges from 0.3% to 12% (FiBL 2006).

Organic farming can be traced back to the 1920s when, in Germany and Switzerland, Rudolf Steiner, Hans and Maria Müller and Hans Peter Rusch, out of concern for soil fertility, started to work on an alternative to the predominant farming system which increasingly relied on artificial inputs. In the Anglo-Saxon world, among others, Lady Balfour and Sir Howard had a great impact as pioneers of organic farming (Vogt 2000). Nevertheless, many social scientists describe organic farming as an example of a new social movement developing mainly from the late 1970s / early 1980s onwards as part of the environmental movement emerging in the Western world (see e.g. Tovey 1997; Kaltoft 2001; Michelsen 2001; Guthman 2004). This is also the perspective taken in the present research.

Following the first large-scale support programme for organic farming in the EU in 1988 (the extensification programme as Regulation (EEC) No 4115/88), organic farming has increasingly become a focus of policy interest in Europe. In consequence, not only processes in market and society, but also in politics determine the development of organic farming. In 1991, the Regulation (EEC) No 2092/1991 was introduced, defining organic farming legally, and a first regulation specifically mentioning organic farming and providing financial support to it was introduced in 1992 as Regulation (EEC) No 2078/1992. This regulation has recently been replaced by Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999, and also Regulation (EEC) No 2092/1991 has been revised as Regulation (EC) No 834/2007 coming into force (together with the accompanying implementation regulations) in 2009 (European Council 2007). Although other support payments and market returns contribute larger shares to the total revenue of European organic farms, specific support to organic farms will remain important for them (Nieberg et al. 2007). Thus, policies targeting organic farming will continue to influence the development of the organic sector in Europe.

This is the focus of my research presented in this thesis. In particular, I will address the following two questions: First, how are organic farming policies shaped in Europe? Which
factors influence these policies in the national states and who are the actors that participate in the policy-making process? Second, I address the consequences of such an increasing political intervention for the organic movement.

To explore these questions, I compare organic farming policies in eleven European countries: Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, and Switzerland. Hereby I take a policy network perspective. This allows me to take account of the many different actors who participate in a policy-making process. However, the concept of ‘policy networks’ is used in various ways in policy analysis, and different academic debates are attached to it. Thus, the different perspectives on the policy network approach need clarification before I can explain the approach I have chosen for my research.

1.1 The concept of social networks and its application in policy analysis

To increase the understanding of the concept of ‘social networks’ and ‘policy networks’, I will first clarify the basic ideas and assumptions behind the concept, and then outline three major concerns in the discussion about the application of policy networks in policy analysis.

1.1.1 Brief introduction to the concept of policy networks

Very generally speaking, a social network is composed of a set of actors and the relation(s) between them (Wasserman and Faust 1999). Network analysis is then concerned with the relationships among these actors, and with the implications of these relationships.

Transferred to policy analysis, the actors in networks are those who engage in the policy process, often rather collective actors than individuals, such as government bodies, political parties, and interest groups. The ‘implications’ of networks refer to the results of policy processes. The immediate results of policy processes, such as laws and regulations are defined as policy outputs, whereas policy outcomes describe the actual wider effects of a particular policy (Almond et al. 2007). In this thesis the focus is on policy outputs, as well as on the consequences that policy processes had or might have on policy actors.

To sum up, a policy network is defined as a structure created by a number of policy actors who have established relations among each other. The interest of policy network analysis lies in exploring the importance of these networks for understanding (the results of) policy processes.
1.1.2 Different perspectives on the use of policy networks

Policy analysts take different perspectives on policy networks. In the following, I present three ongoing debates associated with the policy network approach which illustrate these different perspectives: i) the discourse about emphasizing agent versus emphasizing structure, ii) the use of policy networks to explain outcome, and iii) the use of quantitative versus qualitative methods to analyse networks.

Agent versus structure

Most approaches do not exclusively take either an agent or a structural perspective, but acknowledge the importance of both. However, different emphasis is laid and priority is given to either one of them.

The basic assumption of the agent-based view on policy networks is that the individual resources of an actor determine its scope of action and the relations the actor can build up (Wilks and Wright 1987; Wright 1988; Wilks 1989). Thereby, the agents, i.e. those who act, can be both individuals, as emphasized in the interpersonal approach of Wilks and Wright, or collective actors, such as institutions or organizations, which is now the dominant understanding of the term. Focussing on the agent level, Heclo (1978) and Richardson and Jordan (1979) develop policy networks as specific types of state-interest group relations which they use to explain policy processes. For them, policy actors mostly have a narrow interest, and accordingly, networks form on the basis of sub-issues and sub-sectors of policy. Heclo (1978) highlights the importance of both fragmentation and increasing specialization in the policy-making process and introduces the concept of ‘issue networks’ where actors are constantly changing and their degree of interdependency varies. In consequence, policy networks do not exist for a long time period (Heclo 1978). Richardson and Jordan (1979) argue that the subsystems in which policy is made consist of a variety of interlinked institutions and organizations that form a policy community. Participants of such policy communities are interdependent and together form a group with clearly defined boundaries. They thus emphasize the distinction between policy insiders and outsiders who may encounter difficulties when trying to enter in the policy-making process (Heclo and Wildavsky 1974). Daughbjerg (1998) and Dowding (1995) have criticized that in these agent-based perspectives policy networks are merely used as a metaphor or a label and thus are incapable of providing
any explanation for the choice of policy. In addition, the exclusive focus on individual actions of policy actors ignores the effect that structures have on policy outcome.

The *structure-based* view considers actors to be embedded in a network, and it is in this context that the actors have to make their decisions. Thus, these structures represent options and constraints for individual actions (Knoke 1996). Policy actors in this perspective are either organizations/institutions or individuals as representatives of organizations or institutions, because organizations and political institutions are believed to dominate policy making (Rhodes 1981; Kenis and Schneider 1991; Marin and Mayntz 1991). The structural perspective aims to reveal complex patterns in networks, and to identify the position of actors and the effect that policy networks have on the actors’ capacities to use their resources. Thus, the different ways in which structures create logics in policy making can be considered (Schneider 1992). From the structural perspective, networks are established in policy sectors rather than in sub-sectors, and are assumed to be long-lasting. The structural approach furthermore aims at linking the different network types to policy outcome (Marin and Mayntz 1991; Rhodes and Marsh 1992; Smith 1992, 1993). However, as Daugbjerg notes, “the approach has not moved much beyond the observation of ‘correlations’” (Daugbjerg 1998, p.32).

Concluding, neither the agent nor the structure-based perspective explains the impact of policy networks on policies in a satisfactory way. However, as will be shown in the next section, there have been attempts to combine features from both approaches in order to increase the explanatory power of policy networks.

*The explanatory power of policy networks*

The questions underlying the debate about the explanatory power of policy networks are whether the term ‘policy network’ should merely be used in a metaphorical manner, whether it is useful as a theoretical model or whether it can be applied as an analytical tool. Both perspectives of networks as a metaphor or a theoretical model use ‘policy networks’ to describe the structure and processes through which joint policy making is organized (Heclo and Wildavsky 1974; Richardson, J.J. and Jordan 1979; Kenis and Schneider 1991; Rhodes and Marsh 1992). However, the ambition of the metaphorical perspective on policy networks is more limited than the ‘theoretical model’ perspective. It does not aim at providing the full picture of policy making and at explaining policy outcome, but wants to illuminate
description (Rhodes 1986; Dowding 1994). By contrast, used as a theoretical model, the structure of policy networks determines the policy process and outcome and policy networks are seen as stable relationships which mobilise resources so that collective action can lead to the solution of a common policy problem (Kenis and Schneider 1991). For instance, state-directed networks are argued to be more likely to evoke dramatic ruptures with the past than corporatist networks (i.e. a network in which policies are mainly discussed between the state and one interest group) who are more likely to produce cumulative changes (Coleman et al. 1997). Nevertheless, Kenis and Schneider noted that “[N]etwork analysis is not a theory in stricto sensu, but rather a tool box for describing and measuring relational configurations and their structural characteristics” (Kenis and Schneider 1991, p.44).

For this reason it is not surprising that several authors prefer to use policy networks and network analysis as an analytical tool. From this perspective, policy networks describe the context of policy making and search for factors which lead to joint policy making (Börzel 1997). They are assigned an explanatory power for policy outcome, without assuming that they completely determine outcome. Policy networks are used to examine institutionalized exchange relations between the state and organizations of the civil society, whereby the behaviour of an individual unit of the network is understood as a product of interorganizational relations (Knoke 1996) – an understanding this approach shares with the structural perspective. The aim of using networks as an analytical tool is to reduce complexity and thus increase the understanding of the policy-making process.

A step forward in increasing the explanatory power of policy networks has been undertaken by Marsh and Smith. They linked the network approach with other theoretical frameworks, such as state theory and rational choice theory. Building on the experience of several authors (Dowding 1994, 1995; Rhodes 1996; Hay 1998) they developed what they termed a ‘dialectical model’ of policy networks as a conceptual framework for policy analysis (Marsh 1998; Marsh and Smith 2000). Their model acknowledges the importance of context and actors for explaining a network’s impact on policy outcome. The context of policy networks includes the political, administrative and institutional frameworks, which can legitimize certain policy actors and not others, and supra-national institutions, such as the EU or the World Trade Organization (WTO) can trigger changes in existing policy networks (Peterson 1992; Richardson, J. J. et al. 1992; Sciarini 1995). Furthermore, the (economic and technological) characteristics of the policy in question influence the pressures on a policy network through altering the nature of a policy problem, or the policy options available.
1 Introduction

(Coleman and Skogstad 1990; Dunn and Perl 1994). At the actor level, Marsh and Smith emphasize the importance of skills, learning and resources (Marsh and Rhodes 1992; Marsh 1998). These influence how actors interpret the network structures in which they are embedded and the decisions they take. By integrating both structure and agency, as well as context and outcome in the network approach, the dialectical model has proved its usefulness as a conceptual framework for explaining policy outcome in several studies (see e.g. Toke and Marsh 2003).

Deciding on quantitative or qualitative methods

When applying any concept of policy networks in research, one has to decide about the use of qualitative and/or quantitative methods.

The qualitative approach uses the term ‘policy networks’ as a generic label encompassing all types of government – interest group relationships (Rhodes and Marsh 1992; Van Waarden 1992). It has many similarities with the structural approach, as it assigns a central role to structure which it views as defining the resources actors can use. Proponents of the qualitative approach find that the type of networks influences policy outcome. They use qualitative data to analyse the network structure, and in addition take account of the contents of interaction (Börzel 1997).

In the quantitative approach, sophisticated research methods have been developed to analyse networks. This ‘formal’ approach defines networks as a “finite set or sets of actors and the relation or relations defined on them” (Wassermann and Faust 1999, p. 20). The basic units of analysis are not individuals, but the entire network, i.e. positions occupied by social actors and the relations between these positions (Knoke 1990). Underlying principles of the formal network approach are (see Wassermann and Faust 1999): i) actors and actions in a network are interdependent upon rather than independent from each other, ii) linkages between actors are channels for the transfer of material or immaterial resources (e.g. money, personnel, information, political support), iii) network structures may open up opportunities or be constraining for the actors involved and iv) structure (social, economic or political) is a lasting pattern of relations among actors. Advanced research methods have been developed to describe policy networks, simplify their complex patterns and visualize them (Freeman 1978/79; Laumann and Knoke 1987; Sciarini 1996; Pappi and Henning 1999; Wassermann and Faust 1999; Brandes et al. 2003). Standard questions are often used so that policy
networks can be compared across time periods, sectors or countries. A key concern in this approach is the definition of network (system) boundaries, and it is indispensable to find clear definitions for the different formal network analysis measures which are used to describe network positions of actors and relationships amongst them (see e.g. Schneider 1992; Knoke 1996). However, using merely quantitative data makes it difficult to discover the quality of relations (Marsh and Smith 1995), so that a combination with qualitative methods seems preferable (see Sciarini 1996).

1.2 The framework of research and outline of the thesis

The aims of this thesis are to explore how organic farming policy in Europe is shaped and what the consequences of an engagement in policy networks for the network actors are. First, I take an approach that allows the comparison of the different organic farming policy networks across countries. As has been shown above, the formal approach to policy network analysis provides a methodology which can reduce the complexity of networks as a basis for comparison. Accordingly, I apply this approach to analyse the eleven European organic farming policy networks which were part of my studies. Thereby, I deliberately accept the limitations of the formal approach which are, in particular, the lack of information about the specific quality of relations between actors. However, the large number of cases to compare needed a method to reduce complexity. In choosing a formal approach to network analysis I have thus preferred simplification over detail. Second, the research questions concern the context of networks and the influence of network (structures) on network actors. For this broad focus of research the dialectical model of Marsh and Smith offers a suitable approach, as it integrates a structural and an agent perspective and links networks to outcome. I have therefore chosen this dialectical model as a framework for my comparative exploration of organic farming policy networks in Europe. In a simplified form, this framework is shown in Figure 1-1 below.

Both Daugbjerg (1998) and Marsh (1998) have argued that comparative studies can contribute to building a theory on the explanatory power of networks. While not aspiring to creating a new theory I hope that this exploratory approach can contribute to further developing the concept of the impact of policy networks on outcome.
The three papers compiled in this thesis each focus on one major dialectical relationship. The first paper (chapter 2) deals with the influence of contextual factors, such as the political and the economic environment on organic farming policy networks in Europe and seeks to explain variation between these networks. The second paper (chapter 3) looks at the explanatory power of networks. I apply the policy network approach to explain differences in outputs of organic farming policies in two new EU member states, the Czech Republic and Poland. The third paper (chapter 4) considers the relation between networks and the actions and decisions of actors. Starting from the perspective that organic farming organizations are embedded in policy networks, I outline potential strategies for political action and conceptualize possible consequences of these strategies for the organic movement.

In the Synthesis (chapter 5) I will come back to the initial research questions and see what contributions the papers could give and which focus further research could take.
2 ORGANIC FARMING POLICY NETWORKS IN EUROPE: CONTEXT, ACTORS AND VARIATION

In comparison with the general Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which was established in Europe at the end of World War II, organic farming is a relatively new policy field in the European Union (EU). Particular to this policy field is the fact that organic farming emerged as a social movement in opposition to mainstream farming including not only the producers of organic food but also consumers and environmentalists (Tovey, 1997). This resulted in policy networks that looked quite different from those found in general agricultural policy, where fairly closed systems of policy making had developed, based around general farming organizations and agricultural ministries (Greer, 2002). However, organic farming policy networks are far from similar across Europe. The number of actors engaged in these networks varies between 13 (Czech Republic) and 26 (Austria), and the density of the networks ranges from 7.9% in Estonia to 45.6% in Denmark. Besides, in a few countries organic farming organizations dominate the networks, whereas in others this role is played by the agricultural ministry (Moschitz and Stolze, 2007).

Networks in agricultural policy have been analysed in a number of ways (Thatcher, 1998). Henning, Pappi and Wald used network analysis as a heuristic tool to develop a typology of interest intermediation systems, using the example of the CAP (Pappi and Henning, 1999; Henning and Wald, 2000). Sciarrini (1996) examined how the Swiss agricultural network reacted to pressure exerted by the Uruguay round of negotiations over the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). In a comparative analysis of the implementation of nitrate policy in Denmark and Sweden, Daugbjerg (1998) used network structures to explain the differences in policy outcome. However, while agricultural policy has been the focus of a number of network analyses (see e.g. Smith, 1992; Jordan et al., 1994; Adshead, 1996), this analytical tool has rarely been used in organic farming policy analysis. For example, Greer (2002) examines policy change in the Irish and the British organic sector through a network analytical perspective.

The aim of this paper is to explore why organic farming policy networks have developed differently across Europe, despite the fact that organic farming in all countries is affected directly or indirectly by the CAP. The EU states covered are Austria, Denmark, England (while acknowledging different network structures in the United Kingdom as a whole), Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia; Switzerland
provides a non-EU perspective. We are looking for factors that influence the structure of organic policy networks. In doing so, we apply the concept of network in two ways: first, as a heuristic device to describe linkages and interactions among the actors involved in policy making; and, second, as a variable that depends on different factors, such as the institutional environment and the ideas and strategies of the actors involved. Actors in this paper are conceived not as individuals but as collective entities, i.e. private or public organizations.

In the following, we present the theoretical background of network analysis as well as the concepts used to describe influencing factors. We then outline our comparative research design, before presenting and discussing the results. Finally, we critically review the utility of the chosen approach and outline some conclusions about variations in organic farming policy networks across Europe.

2.1 Theoretical background of network analysis and factors influencing network characteristics

In this section we provide a brief overview of the concept of policy networks and network analysis, present the quantitative network measures used in our analysis, and outline the factors which potentially impact on such networks.

2.1.1 Networks and network analysis

The concept of policy networks took off in the social sciences in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to contemporary developments in the public policy-making process, which was being influenced by a growing number of actors (Kenis and Schneider, 1991). Since it would exceed the scope of this paper to present the lively debate that evolved around this concept (see Dowding, 1994; Marsh and Smith, 2000; Dowding, 2001; Marsh and Smith, 2001), we restrict ourselves to summarizing two main meanings of policy networks (Schneider, 1992). First, the term is used as a metaphor to characterize an action system lacking a clear hierarchy of decision making. Second, a policy network formally describes any pattern of interrelationship among actors. In our study we employ the latter, more neutral, application and use Van Waarden’s notion of policy networks as a generic term to characterize public-private relations (Van Waarden, 1992).

Network analysis lays the foundation for a structural analysis of public and private actor configurations (Schneider, 1992) and provides a powerful means of answering standard social
science questions. Wasserman and Faust (1999) stress that the policy network perspective developed as an integral part of advances in social theory, empirical research and formal mathematics and statistics, so that the method is well grounded in both theory and application. It goes beyond formal institutional decision making by combining different explanatory approaches from the different theoretical backgrounds of rational choice theory, new political institutionalism, symbolic interaction theory and public policy analysis (Windhoff-Héritier, 1993).

The unit of analysis is not the individual (or individual organization) but an entity consisting of a set of actors and the set of links established between them. The underlying principles of the network approach are as follows (Wassermann and Faust, 1999):

i) actors and actions in a network are interdependent rather than independent of each other,

ii) linkages between actors are channels for the transfer of material or immaterial resources (e.g. money, personnel, information, political support),

iii) network structures may either enable or constrain the actors involved, and

iv) structure (social, economic or political) is a lasting pattern of relations among actors

2.1.2 An overview of quantitative network analysis measures

Quantitative network analysis provides the researcher with measures for describing networks as a basis for further investigation into patterns of relationship (Windhoff-Héritier, 1993). First, network size and participants are useful for a descriptive overview of a network, even if they do not involve a relational perspective. In small networks, it is more likely that two actors will know each other and establish a relationship. Furthermore, actors have different priorities and interests which influence their network activity.

The density of a network is defined as the proportion of actually established links (Kephart, 1950). The network density varies between zero and one, usually presented as a percentage value; a density value of 0% indicates no links between the actors and a value of 100% the maximum possible links between the actors. The density of a network illustrates the level of interaction between actors and thus indicates the importance of a policy. If a policy is of little interest there will not be much activity in the network, because all the actors will be focusing more on other policy issues than on that particular one.
Finding the actors that are most powerful in a network is one of the primary objectives of network analysis. We concentrate on two concepts of power based on positively related networks of influence (Jansen, 2003): reputation and prominence. Reputation is defined as the expression of the power of an actor, i.e. the perceived power of an actor to have influence in the network. We define it as the proportion of interviewees who named an actor as influential in relation to a particular policy (Kriesi, 1980; Sciarini, 1996). The prominence concept considers as powerful those actors who exert an influence on many others. There are two types of prominence: prestige and centrality (Knoke and Burt, 1983). An actor is prestigious when it receives a large number of links from other actors in the network. An actor is central when involved (directly or indirectly) in many relations. In our analysis we limit ‘prominence’ to applying the betweenness centrality measure. An actor is central if it lies on the shortest link between other actors (the so-called geodesic), i.e. they have to pass via this actor if they want to interact with each other. A large betweenness centrality signifies that this actor is located between many pairs of actors on their geodesics (Wassermann and Faust, 1999). For purposes of comparison between networks of different sizes, this measure is standardized by dividing the value reached by the maximum possible value of betweenness centrality. Actors with a high betweenness centrality have the potential to control communication within a network and coordinate group processes (Freeman, 1978/79). Hence, this measure describes the potential of a network actor to act as information broker and provides information about its overall activity level in the network.

2.1.3 Factors influencing policy networks

Jansen (2003) argues that network analysis operates as an integrative tool, bringing together the macro and micro level perspectives of social science. Actors (representing the micro-level) are embedded in a (macro-level) social context (Granovetter, 1985). Accordingly, factors from both these levels will influence the characteristics of networks.

The level of socio-economic development provides the general context for any activity undertaken by interest groups. Thomas (1993), Windhoff-Héritier (1993) and Casey (2004) have shown that a rise in standard of living leads to an increase in the number of interest groups. Furthermore, the policy network is affected by the political environment in which it operates. A particular policy will attract more attention if it is part (of the solution or the problem) of a political debate at national or global level (Windhoff-Héritier, 1993; Casey, 2004).
The strength of the state and the interests of state actors shape the framework for network activity of interest groups. First, the degree of centralization in a state (unitary or federal state; the role of the parliament) determines the access points for interest groups (Thomas, 1993; Windhoff-Héritier, 1993; Daugbjerg and Marsh, 1998). Second, the level of integration or fragmentation of the policy in question influences the strength of the state (Thomas, 1993; Daugbjerg and Marsh, 1998). If a policy area is fragmented, the authority within a state is likely to be spread over (possibly competing) decision-making centres at the national and/or regional level, among state actors at the same administrative level or between the legislative and the executive. In consequence, interest groups can choose among a number of access points if they are seeking to influence policy. Third, in a parliamentary system the role of political parties influences networks. Not only can political parties participate in networks, but interest groups may be affiliated with them and thus have a direct influence within the parliaments (Thomas, 1993). Equally, however, strong political parties can constrain the influence of interest groups (Casey, 2004). Finally, if existing political institutions change or new institutions emerge, the framework for interest group activity changes, and this may affect policy networks (Thomas, 1993; Thatcher, 1998). In addition to its strength, the dominant regime and strategy of the state with regard to the policy in question influences the networks developing in this particular policy sector (Greer, 2002).

Both the political environment and the involvement of the state can vary over the different phases of the policy cycle (Greer, 2005), and, accordingly, the relative importance of actors (Windhoff-Héritier, 1993; Casey, 2004). Policy actors that are important in the agenda-setting phase may not be relevant when it comes to implementing a policy. Global processes can be important for setting the agenda of a national policy, but the policy process may subsequently come to be influenced much more by national interests.

The preferences for particular policies and the actions of network actors also influence the network structure (Marsh and Smith, 2000). Actors depend on the interest and attention given to them and the policy in question by other actors in the network (Simon, 1982). Furthermore, their resources available determine the political action of actors. Networking activities are often limited by financial or time constraints (Casey, 2004). Moreover, network actors – especially non-governmental organizations – have different cultures and ideologies regarding political action. This shapes the way in which they participate in policy networks (Thomas, 1993; Casey, 2004). Another resource of interest groups is the support they enjoy within wider society. The higher the group’s membership density and the greater the group sector
concentration, the more interest groups can participate in governance of the society (Thomas, 1993).

To sum up, at the level of context it is the degree of socio-economic development, the political environment of the policy area in question, the strength and dominant regime of the state, as well as the phase in the policy cycle that all combine to influence policy networks. At the actor level, it is the strategies and resources of policy actors that affect policy networks.

### 2.2 Methodology and research design

To explore which factors influence organic farming policy networks we have applied the potentially influential parameters developed in the previous section. Within the EU, the level of socio-economic development is comparable, offering similar opportunities for interest group engagement in the policy process. However, the varying socio-economic importance of organic farming, as described in the overview article of this issue, could influence organic farming policy networks. The broader context of organic farming policy networks is framed by overriding policy processes, such as the EU accession of the new member countries, food crises such as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and Foot and Mouth Disease, and the importance of the debate on the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMO) into agriculture. State involvement is assessed by the degree of centralization and integration of national organic farming policy, the engagement of political parties in the organic farming policy process, the emergence of state institutions in charge of organic farming, the political recognition of and the general interest of the agricultural ministries in organic farming policy.

At the actor level, the strategy of policy actors was explored by assessing the level of conflict between organic and general farming policy actors (Michelsen et al., 2001; Moschitz et al., 2004) and by considering whether opinion blocks exist with regard to organic farming policy. These opinion blocks were created using a blockmodelling procedure (Burt, 1976; Henning, 2000) based on the question: “With which policy actors do you share opinions towards organic farming and with whom do you have diverging opinions on this issue?”. Actors with a similar relational profile were grouped into one block and the relations between these blocks were analysed using the software STRUCTURE (Burt, 1991) which bases blockmodelling on hierarchical clustering (based on the Ward algorithm) of the actors and leaves it to the scientist to test the assignments of actors to blocks. With regard to resources we focused on the size of organic farming organizations, the type of internal relationship within the organic
farming community, the political culture of organic farming organizations, as well as the proportion of organic farmers organized in interest groups and the number of organic farming organizations active in the policy field.

Overall we applied a comparative approach that focused on five ‘old’ EU member states (Austria, Denmark, ‘England’, Germany and Italy), five ‘new’ member states (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia), and one non-EU country - Switzerland. For all of these countries a quantitative network analysis was carried out, focusing on the question: “With whom are you working together or with whom do you stay in regular contact in order to exchange your views on organic farming policy?” As the main information source for the factors influencing these networks, we used results from an analysis of organic farming development in the same European countries, covering institutional changes from 1997 to 2003 within the farming community, the food market, agricultural policy and the institutional setting (Moschitz et al., 2004). National researchers conducted the network survey in their countries in late 2003 / early 2004 following common guidelines and a common questionnaire that had been translated into their native language. In order to identify the boundaries of the networks and thus the actors to be interviewed, the widespread combination of the reputational and positional approach was applied (Kriesi, 1980; Sciarini, 1996). The interviews started with the core policy actors who were asked to name further actors relevant to organic farming policy. This snowballing procedure resulted in 13 to 26 network actors covering organic sector organizations, environmental and consumer groups, farmers’ unions, agricultural and environmental ministries, and administrative bodies. Face-to-face interviews lasted approximately one hour. The results were submitted to the network analyst who analysed all eleven data sets using UCINET software.

2.3 Results

As a remarkable first result, the varying importance of organic farming in the countries is not seen to affect the organic farming policy networks. To explore the influences on policy networks we compare the eleven case study countries in two stages. The first step identifies those factors that co-vary with the size and the density of the networks. The second step applies a most similar system – most different outcome (MSS-MDO) research design to analyse the influences on the power distribution between organic farming organizations and the agricultural ministries.
2.3.1 Factors co-varying with size and density of networks

Taking size and density as characteristics of organic farming policy networks, it is possible to distinguish two groups of countries (see Table 2-1). Relatively large (i.e. above the average of 17 members) and simultaneously dense networks are found in Denmark (45.6%), England (31.1%), Austria (24.9%), and Germany (23.9%). In the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia the networks are average to small, and relatively loose, with densities as low as, for example, 7.9% in Estonia.

Table 2-1 Size and density of European organic farming policy networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Density</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Moschitz and Stolze, 2007; data (national actor interviews, winter 2003/04) based on results of network analysis with UCINET

Examination of the factors that potentially influence policy networks, as described in the theory section above, reveals that it is primarily the political environment that influences the size and density of such networks. All countries with a small and/or loose network are countries that were about to join the EU when the survey was carried out in 2003/04. They had to take over the *acquis communautaire*, including the CAP with its organic farming regulations. Up to that point, no organic farming policy existed in these countries and the socialist system did not allow for political participation by independent interest groups. It was only the financial EU support for organic farmers starting with the accession process (e.g. through the SAPARD instrument), that triggered the development of organic farming (Hrabalova et al., 2005).
By contrast, in countries with a dense and / or large network, organic farming policy has a longer history. The first state policy on organic farming can be traced back to 1987, when Denmark decided to support organic farming through law no. 363, 10.06.1987 (Lampkin et al., 1999a).

Discussions about agricultural policy at the time of the research were characterized by public concerns over food safety, still influenced by the BSE crisis of the late 1990s. In addition, there was a broad debate about the introduction of GMO into agriculture. In a number of countries organic farming was recognized as a possible solution to food safety problems, and as a way of resisting GMOs. More actors became interested in organic farming policy and interaction between actors increased (Lynggaard, 2006). Moreover, general agricultural policy networks opened up to organic farming policy actors. For instance, in Germany, in response to the BSE crisis, a member of the Green party who had not been connected to the general agricultural policy network before was appointed Minister of Agriculture and opened up this network to organic farming and environmental interest groups. In the United Kingdom, the newly formed Department of Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) integrated sustainable development issues, thereby reinforcing the justification for greater support for organic farming. In Austria, the government became increasingly interested in organic farming as part of the discussions on national sustainability strategies and the Kyoto Protocol implementation.

To sum up, the strongest influence on size and density of organic farming policy networks in Europe came from policy processes that changed the political environment of organic farming.

### 2.3.2 Factors influencing the distribution of power between organic farming organizations and agricultural ministries

Taking the importance of overarching political processes as read, we identified two sets of ‘most similar systems’: the new and the old EU member states (including Switzerland). The ‘most different outcome’ relates to the different roles played by organic farming organizations and agricultural ministries in the organic farming policy network, using betweenness centrality and reputation to describe their power. Figures 2-1 and 2-2 below illustrate these different power distributions.
Figure 2-1: Betweenness centrality of agricultural ministries and organic farming organizations in European organic farming policy networks

Source: Moschitz and Stolze, 2007

Figure 2-2: Reputation of agricultural ministries and organic farming organizations in European organic farming policy networks

Source: Moschitz and Stolze, 2007
In one ‘most similar’ group of countries we contrast the Czech Republic with Poland, Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia; in a second ‘most similar’ group Switzerland and Denmark are contrasted with Austria and England.

**Czech Republic versus Poland, Estonia, Hungary, Slovenia**

In this group of new EU member states, only in the Czech Republic the organic farming organization is powerful both with respect to influence (betweenness centrality 15%) and perceived power (reputation 100%). In none of the other new EU member states is the organic farming organization particularly active, having little influence on organic farming policy. Betweenness centrality scores range from 0% in Estonia and Poland to 3% in Hungary, and reputational power is considerable only in Estonia (87%) and Slovenia (94%).

In Estonia, the Czech Republic and Poland the influential power of the agricultural ministry is low (betweenness centrality ranges from 0% to 5%), whereas its reputation for organic farming policy is relatively high, with scores from 93% to 100%. By contrast, the agricultural ministry in Slovenia is influential, with a betweenness centrality of 25%, but it has a relatively low reputation score (76%) in terms of its impact on organic farming policy. In Hungary, the agricultural ministry is neither influential nor perceived as powerful.

As shown in the previous section, the political environment for organic farming is similar within the group of new EU member states. Accordingly, the different power distributions between the organic farming organization and the agricultural ministry must be explained by reference to differences in the regime of the state or to different strategies and actions of policy actors. In Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia, experts described the agricultural ministry as not especially interested in organic farming policy. In the Czech Republic organic farming organizations had managed to approach the agricultural minister and to lobby for their cause at the time of the breakdown of the socialist system in 1990. Although the ministry has shown less interest and openness recently, organic farming enjoys greater political recognition in the Czech Republic than in the other new EU member states (Moschitz et al., 2004).

Both the strategies of policy actors and the resources of organic actors influence the policy networks in the new EU member states. In the Czech Republic, policy actors showed a higher interest in organic farming policy. Blockmodelling resulted in the distillation of different
opinion blocks, and a debate about organic farming policy actually took place there, though not in the other new member countries. Furthermore, the Czech organic farming organization engaged in the policy making process very early and developed a political tradition with several outstanding individuals lobbying for their case (Moschitz et al., 2004; Hrabalova et al., 2005). At the same time, Czech organic farmers developed a common vision of organic farming policy. In the other countries, the lack of resources hampers the organic farming organizations’ engagement in policy making. They are not experienced in policy making, and, with the exception of Slovenia, only a small proportion of organic farmers (about 10-20%) are members of an organic farming organization. Hence, the basis as an interest group is fairly weak. In Poland the organic farming community is split into several organizations that are spread over the country and do not collaborate. In Hungary, organic farming is strongly oriented towards the (export) market and state policies therefore seem to be of no importance to most organic farmers.

Switzerland and Denmark versus Austria and England

In the second group of ‘most similar’ countries the strongest difference in outcome, i.e. the relative power of organic farming organizations and agricultural ministries, occurs between Switzerland and Denmark on the one hand and Austria and England on the other. In both Switzerland and Denmark the organic farming organizations are powerful in terms of influence (betweenness centrality: 15% and 16%, respectively) and in terms of their perceived power, i.e. reputation (95% and 88%). At the same time, the agricultural ministries are not very active and therefore have only little influential power, and also their reputation in to influence organic farming policy is relatively low. By contrast, organic farming organizations and agricultural ministries in Austria and England are equally powerful in both types of power and are thus located in the upper right quadrant in the charts shown in Figures 1 and 2.

As in the previous group, these differences in power distribution between the agricultural ministry and the organic farming organization are explained by the different regimes of the state, variations in the strategies of policy actors and by the different resources of organic farming policy actors. In all four countries organic farming is recognized as an alternative to mainstream farming (Michelsen et al., 2001). However, the agricultural ministries are not equally involved in organic farming policy making. In Switzerland organic farming policy had been debated extensively in the 1990s and at the time of the survey only technical issues
were under discussion. Similarly, in Denmark organic farming policy was discussed mainly from an implementation perspective with no politicized debate. Furthermore, with a change in the Danish government the state interest in organic farming policy decreased. By contrast, in both Austria and England organic farming was an issue of policy debate in 2003/04. In Austria the agricultural ministry initiated the restructuring of the organic farming network which culminated in the creation of a new umbrella organization, Bio Austria. In England, an Organic Action Plan group was set up in 2002 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the responsible administrative body for organic farming, and work was still going on in 2003/04 (DEFRA, 2002). In consequence, we find a more active state in Austria and England, explaining its higher betweenness centrality. In Switzerland and Denmark the state has taken a more background role in the policy process, leaving it to organic farming organizations. These interest groups have succeeded in retaining their powerful role in the policy network even though there is currently little political debate about organic farming.

General agricultural policy actors in Switzerland and Denmark were more open to a constructive political debate on organic farming policy than in Austria and England (Moschitz et al., 2004). The relationship between organic farming institutions and general agricultural policy actors was characterized by “creative conflict” (Michelsen et al., 2001) in Switzerland and Denmark, it was “co-operation” in Austria and England, given the limited power of organic farming organizations. Although facing the same limitations in terms of finances and size, organic farming organizations in Switzerland and Denmark are better resourced for engaging in policy making. Their constituency is stronger than in Austria and England; in Austria in particular, the internal discussions about restructuring the organic sector (see above), took up much of the community’s resources (Moschitz et al., 2004). Additionally, organic farming organizations enjoy a greater reputational power in general agricultural policy in Switzerland and Denmark than in Austria and England. This indicates that they enjoy greater recognition in politics generally in the former countries and may thus have easier access to the policy making process.

Comparison

Both comparisons of the two ‘most similar’ sets of countries yielded the result that similar factors influence the role of organic farming organizations and agricultural ministries in the
organic farming policy networks. The dominant regime of the state, the strategies of network actors and the resources of organic farming organizations influence the distribution of power between actors in the networks. A current debate about organic farming policy involving the agricultural ministry enhances the reputational power of the ministry. However, an ongoing debate does not automatically lead to the ministry having greater influential power (measured by its betweenness centrality). Such a high level of influential power on the part of the agricultural ministry can be observed only in countries with a longer history of organic farming (Austria and England), but not in the country where this sector is emerging strongly (Czech Republic). It thus seems that in this country the policy debate on organic farming is strongly influenced by the organic farming organization.

At the same time, whether or not organic farming is currently an issue of public debate has no impact on the influential or reputational power of organic farming organizations. The betweenness centrality of these organizations is considerably high in Denmark and Switzerland, even though organic farming policy is not of great importance in current agricultural policy debates. A general interest on the part of the state is necessary in order to allow organic farming organizations to participate in the policy network, but the cases of Switzerland and Denmark show that, once a member of the network, organic farming organizations can remain influential even if the agricultural ministry becomes less active in organic farming policy.

In summary, a prerequisite for exerting influential power in organic farming policy networks over the longer term is the availability of resources, and in particular a strong organic farming community that supports the networking activity of organic farming organizations. In those countries where the community is unified and not affected by internal conflicts, the organic farming organization occupies a monopoly position in the network of influence. Furthermore, an established culture and ideology regarding political action is a precondition for organic farming organizations to influence policy networks.

### 2.4 Conclusion

The method of network analysis applied in this study was a valuable tool for the focus of our research. First, as a reductionist approach, the quantitative network analysis helped to master the complexity of eleven networks. While it lacks detailed insight into each national network, it represents a basis for a general comparison across countries. Second, the network analysis
led to counter-intuitive results (Sciarini, 1996). In the introduction we suggested that organic farming policy networks look different to those of general agricultural policy, and in fact they are composed of different policy actors (Moschitz and Stolze, 2007). However, power within both types of networks is distributed between the state and the respective organization representing farmers, be it organic or mainstream. This observation is supported by an analysis at EU level, in which Moschitz and Stolze (2007) have demonstrated that environmental and consumer groups are members of organic farming policy networks, but do not usually occupy a powerful position. Furthermore, against the background of the accession of Central and Eastern European Countries to the EU, one might expect large differences in the policy networks between these countries and the ‘old’ EU member states. Indeed, the organic farming policy networks in these two country groups vary in size and density, but not with regard to the distribution of power between the organic farming organization and the agricultural ministry. Thus, organic farming policy networks cannot be classified by simply distinguishing between old and new EU member states.

Hence, merely taking into consideration overarching policy processes, such as the accession process to the EU, is not sufficient to explain variation across organic farming policy networks. Greer (2005) has already stressed the importance of national processes for explaining differences between countries in transposing EU agricultural policy. On the basis of our comparative network analysis we conclude that the political environment, the dominant regime of the state, and the strategies and resources of network actors influence policy networks and thus the policy making process of organic farming in European countries.
2.5 References


At the time of entry to the European Union (EU), the EU organic farming rules – as part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – had been implemented in all the new Central and Eastern European (CEE) member states. Although all the accession countries thus formally complied with the EU regulations on organic farming, a closer look reveals differences between them. The purpose of the paper is to compare the organic farming policy networks in the Czech Republic and Poland and to highlight whether the likely differences between the two networks help to explain variations in the transposition of the EU organic farming policy, i.e. the way in which member states formally incorporate EU legislation into their domestic laws (Michelsen 2008). In particular, we consider Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 defining organic agriculture, and Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2078/92 (the Agri-environment Regulation, as reformed by Council Regulation (EC) No. 1257/99, the Rural Development Regulation, which came into force in 2000), since these provide the basis for financial support of organic farmers. The Czech Republic and Poland are chosen as examples of CEE countries because they represent two ‘extreme’ cases regarding organic farming policy, which is much more advanced in the former than in the latter.

The methodological framework for this analysis is a ‘most similar systems – most different outcome’ research design (Berg-Schlosser 2005). The Czech Republic and Poland are considered as similar systems in so far as both transformed their political systems from socialist to capitalist structures from 1989 onwards after the fall of the ‘Iron Curtain’. They are now both multi-party parliamentary democratic systems. Furthermore, both countries are situated in a similar geographical environment and agriculture is faced with similar climatic conditions. All the same, the average farm size differs in the two countries with roughly 315ha per organic farm in the Czech Republic (116ha on average for all farms), compared to only about 22ha per organic farm in Poland (8ha on average for all farms) in the year 2003 (Eurostat 2008; Hrabalova et al. 2005). Similarly, the degree of collectivization of the agricultural sector prior to the transformation was different. Whereas in Czechoslovakia – the predecessor state before the split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993 – 93.9% of all farms had been collective or state owned, in Poland 78% of all farms had remained private
during the socialist regime (Swinnen and Mathijs 1995). In consequence, the transformation process led to more dramatic changes in the agricultural sector in Czechoslovakia than in Poland. This rupture opened possibilities for organic farming development through product differentiation on a market with growing competition. In Poland, the transformation process primarily meant that limits for farm development in size, diversification and legal terms were removed. Here, organic farming development was often associated with the development of agro-tourism as a chance for farmers to make a living in rural areas. Hence, despite the differences in the structure of farms and agricultural property, in both countries, the transformation process potentially stimulated organic farming development (Prazan, Koutna and Skorpikova 2004). Similarly, the differences in farm structure and agricultural property do not account for variation in organic farming policy development, as is illustrated by the case of Slovenia, another transformation state. As in Poland, the average size of an organic farm in 2003 (14ha) was relatively small (Hrabalova et al. 2005), and with 82% of private farms the degree of collectivization prior to the transformation of the political system was also comparable to that of Poland (Swinnen and Mathijs 1995). Nevertheless, the development stage of organic farming policy in 2003 in this country is comparable to the stage of the Czech organic farming policy (Hrabalova et al. 2005).

The most important trigger for organic farming (policy) development in Poland and the Czech Republic has been the accession process to the EU starting in 1997 (Prazan, Koutna and Skorpikova 2004). From then on, the countries were eligible for the same European funds and financial assistance to support the transformation and accession process. Although the more dramatic rupture in the property structure of the Czech agriculture may have triggered more changes in the whole sector, the dominant influence on policies from the accession process justifies a characterization as ‘similar systems’. A considerable variation occurs between the organic farming policy networks in the Czech Republic and Poland (Moschitz and Stolze 2007). These networks may therefore explain the different qualities of organic farming policy in the two countries.

Our analysis of these networks is located within the group of structural approaches to policy networks (Daugbjerg 1998); hence, we use the term ‘policy network’ as a generic label encompassing all types of government – interest-group relationships. From a structure-based view, actors are embedded in a network, and this network forms part of the context in which individual actors have to take their decisions. Structures thus represent options and constraints for individual actions (Knoke 1996). From this perspective, it is the type of network that
influences policy outcome (Marin and Mayntz 1991; Rhodes and Marsh 1992), whereby
different authors have developed comprehensive network typologies (see e.g. Atkinson and
Coleman 1985; Rhodes 1988; Rhodes and Marsh 1992; Van Waarden 1992). The benefit of
such network typologies is that they offer a useful tool to order and categorize information
and to describe and classify policy subsystems which can then be compared with each other.
However, the network typologies are often difficult to apply empirically. On the one hand,
some ‘dimensions’ forming the basis for the categories are difficult to operationalize, and on
the other hand, the complexity of some typologies is unsuitable for an empirical analysis
(Sciarini 1995). For these reasons we follow Sciarini (1995; 1996) and choose a fairly general
classification of networks developed by Kriesi (1994) who distinguishes on the one hand
between the structure of interest intermediation – pluralism and corporatism (based on
Schmitter 1982) – and, on the other hand, between a strong and a weak state. This results in
four types of networks: concertation, sector-based cooperation, intervention, and pressure (see
Table 3-1).

Table 3-1 Types of policy networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure of interest intermediation</th>
<th>State Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly developed</td>
<td>concertation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(corporatist)</td>
<td>sector-based cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorly developed</td>
<td>intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(pluralist)</td>
<td>pressure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kriesi (1994)

In the case of concertation public and private actors are strongly structured. The
(hierarchically organized) interest groups manage their conflicts and coordinate their action
with that of the government. These groups face limited competition, and are in a position to
bargain with the state, because they can offer information and assistance in policy
implementation. In return, they are offered a role in policy-making. In the case of sector-
based cooperation the few major interest groups become more powerful in comparison to the
(numerous) public actors, and the state (partly) depends on interest group(s) (Van Waarden
1992). In the intervention type, the state acts independently from any social organization, and,
consequently, the policy choice will reflect the state preference. Conversely, the *pressure* type represents a strong form of pluralism with a predominance of many different pressure-groups who all attempt to gain influence. The policy choices depend on the actual issue debated and the varying influence of interest groups and public agencies determined by their resources (Smith 1993). Both state agencies and organized interests can dominate the policy choice (Van Waarden 1992). To classify the Czech and the Polish organic farming policy networks we will use the characteristics of the networks instead of structural preconditions in order to increase the meaningfulness and improve interpretation of the configuration of structures analysed (Sciarini 1996).

Policy networks and network typologies are useful as an analytical tool; yet, they cannot alone explain policy outcome. Integrating network actors and the political and socio-economic context contributes to the explanatory power of networks (Marsh 1998; Marsh and Smith 2000). Our ‘most similar systems’ research design allows us to limit the importance of context as an explanatory variable. Instead, we concentrate on network structure and network actors. In particular, we will consider: i) the distribution of capacities between actors, ii) the cohesion of policy preferences, iii) the relationship between interest groups and the government, and iv) the dominance of one or more policy networks in a policy field (see Greer 2002; Greer 2005; Montpetit 2005). We use these themes to explain variation in policy output between the Czech and the Polish organic farming policies. The policy outputs are characterized both in terms of policy content (Bugdahn 2005; Dimitrova and Steunenberg 2000) and the timeliness of their transposition from EU into domestic law (Giuliani 2003; Mastenbroek 2003).

In the following, the methods used for analysing the policy networks are introduced, before comparing the Czech and the Polish organic farming policy networks in detail. The article continues by presenting the organic farming policies in the Czech Republic and Poland. Subsequently, we discuss what the policy network perspective contributes to explaining the differences in organic farming policy in these two countries. The data presented mainly refers to the end of 2003 / beginning of 2004 – the period in which the network analysis was conducted.
3 The Influence of Policy Networks on Policy Output

3.1 Methods

To create an objective basis for the comparison between the two policy networks, quantitative network analyses were carried out in both countries. For a general characterization of the networks, we measured the size, i.e. the number of actors present, and the network density. The density thereby is defined as the proportion of links actually established between actors (Kephart 1950), and varies between a value of zero and one, usually presented as a percentage value. Furthermore, we analysed the network actors’ centrality, using the measure of ‘betweenness centrality’. This is a global measure of the position of an actor in the context of the whole network, i.e. it describes the potential of an actor to be an information broker in the network and yields information about the actor’s overall level of activity. An actor is central if it lies between other actors on their shortest link, the so-called geodesic (Freeman 1978/79).

As a measure of power, we analysed the reputation of actors which informs about the perceived power of an actor to have influence in the network. We define it as the proportion of interviewees who named this actor as influential in relation to a particular policy (Kriesi 1980; Sciarini 1996). Finally, the conflict structure was analysed with a block modelling procedure by which actors with a similar relational profile are grouped into one block and the relation between these blocks, or positions, can then be analysed (Burt 1991; Henning and Wald 2000).

Network interviews were conducted by local researchers in the native language, using a common network questionnaire. A combination of the reputational and positional approaches (Sciarini 1996) was applied to identify potential interviewees. First, invitation lists for parliamentary hearings (or any comparable event) on issues of organic farming were consulted and a list of politically active organizations was produced. Researchers then discussed the list with key persons and identified the most important actors in the domain of organic farming policy; more actors were added if necessary. The final list also included those institutions that are important in the policy process from an institutional point of view. In this way, overall, 13 relevant policy actors in the Czech Republic were identified, and 17 in Poland. The interviewees were drawn from state institutions representing the relevant ministries and/or their departments, from the private sector including general and organic farming organizations, environmental interest groups, market organizations, and from other politically important actors. All interviews were carried out in late 2003 / early 2004 and took about one hour. After conducting the interviews, the national researchers submitted the interview results in the form of data matrices to the network analyst. A central analysis of the
The Influence of Policy Networks on Policy Output

data ensured a common analysis routine and reduced possible measurement errors. The network analysis was carried out with UCINET software (Borgatti et al. 1999). Visualization of the policy networks was done with Visone software (Brandes & Wagner 2003), which includes the functionality for graphical representation of actor and network characteristics. The results from the network analysis were written up in country reports and cross-checked with the national experts who had conducted the interviews so as to avoid misinterpretation of the data. To identify the conflict structure in the network, the software application STRUCTURE (Burt 1991) was used. This bases block modelling on hierarchical clustering of the actors (based on the Ward algorithm) and leaves it to the scientist to test the assignments of actors to blocks.

3.2 Comparison of the organic farming policy network in the Czech Republic and Poland

The network analysis focussed on the network question ‘With whom do you work together or stay in regular contact in order to exchange your views on organic farming policy?’ Figure 3-1 and Figure 3-2 on the next two pages visualize the Czech and the Polish organic farming policy network with the help of Visone software (Brandes and Wagner 2003). In these figures, the actors’ size indicates the number of direct links an actor is involved in, i.e. in network jargon, its degree value, whereby the horizontal extent refers to the links sent out, and the vertical extent to the links received. The actors are ordered on the circles according to their betweenness centrality values, with the most central actor in the centre of the inner circle.
3 The Influence of Policy Networks on Policy Output

Figure 3-1 Organic farming policy network in the Czech Republic

Abbreviations

| AKCZR    | Czech Agrarian Chamber                        | MZECZR | Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic |
| ASZ      | Association of private farmers                | MZPCZR | Ministry of Environment of the Czech Republic |
| COLIFE   | Czech branch of Country Life Ltd. – a whole food retailer | PKCZR  | Federation of food and drink industries      |
| EPOS     | Czech association of advisors for organic farming | PROBIO | Organic farming organization                  |
| GREMA    | Organic products marketing company            | VUZEPR | Research Institute of Agricultural Economics in Prague |
| KEZ      | Czech inspection body for organic farming      |        |                                             |
| LIBERA   | Organic farming organization                   | ZSCZR  | Czech farmers’ union                         |
Figure 3-2  Organic farming policy network in Poland

Abbreviations

ARIMR  Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture
EKOGAL  Organic farming organisation in the Subcarpathian region
EKOLAND  Organic farming organisation
IJHARS  Agriculture and Food Quality Inspection
INER  Institute for Sustainable Development
KNRRRE  Coalition for the Organic Farming Development
KRIR  National Council of Agricultural Chambers
KZRKOR  Polish farmers’ union
MRIRW  Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Department of Plant Breeding and Protection, Organic Farming Unit
MS  Ministry of the Environment
PKE  Polish Ecological Club
PO  Civic Platform
PSL  Polish People’s Party
PZ  Polish Green Party
SEKRIRW  Agriculture and Rural Development Committee of the Polish Senate
SKRIRW  Agriculture and Rural Development Committee of the Polish Parliament
SLD  Democratic Left Alliance Party

Legend to Figures 3-1 and 3-2

The shape of the node illustrates the actor type:

- : private organisation
- : state institution
- : other organisation or institution (often parastatal)

The colour of the actor node indicates its classification by the experts:

- black: predominantly oriented to organic farming
- white: predominantly oriented to mainstream farming
- grey: balanced or undefined
3.2.1 General description of the networks

As Table 3-2 shows, the Czech organic farming policy network consists of 13 actors. A high proportion of the network actors are private organizations from the organic sector (the organic farming organizations PRO BIO and LIBERA, the association of organic farm advisors EPOS, the inspection and certification body KEZ and the organic market actors COLIFE and GREMA). Only one of the three organizations oriented predominantly towards mainstream farming (the Czech Agrarian Chamber AKCZR) is connected to the network, whereas the farmers’ union (ZSCZR) and the association of the food industries (PKCZR) do not closely collaborate with any of the other network members. In addition to the Ministry of Agriculture (MZECZR) which plays a prominent role in the network, the Ministry of Environment (MZPCZR) is also involved in organic farming policy making in the Czech Republic. On average, each actor established 2.1 relations with other actors, resulting in a network density of about 17%, i.e. less than one-fifth of the possible links between actors are present.

The Polish organic farming policy network is larger than the Czech one, and includes 17 actors. In contrast to the Czech network, there are no market actors, more than half of the network actors are state institutions and administrative bodies, and one third are private actors. Only a few actors are oriented towards organic farming. Remarkably, the two organic farming organizations (EKOLAND and EKOGAL) play a minor role in the network, whereas the centre is occupied by a mainstream-oriented administrative body, the National Council of Agricultural Chambers (KRIR), and the Institute for Sustainable Development (INER), an actor with an indifferent attitude towards organic farming. As in the Czech Republic, the mainstream farmers’ union (KZRKIOR) is only loosely connected to the network. On average, the actors in the Polish network have established more links to each other than in the Czech network, namely 2.8, and the network density amounts to 17.7%.
### Table 3-2 Main characteristics of the Czech and the Polish organic farming policy network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Network measure/parameter</th>
<th>Czech Republic</th>
<th>Poland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor types</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominant orientation of actors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriented towards organic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriented towards mainstream</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent or balanced orientation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Moschitz and Stolze, 2007*

### 3.2.2 Resources and capacities

In both countries, the organic farming organizations have poor financial and personnel resources at their disposal for the purpose of engaging in policy making (Moschitz, Stolze and Michelsen 2004). They are confronted with state actors whose role in the political process is institutionalized, so the distribution of capacities is clearly skewed towards these institutions. All the same, interest groups may build their political engagement upon the considerable level of commitment of their members. Here, the Czech organic farming sector is in an advantageous position. In the Czech Republic, organic farmers are unified to a large extent under one organic farming organization, PRO BIO, of which about 50% of all organic farmers are members, whereas in Poland only about 10% of organic farmers are organized in one of the three organic farming organizations which are scattered across the country and which compete, to some extent, for members and influence (Moschitz et al. 2004).
3.2.3 Level of conflict and cohesion of policy preferences

In order to analyse the level of conflict in the networks (Sciarini, Fischer and Nicolet 2004), the questionnaire included a question on convergent and divergent views on organic farming in relation to the other actors, whereby convergence was coded as “1”, divergence as “-1” and neither nor as “0”. The average level of conflict is positive in both networks, but is higher in the Czech case (0.12) than in the Polish case (0.08). A declaration of converging or diverging opinions from those of other network actors presupposes an actor who has made up his or her mind about organic farming, and who has a clear understanding of the views of the other actors. The number of total statements about converging or diverging opinions thus indicates the degree to which the actors could make such an assessment and whether their positions towards organic farming policy are clear. Whereas 30% of the Czech network actors positioned themselves in relation to the other actors, only 15% of the Polish network actors declared a clear opinion. Accordingly, the structure of conflict is much clearer in the Czech than in the Polish network. This structure was analysed in detail by block modelling based on structural equivalence in the conflict network. It resulted in meaningful opinion blocks only in the Czech network, whereas experts could not confirm any empirical evidence for the blocks created by this analytical process in Poland. In the Czech Republic, the inspection body KEZ forms one camp together with PRO BIO and the Ministry of Agriculture. They share opinions on organic farming with each other while declaring divergent views from the “mainstream” network actors (see Table 3-3). By contrast, in Poland we find a high level of indifference, which indicates that organic farming does not play an important role for most of the actors in the network (see Table 3-4). In both Table 3-3 and 3-4 cell i,j is the average relation from someone occupying position I to someone in position J.
### Table 3-3 Structural equivalence analysis: Convergence/divergence network of opinions on organic farming in the Czech Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Residual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.111</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-0.889</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-0.333</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.083</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.889</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>0.333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average density: 0.12

Position 1 = 'mainstream organizations' (ZSCZR, AKCR, PKCZR)
Position 2 = 'policy makers' (PRO BIO, KEZ, MZECZR)
Position 3 = 'actors open to organic farming' (GREMA, ASZ, EPOS, COLIFE)
Residuals = LIBERA, MZPCZR, VUZEPR

*Source: own data*

### Table 3-4 Structural equivalence analysis: Convergence/divergence network of opinions on organic farming in Poland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Residual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-0.086</td>
<td>0.286</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>-0.571</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average density: 0.08

Position 1 = 'state institutions' (SLD, SKRIRW, SEKRIRW, ARIMR, IJHARS)
Position 2 = 'central actors' (KRIR, INER)
Position 3 = 'environmentally interested' (EKOLAND, PZ, KNRRRE, KZRKIOR, PKE, MS, EKOGAL)
Position 4 = 'ministry' (MRIRW)
Residuals = PSL, PO

*Source: own data*

In addition to the average level of conflict, cohesion in a network can be described through cohesive subgroups, such as cliques (i.e. a group of mutually linked actors) (Wassermann and
3.2.4 Relationship between interest groups and the government

Such an established relationship between the Czech interest groups for organic farming and the government suggests a general acceptance of these organizations by the state body (see also Moschitz et al. 2004). As has been shown, the same actors not only collaborate with each other on organic farming, but also share the same opinions on organic farming development, expressed by being part of the same opinion block. This high level of acceptance of organic farming organizations in the Czech Republic is mirrored in the process of elaborating the Czech Action Plan on Organic Farming. After it was initiated jointly by KEZ, PRO BIO and MZECZR in 2002, all relevant stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Environment, farmers’ organizations, research institutes and other non-governmental organizations, participated in elaborating the Action Plan (Hrabalova et al. 2005; Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 236 2004).

The relationship between interest groups and the agricultural ministry is further illustrated by the distribution of power, analysed through the centrality and reputation of the actors. In the Czech network, the most central actor (on the ‘betweenness centrality’ measure) is PRO BIO, who also scores highly on the reputational power measure (see the left column in Table 3-5). The agricultural ministry has a high reputation for influencing organic farming policy; however, its betweenness centrality is limited. Thus, organic farming policy in the Czech Republic is dominated by the organic farming organization.

In Poland, the most central actor is the National Council of Agricultural Chambers (KRIR), an administrative body; an environmental organization (INER) which works in organic farming, among other issues, is also fairly central. Remarkably, all of the organic farming organizations have a zero score for betweenness centrality. Although the Agricultural Ministry has a low betweenness centrality score, it is the only actor with a reasonable reputational power (i.e. a score higher than 50%) for influencing organic farming policy (see the left column in Table 3-6).
3 The Influence of Policy Networks on Policy Output

Table 3-5  Reputational power of network actors for organic farming and general farming policy in the Czech Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organic farming policy</th>
<th>General farming policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Ministry (100%)</td>
<td>Agricultural Ministry (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Bio - organic farming organization (100%)</td>
<td>Research Institute of Agricultural Economics, Prague (69%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEZ - inspection body for organic agriculture (92%)</td>
<td>Czech Agrarian Chamber (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Ministry (85%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own data

Table 3-6  Reputational power of network actors for organic farming and general farming policy in Poland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organic farming policy</th>
<th>General farming policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Ministry (94%)</td>
<td>Agricultural Ministry (94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency for Restructuring and Modernization of Agriculture (59%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Rural Development Committee of the Polish Parliament (53%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own data

This fairly weak position of the organic sector in the Polish network is exemplified in the process of elaborating an Action Plan on Organic Farming. In contrast to the Czech Republic, the initiative for such a plan came from the Ministry of Agriculture and was triggered by the EU Action Plan on Organic Food and Farming. The preparation included a number of ministries, such as Environment, Finance, Economic Affairs and Labour, and Science and Information Society Technologies, whereas the organic sector was present only in the form of the six inspection bodies. In summary, organic farming policy is dominated by actors outside the organic sector, which have not, for the most part, established a clear opinion on organic farming.
3 The Influence of Policy Networks on Policy Output

3.2.5 Relationship between organic and general agriculture networks

The question of dominance of one or more policy networks in organic farming policy is further explored by comparing the reputational networks of the organic and the general policy areas, i.e. we compare the two columns in each of the Tables 3-5 and 3-6.

In the Czech Republic, organic farming represents a distinctive policy field. Apart from the Agricultural Ministry which has an institutional role, no actor is seen as influential both on organic farming policy and on general agricultural policy. Organic sector organizations dominate the organic farming policy network, whereas the mainstream farming institutions and organizations influence the general agricultural policy network. In Poland, too, the Agricultural Ministry is powerful in both policy networks for institutional reasons. But, in contrast to the Czech case, its power in organic farming policy is not balanced by organic farming organizations. In consequence, organic farming policy is not clearly distinct from general agricultural policy, and both policy areas are dominated by the Agricultural Ministry. The results from block modelling, as shown above, support this finding.

3.2.6 Summary

Comparing the Czech and the Polish organic farming policy network, we can see that the Czech network is smaller, i.e. fewer policy actors are relevant to the shaping of organic farming policy. In fact, it comes close to a corporatist type of interest intermediation as it has been characterized at the beginning of this paper. By contrast, Polish organic farming policy is shaped by a larger number of actors, but overall, they are less engaged in the policy-making process, and thus, the interest intermediation can be characterized as pluralist (Kriesi 1994). The difficulties caused by the lack of financial resources which organic farming interest groups in both countries face are reduced in the Czech network by a strongly unified organic sector committed to political action. In Poland, organic farming organizations are scattered across the country, and conflicts among them hamper collective political action. The most remarkable difference between the two networks is the clear preference for organic farming in the Czech network in contrast to the prevailing indifference towards organic farming in the Polish network. Not only are many more organic actors involved in organic farming policy making in the Czech Republic, but the most central position is also taken by the organic farming organization, giving it a strong position vis-à-vis the government. In Poland, the organic farming organizations have not managed to become recognized as important policy
actors in the network. The organic farming policy network is distinct from the general farming network in the Czech Republic whereas in Poland organic farming is strongly influenced by the general farming policy network.

After having compared the organic farming policy networks in the Czech Republic and Poland, in the following section the organic farming policies in the two countries are presented, before we discuss the contribution of the network perspective to explaining policy variation.

## 3.3 Organic Farming policy in Poland and in the Czech Republic

The contents of the Polish and the Czech organic farming policies are compared in their main objectives and in the instruments chosen (Sciarini 1994) and the timeliness of the transposition of the EU legislation into national law. Policy instruments can be divided into legal, financial or communicative instruments (Van Nispen and Ringeling 1998). Legal instruments comprise orders, prohibitions and regulations, while financial instruments are less coercive and more stimulative. By contrast, communicative policy instruments involve some kind of interaction between the state and the civil society, and do not include clear sanctions. Information campaigns or strategic documents are examples for such communicative policy instruments (Michelsen 2002). We base our characterization of organic farming policies on the extensive data that Hrabalova (2005) and Tyburski (2003) have collected and analysed for the years 1997–2004 in the form of written documents (such as legal texts) and expert information.

### 3.3.1 Organic farming policy in the Czech Republic

**Objectives**

The objectives of Czech organic farming policy are explicitly mentioned in the ‘Action Plan of the Czech Republic for the Development of Organic Farming until 2010’, (Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 236 2004). This Action Plan conceives of organic farming as ‘conforming to the principles of permanently sustainable development of agriculture’ (Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 236 2004, p.4), and assigns it a role in preventing depopulation of the countryside, providing work in primary agricultural production, and contributing to ensuring equitable regional development. The Action Plan combines environmental, economic and social goals. On the one hand, it aims at
fostering environmental protection, animal welfare, and the conservation of the countryside. On the other hand, economic goals are highly important. In supporting organic farming, the Czech government wishes to ensure the viability of organic farms and promotes organic farming as a viable livelihood in rural areas. Moreover, it aims to increase the competitiveness of Czech agriculture in the EU through organic farming, expand the market for organic produce and improve the effectiveness of production and processing of organic food. Furthermore, it sets out to enhance public confidence in organic farmers, and envisages better consulting, education and research. Finally, the Action Plan states a target of achieving approx. a 10% share of organically farmed land by 2010 (Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 236 2004).

**Legal instruments**

In the Czech Republic, a first national directive on organic farming based on Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 was introduced in 1993 as a ‘Methodological Instruction’, ‘Metodický pokyn pro ekologické zemědělství c. j. 655/93-340 ze dne 22. června 1993’ (Ministry of Agriculture 1993). It provided the legal basis for the national inspection and certification system, and the state label ‘BIO-Organic Farming Product’ was introduced. This directive was replaced in 2001 by Act No. 242/2000 which was an encompassing law, and fully implemented the Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91. To date, this defines the standards for organic farming, processing, labelling and marketing and determines the rules for inspection and certification; Decree No. 53/2001 is the respective executive regulation (Tyburski and Zakowska-Biemans 2003). At the time it was introduced, Act No. 242/2000 extended beyond Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 by including measures against contamination with non-organic production (from neighbouring fields), and requirements for packaging materials. The Czech regulation also defined standards for rabbit keeping, aquaculture, viticulture, and for the processing of bee-keeping products, all of which were absent from the then current EU regulation. Furthermore, this regulation was stricter, as many inputs listed in the positive list of the Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 were not listed in the Czech Act No. 242/2000. However, after EU accession the existing regulations needed little adaptation only, in the form of two executive regulations, Decree No. 263/2003 enlarging the list of allowed inputs and Decree No. 174/2004 extending the list of accepted inspection bodies. Since 2000 (plant production) and 2001 (animal production), the Czech
Republic has been listed as a third country provided for in Article 11 (1) of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91, allowing the export of organic products to the EU.

Financial instruments

The Czech government began to provide financial support for organic farming in 1990. However, this financial support stopped in 1992 and funds were available again only from 1998 onwards, this time provided under the regime for agri-environmental programmes. From 2001 to 2003, these funds were available through Decree No. 505/2000, later changed to Decree No. 500/2001. Currently, organic farming support is part of the Horizontal Rural Development Plan (Ministry of Agriculture 2003) and organic farming payments are detailed in Decree No. 242/2004 and its amendments. The Czech government mainly promotes organic farming through area payments to farmers for conversion and maintenance, support for information measures and support for inspection and certification. Overall, the Czech Republic spent roughly €7.3m. on organic farming support in 2003 (€9.5m. in 2004), and the average organic farming payment per supported hectare amounted to €34 (€43) per ha. All in all, 84 (83)% of organically managed land in the Czech Republic was supported in 2003 (2004) (Hrabalova et al. 2005).

Communicative instruments

In the Czech Republic we find a nationwide state logo for selling organic products which is also promoted by private organizations. Furthermore, an Action Plan on Organic Farming was approved by the Czech government on 17 March, 2004, which was three months ahead of the European Action Plan on Organic Food and Farming (European Commission 2004). Six policy priorities cover i) the relationship between organic farming, the environment and animal welfare, ii) the strengthening consumer confidence and promotion, iii) processing and marketing, iv) the ability to do business and economic viability, v) research, education and consulting, and vi) policy tools and solutions (Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 236 2004).

Hence, the Czech Action Plan is much more precise and binding than the EU Action Plan (Stolze and Lampkin 2005), however, financial resources for implementation of measures have only been provided recently (Ministry of Agriculture 2006).
3.3.2 Organic farming policy in Poland

*Objectives*

In Poland, the objectives of organic farming policy are not stated as clearly as in the Czech Republic. The only indication of such policy goals may be found in the Rural Development Plan which states that organic farming fulfils environmental goals and creates job opportunities in rural areas (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development 2004).

*Legal instruments*

Poland’s first superior law on organic farming based on Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 was introduced in 2001, by the Act on Organic Farming of 16 March, 2001. It defined organic farming and issued general rules on organic farm management. Subsequently, a number of executive regulations detailed implementation issues (Tylburski and Zakowska-Biemans 2003). Prior to accession, the Polish legal framework for organic farming deviated from Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91 in two ways. It did not prohibit tie-stalls (which is the case under EU law), and it included extra environmental requirements for farm management (Tylburski and Zakowska-Biemans 2003). In order to comply fully with EU legislation, the act was replaced just before accession by the Legal Act of April 20, 2004, Journal of Law No. 93, pos. 898. This law was also supplemented by a number of executive regulations coming into force in 2004 (Metera 2005). Poland was not placed on the list of third countries provided for in Article 11 (1) of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91.

*Financial instruments*

The Polish government supported the costs of inspection and certification of organic farms from 1998 onwards. Area payments for organic farming (from the second year of conversion on) were introduced in 1999 (Hrabalova et al. 2005; Metera 2005), and from 2004 onwards, these were provided as part of the agri-environmental programme under the new Rural Development Plan as detailed in the Journal of Law No. 174, pos. 189, Appendix 4 (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development 2004). Currently, organic farming is mainly promoted through area payments to farmers for conversion and maintenance, support for information measures and support for inspection and certification. Overall, the Polish government spent roughly €1.3m. on organic farming support in 2003 (€7.7m. in 2004 when support was
provided as part of the agri-environmental programme), and the average organic farming payment per hectare supported amounted to €44 (€104) per ha. All in all, 62 (91)% of the organically managed land in Poland was supported in 2003 (2004) (Hrabalova et al. 2005).

*Communicative instruments*

No state logo exists in Poland, and the two private logos are not used nationwide, whereas a few regional programmes for organic farming development have been established since 2002. Only in early 2005 did the Ministry of Agriculture begin to set up an Action Plan on organic farming as a response to the Action Plan on Organic Food and Farming developed at the EU (Hrabalova et al. 2005). This process has recently culminated in publication of the Polish Action Plan on Organic Farming for the years 2007-2013 (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development 2007).

### 3.3.3 Comparison

We can conclude that for organic farming policies in both Poland and the Czech Republic, the EU principles and objectives of contributing to environmental quality and cutting excess food production (European Commission 2000) are relevant, since the national laws are an implementation of EU legislation. Additionally, both countries emphasize organic farming as a source of jobs in rural areas as a reason for supporting this form of land management.

Although both national policies are now equivalent to European law, the Czech organic farming policy is more elaborate than the Polish. Until 2003, the Czech government assigned significantly more funds to organic farming, whereas in Poland substantial organic farming payments started only when they were included in the new rural development plan in the framework of the EU funded rural development programme. Poland has since caught up and, in 2004, the average support for organically farmed land was even higher than in the Czech Republic. An Action Plan on Organic Farming, including clear objectives, has been developed only in the Czech Republic, but not in Poland.

As to timeliness, the Czech government adopted European law much earlier and developed an organic farming policy prior to the accession process to the EU, and its Action Plan had been approved even prior to the EU Action Plan on Organic Farming. In Poland, discussion on such a plan has only recently begun, and organic farming policy was developed only after the accession process had started.
3.4 The relation between networks and output

The Czech organic farming policy is more elaborate in its content (described by legal, financial and communicative instruments) and has been developed earlier than the Polish organic farming policy. The comparison of the policy networks in the two countries shows how the different themes of network analysis contribute to explaining the variation in these policy outputs.

Organic farming is widely preferred in the Czech network. A large number of organic actors are members of the network, and the organic sector has successfully used its capacity of a common identity in the policy-making process. Evidence for this success could be found at various occasions. From the early 1990s on, just after the breakdown of the socialist system, organic farming interest groups lobbied for an organic farming legislation, including financial support, which became available for the first time from 1990 to 1992. The organic sector organizations were also successful in promoting the export of organic products into the EU by lobbying for a control and certification body as a public benefit organization which was a prerequisite for approval to the list of third countries provided for in Article 11 (1) of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 2092/91. Furthermore, on their initiative, the discussion process on an Action Plan for Organic Farming started in 2002, and was supported by the Agricultural Minister of the Czech Republic. The involvement of the organic farming organizations throughout the development process of this Action Plan until its publication in 2004 is acknowledged in the introductory part of the Czech Action Plan: ‘The plan […] was prepared particularly in cooperation with the representatives of unions of organic farmers (PRO-BIO, Libera), the controlling body KEZ o.p.s., agricultural universities, research institutes and with the organic farmers, processors and distributors of biofood.’ (Resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 236 2004, p.2). Thus, the main organic farming organization occupying the central position in the network influences policy, shapes the preferences that are formulated and discussed in the network, and in this way adds to the recognition of organic farming. The representatives of the organic sector had a strong interest in bringing organic farming into the political discourse and were successful in doing so.

By contrast, in Poland the organic sector is less equipped for political action and is confronted with a political environment that is less open to organic farming issues. The political discourse on organic farming has been triggered out of a need to comply with developments at the EU level rather than in response to domestic pressure from an interest group. Only
organic inspection bodies, but no organic farming organization participated in the development of the Polish Action Plan on Organic Farming. In consequence, the organic farming policy in Poland is much more state driven than in the Czech Republic. At the same time, organic farming is not a high priority on the political agenda of the Polish Agricultural Ministry (Moschitz, Stolze and Michelsen 2004).

3.5 Conclusion

This paper has shown how the common themes of network analysis can be used to explain variation in policy output. The quantity of actors and relations in a network is not nearly as relevant as their quality in determining the effect of networks on policy output. The larger size and density of the Polish network did not contribute to an elaborate organic farming policy. It seems that in the Czech Republic a limited number of actors collaborate effectively in promoting organic farming policy.

In fact, we can conclude that the Czech organic farming policy network comes close to a concertation type of network as it has been characterized in the introduction to this paper (Kriesi 1994). Organic farming policy is discussed mainly between the government and the major organic farming organization to which the organic sector has delegated the right and power to politically represent the whole sector. Furthermore, the organic sector has developed a common identity which helps them to counterbalance the institutionalized power of the government. The major organic farming organization has a close relationship with the agricultural ministry; it assists in policy implementation, and provides state agencies with information. Thus, it has recently contributed to the 2006 Yearbook on Organic Farming in the Czech Republic edited by the Czech Agricultural Ministry (PRO-BIO and Bioinstitut o.p.s 2006).

Conversely, the Polish organic farming policy network can be characterized by a pluralist interest intermediation system, with more actors and a higher network density, but without a clear structure. Organic farming policy is dominated by the state while organic farming organizations do not have enough resources (neither financial nor in the sense of collective identity) to effectively participate in the policy-making process. This comes close to the intervention type of network (Kriesi 1994). Given such a network, the little interest of the dominating (state) actor in organic farming explains why organic farming policy is less elaborate in Poland than in the Czech Republic.
Admittedly, the static tool of network analysis produces a picture of one specific moment in a policy process. However, relatively young policy fields, such as organic farming policy in the new EU member states, are in general fairly dynamic and prone to change. Different actors may take the central position at different times and determine the prevailing discourse and preferences in a network. Thus, other organic farming policy networks in the new EU member states or, at some other point in time, the networks described here may lie somewhere between the two ‘extreme’ cases presented in this paper.
3.6 References


3 The Influence of Policy Networks on Policy Output


4 MOVING ON – THE ORGANIC FARMING MOVEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF INCREASING POLITICAL INTERVENTION IN EUROPE

Values and ideologies are currently being discussed widely within the organic movement. At its General Assembly in Adelaide in 2005, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) approved the new “four principles of organic farming” after a two-year consultative process (IFOAM 2007). In Europe, the debate revolves around the revision of EU Regulation (EEC) No 2092/1991 and the harmonization of the different national organic standards (Padel 2008). Discussion processes have recently begun in various countries, aimed at redefining the movement’s goals and visions. In Germany and Switzerland, for example, the respective umbrella organizations have initiated a debate about the future of organic farming and the organic movement involving a wide range of participants, from farmers to representatives of (member) organizations and research institutions (Bio Suisse 2007; Bund Ökologische Lebensmittelwirtschaft 2007). In addition, the themes of the last two ‘German scientific conferences on organic farming’ (“The end of the niche” in 2005 and “Between tradition and globalization” in 2007) illustrate that the development of organic farming is being scrutinized critically within the organic movement (Wissenschaftstagung 2007).

These debates are occurring at a time when organic farming is enjoying the growing interest of state politics and is widely recognized as being a positive force by market actors and civil society. Having been viewed as a success of the movement and as a necessary step on the path of organic farming development (Michelsen et al. 2001), it now seems time to rethink this ‘boom’ (Gerber 2007).

This paper mirrors the current debate by, on the one hand, conceptualising possible strategies available to actors in the organic sector for influencing policy and, on the other, exploring the consequences of this process of institutionalization for the culture and identity of the organic farming movement.

4.1 Is organic farming a social movement?

Organic farming can be traced back to the 1920s when Rudolf Steiner, Hans and Maria Müller and Hans Peter Rusch, out of a concern about soil fertility, started to work on an
alternative to the predominant farming system which increasingly relied on artificial inputs. In the Anglo-Saxon world Lady Balfour and Sir Howard, among others, had a great impact as pioneers of organic farming (Vogt 2000). Nevertheless, many social scientists describe organic farming as an example of a new social movement which developed mainly from the late 1970s / early 1980s onwards, as part of the environmental movement that was emerging at that time in the Western world (see e.g. Tovey 1997; Kaltoft 2001; Michelsen 2001b; Guthman 2004).

Social movements have been defined in the literature with varying emphases; these have included the importance of networks for mobilization and collective action, the timeliness and longevity of movements, forms of conflict and protest, and shared values among movement actors (Blumer 1969; Melucci 1989; Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Melucci 1996; Tarrow 1998; Della Porta and Diani 2006). Crossley (2002) notes that all social movements resemble each other in some characteristics but that, due to their heterogeneity, there cannot be one single undisputed definition of the term. As a common denominator, social movements rest on a set of shared values and engage in some kind of protest. This protest may take the form of alternative lifestyles, political lobbying or rallies on the street.

Within any one particular movement protest strategies are diverse and may change over time. Most authors see this lack of homogeneity as one defining characteristic of social movements. In the rural context, for instance, Woods (2003) introduces three ‘ruralisms’ (p. 318), each representing different and sometimes conflicting discourses of rurality. Nevertheless, he argues that despite these differences all these ‘ruralisms’ are part of one ‘rural movement’.

Matching organic farming to the definitions given above, we find that it has a common value base, expressed among others in the IFOAM principles (IFOAM 2007). In view of the debate on ‘institutionalization’, which will presented below, we might assume that these common values have become rather blurred and less homogeneous, perhaps even less ‘common’, given the increasing number of organic farmers who practise organic agriculture out of different concerns, and consumers consuming organic food for a variety of reasons. Organic farming is also engaged in protest in various ways. First, it clearly represents an alternative lifestyle to mainstream agriculture. Second, organic farming has developed its own institutions and infrastructure (Michelsen et al. 2001). Third, movement organizations are involved in political lobbying. At the same time, public protest does not take place in the form of rallies on the street, but is rather expressed through farmers’ markets or in organic food stores; it may not therefore be perceived as ‘protest’ as such by the broader public. Thus, we can conceive of
organic farming as a social movement engaged in a symbolic form of protest aimed at cultural change. One can argue that it is becoming an increasingly diverse movement, but, following Woods (2003), this is not the end of organic farming as a social movement; although it may indeed appear that disparate ‘isms’ have already developed.

So far, the organic movement has been presented here (as in many other publications) from a sociological perspective. Such a perspective often overlooks the fact that organic farming, like all forms of farming, is an economic activity focused on different markets (from local to national and global) with different consumers. In some cases, the economic aspect of organic farming has developed so far as to lead farmers and policy makers to reduce organic farming to a particular form of land management that follows a given set of rules, while ignoring the underlying values and ideologies. Yet even if we do not accept such a limited view of organic farming, we need to consider the importance of economics for the development of the organic movement. Economic considerations play an important role for farmers in their decision to convert to organic farming (Padel 2001), and an organic farmer has to make choices regarding how to sell his or her products, be it directly to consumers or to middlemen. At the level of collective actors, organic farmers throughout Europe have established organic marketing organizations, either as independent cooperatives and companies or as organizations closely linked to organic producer associations (Lampkin et al. 1999a). Just as the market for organic products is expanding, so too is the number of actors; thus, competition on the organic market is increasing. In consequence, organic marketing initiatives that are embedded in the movement need to be aware of developments in the mainstream marketing channels if they are to develop successful strategies to maintain their share in the market (Hamm and Gronefeld 2004). Hamm and Gronefeld (2004) point to the growing importance of general food shops, such as small retailer shops, supermarkets, hypermarkets and discounters, for selling organic products. These easily accessible sales points are attracting more and more consumers of organic products. Equally, however, there is an increasing number of consumers who are concerned about the way in which organic products are traded and marketed (Zanoli 2004). This apparent paradox illustrates a major conflict within organic farming, and the fact that such a conflict has emerged underlines the relevance of the ‘economic’ debate for the movement.

To sum up the various perspectives on organic farming presented above, organic farming is neither exclusively one type of environmental social movement engaged in protest for a different lifestyle, nor is it simply a form of land management that follows a specific set of
rules; rather, it incorporates both of these while providing the basis for an economically viable livelihood for the organic farmer. Organic farming can be considered as a new social movement, but the particularities of the organic movement should be taken into account when discussing its development and institutionalization.

Social movements are discussed from two perspectives within the social sciences. One is the political perspective, which has been developed predominantly in the United States. It conceives of social movements as rational actors that mobilize resources in order to pursue their political interests (McCarthy and Zald 1987; McAdam et al. 1988). Social movements become manifest in organizations and, consequently, this perspective is particularly strong in analysing social movement organizations. Critics of this paradigm argue that this perspective reduces social movements to organizations and disregards the fact that the cultural networks in which movements evolve are not only a source of recruits who can be mobilized for protest, but a place where new lifestyles and forms of social relations can be developed (Melucci 1989). The cultural – predominantly European – tradition, by contrast, addresses social movements as a possible agent for a new societal order (Cohen 1996; Melucci 1996). This perspective is oriented towards identity and broadens the general outlook on social movements. It conceives of them as loose networks of cognitive actors that create a distinct world view, create and articulate alternative sets of technologies and establish new ways of producing and disseminating knowledge (Eyerman and Jamison 1991).

These two traditions have been integrated in a stage, or life cycle, model of social movements (Blumer 1969), which posits that all social movements evolve from a non-institutionalized form of action based on mass protest into institutionalized interest groups and political parties. Cohen (1996), however, suggests that the linearity of this model is not very helpful and that, instead, social movements can occupy different stages in the life cycle at the same time. She concludes that contemporary social movements actually have a “dual organizational logic” (Cohen 1996, p.190). On the one hand, they engage in a politics of influence in the political sphere, while on the other, they also engage in a politics of identity in the civil society sphere.

In view of the particularity of the organic farming movement, as pointed out above, I question whether the ‘dual logic’ of Cohen suffices to describe the tasks this movement faces. I propose adding a third form of logic to this concept, namely a ‘logic of economics’, which targets the economic environment of the organic movement, that is, the markets in which organic farmers sell their products and in which organic consumers can buy them. This perspective combines aspects related to movement organizations and aspects related to
cultural networks. Organic movement organizations might be the more relevant actors on the market than the individual farmer, and thus they are the agents most engaged in this ‘movement politics’. However, the organic movement as a loose network of different types of actors also emerged in opposition to the predominant system in which food was marketed. Accordingly, it is this network which created alternative institutions and infrastructures to sell organic products.

It should be mentioned here that Michelsen (2001b) comes to a similar conclusion when he develops his model of the institutional environment of a farmer. A farmer needs to interact with three sectors of society: the state, the market and civil society. Stipulating that this accounts both for organic and for mainstream farmers, Michelsen establishes the need for separate organic farming institutions which have to interact with the corresponding mainstream institutions. His perspective thus is on social movement organizations that have to interrelate with their environment made up of, among others, mainstream farming organizations. The perspective taken in the present paper, however, is more broadly on the organic movement as a whole, and, in particular, on what differentiates it from the traditional way of conceiving of social movements. The model developed by Michelsen (2001b) is helpful in understanding the development of organic farming institutions in the three sectors of society, but it does not provide a comprehensive framework for discussing the consequences of political action for organic farming as a social movement.

As the focus of this article is not only on organic movement organizations, but on the organic movement as a whole, I prefer Cohen’s approach, in an extended version, for the further discussion on the consequences of political action for the organic movement. At first sight, this triple logic could be experienced as an expanded resource for the movement as a whole: making use of the variety of actors within a movement could be a powerful basis for its overall success (Staggenborg 1988). However, as Tovey (1999) has pointed out, it can also be a severe source of conflict within a social movement, a conflict which she has illustrated with the example of the Irish organic movement. While taking up the argument of the triple logic at the end of the paper, in the following section, I will focus on the logic of influence of the organic movement.
4.2 Dynamics of institutionalization: the organic movement’s politics of influence

The impact of EU policy on the development of organic farming has increased since organic farming support was made available through the extensification programme under Regulation (EEC) No 4115/1988 (Lampkin et al. 1999b). The state’s interest lay mainly in clearance of agricultural markets and in making a contribution to improving environmental quality, but the movement also called for an official regulation to protect the use of words such as “bio” and “organic” for labelling products (Dabbert et al. 2004). Regulation (EEC) No 2092/1991 was introduced as a result, so that organic farming was now defined in legal terms. In 1992 the first EU regulation specifically mentioning organic farming and providing financial support for it was introduced as Regulation (EEC) No 2078/1992, and this has recently been replaced by Regulation (EEC) No 1257/1999 (European Commission 2000). Both regulations (EEC) No 2092/1991 and No 2078/1992, viz. No 1257/1999 required the implementation of EU policy at national level. This had two main consequences for the organic movement. First, actors outside the organic movement, such as politicians and state bureaucrats in charge of policy implementation, now had a growing influence on the concept of organic farming. Second, organic movement actors had to decide whether to influence the policy process that regulates organic farming and directs state support to organic farmers. As Moschitz and Stolze (2007) have shown, organic farming movement organizations have now become actors in organic farming policy networks all over Europe.

Such an institutionalization of organic farming has been widely debated within both the organic movement and the academic community interested in the organic sector (see e.g. Buck et al. 1997; Tovey 1997; Guthman 1998; Goodman 1999; Guthman 2000; Lockie et al. 2000; Campbell and Liepins 2001; Hall and Mogyorody 2001; Kaltoft 2001; Michelsen 2001b, a; Guthman 2004; Tomlinson 2008)1. Most authors express the concern that, in the

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1 Lockie and Halpin (2005) have summarized this debate about what they call the ‘conventionalization thesis’ and have singled out five aspects discussed by the different authors. First, conventionalization is understood as a concentration process of organic production and processing leading to fewer larger organic producers and market intermediaries. This may lead to decreasing price premiums, thus affecting smaller players in the organic industry (from producers to sellers). Second, state regulations encourage the process by which an ecologically and politically innovative movement becomes transformed into merely a sub-sector of agricultural policy. Existing in close contact with conventional paradigms and agencies, the movement might be de-radicalized.
The institutionalization debate about organic farming has so far been debated largely at a national level and has focussed on the question of whether and to what extent such a process has actually taken place. This has led to interesting insights in the dynamics of different national movements, but the findings are of limited value for an overall understanding of the situation of the organic movement at international level. This shortcoming is addressed by this article, which takes advantage of a comparative study of eleven European organic farming policy networks.

4.3 A model for strategies of action

Stevenson and Greenberg (2000) built a dynamic model that explains the actions and strategies of actors embedded in a policy network, taking into account their network position, political opportunity structure, and possible opposition. They set this model against a static view originating from resource mobilization theory, which consider networks as constraining for all but the central actors and deny actors any capacity for adapting to (changing) network contexts. In contrast to this, their model is based on a social movement perspective and uses

Third, the erosion of standards enables more and more corporate farmers and processors to enter the organic industry who are more interested in market access than in the original values and ideologies of the movement. Linked to this aspect is the increasing substitution of allowable for proscribed inputs. Finally, in Lockie and Halpin’s view, the conventionalization debate is characterized by a bifurcation between a ‘conventionalized’ organic sector, which is capital intensive, highly specialized, vertically integrated and export oriented, and a ‘residual artisanal’ organic sector working at a smaller scale, which is more diversified and oriented towards local markets.
resource mobilization theory to explain how both central and peripheral actors can engage in strategies to accomplish their goals.

Stevenson and Greenberg (2000) claim that the context determines whether networks enable or constrain the actions of actors. For them, the political opportunity structure – in other words, political and institutional resources – signifies the openness of the public for change, the existence of supporting groups and elites, the shifts in political alignments and alliances, formal access to the political system and splits among the elite. Opposition in the network can be provoked through conflicting elites and through alliances within and between organizations that vary by issue. Additionally, in a network where not all actors share the same opinion, brokerage activities may provoke opposition from counter movements.

In linking structure and action, the Stevenson and Greenberg model outlines three basic strategies for policy actors regarding i) the location of actors in the network, ii) the negative or positive political opportunity structure and iii) whether or not there is opposition in the network. A first strategy is not to use the network resources but to seek direct contact to decision makers. Secondly, actors can use brokers to negotiate with opponents or to mobilize others who are sympathetic with their political agenda. Lastly, actors can form coalitions to activate others in the network. All these strategies involve different efforts or costs, whereby ‘costs’ comprise both material and immaterial costs, such as the risk of losing influence. On the one hand, actors need to contact relevant decision makers; on the other, when brokers are used or coalitions are built, an actor (partly) loses control over the agenda. From a rational choice perspective, actors will prefer a low-cost strategy wherever possible. Central actors are therefore in an advantageous position, as they can more easily engage in direct contacts with decision makers given their high number of relations. Peripheral actors are more likely to need brokers or to form coalitions; hence, influencing politics is possible for them, but at a higher cost than for central actors. Table 4-1 below summarizes the Stevenson and Greenberg model.

In the remaining part of this article I will adapt Stevenson and Greenberg’s model to conceptualize the effects of the potential political strategies to be used by organic movement actors embedded in organic farming policy networks. I will apply empirical data from a comparative analysis of eleven European organic farming policy networks to illustrate this concept of strategies and consequences for the organic movement.
4.4 Conceptualising strategies of organic farming policy network actors and their consequences

Stevenson and Greenberg’s model proved its usefulness in explaining why actors in a network chose certain political strategies at a particular point in time or when a particular political question was at stake. However, it does not take account of the fact that occupying a central network position entails prior investments from the actors. Relationships have to be established with the relevant policy actors, and these links have to be maintained over a considerable period, otherwise actors will not be able to activate their established contacts for a particular political strategy. Accordingly, we need to broaden their argument and include the cost and effort needed to occupy different positions in a policy network. From a resource mobilization perspective, actors need to invest resources in order to initiate and maintain network links with other actors. From a cultural social movement perspective, the more endurable links actors establish, the more they become integrated into the political system and have to adapt to the predominant culture of such a process (Williams 2004), thereby risking weakening their original culture.

Taking account of both the costs for taking action (as presented earlier) and the costs for building up networks, we can conclude that costs and risks for actors increase when they take a central position in the policy network and / or when they need to include third parties in their political strategies. These considerations show the ambiguous situation in which central policy network actors find themselves: on the one hand they are privileged, because they have
direct access to decision makers, while on the other, they have to invest resources to take up and hold onto their central position, and they might need to agree to compromises in relation to their original culture and identity. Peripheral actors, by contrast, do not need resources to establish and maintain network relations, and because they are not as strongly integrated in the policy process, they do not risk giving up their own culture in order to adapt to the culture of the policy process. The challenge for these actors, however, lies in their dependency on third parties, such as brokers or coalition partners. They have to invest resources in finding such partners, and as a consequence, risk to lose control over the agenda.

The choice of strategy will not only depend on the political opportunity, and the network position, but organic actors who participate in the policy networks are connected to each other through their common participation in the organic farming movement. As discussed earlier, the culture of such a social movement includes, on the one hand, values influencing the actions taken by organizations, which are part of this movement. On the other hand, it involves ‘interpretive tools’ – habits, skills, and styles that movement participants use to construct their strategies of action (Swidler 1986). Therefore, the scope of the above-presented model has to be broadened. Instead of looking at possible strategies of one actor in isolation, all organic movement actors in the policy network have to be considered.

As the interest of this paper is in particular on the consequence of political action for the organic movement, I furthermore expand the model by this dimension. As stated above, organic farming policy actors are part of the organic movement; accordingly, the consequences of the political strategies chosen will affect not only the policy network actors but the whole movement in which they are embedded. Finally, I simplify the model for the case of organic farming by assuming opposition in all policy networks.

Table 4-2 shows i) the potential strategies of organic farming policy actors, ii) the consequences for the representation of the organic movement in politics (pictured bold) and iii) the consequences for movement actors who occupy the respective position with regard to the four different types of costs and risks outlined above. When reading Table 4-2 it should be borne in mind that the movement can include different actors occupying different positions in this Table.
### Table 4-2 Consequences of actors’ strategies for the representation of a movement in politics and the costs for movement actors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location in the policy network</th>
<th>Favourable</th>
<th>Unfavourable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Strategy: direct contact</td>
<td>Strategy: coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong representation of the movement in politics</td>
<td>Unstable representation of the movement in politics (strongly depends on political opportunity structure)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences for movement actors:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Control over agenda</td>
<td>• Loss of control over agenda</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Few resources needed to approach decision makers, initiate action</td>
<td>• Resources needed to approach decision makers, initiate action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Medium-range costs for maintaining position in the policy network</td>
<td>• High costs entailed in maintaining position in the policy network</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Actor need not be too adapted to the policy process or might be largely adapted: ambivalent situation</td>
<td>• Actor needs to adapt to the policy process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Source:** own representation

The strategies outlined should be seen as potential strategies; further research would be needed to explore the actual strategies the organic movement actors have chosen. Nevertheless, empirical data from a comparative analysis of eleven European organic farming policy networks can be used to illustrate the concept of actors’ strategies and their consequences.

The analysis was carried out in the course of the European research project EU-CEE-OFP during winter 2003/04. Between 13 and 26 interviews with actors involved in organic farming policy were conducted in each study country (Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, and Switzerland). A combination of the
positional and the reputational approach was used to identify the most important policy actors, and a snowballing procedure ensured that all relevant actors were taken into account. The interviewees were asked about their contacts to other actors with regard to organic farming policy in their country, and additional information was collected about the situation of organic farming in the countries. The results of a quantitative network analyses were discussed with national experts to ensure correct interpretation of the results. These networks are not only composed of organic movement organizations but also contain organizations and state actors who may contest the movement’s goals. Hence, organic movement actors are competing with other network actors for political influence (Moschitz and Stolze 2007).

Table 2 shows that the most powerful representation of a social movement in politics at the lowest cost is achieved when movement actors take a central position in the policy network in a favourable political environment. Actors in this situation are likely to choose a direct contact strategy, thus keeping control of the agenda and limiting the resources they invest for initiating action. In such a situation, the central network position can be maintained without too much effort, as the actors are widely acknowledged and need not struggle continuously for acceptance in politics. One could even suggest that, in a highly favourable political environment, the policy at stake may be accepted to such an extent that actors need not adjust their own culture to the predominant culture of the policy process in order to be heard. However, the central position of an actor could also be due to the almost complete adaptation of the actor to the policy process, so that the overall assessment of a central network location remains ambivalent.

The organic farming movements in the Czech Republic, Switzerland and Germany have policy network actors in this position. In both the Czech Republic and Switzerland, the main organic movement organization is centrally located in the network, and in the Czech Republic one additional (minor) organic movement organization is involved in the periphery of the policy network. As a consequence, the organic movement in these countries is fairly strongly represented in politics and the central movement organizations can limit their costs when influencing policy. The situation in Germany is slightly more complex. The agricultural ministry and two organic movement organizations – of which one is the umbrella organization of the German organic sector and the other one of its largest member organizations – occupy central positions in the German organic farming policy network. According to the model, they would be acting rationally if they had direct contact to the agricultural ministry. However, contrary to the suggestion in the model, the two central actors
might need to make some effort to stay in this position, because they will continuously need to negotiate who represents the organic movement in the policy-making process. Furthermore, in the German organic farming policy network there are six peripheral organic actors that would need to pay high costs if they were concerned to exert a strong influence on the policy process. Equally, such peripheral actors are freer from network obligations and could therefore play an important role in the organic movement outside the politics of influence.

No example could be found for a situation in which the political opportunity structure is favourable and no organic movement organization manages to take a central position in the policy network. Indeed, such a situation seems to be fairly unlikely in a democracy where pressure groups representing various societal interests participate in the public policy-making process.

One example in which the representation of the organic movement in politics is fairly difficult is Austria. Here, the situation of the organic movement in the policy process is complicated by the fact that, at the time of the survey, there were three organic movement organizations seeking to represent the organic movement, of which only one was in the centre of the policy network. The agricultural ministry occupied a central position and determined organic farming policy in the country in a way that was not always in accordance with the movement’s preferences, thus creating a rather unfavourable political opportunity structure. Actors who want to influence the policy process in such a situation therefore need to invest considerable resources in adapting to the policy process and engaging in coalitions with others. Both could be observed in Austria, where the three most important organic movement organizations merged to become a single umbrella organization, under pressure from a government initiative. So far, they remain concerned about losing the power to set the political agenda for organic farming, and fear being co-opted by general agricultural politics (Groier and Schermer 2005).

The weakest mode of representation for the movement in politics is given in a situation where social movement actors remain peripheral in the policy network while the political environment is, if anything, hostile to their issue. Although social movement actors in such a situation retain a considerable degree of freedom in terms of developing the movement’s identity, their political impact is limited. At the time of the survey, such a situation could be observed in Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia where organic movement actors do not play an important role in the organic farming policy networks and established agricultural policy is fairly uninterested in this policy issue (Moschitz and Stolze 2007). When actors want
to influence the political process in these countries, they need to invest considerable resources to overcome the shortcomings of their starting position.

### 4.5 The consequences of political action for the organic movement - reconsidering its triple logic

The presented concept of actors’ political strategies shows that the representation of a social movement in politics depends to a large extent on the political opportunity structure. But opportunities need to be perceived as such and the choices made will feed back on the movement's culture (McAdam 1994). Taking up the argument outlined earlier, the organic movement's culture is shaped by a triple logic. Thus, in the following, I will discuss the consequences of political action for the movement's three politics of influence, identity, and economics.

Since the beginning of the engagement of state politics with organic farming, organic movement organizations have increasingly focused on pursuing a politics of influence, targeting both polity and policy. On the one hand, they initiated the political recognition of organic farming and worked towards achieving legal protection for organic produce. On the other, the growing involvement of state politics in organic farming demanded a response from the movement and encouraged its representatives to engage in policy making. At the beginning, this focus on political influence may not have been in conflict with the politics of identity, as identity emerges from processes of both self-identification and external recognition. Della Porta and Diani (2006) argue that a movement’s identity is constructed through the aspiration to differentiate oneself from the rest of the world while at the same time seeking recognition. Thus, the strong adversarial stance to established mainstream agricultural policy into which organic farming has been drawn may have contributed to creating the organic movement’s identity. However, the more recognized a social movement actor becomes, the more difficult it becomes to shape an identity by distancing oneself from the political adversary. All attempts to lodge a claim of any sort in the public sphere contain a degree of accommodation to that ‘publicness’ (Williams 2004).

A similar argument can be made in relation to the politics of economics. Economic viability is a prerequisite for the organic farming movement to continue to exist at all. However, a higher integration into conventional market structures may cause (and has caused) tensions in the
movement, as actors become accommodated in this particular publicness, to use Williams’s term (2004).

According to Della Porta and Diani (2006), growing external recognition by both politics and the market should be accompanied by a process of self-identification. In particular, when a movement seeks to change values and norms in civil society and to influence lifestyles and consumers, as the organic movement does, a politics of identity is needed which may lead to a process of moral learning in society (Cohen 1996). Gamson (1991) stresses that the construction of a collective identity is indispensable for a movement’s persistence over time. Accordingly, the question is how to balance the three politics of influence, economics and identity in the organic movement. One way forward is to maintain a diversity of organizations and roles within a movement, and to share the multiple tasks between them. Melucci (1996) suggests that a diversification of a movement’s image can be projected onto various groups and potential supporters, thus creating a broader audience for movement activity. Labour can also be divided between movement ‘leaders’ and ‘members’ (Melucci 1996), where leaders act as representatives of the movement in the public sphere. Members, by contrast, may play an important role in innovation, given that they are free to behave in a non-conformist way. Diani (2003) also points to two influential roles in a social movement network, with ‘leaders’ who, similarly to Melucci’s concept, act as movement representatives in the public sphere, and ‘brokers’ who fulfil an important task in creating cohesion within the movement by mediating between competing subgroups.

## 4.6 Conclusion

This paper began by positing a certain degree of institutionalization of organic farming movements all over Europe. The effects of institutionalization may be manifested, on the one hand, in an increased political representation of the organic movement; on the other, however, it involves the risk of losing control over the political agenda and/or the movement’s identity. A cross-country comparison has shown that the potential effects of institutionalization on a movement’s politics of influence and identity vary across Europe. The diversity of the situation of organic movement(s) in Europe suggests that there is not one way or a linear ‘path of development’ (Michelsen et al. 2001) for organic farming to follow. Rather, the choice of political action depends on the movement's perception of political opportunity, its culture, and available resources. The potential strategies of action outlined here together with their
possible consequences, may be seen as challenge and opportunity for the organic movement(s) in Europe.

The results indicate, first, that it is preferable for the organic movement to be represented in the political process by an actor who takes a central position in the policy network. However, this actor must be equipped with adequate resources so that political influence can be retained in times of a deteriorating structure of political opportunity. Additionally, it has to be accepted as a representative by the whole movement. That is, the organic movement’s politics of influence would need to be delegated mainly to this particular actor. Second, it is suggested that the organic movement should engage actively in a ‘politics of economics’. However, further investigation is needed regarding how best to conceive of ‘economics’ and ‘economy’ from a cultural perspective on the organic movement. Third, the organic movement should not focus exclusively on achieving a forceful representation in politics and markets. Its collective identity needs to become visible in civil society in a more explicit way than merely through the regulations manifested in organically certified products.

As Michelsen (2001a) has argued, organic regulations and standards have more and more been taken over by the state, and he points out that public agencies are not interested in developing the values behind organic standards. This is the task of the organic movement, and Michelsen argues for cooperation between those who “govern the production standards” and those who are “users of the system” (p.81).

An analogous conclusion can be drawn from a social movement perspective. For the multiple tasks, both actors of the ‘leader’ and the ‘member’ type are needed in order to represent the whole movement in the public sphere, and to resist a complete 'colonization of the lifeworld' (Habermas 1981) of organics by the state. This might not always be an easy way forward. There will always be tensions between the logics of influence, economics and identity, between recognition of the organic movement in civil and political society, its involvement in the market and its self-definition. Cohen (1996) concludes that this conflict can be defused by achieving a higher level of self-reflection, rooted in dialogue within the movement; brokers can play a crucial role here. Hence, a space needs to be opened up within the movement for continuous innovation and the re-construction of a collective identity. When new ideas are openly expressed and discussed among the diverse members of the organic movement, a basis can be formed for keeping the movement alive and adaptable to a changing environment. The current debates on values and ideologies within the organic movement are an important step for moving on.
4.7 References


4 Organic Movement


5 SYNTHESIS AND OUTLOOK

In the final chapter, I use the analytical framework as it has been presented in the introduction to bring together the main findings from the papers assembled in this thesis, and put them in the context of the initial research questions. These research questions were first, how organic farming policies in Europe are shaped and second, what effects the increasing political intervention has on the organic movement. To answer these questions, a comparative analysis of eleven organic farming policy networks in Europe was conducted.

Thereby, the papers assembled in this thesis all consider one particular aspect of the interrelations between context, actors, networks and outcome in organic farming policy making. Whereas within the groups of old or new member states of the EU, the political and socio-economic context of organic farming policy is relatively similar, it differs widely between these groups. One could therefore expect considerable differences in the structure of organic farming policy making between these two country groups. However, research has shown variation not only between the two groups of countries, but between all the eleven countries surveyed. In consequence, the different implementation of common European policies can only be understood by taking account of national policy processes determined by the interrelations between context, actors and networks.

The first paper focussed on how context and actors influence organic farming policy networks. It showed that the socio-economic and the political context in a country only had an effect on the ‘quantitative’ network characteristics, namely the size and density of networks. The power distribution between interest groups and the government, by contrast, is much better explained by the strength and the dominant regime of the state, as well as by the resources and strategies of the interest groups involved.

Based on a comparison between the Czech Republic and Poland, the findings from the second paper, in turn, suggest that not the size and density, but ‘qualitative’ network characteristics are responsible for differences in policy output. The relationship between the interest groups and the government, the degree to which opinions in the network are stated clearly and a constructive atmosphere of conflict is established, as well as the resources and strategies of network actors contribute to explaining the different organic farming policies in Poland and the Czech Republic. In these cases, no effect of the network size and density could be found, but it was the active involvement of organic interest groups in the policy process that led to a more elaborate organic farming policy in the Czech Republic than in Poland. Taking into
consideration the findings from the first paper as summarised above, we can conclude that the political and socio-economic environment have only a limited impact on organic farming policies. They may explain size and density of a policy network, but these network characteristics were not found to influence the performance of policy importantly. Much more important are the actions of network actors, in particular the dominant regime of the state or the strategies and resources of the involved interest groups.

The focus of the third paper is on the consequences of such a political involvement of organic farming interest groups. Thereby, these interest groups are conceived of as part of a social movement. This organic movement is presented as a social movement with a triple task: First, it follows a politics of influence aiming at the political sphere, second, it engages in a politics of identity in the civil society sphere, and third, the organic movement pursues a politics of economics, targeting the markets in which organic produce is traded. The question therefore is what an emphasis on one of the tasks, in this case, on the politics of influence, means for the other two. On the one hand, political involvement may lead to the recognition of an organic farming organization, and thus, of (part of) the organic movement in politics, and this could strengthen the movement’s identity. On the other hand, focussing too strongly on political activities could lead to absorption of an organic interest group in the policy network, loosing contact to the rest of the movement. On the basis of these considerations, different strategies for organic movement actors and the consequences for the movement as a whole are conceptualized, thereby considering the position of actors in the policy network and the political opportunity structure. The challenge is how to balance the three politics of influence, identity and economics in the organic movement. Apparent tensions between these logics which are followed by different movement actors need self-reflection within the movement. Different movement actors could share the tasks between them while maintaining a constructive debate with each other as a basis for continuous innovation and the re-construction of a collective identity of the organic movement.

Summarizing the main findings of the papers compiled in this thesis, we notice the important role of agency in the policy-making process. In particular, the first two papers (chapter 2 and chapter 3) have shown the prominent role of policy actors, be it representatives from the state or interest groups. The resources of policy actors shape the structure of networks, in particular the power distribution between the state and interest groups, and when these actors are willing to engage in the policy-making process they can influence policy output. Nevertheless, this does not mean that agency is per se more important than structure in the policy process.
5 Synthesis and Outlook

Actors have to interpret the network structures in which they are embedded and translate their interpretation into political action. For the cases discussed in this work it can be concluded that a central position of organic farming interest groups does not automatically lead to a satisfying representation of organic interests in the networks. Only when organic interest groups become aware of their central position and can activate their resources to engage in the political process, they can successfully introduce their ideas into the network.

The analytical lens of the policy network approach allows determining different starting points for organic sector organizations to participate in organic farming policy-making process throughout European countries. The variety of organic farming policy networks analysed allows for some interesting insights into the different elements which play a role in organic farming policy making. Yet, we have to take into account that the network analysis approach gives us a picture of the situation at one particular point in time in a particular country and, therefore, the conclusions drawn should not be seen as universal in time and/or place. Networks are not static, but change over time, according to phases in the policy cycle, changes in the political environment, and in the strategies of actors. However, network analysis admittedly is a static tool, and the networks analysed in this thesis are the result of a survey carried out in late 2003 / early 2004. In consequence, the networks analysed have to be interpreted as a potential for political actions of actors, but they do not necessarily tell us anything about whether this potential is or has been used by the network actors.

The question therefore is how network structures can be (and have been) activated by network actors. In a similar context, analysing the institutional development of organic farming, Michelsen et al. (2001) stressed the need for a certain level of conflict between organic sector organizations and state representatives to promote organic farming. Moschitz et al. (2004) have concluded in their comparison of the institutional development of the organic sector in eleven European countries that in fact an issue of conflict is required to maintain a constructive debate among the relevant policy actors. Hence, the question is how a particular policy content (the issue of conflict) is introduced into the political debate through the structures of the policy network, to which policy results such a debate leads, and what the consequences of the debate are.

To approach the issue of actors’ strategies and their consequences I refer to the example of the current political developments in the Austrian organic sector. At the time of the survey, one of the three major organic farming organizations occupied a central position in the network, yet, the political opportunity structure was fairly unfavourable, and organic farming policy was
dominated by state bodies (see chapter 4). In consequence, as suggested by the conceptual model presented in chapter 4, the central organic farming organization engaged in a coalition with the other two organic farming organizations, to the extent of founding a joint umbrella organization of organic farming, BIO AUSTRIA. However, the trigger for establishing such an umbrella organization came from the government, so that one can interpret the fusion of the three organic farming organizations into one as an adaptation to the requirements formulated by a state-driven policy process. Each of the former independent organizations has lost some of its control over the agenda to lobby for, because decisions have now to be discussed among all players in the umbrella organization, and compromises have to be reached. Up to now, these internal debates need considerable resources of the organization which might, on the other hand, lack in the policy-making process. Still, the strategy of a “total” coalition has been successful in influencing the results of the recent policy process on the new rural development programme for 2007-2013 (Stiftung Ökologie & Landbau 2007)\(^2\). Hence, the opportunities of the network structures have been used by the organic farming actor, and this affected the policy output. To judge whether the outcome of this process will change the political opportunity structure in Austria in favour of organic farming remains to be seen. Contexts do not change quickly, and a single political success does not ensure sustained policy change. However, the organic farming organization now holds a good starting position for engaging in the upcoming discussion processes, such as on genetically modified organisms (GMO), and the future development of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – two policy processes in which the new umbrella organization has stated its interest (Stiftung Ökologie & Landbau 2007).

The interaction between context and network, and network and outcome can be illustrated with the case of the development of organic farming policy in the Czech Republic. Although, within the framework of this thesis, the Czech organic farming policy network has only been analysed in late 2003 / early 2004, expert information on how the policy and the network developed in the long run was gathered in the course of the EU-CEE-OFP project (see, e.g. Moschitz et al. 2004; Hrabalova et al. 2005). In this country, the representatives of the organic

\(^2\) Although the state support for organic farming as an agri-environmental measure within the new rural development programme for 2007-2013 has been cut down, the difference to other agri-environmental measures has become greater. In consequence, the incentive to farm organically has been relatively increased (Stiftung Ökologie & Landbau 2007).
movement were successful right from the start of the organic farming policy development. They managed to gain influence in the established agricultural policy network and successfully introduced organic farming ideas. Subsequently, the responsible organic farming organization took the central position in the organic farming policy network and could continue to shape organic farming as a distinct policy field in agricultural policy. As a consequence of the continued engagement in the policy making process, organic farming was increasingly recognized in politics and this in turn strengthened the central network position of organic movement actors. Furthermore, the acceptance of organic ideas supported a policy outcome which improved the political opportunities for the actors promoting these ideas and raised their political recognition.

Yet, we must not forget that organic farming does not exist isolated from mainstream farming, but is similarly affected by policy decisions in general agricultural policy, such as the 2003 reform of the CAP in the European Union (Nieberg et al. 2007). Therefore, focusing merely on organic farming policy networks overlooks important developments of the overall situation in agricultural policy. This limited focus could also lead to overestimate the chances of proponents of organic farming to influence politics which are relevant to this alternative way of agriculture, considering that the position of organic movement organizations in general agricultural policy networks is weak (Moschitz and Stolze 2007).

The challenge that such a dominant general agricultural policy network presents for organic farming policy actors is illustrated with a debate on agricultural policy, which has recently taken place in Switzerland. In this country, the organic farming organization is positioned in the centre of the organic farming policy network. The political environment has been assessed as fairly open to organic farming (see chapter 4), and hence, one could assume that the organic farming organization is in a relatively good position to lobby for its case by directly contacting the decision-makers. However, recently, the Swiss organic farming umbrella organization could not achieve its goal to keep the full farm conversion (with a few exceptions) as a requirement for organic certification. The exceptions to full farm conversion have been enlarged from only fruit and wine production to all permanent crops (Schweizerischer Bundesrat 2007b). So how can this policy result be explained with the use of the results of the network analysis?

In fact, the policy process leading to this decision did not take place in a process of organic farming policy making, but was part of the policy process outlining the general Swiss agricultural policy for the years 2008-2011, the so-called AP 2011. Accordingly, this debate
took place in the general farming policy network, and not in the more narrowly focused organic farming policy network. Conventional farming organizations opposed the organic sector’s position and had an interest in loosening the respective regulation (Schweizerischer Bundesrat 2007a). In the general farming policy network, the organic farming organization is much less powerful than in the organic farming policy network (Moschitz and Stolze 2007). In consequence, it could not follow a successful strategy. Although their central position in the organic farming policy network confirms their high reputation in organic farming policy issues, this power could not be transferred to the general agricultural network. The predominance of a network in which the organization is not well positioned thus led to an unwished policy change.

With these examples of the situation of organic farming policy in different countries I hope to have illustrated what the network analysis perspective can contribute to understanding current policy processes relevant to organic farming. However, it is clear that the research work undertaken could not answer all the questions about the interaction between actors, context, networks, and outcomes. Moreover, it has uncovered additional questions that would be worthwhile to explore.

To address the dynamic nature of policy networks, further research would need to examine the continued processes of influence and feedback between actors, context, networks, and outcomes. Thus, it would be interesting to analyze the organic farming policy networks in the surveyed countries a second time, and compare the situations found at the different points in time. In this way, one could explore if and how the networks presented and analysed in this thesis have had an effect on the context of organic farming policy, and whether the policy outputs have changed the network structure. In particular, in the new EU member states we could expect a dynamic development of the political situation of organic farming.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to look at the actual impacts of the participation of organic movement organizations in the policy networks on the identity (or identities, respectively) of these movements as political agent, market partner and protestor for an alternative life style. Are the processes of self-reflection within the organic movement which can be currently observed in different countries enough to secure a common identity? Are the three logics of the organic movement, the logics of influence, identity and economics balanced in a satisfying way, and does such a balance lead to further evolvement of the organic movement? In bringing together policy network and social movement literature, this thesis has offered a conceptual framework to study the consequences of political intervention
of movement actors for the organic movement as a whole. This concept now needs to be further tested for its applicability in real-world processes.

Finally, a question that has been left unanswered is about the relevance of policy implementation networks in organic farming. The analyses presented here have focussed on the formation of policy, whereas a number of decisions on organic farming support, for instance, are taken at the implementation stage of the policy process. The implementation networks might look different to those of policy formation (Windhoff-Héritier 1993; Casey 2004; Greer 2005), and analysing these networks would importantly contribute to the understanding of the structure of the organic farming policy-making process. Implementation has not been part of this study for practical reasons. In particular in countries with a federal structure, implementation networks are situated at the regional level, and thus, analysing the networks of implementation in a country would entail numerous networks to be analysed. Nevertheless, if one focussed on one particular country, such an undertaking seems feasible.

The strength of the comparative approach chosen in this thesis is that it captured a number of different countries with varying organic farming policy networks. While neglecting the details in each country, the comparative approach applied has produced interesting insights in the structure and effects of the organic farming policy-making process throughout Europe. The network analysis used has helped to reduce the complexity of eleven policy networks and supported to extract the features with an explanatory power. The partly counterintuitive results led to rethink initial hypotheses about the differences between organic farming policies in the old and the new EU member states. It has been shown that we have to take a careful look at the different contexts in each country if we want to understand how organic farming policy in Europe is made, and what the strategies of organic movement actors might be to further develop the organic sector.
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