

Masters Thesis  
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***Open Policy-making: Going Beyond  
The Traditional Borders***

A communicative approach to the environmental discourse of the European Union

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*'Nothing is more dangerous than an idea when it is the only one we have'*

Emilé Chartier (quoted by Roger von Oech, 1998: p. 30)



## **Summary**

Over the years, the European continent has distributed more and more competencies to a supranational actor: the European Union. In the field of environmental legislation, the EU has had severe impact. In sharp contrast with this, there is little involvement and identification of EU citizens with the European cause. By discussing the communicative elements of European politics, the possibilities and impossibilities for an open European arena are explored. This investigation is aimed at the discourse of environmental policy-making.

In this thesis discourse is interpreted as an interaction of ideas and actors. Foucault sees this interaction as being framed by a dominant idea. Habermas on the other hand, tells us that for some cases actors will find out they have to communicate and group ideas. Both elements of discourse are represented. A communicative discourse, affiliated to the Habermasian approach, calls for open structures. And although dominant ideas may still be present, Beck tells us openness allows for an amount of 'reflexivity'. This idea will lead the discussion of the communicative elements in the EU.

Starting with the interaction of ideas in chapter 3, European thinking seems to be heavily influenced by the Judeo-Christian worldview. However, over time human species has been slowly taken from its central position within the earth's creation. Present day environmentalism is part of a wider call for post-material wealth. Multiple strands of thinking are present. Some groups think that human technology can solve environmental problems and hold that the market will display a suitable response. A second line of thinking calls for restriction of human technology and usually does so through the political realm. The third group sees both politics and technology as a cause of the environmental crisis and aims at a psychological change. The last kind of environmentalism, a communicative kind suggested by Patsy Healey, seeks to combine elements of each group to look for innovations.

As Europe acquired more and more competences in the field of environmental politics, their decision-making structures have basically determined the division of European power. The Commission drafts most European legislation, but is heavily dependent on the input of external groups. The European Parliament is more able to respond to issues of public concern, since it has been given a greater role during treaty revisions in the 80's and 90's. The Council traditionally guards the economic concerns of Member States by holding a veto, but has had more trouble to block proposals since the introduction of Qualified Majority Voting. Through a division of power between these three institutions, other actors have employed a realm of strategies to lobby them.

EUROCITIES and ICLEI display what kind of tools are useful to be successful in the field of lobbying. Firstly, one needs a staff to keep track of developments in Brussels. Personal contact is necessary as well.

Above all, one needs useful knowledge and expertise the EU does not have. And of course a group can not have too much competition with that. There has to be a specific 'niche' in the market for your kind of knowledge.

In chapter 6 it is shown that a dependency on scientific knowledge can have bad consequences for environmental decision-making as well. Besides that, a distorted picture can arise from the media. Within the political structures of the EU, 'popular' trends can be seen as well. Interpretations of the term 'subsidiarity' and the ongoing process of democratization have influenced the expansion of environmental legislation heavily. Besides depending on institutional changes, environmental politics have been revised by other factors as well. These revisions were guided by either science, the media, demands from the public, or even economic concerns. Some fields of environmental politics however, remain unchanged. Here, the old liberalist foundations of the European Union are still fiercely standing.

## ***Illustrations and Tables***

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Table 3.1.</b> Environmental worldviews              | 33 |
| <b>Figure 4.2.</b> The co-decision procedure            | 40 |
| <b>Figure 4.1.</b> The production of environmental laws | 42 |

## ***List of Abbreviations***

|         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
| BATNEEC | - | Best Available Technology without Entailing Excessive Cost |
| CAP     | - | Common Agricultural Policy                                 |
| CoR     | - | Committee of the Regions                                   |
| ECJ     | - | European Court of Justice                                  |
| EEA     | - | European Environmental Action Plan                         |
|         | - | European Environment Agency                                |
| EMAS    | - | Eco-Management and Audit Scheme                            |
| EP      | - | European Parliament  |
| ERT     | - | European Round Table of Industrialists                     |
| EU      | - | European Union   |
| FoE     | - | Friends of the Earth                                       |
| ICLEI   | - | International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives  |
| MAC     | - | Maximum Acceptable Concentration                           |
| NGO     | - | Non Governmental Organization                              |
| NSM     | - | New Social Movement  |
| QMV     | - | Qualified Majority Voting                                  |
| SEA     | - | Single European Act  |
| SME     | - | Small and Medium Enterprise                                |
| TEU     | - | Treaty of the European Union                               |
| UK      | - | United Kingdom   |
| UNEP    | - | United Nations Environmental Program                       |
| WWF     | - | World Wind Foundation                                      |



# Content

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Summary  | 5         |
| Illustrations and Tables   | 7         |
| List of abbreviations  | 8         |
| Content  | 9         |
| Preface  | 12        |
| <b>1. Outline of the problem</b>   | <b>14</b> |
| 1.1. Introduction  | 14        |
| 1.2. Decision-making in Europe   | 14        |
| 1.3. Gathering data  | 16        |
| 1.4. Investigating discourse   | 16        |
| 1.4.1. Overview of the thesis  | 16        |
| 1.4.2. Research questions  | 18        |
| 1.5. Conclusion  | 18        |
| <b>2. Theoretical framework</b>  | <b>20</b> |
| 2.1. Introduction  | 20        |
| 2.2. The concept discourse in this thesis  | 20        |
| 2.2.1. The transformation of the discourse approach                                    | 20        |
| 2.2.2. The approach to discourse in this thesis  | 22        |
| 2.2.3. Actors and policies of the European Union: defining the boundaries of discourse | 23        |
| 2.3. The communicative approach  | 24        |
| 2.3.1. The origin of the communicative approach  | 24        |
| 2.3.2. The use of a communicative approach in decision-making                          | 25        |
| 2.3.3. The communicative approach within discourse analysis                            | 26        |
| 2.4. Conclusion  | 27        |
| <b>3. Environmental concepts and political action</b>                                  | <b>29</b> |
| 3.1. Introduction  | 29        |
| 3.2. A changing relationship between mankind and the environment                       | 29        |
| 3.2.1. Ancient or pre-historic environmentalism  | 29        |
| 3.2.2. Christianity and belief in progress   | 30        |
| 3.2.3. Industrial society and modern environmentalism                                  | 31        |
| 3.3. Environmental views in Europe: a discourse of plurality                           | 33        |
| 3.3.1. Environmental exploitation  | 33        |
| 3.3.2. Ecological Modernization  | 34        |
| 3.3.3. Ecocentric environmentalism   | 35        |
| 3.3.4. Communicative environmentalism  | 36        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 3.4. Conclusion  | 37        |
| <b>4. Who decides on EU-politics?</b>  | <b>39</b> |
| 4.1. Introduction  | 39        |
| 4.2. Political organisation of the EU  | 39        |
| 4.2.1. History of the EU: acquiring competencies                                 | 39        |
| 4.2.2. Decision-making in the EU and the flexibility of regulation               | 43        |
| 4.3. Theories of integration: a framework for investigating political power      | 44        |
| 4.3.1. Intergovernmentalism  | 45        |
| 4.3.2. Functionalism (the Monnet-method)   | 45        |
| 4.3.3. Interest representation   | 46        |
| 4.4. European actors in decision-making  | 46        |
| 4.4.1. EU-institutions   | 46        |
| 4.4.2. Member States   | 48        |
| 4.4.3. Civil Society Interest  | 49        |
| 4.5. Conclusion  | 50        |
| <b>5. Case Study: representing local interest trough EUROCIITIES and ICLEI</b>   | <b>52</b> |
| 5.1. Introduction  | 52        |
| 5.2. EUROCIITIES   | 52        |
| 5.2.1. Objectives of EUROCIITIES   | 52        |
| 5.2.2. Organization of activities  | 53        |
| 5.2.3. Profile   | 54        |
| 5.3. ICLEI   | 54        |
| 5.3.1. Objectives of ICLEI   | 55        |
| 5.3.2. Organization of activities  | 55        |
| 5.3.3. Profile   | 56        |
| 5.4. Gaining access to EU decision-making  | 57        |
| 5.5. Conclusion  | 58        |
| <b>6. Connecting the dots: collaborating on environmental politics in the EU</b> | <b>59</b> |
| 6.1. Introduction  | 59        |
| 6.2. The rise of sub-politics in the environmental discourse                     | 59        |
| 6.2.1. Environmental decision-making with science                                | 60        |
| 6.2.2. Agenda-setting by the media   | 60        |
| 6.3. Discursive struggles in the EU: subsidiarity & democratic deficit           | 61        |
| 6.3.1. Subsidiarity  | 62        |
| 6.3.2. ‘Democratic deficit’  | 63        |
| 6.4. Reflexivity and the communicative approach in EU’s environmental discourse  | 64        |
| 6.4.1. Institutional setting and the environmental discourses                    | 65        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 6.4.2. Revising environmental politics                       | 66        |
| 6.4.3. Living up to the communicative ideal                  | 68        |
| 6.4.4. Ideological limits to the communicative ideal         | 69        |
| 6.5. Conclusion  | 69        |
| <b>7. Conclusion</b>   | <b>71</b> |
| 7.1. Introduction  | 71        |
| 7.2. Answering research questions                            | 71        |
| 7.3. Policy implications and appeal for open decision-making | 74        |
| 7.4. Related discussions and further research                | 75        |
| 7.5. Epilogue  | 75        |
| Bibliography   | 77        |

## **Preface**

Living more than four years of a student's life now, it is about time to find out what kind of skills and concepts have lingered and can sustain their value. A good way to determine if you have learned something, a teacher once told me, comes of attempting to explain the acquired concepts to another. Thus, the writing before you is meant to be an application of the themes and skills that were brought to me over the last four years. However, rather than representing a balanced overview of knowledge from these four years, it would be fair to say that the majority of concepts used in this thesis have only caught my full attention during the time I have been enrolled in a masters degree in Environmental & Infrastructure Planning.

An affinity with environmental topics has always been present within me, and was more or less linked to my choice of Technische Planologie as an undergraduate degree. This degree has been translated in many ways, but Land-Use Planning with a focus on environment, infrastructure and water (the 'technical' aspects of land use) would describe it best. While it directly focuses on the (re)shaping of *physical space*, many other disciplines, like politics, cross its sphere. My focus on European politics stems from a discrepancy I began to notice in class between European decision-making and the low involvement of laymen or 'citizens' in this level of decision-making.

The subject of environmental politics is rather common within Environmental & Infrastructure Planning, and by increasing its competencies in this field, the EU attracts more and more interest as a policy-making arena. Furthermore, the rise of the communicative approach in the field of planning shows a growing interest for planning subjects (actors) and their differing attitudes towards planning objects. As will be shown later in this thesis it is my suspicion that making successful policy-decisions forces policymakers to account more and more for these varying opinions (and to an increasing degree the actors that have indirect relations to the object of planning).

One step further than accounting for opinions of actors lies in determining where positions come from, how they influence each other and the decision-making 'game' as whole. The interest for a 'sociology of decision-making' was born during the socially and philosophically oriented courses in and also outside the Faculty of Spatial Sciences. The study of different 'planning cultures' during the course International Planning Practice, is an example of the notion that decision-making has deeper cultural and historical roots (see Sanyal, 2005).

More and more I am convinced that Environmental & Infrastructure Planning can gain much from an increasing insight into these fundamental connections. Especially during the draft of this thesis, I was overwhelmed by the embeddedness of environmental problems in our socio-economic systems and our mental frameworks. For this very reason the environment cannot be studied from a narrow technical perspective. To dissect some of the rhetoric and politics surrounding the European policy arena is what this thesis wants to achieve. Perhaps the shift to more sociologically oriented analysis suggests that I should study sociology someday!

By combining a somewhat uncomfortable feeling that European decision-making is a technocratic exercise, and duly of interest to the cultural frameworks of environmentalism, the subject of this thesis was conceived. The inclusion of a communicative approach on this subject is a more normative assessment of the policy-making process of the EU. While I have not yet decided if the communicative approach should be implemented in every field and arena of policy-making, it is merely a general question if these ideas are present within the European system or if they work effectively.

Before beginning the actual text, I must apologize for my limited use of English language. Because most of my life is lived in English nowadays, I thought that writing in it would make an excellent exercise. And it did. When I began formulating the text it became apparent to me that it is not always easy to provide sentences and complex thoughts with the same sophistication as you may in your own language. A lack of skill in the English language is reflected in my restricted use of synonyms. Writing this thesis has nevertheless been a very rewarding experience, especially when one considers that opportunities for planning students may go beyond our homeland.

Finally, I would like to direct a few words of thanks. First of all I would like to thank my supervisor, Christian Zuidema, who provided me with very useful reflection. Very valuable was his idea to utilize interviews in order to counter the theoretical content of this thesis. Both Alfons Finkers and Cristina Garzillo, the interviewees, were very helpful in providing insight to the EU-mechanisms and the role of their organizations EURO CITIES and ICLEI. Last but not least, I want to thank my parents, Wybren en Alie Stellingwerf, for providing the bed on which dreamers like me can sleep.

Happy reading!

Evert Stellingwerf, January 2008

# 1. Outline of the problem

## 1.1. Introduction

In this chapter the problem, for more constructive thinkers, the challenge that underlies this thesis and the way to address this phenomenon, is outlined. An outline of the matters at stake will begin in part 1.2. Subsequently, part 1.3. shortly eludes to the literature used for this thesis. In part 1.4 the composition of this thesis is explained and the research questions are clarified. 1.5 will recapitulate all these topics shortly.

## 1.2. Decision-making in Europe

From the stemming of the agreement on the Treaty of Rome in 1957 the birth of a new political 'animal' became a reality in Europe. Originally a cooperation between six countries was established to achieve economic stability and peace. Over time however, this European actor not only transformed its name, institutions, and territorial size a number of times, but it also acquired a vast amount of competencies and political powers. Thus it became a kind of supranational actor, the likes of which the world had never seen before.

Parallel to the expansion of decision-making on a European level is the impact on the legal frameworks of its Member States and subordinate actors. One of the areas in which this mechanism has profound impacts is within environmental policy-making. The book *Environmental Policy in the European Union* (Jordan et al., 2002) indicates the ways in which European decision-making has made an impact: *'The European Union (EU) dominates the way in which environmental policy is thought about, developed and implemented throughout Western Europe. The policies of the Member States and the EU are now so deeply intertwined as to be politically and legally inseparable.'*

A further illustration of this development is the share of environmental regulations that originate in 'Brussels'. According to Ravesteyn et al. (2004) these run as high as 80% in the Netherlands. The same authors stress, for example, the far reaching effect of the Bird Directive and Habitats Directive for the spatial development of this country. Other authors indicate the implications that an EU Water Framework Directive will have for local governments in the UK (Howe & White, 2002)

Besides implications for their own continent, the policies of the EU have global importance. The EU is setting an example for many countries. In the same thought as quoted previously, Jordan et al. testifies: *'...with some of the most progressive environmental policies of any international organization, the EU also serves as an influential guide and benchmark for policy development elsewhere in the world.'* Indeed, the US is looking towards Europe to import good examples of environmental policy and spatial planning (see for instance Beatley, 1994) Besides that, the EU, as a powerful supranational actor has an important role in shaping global governance. By greening its transactions with the third world and restoring some of the environmental malpractices exported since the middle ages, much can be accomplished (Ponting, 1993: chapter 10).

Sharply contrasting with these vast policy implications is the low involvement of the final recipients of policies: the citizens. Most European citizens have no clear idea what the EU contributes to their daily life (CEC, 2001). All of this is reflected in a meager turnout at elections for the European Parliament (EP). Questions about the legitimacy of European policy then rise. Are citizens represented adequately by the European Parliament (EP), Is the EU capable of accounting for their diversity, and can Member States safeguard their national interest? Is there enough opportunity to scrutinize and limit European power or is it open-minded enough to represent the diversity of its regions?

This situation gets more alarming when one keeps in mind the expanded role the public has to play in environmental degradation. Most European families now own a car, go on holidays every year and make other demands on the industrial system by a consumerist lifestyle (see also CEC, 1999: p.16 and p.49). By voting with their wallet, citizens are more and more the actors who make actual decisions about the industrial system (Beck, 1992). So, with expanding 'decision-making power' at the bottom, successful implementation of regulations from Brussels becomes more and more dependent on the commitment of local actors.

To account for the diverse cultural, socio-economic and physical contexts in which legislation has to be implemented, decision-makers need knowledge-input from local actors. So, besides acknowledging the role of citizens at the lowest level, the EU has to cooperate with the national, regional and local governments that implement the EU-regulations at different levels. While delivering valuable information for decisions-making, actors may even serve the EU as policy entrepreneurs, supplying ideas for regulatory measures itself (see for instance Liefferink & Andersen, 2002)

Besides a European platform that exchanges knowledge between the actors, one could wonder if the public sphere of Europe is accountable enough. Are citizens, considering their low turnout at elections, adequately represented by the European Parliament (EP)? Can Member States safeguard their national interest, or is the EU able to push through regulation that does not account for this diversity? And if the EU is not able to consider these differences, is there enough opportunity to scrutinize and limit European power?

The aim of this thesis is to find out how environmental policy in the EU is responding to the challenges outlined in the previous paragraphs. In order to make this inquiry, the concept discourse is introduced in chapter 2 and tailored for this thesis. Besides that, the communicative approach, introduced in the same chapter, is proposed as a possible answer to the perceived problem. This school of thought suggests that the demands of legitimacy and knowledge-exchange can be resolved by diversifying and 'opening up' the discourse of policy-making. Besides investigating how the present discourse meets the principles of the communicative approach, wider application of this approach is considered in the last two chapters.

To have a firm grasp of what happens within this system and why, it is necessary to investigate how the policy-making system navigates itself, by which rules and structures, and to determine which ideas and mechanisms have originally brought them about. This is precisely what is fulfilled by utilizing a discourse approach. Part of what is undertaken in this thesis is to understand where European ideas about the

environment are rooted, in what kind of policy-making styles they have resulted, and how, interacting with the institutional setup of the EU, these ideas guide the environmental policy-making game in the EU.

At first such an investigation might seem only of scholarly interest. However, this thesis will demonstrate that reflection on fundamental ideas produces a richer and more informed policy-making process. These characteristics will prove to be very vital attributes for a political actor that has to keep reinventing itself to maintain legitimacy in European policy-making.

### **1.3. Gathering data**

Mapping out a discourse of environmental politics is primarily about working with abstract ideas and metaphors. A lot of analysis in this thesis will therefore involve a more qualitative treatment of data. Firstly, an array of connecting literature is considered, but further, to balance theory, interviews are conducted in order to gain real discourse and hands on knowledge. Interviews with representatives of EURO CITIES and ICLEI will feature in chapter 5.

A direct source of literature about the European discourse exists in policy statements from the EU-actors themselves. From these documents the use of models, rhetoric, and ideas can be retracted. Yet, besides this primary literature, more reflexive and independent writing is considered. With these ideas discourse is put into perspective and it possible to speculate about the kind of Europe that exists behind the promises of politicians and rhetoric of bureaucrats.

This second group of literature roughly comprises two categories. On the one hand there is literature regarding the institutional and procedural setup of European Environmental Politics. In this category Jordan et al. (2002), Greenwood (2003) and Bomberg (1998) proved very valuable. The other category is made from examinations of sociological, cultural, psychological and even linguistic frameworks of environmental politics. These comprise most importantly work of Yearley (1992), Ulrich Beck (1992), Du Nann Winter & Koger (2004) and Harré et al. (1999)

### **1.4. Investigating the discourse**

In this section an outline of the thesis is given. Also, the questions that are at the core of this thesis are summed up in part 1.4.2. These questions are revisited at the end of this thesis, in chapter 7.

#### *1.4.1. Overview of the thesis*

While introducing this thesis, ambiguous concepts have presented themselves. Chapter 2 therefore is devoted to exploring and clarifying some of the more complex notions and undefined concepts. The first thing to be dissected is the concept of discourse. In the end, a discourse method will simply focus on the interaction between actors and ideas. As will be explained, the approach considers intersubjective perception and the distribution of power to be the crucial elements of discourse. Both of these dimensions will be discussed in chapters 3 and 4.



Because discourse takes place between a specific range of actors, description of it only acquires meaning when the involved actors are illuminated. Description of the policy-making arena will therefore follow in part 2.2.3. The following part, 2.2.4. explains how the relevant discourse in this thesis is positioned in comparison with other discourses. The final paragraph of chapter 2 relays the ideas behind the communicative approach and its relation to the discourse approach. The pre-conditions for communicative decision-making will reappear in chapter 6, when they are applied to the dimensions of discourse of the preceding chapters.

Chapter 3 begins by outlining perceptions of the environment which have dominated European thought through the ages, as well as those that do contemporarily. Because the roots of environmental discourse go deeper than the history of the EU, investigation is put in a larger socio-cultural and temporal framework. In order to highlight the diversity of environmental discourse, an attempt is made to distinguish the main dialects of 'Greenspeak' and, related to this, the political action proposed by these groups. This characterization will be constructed from the typology of Healey (2006) and the dimensions that Wissenburg (1996) links to environmentalism. The step taken in this chapter comprises the first dimension of the EU's environmental discourse: the perceptions of the present actors concerning the environment and the ethics and politics that result from it.

After distinguishing the different voices present in EU's environmental policy-making arena, chapter 4 reflects on the interaction between the several actors in this arena. In the first part of this chapter the modified role of the EU in environmental policy-making is described. The second part, 4.2.2., of this chapter deals with the official decision-making procedures, or the 'hard infrastructure', present in the EU. Thirdly, some theories of European expansion are considered. These provide concepts to work with in the subsequent parts of chapter 4 and chapter 6.

Finally, the last paragraph of this chapter sheds light on the position of the theoretical voices involved in decision-making. The separate actors considered are the EU-institutions, Member States, citizens and special interest groups. In these paragraphs attention is given to the strategic behavior actors exhibit and the 'soft infrastructure' that is present. Only by accounting for both types of infrastructure can a description of the EU's environmental discourse be completed.

Whereas the previous chapters carried a lot of theorizing, Chapter 5 contains a more practical inquiry. The accessibility of EU-institutions will be investigated by zooming in on interest representation by cities. Use is thus made of the interviews that were completed with representatives of ICLEI and EUROCITIES. While both organizations show a different approach, they both represent local governments or cities in the European context. Interviewees are Alfons Finkers, ex-chairman of the environmental forum with EUROCITIES and Cristina Garzillo, project officer with ICLEI.

Chapter 6 is a synthesis of ideas about the 'communicative approach' explained in second chapter, the theoretical ideas of the third and fourth chapter, and a consideration of the practical data from chapter 5. Drawing from the idea that discourse should be open not only to policy makers, but to those whom the policies have repercussions for, an investigation is made into the existence of and future possibilities for a

communicative approach in the EU. Rather than advocating for only one of the voices present, observations are made to determine whether all voices are represented in the European policy-making arena.

In the last part of the thesis, chapter 7, the earlier points made in the thesis are recapitulated by addressing the research questions in this introduction. Combining the results, implications for the EU are summed up and some policy recommendations will follow. Although the scope of this thesis is inevitably limited, suggestions to further research are made in the final pages.

#### *1.4.2. Research questions*

In this thesis, chapters 2 up until 6 are centered around a research question. While the most important points concerning these questions are summed up in the conclusion of each chapter, direct answers will be provided in chapter 7, as a final conclusion. Because chapter 6 provides a synthesis of the earlier chapters, the question of chapter 6 can be considered the main question of this thesis.

Chapter 2: *What are the elements of the concept discourse and how do these relate to the communicative approach?*

Chapter 3: *Where do the roots of modern day environmentalism lie and to which political philosophies are they related?*

Chapter 4: *In what way is the decision-making power of the EU distributed between the European actors?*

Chapter 5: *How can interest groups like ICLEI and EUROCIITIES get access to the EU?*

Chapter 6: *How much of the communicative ideal was adapted by the EU within the territory of environmental politics?*

### **1.5 Conclusion**

Based on other research, it was argued that the EU legislation holds important implications for its Member States. Meanwhile, there seems to be a gap between the policy-makers in Brussels and the final recipients of policy: the citizens. At the same time the EU is getting more diverse and citizens play a more important role in the implementation of policy. In order to keep all actors informed and to make policy accountable, Brussels needs to maintain close contacts with local actors.

The communicative approach, advocating an open and diverse discourse, provides a manner in which to study the possibilities of participation by local actors. In the subsequent chapter, this will guide the analysis of this thesis. In chapter 3 and 4 the discourse is charted by exploring the different ideas and power relations respectively. In chapter 5 the activities of interest groups within the EU are considered and in

chapter 6 all these elements are melted into one argument. Chapter 7, recapitulates the most important points of this thesis by addressing the research questions.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter introduces the various sides of the discourse and explains its relation to the communicative approach. Part 2.2. and 2.3. will deal with these aspects respectively.

### **2.2. The concept discourse in this thesis**

The term discourse was made popular by the French philosopher Foucault, but is duly related to many older problems in philosophical history. Part 2.2.1. will shortly address the transformation of the concept discourse. This will begin with the object-centered philosophies of ancient times and end with modern philosophy which includes the role of the subject as well. In the next part, 2.2.2., an approach to the concept discourse is logically constructed out of the elements of the previous parts. Finally, in part 2.2.3., the limits of the European discourse are clarified and its relation to other discourses are discussed.

#### *2.2.1. The transformation of the concept discourse*

According to the Compact Oxford dictionary, discourse is 1. *a written or spoken communication or debate* and 2. *a formal discussion of a topic in speech or writing*. Both explanations have a clear connection with communication and language, but while the first definition encompasses a broader scope, it might prove more useful in the context of this thesis. Normally discourse analysis is solely about language, however this thesis would like to broaden the traditional dimensions of discourse. These desires are forwarded by briefly relating them to philosophical history.

The problem of interpreting and communicating reality is one of the oldest issues recorded in human history. A pivotal part of this problem is the use of language. Puzzled by the temporality of phenomena, Pythagoreans decided it was better not to try and represent reality in words. Plato then reconciled the temporality and stability of things by introducing his notion of two worlds. In his perspective a 'complete' world of reality parallels the imperfect world we can see (Devereux, 2003).

While Plato's truth was only attainable for the deductive reason of philosophers, Aristotle, his student, maintained that knowledge could be obtained through direct observation of this world. Although this epistemological debate continued in discussions between the rationalist and empiricist schools, both seemed to agree on one thing: the truth was 'out there' (see Bor et al., 2004; Voogd & de Roo, 2004 for different philosophical traditions).

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, philosophy had been mainly focussed on acquiring knowledge about the objects outside of the human mind. In this context language was put back on the philosophical map. Logicians started looking for a language that could fully represent observations; a philosophical language in which people could make logically sound expressions about the world. One of the philosophers influential in the 'linguistic turn' that still dominates many sciences, was Ludwig Wittgenstein. In his *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* Wittgenstein claims that language can only represent reality in a one on one relationship.

However, the philosophical tide was turning and Wittgenstein himself would revoke many of his early ideas and stress that language is created in 'language games'. The words in language games could not be transferred one on one like in Wittgenstein's earlier paradigm, here they bore no more than a 'family resemblance'. This position implied that the meaning of language is not fixed, but rather determined by its context (Wittgenstein, 2004).

Wittgenstein's latter perspective, together with linguistic work by anthropologists in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, demonstrated the mutual relationship between language and culture. At the same time, philosophers of science like Popper and Kuhn started to shake the foundations knowledge (van den Bersselaar, 2003). It was the latter who demonstrated that a search for knowledge could not be separated from subjective abstractions by scientists. According to Kuhn scientific truths were defined by 'paradigms' that prescribed the method to find this 'truth.' Science in this way appeared to be a social phenomenon rather than something able to define truth. It took its place beside other daily practices. In light of these developments, knowledge seemed to be produced by the subject instead of being 'out there' (see also Latour, 2002)

While the firm relation between language and truth was not there anymore, and the Enlightenment ideal of rational people had long gone, it was Michel Foucault who introduced a new element to philosophy. For him a discourse was determined by power relationships between the participating actors. By going back to the roots of definitions Foucault was able to show the domination of certain conceptions over others. According to him, an '*ordre du discours*' determined which perspectives could be treated as truth and which could not be spoken about. People who thought outside of given frameworks, were systematically excluded (Foucault, 1971). According to Hall language in this sense 'gets in the way of deciding what is true and false' (quoted in Allmendinger, 2002: p. 186).

While Foucault placed an accent on the repressive character of structures, it was the German philosopher Habermas who focussed on the possibilities of intersubjective communication. To him speech could become rational again, if it was freed from power relations. If everyone could understand that '*communicative action*' would bring back rationality these '*ideal speech situations*' would develop naturally (Healey, 2006; Allmendinger 2002). Altogether, the theory of communicative action was Habermas' ultimate attempt to restore the project of modernity, because if subjects would not distort knowledge claims, objective knowledge was possible (see Dankert, 2005; Allmendinger, 2002).

Besides Foucault's stress on repressive structures and Habermas' prediction that agents can eventually shape structures in the right way, a 'third way' is proposed by sociologist Anthony Giddens. He argues that structure and agency have a reciprocal and fluid relationship (Healey, 2006). Therefore, structures cannot dominate agents and agents can not shape structures in a definite form. This explains why dominant concepts leave a discourse after a certain time, and paradigms change. Equally, Giddens' writing suggests that there cannot be one dominant discourse that controls a structure, but rather a multitude of actors and ideas competing to shape structures.

### 2.2.2. *The approach to discourse in this thesis*

Out of the aforementioned aspects of discourse a definition for this thesis will now be constructed.. By now it should be clear that ultimately discourse is about the interaction of actors and the beliefs and values of these actors. While maintaining that this interaction goes both ways like Giddens argues, the ideas of both Foucault and Habermas can be used in this thesis. Using ingredients from previous paragraphs, this definition of discourse is proposed: *discourse is the interaction taking place between networks of actors in order to establish their worldview on a specific topic, and for it to be accepted by others..* Put in Giddens' terms: *discourse is the attempt of an agent to impose his envisioned structure upon another agency and, very importantly, using present structures in this competition.*

So firstly, discourse deals with the ideas we have about the essence of the world. Beliefs may vary from overarching religious systems to more trivial cultural traditions like eating-habits. Important to note however, is that these beliefs shape our lives, and relevant for this thesis, they determine the ways in which we make policies. Du Nann Winter & Koger (2004) demonstrate that the automatism on which environmental behaviors are based are rooted in the cultural practices we absorb from our social environment. Here it becomes clear how structure guides agency, the first side of Giddens' framework. It is this relationship between humans and ideas that is addressed in the following chapter.

Because no belief system is able to prove permanent value, a manifold of worldviews have prospered. A multitude of worldviews automatically brings the second important question of discourse: how do these different ideas interact with each other? It is here that the frameworks of Foucault and Habermas become important. The first one, that of Foucault, stresses the repressive character of structure, the second one adds a more normative approach by advocating a democratic, powerless use of structures. By using Giddens' theory of structure and agency both ideas become valuable. Foucault's framework can demonstrate how agencies use structures to dominate over other agencies. Habermas' idea that in some cases structures have to be communicative or open, reflects the tendency towards democratization that has been a central theme in the recent history of Europe as well. The influence of agents on structure is central in chapter 4 and 6.

Interestingly, both Foucault and Habermas give communication an essential role. To them discourse is something that 'takes place' intersubjectively, between actors. Because language<sup>1</sup> is the medium used to express ideas to others it naturally positions itself at the center of the approach. Language is used as a mirror to reflect the ontology of several 'knowledge communities' and, applying Foucault's notion of an '*ordre du discours*', the power structures between these groups. The approach is comparable with Rydin's rhetorical approach which tries to identify the instruments of persuasion (2003: 184). Indeed, sometimes the very interpretation of words transforms power relations. In chapter 6 this reality will provide an example of how 'discursive struggles' about definitions have influenced environmental decision-making in Europe. At the center of the earlier definition of discourse, language serves as the instrument of persuasion.

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<sup>1</sup> Instead of language the reader is encouraged to think about communication in a broader sense. The expression of ideas is rarely limited to verbal and written statements only. There are very subtle ways in which we express our ideas about the world without using words. Art is certainly among these.

Because the expression ‘discursive struggle’ reflects the competitive element of discourse and the role of language pretty well, it can be used as a synonym for discourse.

While the discursive struggles can reveal the beliefs of different groups, they sometimes work the opposite way too. Here, language can hide the actual intentions of policy-actors, or it can merely have a symbolic function. Of course this characteristic fits well with Foucault’s analysis of repressive structures (see also Hall’s remark, stated earlier on pp. 21). Unfortunately this side of discourse is not limited to promises of politicians and advertisement offices only. Bureaucrats and planners too, use tricks to persuade the public (see Voogd & de Roo, 2004, p. 79-89). This distortion of truth will feature in further analysis as well.

### *2.2.3. Actors and policies of the European Union: defining the boundaries of discourse*

After discussing discourse as a method in which to study policy-making and arriving at a definition to use in this thesis, a couple of questions remain unanswered. Referring to the definition, how can the terms ‘networks of actors’ and ‘specific topic’ be refined in definition? Furthermore, how is European discourse related to other discourses?

Considering the realm of actors one could wonder if only legislation-making institutions of the EU should be considered, or if a comprehensive approach to define actors would prove more useful. In the first approach only the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers, and the European Court of Justice would feature. The latter would include member states, lower units of government, lobbyists, NGO’s, EU-citizens and, keeping in mind the EU’s position in world politics, even actors from outside the EU (see for the last one: Sbragia, 2002: p.275).

Giddens proposes that the reciprocal relationship between policy-makers and policy-receivers creates a need for a comprehensive view. The comprehensive view further corresponds with the dependency of EU-politicians and bureaucrats on other actors for knowledge and support (Bomberg 1998, Mazey & Richardson, 2002). However, because the enormous quantity of actors would be impossible to handle, only a cross-section of them will be considered. Besides that, to discuss them at the right level of abstraction, actors are grouped into categories like ‘interest groups’ or Member States.

Rather than speaking of one EU discourse, the EU should be considered as an arena for many discourses, and therefore when dealing with specific struggles, specific information will be abstracted and applied (providing boundaries for this thesis.) When analyzing on a very abstract level, for instance the relation between human technology and the environment, European thinking may correspond with a general ‘western’ worldview. This provides the opportunity to apply theories of sociology, psychology and linguistics to the environmental discourse of Europe in chapter 3. However, when the discourse gets more detailed, actors will show national and even regional or locally diverse positions. Therefore, when giving examples of legislation-making in chapter 4, 5 and 6, actors and their positions have to be identified more specifically.

This spawns further questions. Which policy-output must be considered? What pieces of legislation are still part of the environmental discourse? The directives issued by the Directorate-General (DG) of the

Environment displays the most direct relationships, but they are not the only policy-making body concerning the environment. It can be easily seen for instance, that decisions made in the DG's of Transport, Industry and Agriculture have a clear impact on the environment. To draw this point even farther: eventually all policy has a physical impact. To keep the scope of this thesis practical, inquiry is mainly limited to directives that immediately involve environmental regulation.

Finally, as the EU is at least partly dependent on policy-import, it is essential to see how its discourse is fed by external discourses. Correspondingly, the EU has to prioritize the issues which are presented to them. Therefore inquiry must reveal if all ideas and policy problems have equal opportunity to make it to the European agenda. This opportunity is directly related to the amount of access granted to different actors in Europe. Bearing this in mind, it is time to start discussing the value of diversity and open structures. This is an important part of the communicative approach.

### **2.3. The communicative approach**

After clarifying some issues surrounding the concept of discourse, it is now time to attach the strings of the communicative approach. Firstly, in part 2.3.1. the communicative approach is introduced alongside a broader theoretical background. Part 2.3.2. will outline the concepts of the communicative theory in the context of decision-making. Because the communicative theory is a disputed concept in both philosophy and planning theory both the benefits and advantages of the approach are discussed. In the last part, 2.3.3., the application of the communicative approach in this thesis is discussed. Essentially, this involves linking it with the previous observations on the topic of discourse.

#### *2.3.1. The origin of the communicative approach*

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a debate about *rationality* raged in multiple branches of science and philosophy. Amongst others, Critical Theorists, Marxists, anthropologists and post-modernists put the merits of Enlightenment on trial. Jürgen Habermas, one of these critics, did not want to do away with modernist claims to rationality as a whole and interpreted modernism as an 'unfinished project' (Allmendinger, 2002). In his main work, *The Theory of Communicative Action Part 1 & 2*, he sets forth the changes to the system that he thinks are needed to restore the project.

Opposing post-modernism, Habermas proposed that there was not one overarching rationalism to abandon, but rather a focus on instrumental/scientific rationality that had suppressed other ways of thinking. As Allmendinger (2002) points out, Habermas thought that an equal distribution between the dominant scientific rationale and the non-scientific debates of art and morality, would eventually restore rationality as well as power relations. The role of language here was to expose the discourse that was created by the 'capitalist mode of production' (Allmendinger, 2002). For Habermas, a powerless speech situation was the instrument to represent the right distribution of scientific and non-scientific debates.

Not only new demands about the status of rationality as a concept were at stake. By obtaining more civil rights and liberties, societies grew more independent from their institutions and gained more influence in



decision-making. At the same time, individuals come to hold unofficial decision-making power as their possession and acquisition of wealth inadvertently change the world (Beck, 1992; Hajer, 1995). Besides that, a pluralization of lifestyles demands more consideration of diversity (Healey, 2006: chapter 4). Following it is discussed how these developments have influenced environmental decision-making.

### *2.3.2. The use of a communicative approach in decision-making*

As it happened, more diverse, accountable, and informed decision-making was needed to redefine the system of modernity. Using Habermas' theory, planners like Patsy Healey (2006) decided that the best way to meet these demands would be the inclusion of representative actors. Still, other strategies include better access to information and decision-making on smaller scales. Real commitment from stakeholders, it is argued, will only come from total inclusion in decision-making (see also Sager, 1994 and Arnstein, 1969). Involvement of actors is therefore the central idea communicative planning theories.

An argument in favor of this approach comes from the idea that a diverse set of actors holds more diverse knowledge and thus more strength. This allows, on the one hand, decision-makers to be better informed about the specific demands of the community and helps to avoid the mismatches that accompany the monolithic outlook of modernity (see for instance Healey, 1997: Chapter 4; Mitchell, 2002: Chapter 1). Also, the better that actors on the receiving side of decisions are informed, the more smoothly the implementation process will be. Ultimately, the collective knowledge of all included actors can eventually lead to more innovative solutions than the ones thought of by a closed system.

Secondly, the more responsibilities actors are given, the more they are committed to the decision-making process (Healey, 2006: chapter 8). Or as Allmendinger, analyzing Habermas' theory, writes: the more discussion that takes place outside the 'system' and inside the 'lifeworld' of people, the more they are 'forced to play the game' (2002: 187). Healey (1997) suggests that this involvement of multiple actors will build an amount of trust and acceptance between them, or, as she calls it, 'social capital'. Familiarity with the stakes of others and the time spent together is useful to avoid conflicts between the different parties and will even make the decision-making process run more smoothly. Comparable statements are made in Mitchell's description of Alternative Dispute Resolution (2002).

Finally, not only sound policies are important, but increasing value is also attributed to the processes preceding their creation. Because political actors are held accountable for their ability to provide (good) policies, they are dependent on public acceptance of these measures. By basing decisions more directly on 'policy-receivers,' policy-makers are forced to make responsible policies. Inclusion of lower level actors, which Harvey calls 'procedural justice,' (quoted in Healey, 2006) would obviously be the most direct form of holding policy-makers accountable for their policies. Sager (1994) maintains that adding a communicative rationale to planning and decision-making would provide its own justification, in that these forums have an instrumental purpose in the world.

Until now, the communicative approach sounds very viable, but is this the whole story? Can open and diverse speech situation be facilitated? Quite an amount of authors claim that Healey's outlook is too

positive (Rydin, 2003). The first strain of criticism points out that involvement of many (often unprofessional) actors heavily impairs the making of complex decisions. To them, creation of consensus would actually slow down the decision-making process. Indeed, even in the European Union this is a well-known tactic used by actors to bend decisions their way<sup>2</sup> (Judge, 2002).

Besides the speed of decision-making, the quality of decisions can also decrease. With a lot of actors, compromises have to be made in order to satisfy everyone. In many cases this does not lead to an optimal situation (see also Woltjer, 1997) In the EU this phenomenon is also known. Here coalitions are built to either block decisions or to force a 'consensus' upon other Member States (see for instance Golub, 2002 on the packaging waste directive). Eventually, the need for strategic behavior heavily damages the prospects of social capital, or even works the opposite way. This field of tension will be revisited in chapter 4.

A second group of critics relate to post-modernism (Dankert, 2005; Allmendinger, 2002) Instead of doubting the communicative ideal, like the first line of critique, they reject the whole idea of a rationality altogether. To them, rationality is defined within discourse itself and can not become more rational by the creation of 'ideal speech situations' (see for instance Hajer, 1995). The most cynical of them reject the whole idea of collective decision-making, because they believe that power structures will remain no matter what. According to Lyotard for instance, modernism has become a 'meta-narrative' that frames all possible direction anyway (Allmendinger, 2002: p. 159). For this group of thinkers, people should better refrain from *any structure* and make their own decisions.

### 2.3.3. *The communicative approach within discourse analysis*

By now, the connection between discourse and the communicative approach should be visible. To speak with Healey's words (2006) the communicative approach wants to 'open up discourse.' By removing the power structures of traditional decision-making, a more diverse input of knowledge and interests will lead to more optimal decisions.

However, as noted above, the communicative ideal is not undisputed. This thesis will therefore incorporate the critique of communicative theory in its analysis. For example, the post-modernist claim that social systems subject rationality to repressive structures, is taken into consideration. Yet, rather than abandoning the idea of decision-making and saying that rationality is impossible altogether, a more positive prospect will follow.

Eventually the confrontation of multiple insights in a more level context can serve a system to make more balanced decisions. Taking away the monopoly of both knowledge production and political power removes the bias normally related to both institutes. Ulrich Beck (1992) works out these ideas under the title 'reflexive modernism'. According to him, rationality, although limited by old and rusty structures, can be redefined. Kuhn, in his analysis of scientific discovery, discusses the same idea when he talks about 'paradigm changes' (van den Bersselaar, 2003). A reflexive system then, would be deliberately aiming for these paradigm changes.

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<sup>2</sup> The European Parliament uses it as a way to get a better bargaining position.

So, to keep redefining modernity, a communicative conception of discourse and a diversity of worldviews, is essential. German philosopher Gadamer suggests that by putting things in dialogue people are forced to clarify themselves and revise the assumptions about their worldview (Guy Widdershoven, 2004: 61). Linguists Harré et al. (1999) show by an analogy why diverse expression is needed to address the complexity of environmental problems. To him, each language holds metaphors of our environment, which can either be more or less adequate. In order to keep find the best concept of ecology we should make sure that 'linguistic resources' and the 'ecology of language' is not depleted by itself.

So, while not unconditionally believing in the 'truth out there', it is expected that reflexivity can change decision-making for the better. Research in this thesis is therefore aimed at testing the present conditions in the EU for the communicative ideal and for opportunities to become more reflexive. How are the ideals of openness and diversity part of environmental decision-making in the EU? In part 3.3.4. an ideal type of environmentalism is worked out to serve as a backdrop for this discussion. Final discussion will follow in chapter 6.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

In part 2.2.1. the features of discourse were discussed. It was shown that originally discourse was linked to the representation of reality in objects outside of the human mind. Later on, philosophy of science demanded both rationalists and empiricists to revise their claims to knowledge. Work of Kuhn, Foucault, and more recently, Latour, showed us that claims to knowledge are subjective as well. The importance of power relations over the definition of truth was introduced and related to language, discourse, and worldviews.

In part 2.2.2., a definition of discourse was constructed out of two elements from the subsequent part. Discourse was considered to be the interaction of worldviews and power relations. Borrowing the notion of Giddens, that structure and agency have a fluid relationship, discourse was represented as a competition in which communication (or the competition language) is the most important instrument of persuasion. This weighs heavily on contemporary policy making structures and relationships.

Subsequently in part 2.2.3., it was shown that it is hard to limit the study of European discourse to a set of actors and policies. Rather than limiting the perspective, a broad scope is taken and a blow-up of actors will follow when discursive struggles become more detailed. To serve the purpose of this thesis it is important to show how discourses of other levels secure access on a European level.

In part 2.3. it is discussed why the communicative approach is not a flawless or definite replacement to instrumental planning. The approach clearly has advantages, but is debatable as well. Its advantages include more informed decisions, committed actors, and more democratic decision-making. On the other hand, critics argue that strategic behavior may slow down decisions and a search for consensus damages the quality of decisions. For some post-modernists rational decision-making should even be abandoned, to them, consensus equals the repression of diversity.

While this critique has serious implications for European decision-making, this thesis wants to consider the reflexive opportunities of the communicative approach. This concept is worked out by the German sociologist Ulrich Beck. To him openness of diverse knowledge-claims is essential for the stimulation of reflection. By putting things in dialogue, necessary 'paradigm changes' can be discovered.

## ***3. Conceptualizing the environment and choosing political action***

### **3.1. Introduction**

As mentioned in the second chapter, our environmental worldview provides the fundament for the way we act and to the way we make policy. Therefore, this chapter is used to study this link more deeply. In part 3.2 a start with the mental- and, because our ideas are always influenced by the social context we live in, social concepts of the environment is made. Because a lot of these ideas are rooted in ancient worldviews, 'conceptual archeology' is necessary to uncover their sources.<sup>3</sup> Especially the Judeo-Christian worldview has left its mark on western thinking. Eventually, analysis will lead us to an overview of present-day environmentalism.

In part 3.3 attention will turn to the politics inherent to the conceptual frameworks. To illustrate this link and to create categories to work with in the following chapters a division in four kinds of environmentalism is made. Part 3.4. will conclude this chapter by summarizing the most important points of this chapter.

### **3.2. A changing relationship between mankind and the environment**

Trough time the impact of humans on the environment has changed. With this change our concepts of the environment have shifted as well. In this part both changes are discussed in three historic periods. Analysis starts with hunting and gathering societies in part 3.2.1. and ends with our modern industrial society in part 3.2.3. Because the developments in the last period are most relevant for the rest of this thesis, they will receive further reflection in part 3.3.

#### *3.2.1. Ancient or pre-historic environmentalism*

In the last couple of decades environment problems have become a lasting public and political issue (Yearley, 1992; Bomberg, 1998). However, environmentalism, environmental problems and environmental concepts are not a modern phenomenon only. Ponting (1999) explains to us how the fate of civilization has dependent on the interaction with the physical environment from the very beginning of mankind. The extinction of the Easter Island population often serves as a classic example of a 'misfit between cultural and biologic carrying capacity' in pre-modern times (see for instance Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004: p.7). However, not only *their* way of life had self-destructive elements to it.

While hunting and gathering societies left only small traces of impact on their environment, the transition to agriculture definitely shifted development and its drawbacks in a higher gear. In his book *A Green History of the World*, Clive Ponting (1999) links the decline of the Sumerian civilization and even the fall of Rome to exhaustive agricultural practices. Secondly, the food surplus created by agriculture gave people the opportunity to get organize more activities then preparing food. It is not coincidental that things like

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<sup>3</sup> Conceptual Archeology is the name Foucault gives to his approach. By digging up the roots of ideas, for instance the definition of 'sanity', he wants to put their rationale on trial.

politics, writing and professional armies started to blossom in same areas where agriculture was ‘invented’. By the same virtue practices like trade, manufacturing and waste disposal started to impact the environment on a local scale.

Ancient peoples are known to worship parts of the environment as their Gods. This is illustrated by the importance of oaks among the Germanic tribes, the Greek conception that mount Olympus was home to the Gods and the many cults worshipping the sun. However, because many ancient people held no written records, little is known about the precise implications of their worldviews. From the moment people began to write and dogmatic thinking was established, more can be said about the relation between worldviews and environmental practice. Because writing was an established feature of the Hellenic and Roman world, one major change in environmental conceptualization has been recorded quite well: the rise of the Judeo-Christian worldview.

### *3.2.2. Christianity and belief in progress*

Supported by Gods blessing Jews, and later Christians, made sure to ‘multiply themselves’ and ‘subdue the earth’.<sup>4</sup> Stark (1997, chapter 4 and 5) points out that prohibition of infanticide and abortion; the better treatment of women and appeal to charity led to substantial higher birth- and survival rates among the Christian community. Over time this paradigm was able to dominate much of the European continent and adjacent areas. When Europeans started to explore the rest of the world in the middle ages, they were very ‘successful’ in exporting, besides unknown crops, animals and diseases; their Judeo-Christian way of thinking (Ponting, 1999: chapter 7).

After the ‘dark ages’, humanist revision of Judeo-Christian thinking and later the Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, underlined a belief in progress and the abilities of mankind (Bor et al., 2004). While ancient civilization considered Golden Era’s to lie behind them, ‘Westerners’ were the ones who started working towards a ‘better world’ (Ponting, 1999). Sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992) describes to us how belief in progress has made industrial society insensitive to environmental degradation. We have come to accept it as a natural companion to progress. ‘A chimney has to smoke’ says a Dutch saying.

Another important feature of Judeo-Christian thinking is the split between nature and culture. Nature was certainly part of Gods creation, but it had to stay subordinate to men, who were deemed rulers over the earth. Also, nature was viewed as something far from human, appropriate for waste disposal. Not something that directly related to the air we breathe and the water we drink. The metaphor of Mother Earth strikingly displays the conception of the environment as ‘she’ would clean up human waste.<sup>5</sup>). Psychologists point out that the more we distance ourselves from the environment, the less we care about it (Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004: chapter 7).

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<sup>4</sup> The biblical passages I am aiming at here are: Genesis 1:27-28 and Genesis 15:5.

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, it says something about the way people thought they should assign their tasks within the family as well.

### *3.2.3. Industrial society and modern environmentalism*

While the Judeo-Christian idea of human control is still important in environmental thinking, some 'thought revolutions' have taken place. Harré et al. (1999) mention four of these. First of all, the Copernican Revolution made clear the earth was not the center of the universe. Secondly, Darwin added that men and animal had the same decent and therefore were not placed so far apart as most people thought until then.

The third revolution is related to the dominant belief in progress. Gradually people started to accept that other 'time paths' were possible, that our planet was maybe not an open system that could bend every way mankind wanted it to. A discovery, of what Harré et al. (1999) call 'Deep Time', is related to other critical analysis of industrial production, of which Marxism and Critical Theory are mentioned in chapter 2. The fourth revolution was the discovery of different cultures. In the first place it was guided by discovery of the other continents and the popularity of anthropology; in later times it was fueled by the globalization of communication networks.

While the other thought revolutions have been very important in reversing the hegemony of Western thinking in general, the third one is central to modern environmentalism. Two developments propel the loss of faith in progress. First of all, the costs of environmental decline began to outweigh the economical benefits of industrial production. In other words, environmental degradation was becoming so severe that it could not stay unnoticed. Ponting (1999) paints a somber picture involving the extinction of species, depletion of resources and the pollution of all spheres on scales of the environment (see also Yearley, 1992 and CEC 1999).

Secondly, conceptions and values were shifting. Several explanations have been offered for this change, among them a higher level of education among Western citizens. But most certainly economic success and, correspondingly, ongoing individualization added a 'post-materialist' dimension to these values. Because welfare states were able to assure a decent living for everyone, the 'social question' of wealth distribution lost its urgency (Beck, 1992). Other dimensions became more important to measure the 'good life'. Certainly important was a healthy and attractive environment. This in turn was related to the increase of leisure time and recreation. These were of course conditioned by the material benefits of a more social system.

Besides the call for a cleaner environment, the public wanted more say in decision-making (Hajer, 1995). New Social Movements (NSM's) argued that if 'the old bunch' could not deliver new values, they had to undertake action themselves. Emblematic for this new kind of politics is the mass mobilization surrounding of nuclear weapons and power (Bomberg, 1998). The shift of power is further illustrated by Beck's (1997) observation that more and more consumers are able to 'vote with their wallet' and that, increasingly, traditional politics are one step behind these 'real' decisions. In order to maintain that they are still in control, politicians have reverse to symbolic action more often. For Beck (1992) science, economy and politics, 'the coalition behind modernism' is not able to respond to environmental problems because they

all get their benefits from ongoing progress. Therefore he speaks of 'organized irresponsibility' that is legitimated by the system. In part 6.2.1. a dimension is added to the inertia of politics.

Not only the setup of politics is causing a lack of response to environmental problems, equally important is the different character of environmental problems. Many of the newer problems go beyond borders and affect much more than those close to the source (think about global warming, acid rain, a diminishing ozone layer and nuclear fallout). Beck (1992) cynically asserts that the distribution of risks, which is the central struggle of our age, does not discriminate like the distribution of wealth. This way people do not see the full effects of emitted pollution.

Furthermore, some environmental mechanisms are not directly visible in our daily experience. Du Nann Winter & Koger (2004) suggest that humans have serious cognitive limitations to attribute right value to environmental degradation. For instance, while humans are dependent on visual perception, many environmental problems are only visible on a molecular level or high up in the stratosphere. The politics of 'high smokestacks', practiced to dilute pollution across a greater territory, is an example of how environmental problems are taken out of daily work environment and placed at a less threatening, but equally dangerous, distance. The same is true for modern waste treatment: efficiently it takes waste out of sight and out of mind. Only when the waste collectors would strike for a couple of days, the effects of our consuming behavior are as directly visible as in the Middle Ages.

Also, when people are part of the problem, which was asserted in chapter 1, for instance by driving a car, or producing waste, they are much less prone to acknowledge the problem. Such an attitude can be explained by Freudian defense mechanisms like intellectualization and repression. Besides that, there seems to be bias in attributing social value to environmentally damaging acts. While people are quick to judge someone else's behavior as environmentally damaging, they do not usually think of themselves as the bad guy (Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004: chapter 2 and 3).

Conclusively, modern day environmentalism is characterized by a plurality of worldviews and lifestyles. On the one hand, the Judeo-Christian worldview, although shattered in many philosophies, still determines an important part of western thinking. On the other hand, a New Environmental Paradigm (see Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004) reintroduced the spirituality of nature and restored for some the separation from nature. This last development can be illustrated by the worship of natural processes and elements by Neo Paganist groups worship, but also simply by the enjoyment of outdoor recreation.

What is important about the plurality of worldviews, is that it adds to the complexity of environmental decision-making. Unfortunately, the complexity of the environmental discourse hides away the real trade-off between human and society. Hajer (1995, p14.) even asserts that an important concept like sustainability is kept together by vagueness only. To create some handles for further analysis, the next part will provide the present spectrum of environmentalism with four distinctions.



### 3.3. Environmental views in Europe: a discourse of plurality

In this part of the chapter the link between environmental concepts and politics is mapped out further. To handle the overwhelming plurality of worldviews a distinction is made between four different perspectives. These four categories are derived from Patsy Healey's chapter about environmentalism (2006: chapter 6). To this the dimensions of environmentalism that Wissenburg (1996) sums up in his article about a European Constitution are added. Further arguments are drawn in from social and psychological theory of environmental problems (see for instance Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004). While many overlaps and distinctions still exist, the four worldviews provide enough insight in the European traditions to serve this thesis.

Linguists Harré et al. (1999: p. 43-48) argue that the transition between the geophysical discourse and the discourse of moral, or in other words: between empirical observations and political action, is bridged by less or more successful metaphors. These metaphors can be scientific theories, economic models, but also linguistic images and a matters of rhetoric. Because these metaphors are useful to point out the consistency of the aforementioned discourses, reference is made to them in this section. The reader is asked to recall that none of these discourses is a stable and that neither of them holds a perfect truth.

Then finally, a couple of obstacles between environmental beliefs and attitudes have to be stressed. First of all, actors may pretend that they support a certain discourse because it is socially favorable. In reality they could be closer to another discourse. Secondly, actors are inclined to attribute themselves with a more favorable look than in reality. In this way beliefs and attitudes might differ quite a bit without it being obvious for the person itself (see for instance Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004). These features will be pointed out throughout the various discourses as well.

*Table 3.1. Environmental worldviews.*

| <b>Worldview</b>                      | <b>Problem-solving strategy</b>          | <b>Ethics</b>                 |
|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>Environmental exploitation</b>     | Market liberalization                    | Anthropocentric / utilitarian |
| <b>Ecological modernization</b>       | Politics                                 | Anthropocentric               |
| <b>Ecocentric environmentalism</b>    | The mind                                 | Ecocentric                    |
| <b>Communicative environmentalism</b> | Deliberation, argumentation & reflection | Ecocentric                    |

#### 3.3.1 Environmental exploitation

The first category mentioned is based on the anthropocentric worldview that has dominated Western thinking and European politics for many ages. While humans placed themselves at the center of creation, they deemed all other creation to be a mere 'stock of assets' (Healey, 2006). Guided by a utilitarian ethic, the main question concerning nature was: how can it serve human wellbeing?

The discourse of exploitation, as you could call it, is heavily supported by belief in progress. The trouble caused by human technology can be solved with human technology as well. This notion even leads Simon

(quoted in Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004) to argue that population growth is favorable, because, to him, human invention is the ultimate resource. Most of this perspective is in full accord with neo-liberal theory, which is mainly: letting a market of supply and demand guide the behavior of actors (Healey, 2006). For example, externalities caused by industrial production will be reversed if their price gets to high.

Correspondingly, many businesses and politicians have gone 'green' (see for instance Yearley, 1992). Nowadays, many products have a 'low-impact label' and no single political party omits to address green topics to secure their votes. Because green issues became so popular, it naturally follows that this perspective is declining in both the public and the political arena. In general, the discourse of exploitation has become harder to distinguish (see Beck, 1997; Bomberg, 1998). This does not mean that in reality it might still be the dominant way of *acting*. For many it is hard to leave the economic benefits of exploitation.

Conclusively, one could say that the environment in this discourse depends on its success to express its value in money. During the 80's the idea that economy and environment were not excluded territory, was a very popular idea. The Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment even wrote: 'improving the environment and strengthening a lasting economic development are closely connected and consistent policy objectives. Provided they are managed correctly, environment and economy can be mutually reinforcing' (Ministerie van VROM 1984, quoted in Hajer, 1995: p.185). To this Wissenburg (1996) adds to this that a liberal kind of environmentalism would best fit the development of the European Union.

### 3.3.2. *Ecological Modernization*

Another anthropocentric worldview, but different from the perspective mentioned previously, is ecological modernization. This perspective takes a negative position concerning human technology and often calls for certain amount of state intervention to protect natural assets. Ecological modernization is therefore traditionally found on the leftist side of the political spectrum.

While it should be protected, nature in this perspective still serves as a resource to mankind. Therefore ecological protection usually consists of more efficient use or re-use of resources, so the present level of output can still be maintained. In contrast with exploitative discourse however, the perspective on the value of natural resources is more indirect. Nature here can be regarded as a valuable resource for recreational facilities, health and aesthetics; all of which bring back monetary value in the form of tourism, reduced health costs, or rising real estate prizes.

De-Shalit (1997) argues that this discourse is the one that is most democratic. Apart from the other categories, ecological modernization takes care of environmental politics through the public domain, often representative democracy. This tendency is appearing worldwide as well, as advocates of ecological modernization claim that environmental problems are a common problem for all mankind. Their perspective features in many calls for worldwide action, most notably the Brundtland report (Rydin, 2003). The creation of a common problem serves them as an instrument of discourse-closure: because the

environmental problem is everybody's problem, worldwide action is necessary. Harré et al. (1999) underline the same point when discussing the success of a metaphor like 'Global warming'.

It is mainly in the discourse of ecological modernization that the word 'sustainability' has been so successful within environmental terminology (see Rydin, 2003). Proponents of this worldview feel that integration of environmental concerns in other policy areas could resolve most of the environmental trouble. Also, the introduction of Maximum Acceptable Concentrations (MAC) and the Best Available Technology without Entailing Excessive Cost (BATNEEC) represent the central idea that the proper application of technology can avert an environmental crisis. While scientific evidence is not available for both concepts, it can be easily seen that they are placed on a slippery slope (see Beck p.67.; Hajer, 1995: p.153-155.)

Finally, this discourse is usually keen on displaying governmental control over environmental degradation and regulation as a sufficient measure. However, it should be remarked that, as with the discourse of exploitation, the features of this discourse are often held together 'fuzzy logic' as well (see for instance de Roo, 2006; Hajer, 1995). For this very reason Beck (1992) warns us for the symbolic value of these regulations: 'it remains eye-wash to set acceptable levels for individual pollutants, if at the same time one releases thousands of other harmful materials, whose synergistic effects one says nothing about' (p.67).

### *3.3.3. Ecocentric environmentalism*

Adherents of an ecopocentric worldview are the successors of transcendentalist thinkers like Spinoza and Thoreau. Like transcendentalists, the ecopocentrists accept, in varying degrees, that the world is intricately connected to each other. For them the cultural and natural do not exist separately but are rather tied into one big ecosystem. Broadening their scope beyond the ecological modernization perspective, nature has healing and spiritual attributes.

The name ecopocentric, according to Wissenburg (1996), points to the attitude of 'attributing value to all nature.' Of course, multiple varieties are possible. For instance pathocentrism, attributes 'value to all sentient creatures' only. Most ecopocentrists however, agree that we should look after the health of a complete ecosystem to ensure the health of every creature living in it. This of course is different from the outlook of the two anthropocentric discourses mentioned earlier on. Lovelock, originator of the Gaia hypothesis, characterizes this perspective pretty well: 'it is the health of the planet that matters, not that of some individual species of organisms. This is where Gaia and the environmental movements, which are concerned first with the health of people, part company.' (quoted in Du Nann Winter, & Koger, 2004: p.197).

While the previously mentioned worldviews held that human intervention would be able to avert environmental crisis, a lot of ecopocentrists claim we are already in the midst of this catastrophe. Related to this is a crisis of mind: for a better world, we should leave our believe in and dependency on technology. Arne Naess, proponent of Deep Ecology, proposes we should return to a simpler mode of living to find our 'true selves' (see De-Shalit, 1996; Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004: chapter 7). A similar idea comes from

the so-called 'mismatch theory' in psychology. This theory states that 'evolution has not yet prepared us to respond to modern hazards'. Consequently, humans are not fit to deal with the stress of modern life and not able to interpret the risks of industrial development (Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004: 182).

According to De-Shalit (1996) the ecocentric perspective on the environment has far-reaching undemocratic tendencies.<sup>6</sup> He writes: 'hard-line environmentalism ... should not be interested in democracy. Since the nature of the problem is psychological, the solution it recommends is achieving the right consciousness rather than choosing the right policy' (1996: p.182). Bomberg (1998) also notes that a retreat from the public sphere and traditional politics are central features of Green politics. This usually goes together with localism and a call for decentralized politics as with the social movements of the 70's, mentioned earlier on. Interestingly, both authors seem to agree that by neglecting the national and international sphere of politics 'the environment has been lost somewhere.' (De-Shalit, 1996: p.185).

Altogether, the apocalyptic outlook of 'Deep Greens', brings about some heavy moral imperatives. This leads several critics to position environmentalism as the modern religion. Here they of course point to the dogmatic and exclusive character religion can have (see for instance Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004: p.19). For this thesis the parallel illustrates that discourses are always dependent on a *belief* in the scientific models and metaphors they use.

As with the other discourses, the ecocentric discourse has its weakness as well. The scientific models on which it builds are usually thin. This, for instance, is visible in the case of the Gaia-hypothesis (Yearley, 1992). Similarly, the theory of Deep Ecology draws heavily on moral implications, rather than scientific proof. Besides the weak scientific base, the believers of this discourse will have more trouble to align their actual behavior with their attitude, because it has such high expectations. How many people actually think about leaving behind their present level of comfort?

#### 3.3.4. *Communicative environmentalism*

To the previous perspectives, Healey (2006) adds the a fourth one: communicative environmentalism. According to this discourse the different groups should admit that there are multiple views and work out a consensus rather than letting one view dominate. Of course all the actors have to be willing to negotiate in the first place, otherwise more discrete pathways have to be pursued (Mitchell, 2002: chapter 11).

The communicative perspective is sort of an addition to the ecological modernization framework, which already proposes to use public intervention by democratic means. A communicative view however, claims that representative democracy does not adequately account for all the perspectives on the specific issue. Moreover, representative democracy is not based on consensus, but rather on an approval of the greater part of society. This way of decision-making leaves out minority's. Which, as Mitchell argues in favor of indigenous people, might well have the most knowledge about the environment (2002: chapter 6).

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<sup>6</sup> There even seem to be very militant and radical groups organized from an ecocentric worldview. At the website <http://www.animalfreedom.org/paginas/column/marcelham.html> you can find an interesting discussion on so-called 'eco-terrorism'.

By including allowing the multiple perspectives access to the planning process, a balanced consensus can be worked out. Besides reaching consensus together, the inclusion of actors is a form of justice in itself. Not only is it more democratic to include actors in the planning process, direct scrutiny of the public forces governments to think about their decisions more thoroughly. It makes decisions more accountable.

As we have seen with the first three perspectives on the environment, pronounced attitudes do not always correspond with actual behavior. Besides that the actual state of the environment can be covered with a great amount of technical jargon and fuzzy logic. It is exactly these covers that come under pressure in the open and reflexive system of communicative environmentalism.

Beck (1992) asserts that when science and politics open up for subpolitics, this technical jargon and fuzziness surrounding the environment has to wither away. By revising discursive practices and illuminating the social and personal habits we have established for our environmental behaviors, we can be led to a more environmentally suitable attitude (see Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004: chapter 8). Doing this with multiple views simultaneously, it is not necessary to invent the wheel by ourselves all the time.

### **3.4. Conclusion**

In the beginning of this chapter we have seen how the European environment has changed both physically and conceptually. Over time worldviews have been reinterpreted, replaced or diversified. In the ancient world impact upon the environment was small and people lived in close contact with their surroundings. Often, this led them to worship natural features as their Gods. With the transition to agriculture came more environmental degradation. Also, an agricultural surplus created opportunities for a ruling class to emerge. They, in turn, elevated the importance of written law and religious dogma.

One of the world religions to arise in this context was Christianity. While Christian ethic was directly instrumental in creating population growth, there thinking has left us with some lasting images of the environment as well. For instance, to them humans were lifted above other creation. It might well be, that trough this conception nature was seen as separate and not as something that was connected directly to human health. After the middle-ages the Judeo-Christian worldview was partly redesigned by humanism and enlightenment pictures. This was accompanied by a belief in human abilities and technology.

Over time, four important thought revolutions had led many people to doubt the main assumptions of dominant Judeo-Christian paradigm. Men was not seen as the centre of the universe anymore and there was a feeling that different endings of the world were possible. When after the second world war welfare systems were able to secure a fair living for most people in the west, post-material interests started to gain prominence. More recreation and attention for the environment was among them, but also a call for more democratic decision-making. While different conceptions of the environment were present and human impact turned to bigger scales, the matter got even more complex.

By the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century environmentalism seemed to be divided in three main models. The first model considers liberalism to be the best way to deal with public affairs. Adam Smith, father of economic liberalism argues: what is right for the individual, is right for the state. When natural degradation carries to

far, the market will resolve this by setting the right prize. In this paradigm we can find some of the Judeo-Christian worldview as well. Nature is considered a stock of assets at disposal of the human kind. Supporters of this anthropocentric worldview feel that human technology can solve every problem caused by humanity.

The next model, ecological modernization, has more moderate considerations. While they try to make human technology more efficient, it is held that natural destruction cannot always be helped by human technology. Therefore impact has to be restricted when possible. Usually intervention is carried out by a the state or local government. This worldview sees politics as the way to make proper environmental legislation. While this worldview is still largely anthropocentric, it can attribute aesthetic quality and a value for health to nature.

Thirdly, an ecopocentric view was mentioned. This paradigm holds that the whole ecosystem to has intrinsic value, something to be maintained in order to protect the parts. To them, human behavior has already pushed the earth to far and serious psychological change is needed to put things back in their right place. Because politics and technology are part of the system that has caused this mess in the first place, many ecopocentrists would like to make this change outside the political realm. Here similarities with the New Social Movements of the 60's and 70's can be seen.

The last perspective on environmentalism, a communicative one, is supplied by Healey (2006). By considering all different models of environmentalism, Healey argues we can work out more informed decisions and create social capital between groups that would normally never get together. Besides that, the inclusion of all groups makes decisions more democratic and accountable. Finally, a dialogue with 'others' will create a reflexive and innovative society. With this feature, the uncertainty and instability is laid out in the open. This gives opportunities for revision.

By hooking up psychological and social ideas of the environment with different styles of political action, the stage is set for chapter 4. In that chapter analysis of the organization of European Union politics will be at the center of attention. Putting together the ideas of different political actors and the organization of them, a synthesis can follow in chapter 6.

## **4. Who decides on EU-politics?**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In chapter 2 it was set down that discourse essentially consists of two elements: firstly, the conceptual ideas of different actors and secondly, the interaction of these actors through political and institutional structures. While the first element has been analyzed in the previous chapter, this chapter will now deal with the organization of politics in the European Union.

In part 4.2. of this chapter the institutional make-up of the European Union is discussed. An insight will be given in the competencies the EU has acquired over the time in 4.2.1. Secondly, the decision-making procedures of the EU are described. This will happen in part 4.2.2. Subsequently, a discussion of three theoretical models of the EU integration; intergovernmentalism, functionalism and interest-representation, will enter be analyzed in part 4.3. The theory of interest-representation is used in the final discussion of chapter 6.

Part 4.4. will deal with the position of several actors in the decision-making process. The European institutions, member states and the interests of civil society are discussed successively. As will be shown, much of the position of the actors depends on the decision-making rules outlined in part 4.2.2. A conclusion, formulated in part 4.5., will revisit the central points made in this chapter.

### **4.2. Political organization of the EU**

In this part the political structures of the EU that are anchored in treaties and legislation are discussed. Together they comprise the more formal features of decision-making or, as Healey (2006) calls it, the hard infrastructure. The soft infrastructure or personal relationships, which are said to have quite an influence in Brussels, will be called on in part 4.3. That part will be devoted to the position of several EU-actors in the decision-making processes described in part 4.2.2.

Firstly, part 4.2.1. goes into the history of European expansion. It will be show how the EU has been able to expand its competencies in the field environmental policy. Subsequently, the current decision-making procedures are discussed. Also the different kinds of regulation the EU can issue, will be a topic of part 4.2.2. As we will see in part 6.3., this so-called 'institutional heritage' will appear to be a rather essential feature of the environmental discourse of Europe.

#### *4.2.1. History of the EU: acquiring competencies*

The treaty of Rome, the document that laid the foundations for the European Union in 1957, had no explicit basis to draw environmental legislation from. A lot of regulation issued in the 'formative years', was therefore said to extend the 'quality of life'. Most of them could be seen as *ad hoc* measures to deal with acute threats. With the introduction of the program of European Environmental Action (EEA) in 1973 more strategic action came into call. This would indeed add 'a new dimension to the construction of Europe' (Hildebrand, 2002: p.18). However, the lack of information, low public pressure to interfere with the

environment and the priority of the economic agenda made the first EEA's into symbolic statements at most.

During the 70's some environmental disasters began underlined the need for EU-legislation. Also, an oil crisis of 1973 and the unpopular alternative of nuclear energy had the made environment into a sensitive issue (Healey, 2006; Yearley, 1992). Even more, it was quickly becoming an issue that could yield political credit. It was by this time green parties were being established throughout Europe (see Bomberg 1998; Yearley, 1992). The second EEA reflected a more structural extension of environmental protection. Rational and non damaging use of resources were the new guiding principles. Also, directives for the protection of water, air, waste and emissions started to emerge (Hildebrand, 2002).

Besides the entry of environmental issues into traditional politics, the environment was no longer seen a direct threat to economic interests (see the part 3.3.1. for this point as well). While it could provide opportunities for business, environmental regulation could be a very instrumental way in avoiding market distortion. While the late 80's can be characterized by a huge expansion of European competencies, the idea proved to be very fertile in Brussels during (see Greenwood, 2003: p.96). By the time Commissioner Delors took to office, environmental regulation was seen as an essential part of European market integration. In 1987, when the Single European Act (SEA) came into effect, a legal basis for environmental decision-making was finally drawn up. In the following years, this lead to an explosion of environmental legislation (see Figure 4.1.). In the same period, green parties saw their most successful years (Bomberg, 1998).

|  | <i>Period</i>  |                |                |                |                   |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
|  | <i>1958–72</i> | <i>1973–86</i> | <i>1987–92</i> | <i>1993–95</i> | <i>1995 alone</i> |
| Number of laws adopted <sup>a</sup>                      | 5              | 118            | 82             | 60             | 5                 |
| Average number of laws adopted per annum                 | 0.3            | 8.4            | 13.7           | 20             | 5                 |
| Total number of laws adopted <sup>b</sup>                | 9              | 195            | 192            | 144            | 28                |
| Average number of new and amended laws adopted per annum | 0.6            | 13.9           | 32             | 48             | 28                |

<sup>a</sup> Regulations, directives, and decisions only

<sup>b</sup> Including amendments and elaborations

**Figure 4.1.** *The production of environmental laws. From 1958 till 1995 (source: Jordan et al., 2002).*

Trough the ratification of the SEA another important element for environmental decision-making came into play. In the treaty the European Parliament (EP) was granted a co-decision procedure. This enabled them to forward some of the green sentiment of their electorate into legislation (see the previous part on decision-making procedures as well). Also, a more flexible voting system was issued within the Council of ministers. By the introducing a Quality Majority Voting (QMV) to certain areas of environmental



legislation, the Council could now suffice with qualified majority instead of a unanimous vote to approve the new legislation<sup>7</sup>.

Originally, changes were created to make decision-making faster. It was expected, that through QMV it was easier to reach an agreed position. Also, this would lead to decisions of better quality, since compromises that were essential for a unanimous position, were not as common anymore. However, because the EP was now able to add their concerns to the European decisions by requesting multiple readings, many procedures did take a lengthy process in the end (see Figure 4.2.) Finally, one could argue a co-decision procedure did bring more democracy to European decision-making. Besides the Council of ministers, the EP now represented the European citizen as well.

By 1993, the Treaty of the European Union (TEU), took further steps to make the EU more responsive to environmental issues. Firstly, QMV was extended to more areas of decision-making. Also, the integration of environmental protection in other fields of policy-making was heavily underlined in Article 130r of the Treaty (Wilkinson, 2002: p.40). This of course all in accord with the sustainability principle, which was so dominant after the publication of the Brundtland report of 1987. While the use of a veto was lost by the QMV-system, another big theme was to take account for the 'variable speeds of Europe'. This was achieved by allowing for derogations from directive standards or providing Cohesion Funding for poorer Member States (see Wilkinson, 2002: p.47; Héritier, 2002).

The years after the TEU saw a decreased priority of environmental legislation. Of course new steps to modernize of European policy-making were taken by the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999). Firstly the extension QMV and co-decision procedures were extended to more areas (Jordan, 2002). Also, the treaty of Nice (2002) held provisions to limit the influence of populous countries. To do this, voting weights from large countries were made smaller and those from small countries larger. Besides these institutional changes, a lot of substantial changes to environmental policy were pushed back until territorial enlargement of the European Union (Jordan, 1999). Possibly to let these changes be subsided by other priority's from eastern enlargement and therefore delayed again.

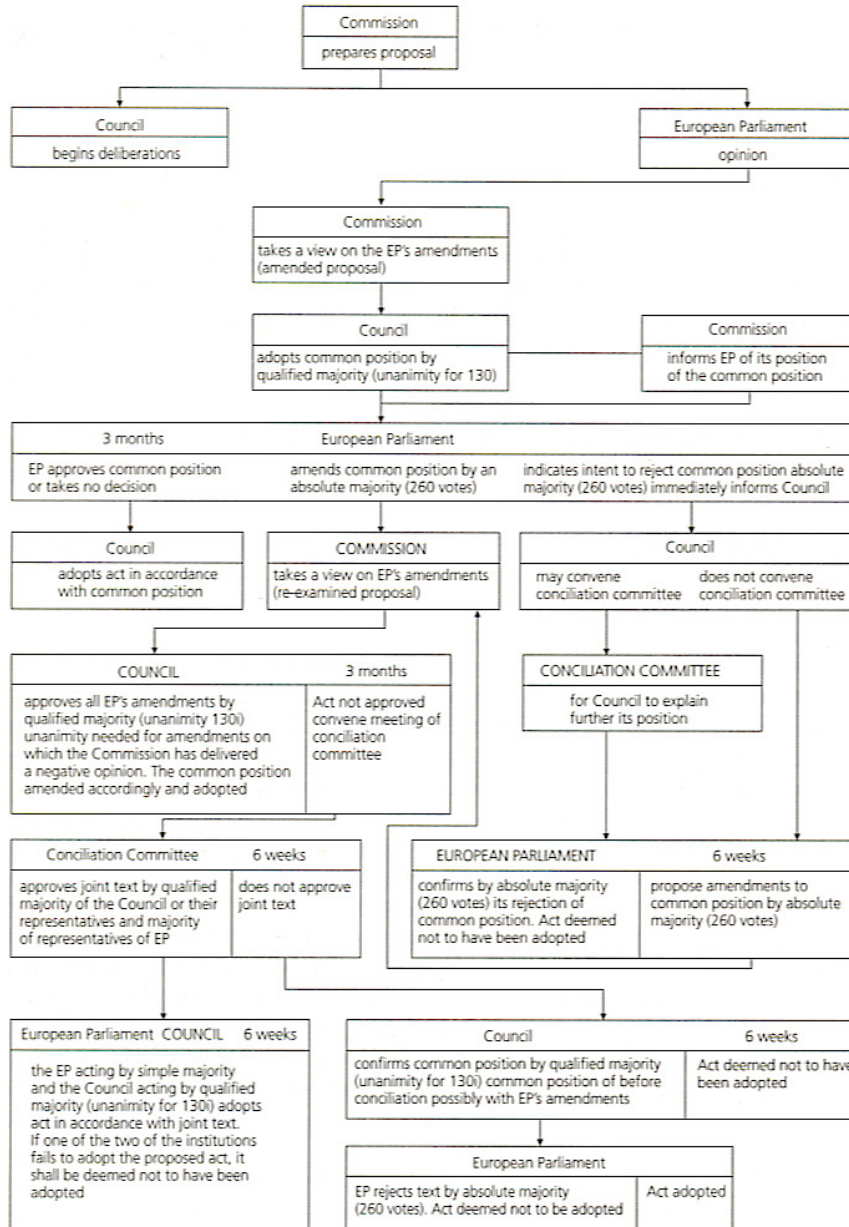
In general the 90's became the period where European expansion was not as obvious anymore. A lot of countries were not willing to pass on any more competencies (Jordan, 2002). Also, countries were questioning the consistency of environmental legislation and common market principles, the central feature of the EU so far. This struggle is illustrated by the Nordic countries that were pushing for higher environmental standards and countries that did not want to go ahead with the plans for CO<sub>2</sub> taxation (see Liefferink & Andersen, 2002; Zito, 2002).

Another issue marking the last decade of EU-politics was the accessibility of information and the openness of European institutions. Through article 191a of the Amsterdam Treaty a right of access to every published EU-document was provided (Jordan, 2002). In the White Paper on Governance (EC, 2001) additions to this

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<sup>7</sup> When the TEU was installed, a qualified majority was defined by weighing the votes for each country according to their population. Added up, these weighed votes had to exceeded 71%.

process were made. Among the proposals were strengthened co-operation with local actors, preferably through contracts and openness towards citizens.



**Figure 4.2.** The co-decision procedure. Complicated, but a way to divide power between the Commission, the EP and the Council (source: Jordan et al., 2002).

While discussion about the exact nature of EU's competencies in the environmental field remains contested, it is clear that over the years the EU has become more committed to environmental protection and has issued a far-reaching body of legislation. Indeed, the EU environmental standards can be considered the most advanced in the world (Greenwood, 2003).

#### 4.2.2. Decision-making in the EU and the flexibility of regulation

For a long time decision-making in the EU consisted of an initiated draft by the Commission and a final vote by the Council of Ministers to approve the draft. The EP, the only democratically elected institution in the Union only had a consultative role in this procedure. Over time it was felt necessary to give the EP more decision-making powers to create more openness to the legislation process, or address a the 'democratic deficit' (Jordan, 2002: p.27). Besides giving the EP more powers, Quality Majority Voting was introduced to get around veto's in the Council. These measures would produce a more substantial outcome from decision-making.

Presently, three different procedures are used to decide on environmental legislation. All of them feature a different distribution of power. The Council always holds a final vote. This vote can be either require a qualified majority or unanimous position. Depending on the area of legislation, the EP can issue amendments and veto proposals. Finally, the Commission can recall its proposals anytime. The decision-making procedures relevant to environmental legislation will now be discussed.

A co-operation procedure applies to the areas of decision-making which are governed by quality majority voting only. This procedure is used for most environmental legislation that is not related to the single-market. It gives the EP two opportunities to issue amendments to the initial proposal from the Commission. These amendments can however be overturned if the Council reaches a unanimous position after one of these two 'readings' (see also Wilkinson, 2002).

A co-decision procedure is used in relation to general action programs and matters concerning the development of a single market. In this procedure the EP is allowed to veto proposals even if they are unanimously adopted by the Council. In this procedure the Council and the EP thus have an equal say in the decision. When after a second reading both institutions are not able to arrive at a common position a conciliation procedure is launched. In this procedure an equal number of representatives from both groups has to negotiate on a compromised text.

Concerning sensitive issues, or the so-called 'high politics' of the EU, the EP has a limited role. For these issues unanimous voting in the Council is required as well. These matters are of a fiscal nature, issues relating to land-use planning, management of water resources and choices concerning energy-supply. The EP's role in this case is limited to a non-binding consultation (Wilkinson, 2002).

Besides voting procedures, there are different levels of regulation. In Article 189 of the TEU five kinds of measures are proposed for the Council and the Commission to carry out their task. A *regulation* is entirely binding and applicable to all Member States, it is used for specific purposes like financial matters. *Directives*, on the other hand, only have a prescribed result, the means to reach this outcome are left to the Member States themselves. This instrument is used most often to regulate environmental issues. While directives prescribe no specific means, the goal can be so clearly defined, that there not really is a choice of means (Interview Finkers, 13-07-2007). *Decisions* are 'binding in its entirety upon those to whom it is addressed' (Article 189/4, quoted in Hildebrand, 2002). This can be to everyone, ranging from Member

States to local actors. *Recommendations* and *opinions* finally, have no legal power and can be uttered both on specific or general matters.

In combination with the proposed legislation the treaty advocates an amount of leeway to account for the diversity of Member States. Usually this allows for a different time-path to achieve certain measures. The use of deviation clauses allows Member States whose standards lie behind others to still agree with proposed measures (Wilkinson, 2002: p.40). Besides more flexible options, use is made of structural funding and the Cohesion Fund to mend differences between the levels of development between the regions. This last option is reserved for Member States with a GNP below 90 per cent of the EU average (Wilkinson, 2002: p47; see also EC, 2005).

The adoption of more stringent measures on the other hand, is more contested because they may distort market competition. However, a 1988 ruling of the ECJ has shown that a 'conflict between the internal market and environmental protection need not always be decided in favour of the market' (Wilkinson, 2002: p 47). Trough both kind of deviations, directives can have more impact then the ones based on a compromise. How well these measures are implemented remains a question. Fortunately there are some procedures to make countries comply.

Implementation of Community Directives is supposed to be as firm as the implementation of national legislation. However, while some decisions are not based unanimous agreement, problems exist. The introduction of QMV of course enhanced the effect of efficiently omitting disagreement within decision-making. The TEU provided for a Court procedure if trouble of non-conformity should arise. Besides citizens and others challenging Member States to court, MEP's have a formal right to investigate and question alleged maladministration (Wilkinson, 2002: p.48). In the end, this court procedure could result in a 'penalty payment' and the freezing of structural funding from the EC. However, the European Court of Justice is usually too busy to effectively settle all infringement procedures (Bomberg, 1998: p.53).

Besides, while there are procedures in place to monitor Member States, there is no established institution to verify conformity. Several people, including the ex-commissioner for the Environment, have argued for more elaborate inspection powers (see Bomberg, 1998: p.53). Up till now, this wish has not been met. The European Environmental Agency, a candidate, only has an advisory role. On the other hand, some writers suggest, that non-compliance are an integral part of the decision-struggle between actors. The approval of legislation should therefore be valued as a symbolic gesture to reach consensus as well (Jordan, 2002). This makes all the more clear, that consensus on a legislative discourse is not a definite consensus, but a political instrument as well (here the distortion of a true position shows its face again, see part 2.2.2. and 3.3.).

#### **4.3. Theories of integration: a framework for investigating political power**

Before proceeding to the positions of several actors, three theoretical models of European integration will now be discussed. The first one, intergovernmentalism, sees European expansion mainly resulting from Member State interests. The functionalist theory on the other hand, attributes expansion to the ability of bureaucrats to pass legislation in a relatively secluded arena, giving the EU a supranationalist dimension.

A final theory, interest representation, combines both previous theories and tries capture how specific ideas can penetrate a network of power. Because of a focus on openness and the ideas of actors, the last theory is very useful in a search for communicative elements. While this chapter will keep its attention with power relations in interest representation, the specific role of ideas will return in part 6.4.

#### *4.3.1. Intergovernmentalism*

Intergovernmentalism sees national governments as the main architects of the Europe. By negotiating treaties and holding a final vote over legislation by the Council, ministers hold the key to European integration. Therefore legal expansion can only take a direction concerted by national approval. This last characteristic ties up intergovernmentalism with the idea of representative democracy. While elected officials are dependent on a vote, they pass on the sentiment of their national electorate.

Because intergovernmentalism sees European integration as a fusion of national interests, it might be anticipated that negotiations will often include a collision of legal systems. Moreover, the introduction of QMV to environmental issues will leave countries more often with a 'forced position'. As an example Timothy Moss (2003) notes that political arrangements accompanying the new Water Framework Directive (WFD) might leave Germany with an 'institutional misfit' (see for different examples Pridham, 2002).

While 'high politics' such as the drawing up of treaties are firmly held by national interests, intergovernmentalists make such claims for legislation as well. Because, as they argue, bureaucrats within the Commission are positioned according to their wishes.

#### *4.3.2. Functionalism (the Monnet-method)*

Functionalism is the idea that was originally advocated by one of the founders of the European Union, a Frenchman called Monnet. Because he suspected the European Union would steadily grow from a spillover of tasks from Member States, the theory is related to his name. According to this idea, EU-bureaucrats should work in a secluded space. Indeed, the trick of Commission officials to hide real policy implications behind complicated and technical terms, is called the Monnet-method (Zuidema, 2005). Another term that is used for the functionalist strategy is 'integration by stealth' (Weale, 2002).

Because Brussels has a relatively small bureaucracy, the Commission is often dependent on other actors to obtain relevant information. This of course leaves a lot of opportunity for NGO's or interest representing groups to become 'policy entrepreneurs' within. Indeed, the Commission itself is involved in the creation of groups and financially support the fulfillment of their task (Greenwood, 2003). Of course it does not do this in the least to increase its own legitimacy and to acquire new competencies.

It is by the expansion of authority and knowledge that the EU tries to take over tasks from Member States. Article 3b of the TEU reflects how this mechanism works in relation to the subsidiarity-principle: *'In areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Community shall take action, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, only and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently*

*achieved by the Member States and can therefore, by reason of scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved by the Community'* (quoted in Wilkinson, 2002: p.41) Of course the Commission will stretch the definitions of such a rule to include as much competencies as possible. This definition-struggle will recur in chapter 6.

#### *4.3.3. Interest representation*

While the first two theories stress the importance of national interests and the interests of EU bureaucrats respectively, interest representation looks at the combination of both interests. Greenwood (2003) stresses that the 'multilevel architecture' of the EU has made it impossible for one interest to capture all others. While the decision-making procedures call for harmony among all interests, the power is divided between all interests. Therefore, the process of European integration should be seen as complicated mix of national, sub-national, bureaucratic, business, public and even global interests. It is therefore not only guided by groups that can exert most political pressure, but also by those groups and countries that are able to convince the bureaucracy that their ideas are useful. It is therefore necessary to address the value of ideas themselves. This will be done in chapter 6.

First, the other condition of interest representation has to be unraveled further. Political power *does* play a role, not every idea has equal access to the European Union. In this chapter it is spelled out how certain groups are positioned in the EU decision-making game. In the subsequent chapter the position and strategies of lobby groups will be discussed in further detail.

### **4.4. European actors in decision-making**

So, after concluding that the decision-making procedures of the EU reflect a division of power, it is now time to analyze what this means for the behavior of European actors. Because EU-institutions are related most closely with the formal decision-making structure, and because they will prove to be the starting point for the political action of many other actors, a start with them is made first. Subsequently interest will shift to member states and finally to the civil society interests. While the position of lobby groups is addressed in this chapter, the following chapter will be related to the structures and tactics used by these groups.

#### *4.4.1. EU-institutions*

By working through a specific decision-making procedure decision-making power has been shared mainly by the Commission and the Council. The introduction of a co-operation and a co-decision procedure in 1987 and the extension of QMV to environmental legislation has added the role of the EP to this dynamic. By making the actual decisions, these three institutions are they actually drive the European discourse. It should however not be forgotten that these institutions heavily depend on other actors for their input. Maybe even more so, when one considers the thin bureaucracy of Brussels (Mazey & Richardson, 2002). Both the dependence on outside actors and the unique order of decision-making has lead to very marked strategic roles of these institutions.

First of all, the Commission has the right to draft legislation<sup>8</sup>. One of the consequences of this position is that they constantly try to make legislation on the basis of an article that suits themselves best, thereby defining which decision-making procedure has to be used and trying to form allegiances with the EP and certain members of the Council. Justin Greenwood (2003) has called this behavior 'playing the Treaty-game'. In the environmental arena most conflicts with the Council have resulted from this strategy. The Commission would interpret a part of legislation to benefit a single market, which would involve the EP into the game through a co-decision procedure. Several countries in the Council would oppose this route and argue that regulations related to environmental standards only. This would call for a co-operation procedure, giving the EP a smaller power base.

Because the Commission is the institution that draws up legislation, they are constantly looking for knowledge-input to build their proposal. Also, they try to anticipate how measures will be received by the actors involved with implementation. This dependency on knowledge-input of course provides opportunities for interest representing parties. Moreover, the Commission has actually created lobby-organizations by itself and supports a share of them financially (Greenwood, 2003).

Although the draft of some small proposals has dated the legislative role of the EP before introduction of the SEA, real inclusion started with the installment of this act (Judge, 2002). Being involved in decision-making the EP has the task to represent the concern of the European Population. Sensitivity towards the electorate can be seen by the EP's focus on popular issues. The Environmental Committee, dealing with environmental issues, is known for a pro-active role. This means they articulate their concerns and investigate many issues by themselves. In general the EP is characterized by a very green outlook (Judge, 2002).

The green profile of the EP is hard to separate from their attempt to expand their own power base. Like the Commission they have been pressing hard to stretch the base of a co-decision procedure, feeling that together they could build a supranational allegiance against the national interests of the Council. Indeed, by delaying decisions or threatening to head for a conciliation procedure, the informal bargaining position of the EP has many times gone beyond the official role laid down in the treaties (Judge, 2002). Besides their role in decision-making, the EP controls the EU budget and holds a veto over the appointment of Commission officials.

The Council, by having the last say in the decision-making procedure, of course retains a lot of power. But, as with the other actors, it has to estimate how a proposal will return if they reject it. In effect, the decisions the Council can make are heavily framed by the proposals of the other institutions. If the QMV is used another dimension is added to Council decision-making. National interests will try to build coalitions with other members, either to prevent a majority and block a decision, or to create a qualified majority to approve a decision. Often the ministers of the Council are biased toward economic concern and use environmental legislation to favour their national industries. I will return this dimension in part 4.4.2.

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<sup>8</sup> While the Commission has the *right* to take initiatives, the EP can invite them to make legislation.

Koppen (2002) remarks that since the legal basis of environmental policy, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) can claim quite an amount of influence as well. By its jurisprudence the ECJ has been able to clarify definitions within the treaty and move the boundaries of EU-competence. By defining legal boundaries, the ECJ holds the key to close of discourse (Rydin, 2003) Early on the court punished countries for not implementing the Environmental Action plans stating that ‘the harmonization of environmental measures was necessary for eliminating trade barriers’ (Koppen, 2002). With the case of Danes recycling bottles, mentioned in the previous parts, the ECJ has shown that the environment can preferred over free trade. As with other European actors the ECJ has taken an ‘activist stand’ to expand its own legislative powers. Besides the three decision-making institutions and the ECJ, the EU is served by various advisory committees. Although these committees usually hold no decision-making powers they are quite important in the transfer of ideas and presenting information to decision-makers. While they do not frame the discourse, they can certainly feed it. Amongst the most important consultants are the Social and Economic Committee, the Committee of the Regions (CoR), and more specifically in environmental issues the European Environmental Agency.

#### *4.4.2. Member States*

National interests are expressed in a variety of ways throughout the European Union. First of all the Member States, or more often their ministers of foreign affairs, that formulate and ratify treaties and the general politics of the European Union. Besides deciding a main route for the development of the European Union, the member states have a role in the formulation of legislation.

The position of Member States in the Council has already been discussed above, but there have been more tactics involved to influence the outcome of legislation. The occupation of certain bureaucratic positions within the Commission most importantly is used to put certain subjects and visions on the agenda. Also, the kind of offices countries try to get placed within their borders points to the priority they give to that area of legislation. The location of the EEA in Copenhagen for instance, has probably something to do with the green profile of this country.

Besides these long-term strategies, the semi-annual presidency of countries is often used to introduce the own agenda. In turn, addressing countries in the chair position is a strategy used by lobby organizations to get their message across. For example, by inviting the Austrian presidency, ICLEI, a worldwide organization for sustainability through local action, was able to insert certain phrases into legislation (see next chapter; Interview Garzillo, 2007).

The different traditions, styles and maturity of legislation in the Member States has been subject of much discussion. The Commission itself undertook an investigation into the planning methods of different countries (CEC, 1997). For years the conception that Member States in the North had a more environmental outlook and more established bureaucracy (Lieverink & Andersen, 2002) has dominated this thinking. The southern Member States, who joined the EU later, saw themselves confronted with issues



that had less priority for them (Pridham, 2002). For this reason, the 'laggard' southern states struggled to deal with the pro-active legislation introduced by the northern states.

Nowadays, most of this imbalance has been dissolved. Some of the northern states like Germany and the Netherlands have lost the leading role they had in the 80's and southern countries, most notably Spain, have made a lot of effort to progress European integration (Interview Finkers, 13-07-2007). By now all countries have kinds of environmental legislation that does not fit their priorities to well. For other issues they would like to have very stringent measures because they already have a head start introducing them. This last strategy we call the 'first mover principle' (see Liefferink & Andersen, 2002).

However, the fact that new Member States have to deal with the institutional inheritance of older members, still stands. What is even more, a lot of European legislation is transferred to these countries 1:1, because a lot of them did not have any developed legislation in this field yet (Interview Finkers, 2007). In turn, the recent enlargement (2004 and 2007) of the Union by 12 countries, mainly from eastern Europe, has thoroughly scrambled the agenda itself. First of all, attention will have to be paid to the priorities from the East, which means a focus on democratization. Secondly, the dynamic of coalition building in the Council will increase, with Western countries looking for new allies. Finally, a lot of funding will probably go towards the East as well (this is visible in. The long-term impact of this transition is not clear however.

#### *4.4.3. Civil Society Interest*

Interest of civil society within the environmental arena has been represented by a range of professional NGO's and lobby organizations for quite a long time. While European institutions are essentially more open than national governmental structures, the 'Brussels route' has had great opportunities for lobby groups (Greenwood, 2003). A lot of these groups aim at the Commission, while they draft legislation and are therefore most dependent on knowledge-input. Besides this, lobbying groups try to contact members of the European Parliament that have affinity with specific subjects or certain businesses. When representing an important issue at national scale an attempt is made to influence the Council.

Green lobby organizations like Greenpeace, World Wide Fund (WWF), Friends of the Earth (FoE) have established valuable contacts with the Commission. While these groups have a large international support base, they have a lot of resources to work with. This makes them able to supply the EU with important scientific knowledge and stay relatively independent at the same time. In sharp contrast with other interests, the harmony within these organizations makes them effective representatives of environmental concern (Greenwood, 2003: chapter 6). Even a division of tasks has been noted. While Greenpeace uses its expertise on maritime biology, the more politically entrenched WWF works on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and pollution issues (Mazey & Richardson, 2002).

Greenwood (2003) suggests that the existence of a natural enemy is a strong incentive for the organization of interest. So, besides these green groups business has organized a strong voice in environmental legislation. Often the influence of large business organizations, like the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT), has been linked to big political decisions in the Union. Although Delors fondly recalls

the close cooperation with business groups in the 80's, it looks like their importance has been largely overrated (Greenwood, 2003: chapter 3).

While business groups are in general equipped with more resources, they do have a lot of trouble to create a common position. Genuinely, a lot of businesses have tried to adopt environmental legislation that would give them an advantageous position, described as the 'first mover principle' above. Some business groups, like EuroChlor, have established their profile as authoritative source of information (Greenwood, 2003). Finally, while the conversion of business to the environment is clear, the effects of 'green consumerism' remain controversial (see Yearley, 1992)

Overall citizens show little direct involvement with EU politics. European elections even show an ever decreasing attendance rate<sup>9</sup>. Also, news coverage of national politics is way more comprehensive than word from Brussels. While the role of citizens as employees, entrepreneurs and consumers is guarded by several interest groups (Greenwood, 2003), the EU has become more and more convinced that it needed more intense contact with its citizens (Jordan, 1999; CEC, 2001). In 1987 this led to an expanded role of the EP in decision-making. During the 90's and the beginning of this century several documents, amongst them the White Paper on Governance, have advocated to involve civilians more directly with the EU-decisions. This topic will return in the discussion of chapter 6.

Because it is usually them who have to implement the legislation, many local authorities have a stake in European politics as well. About a decade ago the arrival of Europe of the Regions was heralded by many a writer, but involvement of regional and local involvement has expanded slowly (Greenwood, 2003). For instance the Committee of the Regions did not yet get more than an advisory role. So while not going as fast as writers hoped in the beginning of the 90's, we may expect decentralization to increase over time (see for different kinds of regionalist trends Keating, 2003). This *trend* is signaled by ICLEI as well (Interview Garzillo, 2007). The representation of local governments by an organized effort will feature in the following chapter.

Finally, apart from internal interests an amount of external interest in the European Union is going on. Some of these interests are institutionalized in Brussels. For instance the EU Committee of American Chamber of Commerce, representing American business groups. On the other hand the EU has devoted themselves to an important role within international politics. Its established role in global in the UN for instance, calls for some for time and staff (Sbragia, 2002). All of this is related to Europe's responsibility as a trendsetter in environmental policy-making. The role is reflected by the shares their countries have taken in the Kyoto-protocol and the agreements on the ozone layer made in 1987 in Montreal (see Bomberg, 1998: p.50-51).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter it is shown how the European Union has acquired its competencies in the field of environmental politics. As was noted in part 4.4.1. on the European institutions, the inclusion of

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<sup>9</sup> The elections of 2004 were attended by 45,6% of the European population (source: the EP website)

environmental regulation has been very much related to the expansion of power of supranational EU-institutions themselves. This explains as well why these institutions have had such a green profile; taking on board new issues made them able to decide about new areas of politics. It is not strange therefore, that the 'green years' largely correspond to a period of 'Europhoria' in the late 80's.

Besides the acquisition of competencies, it was shown in part 4.2.2. how decision-making procedures frame the possibilities for making legislation. Of course the dynamics of decision-making was radically changed by the ratification of the Single European Act in 1987. Since then the EP has used its role in decision-making to address popular green issues. Among these have been the use of tropical woods, genetic modification and leaded petrol (Judge, 2002).

Finally, it has been shown that, inherent to the decision-making procedures, European actors depend on each other while making legislation. Because the EU works by a division of powers no single interest, be it national or supranational, has been able 'to kidnap' the decision-making structure. More importantly, the Commission, as well as the EP and the Council depend on the ideas of other actors to legitimize their own decisions. This is why in chapter 6, the ideas and worldviews from chapter 3 will guide a final discussion.

While it can be concluded that the EU is ruled by a network of actors, rather than one overarching force, there still are ways in which actors can contribute more than others. In chapter 5 further research into lobby organizations will be related to this phenomenon. In this chapter 5 the representation of cities by using a case study of both EUROCITIES and ICLEI. After theoretically oriented chapters, some more practical data is involved here. Interviews with representatives from EUROCITIES and ICLEI will lead the discussion.

## ***5. Case Study: representing local interest through EUROCITIES and ICLEI***

### **5.1. Introduction**

Up till now, this thesis has had a very theoretical character. Some more concrete information will now be added to complement these theoretical considerations. The focus in this chapter lies with the representation of local governments in Europe. This topic will be addressed by considering two different organizations representing these local governments, EUROCITIES and ICLEI. Consequently, this chapter includes a lot of input from the interviews with Alfons Finkers (ex-chairman of the environmental forum, EUROCITIES) and Cristina Garzillo (Project officer with ICLEI) and the information provided by these organizations.

By inquiring the character of both associations in three steps; their objectives, their methods and their achievements; the most strategy of both groups is revealed. These descriptions will fill part 5.2. and 5.3. respectively. In part 5.4. the outcome of both discussions is to say something about the accessibility of the EU. The information provided by this part is used as an input for chapter 6. Some concluding remarks are added in part 5.5.

### **5.2. EUROCITIES**

EUROCITIES is an organization aimed at the integration of European cities. It was founded in 1986 by the majors of Barcelona, Birmingham, Frankfurt, Lyon, Milan and Rotterdam. Today EUROCITIES represents more than 130 large cities. Indeed, membership is limited to cities over 250.000 inhabitants. Cities are both located in- and outside the EU and are composed of over 30 nationalities.

While EUROCITIES is active in virtually every area of urban politics, of course the environmental topic will be the main focus. These issues are covered mainly by the environmental forum. Now the objectives, politics and achievements of EUROCITIES will be discussed.

#### *5.2.1. Objectives of EUROCITIES*

Involvement in European politics is a result from the position of cities as implementers of legislation. In the first place, this position directly confronts them with the reception of European politics by European society. In other words: they have to enforce the rules upon local actors and they have to deal with the complaints by citizens. Secondly, cities have useful expertise on the implementation of EU-regulation (Interview Alfons Finkers, 13-07-2007). EUROCITIES wants to facilitate a platform of knowledge-exchange between European cities. There other objective is pushing for more inclusion of 'urban requirements' in European politics.

The scope of issues they are dealt with by, cover all urban topics. According to its own webpage, [www.eurocities.org](http://www.eurocities.org), its main strategic objective therefore is: 'to work towards a common vision of a sustainable future in which all citizens can enjoy a good quality of life.' Within this framework EUROCITIES wants to create an inclusive, prosperous, sustainable, creative and co-operative cities. These

general objectives are further specified at the level of working groups. For instance the working group on *Greening local economy* has the following objectives below. Note also the orientation to European policies and funding:

- exchange information on strategies, instruments and tools to improve environmental performance in business, particularly in Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's). Environmental performance should be more than a basic compliance to regulations.
- present initiatives in European cities on basis of a common structure. What are the targets and the target groups, stakeholder involvement, strategies for development?
- research the relevant EU regulations and documents.
- research the possibilities for an EU-funded project, and possibilities for lobbying.
- create a final document, a guide that can be used for development and improvement of programs for greening the local economy.

#### 5.2.2. *Organization of activities*

A General Assembly takes place each year to decide on the general politics and to choose an executive commission. Positions on policies are formulated at the level of working groups. In most cases a common position is reached within the working group. In some instances votes are used to reach an agreement (Alfons Finkers 13-07-2007). As a result of this consensus oriented model, individual cities usually do not exert a lot of influence through EUROCITIES. Besides delivering their position to the EU directly, EUROCITIES tries to get its message across to other European actors through a range of activities. Amongst these are: the organization of meetings and activities; maintaining a website; publicizing position papers and reports.

Besides accumulating experience and facilitating knowledge exchange, EUROCITIES is quite actively involved in lobbying the EU. Because the EC has the right of initiative, this is usually the starting point of lobbying, recalls Finkers (Interview Alfons Finkers, 13-07-2007). In the EP the Green Party is a logical partner to put an environmental issue on the agenda, but it is very important to win the votes of other groups as well. MEP's who are interested in cities or have a green outlook can be found in every party's. Representation through Member States is more uncommon, because they usually want to be the exclusive discussion partner of the EU. Regardless of the institution, personal relationship with representatives are essential in most cases (Interview Alfons Finkers, 13-07-2007).

Cooperation with other European actors is quite common, all actors hold an amount of useful knowledge. EUROCITIES cooperates with, amongst others, the World Health Organization, the European Environment Agency, the Committee of the Regions, ICLEI and several Universities. These actors work somewhat like the green lobby groups mentioned in the last chapter. Informal agreements are made about who will participate on certain topics, for instance by a seat in an EU-expert group (Interview Alfons Finkers, 13-07-2007).

To address the wide range of topics EUROCIITIES is involved with, the organization is divided into multiple forums, which are further subdivided into working groups. The forum that is of interest to this thesis, the environment forum, is subdivided into eight working-groups. These are: Clean cities, Climate change and air quality, Environment and health, Greening local economy, Green areas, Noise policy, Sustainable urban water management, Waste management. Involvement within these forums is open to all members and is therefore dependent on the interest and resources of cities themselves. Cities that are not located within the EU cannot preside groups and forums (Interview Alfons Finkers, 2007).

Popular topics that are currently addressed by EUROCIITIES are the implementation of the EU's 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme; the challenges of climate change and the implementation of Sustainable Development Strategy. Recently a meeting with the theme '*Towards an energy efficient city*' was held in Göteborg.

### *5.2.3. Profile*

Over time EUROCIITIES has expanded from 6 founding members into an organization representing more than 130 members from almost all European countries. According to Greenwood (2003, chapter 7) EUROCIITIES became a respected partner of the EU and is regularly invited to carry its expertise to legislation-making institutions. According to the same author, the Brussels office of EUROCIITIES employs around 30 fulltime staff, making it the largest representative of territorial interests (Greenwood 2003, p.232).

Indeed, by using their available expertise, EUROCIITIES has been able to raise certain topics on the European agenda. Examples of these are: the adaptation strategies towards climate change and waste recycling. Furthermore, they have recently contributed importantly on the draft of Air Quality policies (Interview Alfons Finkers, 13-07-2007). In part 5.4. some more will be said about the factors that either limit and provide access to the EU.

### **5.3. ICLEI**

ICLEI is a worldwide organization for the promoting the concept of sustainability among local governments. Its history dates back to 1989 when 35 local community leaders from the USA and Canada felt the need to coordinate a local response to global environmental problems. By that time, the depletion of the ozone layer was the main concern of this group. After consulting with local governments from other countries, a World Congress was organized under the auspices of the UN. More than 200 local governments from 49 countries took part. It was on this occasion ICLEI was institutionalized by signing a charter and choosing an Executive Committee (source: the ICLEI website [www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)).

Nowadays, ICLEI represents more than 630 local governments and associations in 67 countries. Every three year these members assemble to approve a six year Strategic Plan and the triennial updates of this plan by the Executive Committee. Besides a general secretariat in Toronto, ICLEI has regional offices concerned with the implementation of projects. When discussing the activities and achievements of ICLEI,

the European Secretariat in Freiburg is important for European matters. First ICLEI's main objectives will be elaborated ([www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)).

### *5.3.1. Objectives of ICLEI*

ICLEI is an abbreviation for International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. In 2003 the subtitle *Local Governments for Sustainability* was added to 'better reflect the current challenges local governments are facing' ([www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)). By acknowledging the relationship between a quality of life, economic activities and natural resources initiatives require a more comprehensive consideration. This of course extends ICLEI activities further than purely environmentally oriented projects. The European Secretariat for instance operates projects for Viable Local Economies. (source: the European ICLEI website: [www.iclei-europe.org](http://www.iclei-europe.org)).

ICLEI's mission statement however, betrays an environmental focus on the sustainability concept. According to this formulation ICLEI's aim is 'to build and serve a worldwide movement of local governments to achieve tangible improvements in global sustainability with special focus on environmental conditions through cumulative local actions' ([www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)). The accent on a movement character and the importance of local initiatives has some similarities with movement ideas of 'deep greens' (see part 3.2.3. and part 3.3.3.). Besides being a *Movement* that forwards the practice of sustainability through local action, ICLEI wants to be an attractive *Association* with a challenging voice and an *Agency* that demonstrates creativity and excellence in inventing solutions for local governments ([www.iclei.org](http://www.iclei.org)).

### *5.3.2. The organization of activities*

European activity is coordinated by ICLEI-secretariat in Freiburg, located in the south of Germany. As expressed on their website, [www.iclei-europe.org](http://www.iclei-europe.org), the choice of this city is essentially motivated by its leading role for sustainable development and less by its proximity to the European decision-making centers of Strasbourg and Brussels (Interview Cristina Garzillo, 26-07-2007). Or, as a local tourist brochure tells us: 'In Freiburg schreibt man Ökologie mit ein Hauptletter' (Translation: in Freiburg the word ecology is written with a capital).

ICLEI tries to be a democratic movement. While their general policies are decided by a council of all members, the annual programme and budget is composed by the 21 members of the Executive Committee. In turn, the World Secretariat, Regional and Country Managers are responsible for the implementation of policies and the coordination of projects. While ICLEI is mainly aimed at serving their members and representation to the outside is less important, there is less pressure to reach consensus amongst members. (Interview Cristina Garzillo, 26-07-2007). This toleration of differences perhaps underlines the movement character of ICLEI (compare Bomberg, 1998: chapter 1).

The most important way for ICLEI to achieve 'tangible results' is to focus on the implementation of projects and, of course important in this context, European legislation. Like EURO CITIES they are organized around a number of themes. These are: Urban Governance; Sustainable Management;

Sustainable Procurement; Climate and Air; Water; Soil and Land Use and Viable Local Economies. To support these projects ICLEI develops management-tools, exchanges knowledge through releasing publications and obtaining funds. Of course funding is essential in the execution of projects and the operation of an office. ICLEI aims to attract 90% of its funding outside of membership revenues (ICLEI 2006). A dependency on outside resources means that ICLEI cooperates with many governments and other institutions. Among these is the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP).

Besides organizing projects for the European members, the Freiburg secretariat hosts ICLEI's international training centre. This institution facilitates learning for local decision-makers through the organization of congresses, hosting courses and also enables web-learning for ICLEI-members (Interview Cristina Garzillo, 26-07-2007).

While ICLEI is more concentrated on providing services for its members, involvement with European decision-making is a less important strategy. Sometimes a general need among members does get ICLEI to knock on a door Brussels (Interview Cristina Garzillo, 26-07-2007). Here influence comes from below, rather than from a central entity. A further indication of a focus on members are the restrictions to knowledge resources. Instead of spreading its message far and wide, parts of the ICLEI-website are only accessible to members and many publications have a price.

As ICLEI is interested in broadening its own knowledge and possesses important experience on the implementation of projects and legislation, it does cooperate with other parties as well. An important cooperation between many groups, including attention from the Commission, was a conference on sustainable cities in towns in Sevilla. Cristina Garzillo also mentions cooperation with the European Commission and EUROCITIES on the topic of Green Procurement (Interview, 26-07-2007).

### *5.3.3. Profile*

While ICLEI is not primarily aimed at influencing the political level it does cooperate with the EU every now and then. This relationship is not in the least based on the important share of funding that is supplied by the EU (Interview Cristina Garzillo, 26-07-2007). The EU on the other hand, has called on ICLEI to contribute their expertise by itself as well. Currently ICLEI has been invited to contribute on a new draft of the Thematic Strategy for the Urban Environment. Also, they are assisting the review group on the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), a business-tool the Commission wants to apply to local governance. Furthermore, there has been a long-standing common interest and cooperation on the endorsement of green consumerism. Here ICLEI has taken a tender to organize five workshops (Interview Cristina Garzillo, 26-07-2007).

More generally, by working on topics of concern to multiple parties, ICLEI is likely to have contributed to the pool of ideas where a broad network draws from. The mechanism can be explained by a small yet characteristic example. Each year ICLEI organizes a round table for Member States of the EU, to emphasize the importance of ICLEI's activities in sustainability. Under the Austrian presidency in 2006, a



sentence specifically endorsing the role of local governments and the in achieving sustainability to the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy the same year. The sentence almost literally expressed the themes mentioned at this conference (Interview Cristina Garzillo, 26-07-2007).

#### **5.4. Gaining access to EU decision-making**

In this chapter two quite different organizations concerned with the sustainable development at a local scale were portrayed. One operates from Brussels and is quite actively lobbying the EU, the other focuses more on its own members and an effective implementation of projects. While the organizations are not equally interested in lobbying, they both cooperate with the EU. Relating to the EU one important question has not been answered yet. What do both organizations think about the amount of access that is supplied by the Brussels arena?

Both seem to agree that Europe is much more open than most national governments (Interview Alfons Finkers, 13-07-2007; Interview Cristina Garzillo, 26-07-2007). The DG Environment usually is the first partner to deal with, but other institutions appear to be equally accessible. More important than the institutions themselves, is to organize your contacts around persons. It is the relationship to them that really gets issues on board. This is why Cristina Garzillo laments a recent move of bureaucrats within Brussels, because together with the persons, the contacts have been lost (Interview, 26-07-2007).

Besides the structures being open, Finkers underlines how important it is to show up with something valuable or new if one wants to go home with more than just a 'friendly nod' (Interview, 13-07-2007). Indeed, it is the role of policy-entrepreneurs that makes these institutions into useful contributors at the European level. Importantly, these organizations work on abstraction level interesting to the EU. Their information is neither too gross, nor too detailed. Because both organizations possess valuable information about urban systems, the supply of knowledge gives them an *indirect* opportunity to influence the EU (Interview Finkers, 13-07-2007). While groups present knowledge in a specific way, the general circulation of knowledge feeds a discourse as well.

Another important factor is the amount of competitive claims. If there would be a large amount of lobby groups delivering the same kind of information, their influence withers. Greenwood has demonstrated this effect in the creation of EU's of social policy (2003: chapter 6). The same effect does not seem to apply to 'territorial interests', at least not in organized groups like EURO CITIES and ICLEI. Within the groups, little disagreement on objectives and goals is noted (Interview Finkers, 13-07-2007). Possibly some of the disagreement is not explicated in order to reach a consensus. As with environmental groups, ICLEI and EURO CITIES seem to be able to cooperate because of their different approach. Competition would, as Garzillo reports, concern the acquisition of EU-funding (Interview, 26-07-2007). Of course, interests from a local government may have to compete with other interests. We can imagine competition between a city trying to expand its traffic system and environmental groups pressing for higher air quality standards.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented two organizations working on issues of sustainability within the European territory. EUROCITIES, the first organization under discussion, displays a more pro-active and political character and aims at more comprehensive targets. Membership of EUROCITIES is restricted to large cities only. In order to construct a coherent position to the outside world, the achievement of consensus within working groups is an important mechanism.

ICLEI, the other institution discussed, is more concerned with serving its members and the implementation of concrete projects. ICLEI wants to achieve sustainability as well, but has a less comprehensive approach. To them, the achievement of concrete results is most important. The approach of ICLEI shows more similarities with movement groups. While they are less concerned with entrenched politics, ICLEI stresses the diversity of its members.

Both organizations have shown the importance of knowledge to gain access to European decision-making. EUROCITIES has become a respected partner and is frequently involved in drafting legislation. ICLEI on the other hand, cooperates with the EU on projects at a more infrequent basis. It might well be, that through a larger resource base of EUROCITIES (30 staff in Brussels) has more expertise on the formal rules within the EU and the progress of legislation. Also, interviews have displayed the importance of personal relationships. More than anywhere else, Brussels is about maintaining a 'network'.

Now, having complemented the theoretical ideas of the earlier chapters with some practical experiences in this chapter, this thesis will proceed with a synthesis of all data. In chapter 6 it will be shown to which factors the EU is related. Later on in the same chapter, it will be discussed how the different environmental discourses have benefited from this openness.

## ***6. Connecting the dots: collaborating on environmental politics in the EU***

### **6.1. Introduction**

This chapter is mainly about regrouping the points made in this thesis into the most important characteristics of the European environmental discourse. While answering the question of how external interests influence the EU-structures in chapter 4 and 5, this chapter tries to reveal how their success is related to the worldviews they propose.

Analysis of the communicative idea within environmentalism will start in part 6.2. Here the openness of the environmental discourse is discussed by two trends that influence politics more increasingly every day. In *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* Ulrich Beck has called this the rise of 'sub-politics'. The two most striking sub-political features of the environmental discourse are science and the media. It will be shown that the handling both science and the media are essential to access the political discourse.

While part 6.2. relates to the environmental discourse in general, part 6.3. addresses environmentalism in the context of EU politics. More specifically, the flexibility of the environmental discourse is related to two important trends in EU-politics over the last two decades. Recalling the linguistic elements of discourse from chapter 2, one could speak of 'discursive struggles' here. First of all, the EU's reference to the principle of subsidiarity has always begged the question: who should act? As will be shown in part 6.3.1., there is an ongoing debate surrounding the interpretation of this principle. Secondly, the EU's pursuit to legitimize itself is discussed. The question at stake in this part is: how did the two discursive struggles influence the openness of environmental discourse of the EU? This question is addressed shortly in part 6.3.3.

While part 6.2. and 6.3. focus on the openness of the environmental politics, section 6.4. will highlight another dimension of communicative approach. Does the European environmental arena allow for diversity? Equally one could ask: how much reflection has taken place in this discourse? Both questions are examined by comparing the opportunities and the achievements of the four worldviews that were introduced in chapter 3. Finally, the chapter is ended with a conclusion in part 6.5. Here it is reflected to what degree the EU can be seen as a communicative institution and where it has trouble to live up to the ideal.

### **6.2. The rise of sub-politics in the environmental discourse**

In his main work *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* and in many essays sociologist Ulrich Beck points out that new kinds of decision-making are replacing or rather complementing traditional politics. While the latter have been discussed in chapter 4, a short discussion of sub-politics is added here, because they precede and frame the environmental discourse within politics. As you will notice these themes are not a sudden turn from the other topics in this thesis, rather they are intertwined with a lot of previous points.

Both elements return later in this chapter, when talking about the diversity and revision of environmental politics in Europe.

#### *6.2.1 Environmental decision-making with science*

The first area of sub-politics to rise in the environmental arena is science. As we have seen in chapter 3, new environmental problems are often created by many sources and have a dispersed impact. Correspondingly, these impacts are remote from our own senses. We cannot directly see air pollution or global warming. This makes it hard for people to relate to the dangers of environmental issues. Instead of making risk assessments by ourselves, scientists become our senses (Beck, 1992). Scientific data therefore is a valuable political resource. This point is well illustrated in Europe by the many groups that supply their knowledge to the decision-making institutions. Indeed, as we have seen in chapter 5 and with the green lobby in part 4.4.3 it is often (scientific) knowledge that makes groups into respected decision-making partners.

However, there is a problem. For science, a requirement to make decisions in the environmental discourse, has lost some of its persuasiveness. As we have seen in chapter 2, the claim of objective knowledge has been questioned in the last few decades (see chapter 2 well). Also, science turns out to be contradictory at many times. Often it happens, that two scientists have completely opposite claims and nobody is able to arbitrate the truth between them (Beck, 1992). Also, Yearley (1992) demonstrates how science can be an 'unreliable friend' if environmental groups are not able to 'prove' their case. However, not acting would be in conflict with the precautionary principle many theorists endorse (Mitchell, 2002: p.33). Conclusively, developments in science have somewhat paralyzed environmental decision-making. The problems related to paralysis have demonstrated for the case of acid rain in the UK (see Hajer, 1995)

So now, neither our senses, nor scientists are legitimated to make decisions. The solution to this problem Beck foresees, is to combine the potential of both. Bruno Latour, a philosopher who studied the political dimensions of everyday science, makes the same point. According to him Plato, unjustly separated the 'unruly mob' and objective 'a-political' scientists (Latour, 1999). Science should bring forth theory and speculation, but 'mothers wit' and the presumptions of the wider public should not be excluded from decision-making. In the EU this idea lives as well. The Commission has proposed to give the general public more insight in its scientific sources in order to make the Union more legitimate (CEC, 2001). So the answer to the apathy surrounding the scientific base of environmental decision-making, is to make structures more open.

#### *6.2.2. Agenda-setting by the media*

The second kind of sub-politics to take flight is the influence of the media. This development, Beck (1992) tells us, is made possible by the guarantees of press-freedom throughout the western world. Meanwhile the EU has left its functionalist roots behind and has taken aboard many popular issues. Amongst which, very distinctively, environmental policy-making. This turn to populism has become even more important when

the EP, the directly elected branch of the EU, attracted more decision-making powers in 1987. Elected officials are of course more sensitive to popular issues than the bureaucracy, because they want to be re-elected.

According to Beck (1992), the media does not directly influence decisions, but is rather effective in shaping the agenda of politicians. Agenda setting only takes place, when the public shows a response to media-issues. With the topic of environment this turned out to be quite important. Not seldom is the environment the most urgent problem in political polls (see Yearley, 1992). For politicians, environmental politics provided a way to deliver post-materialist wealth to the public and cash political credit (Bomberg, 1998). As we have seen in chapter 4, the EU was very willing to take these environmental issues on board

In this context it is important to remind that the media often displays a bias towards certain topics. Rydin (2003) notes that reports on environmental topics mainly focus on more sensational news, like environmental disaster. It may clarify why there is such a difference of risk perception on the topic of nuclear energy between scientists and the general public (see Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004). Equally, it explains why the activist of Greenpeace was able to get so much done (see Beck on Brent Spar, 1997). Stephen Yearley (1992) even claims that Greenpeace employs media professionals that supply photographs or film footage to the media themselves. Indeed, media coverage might well be Greenpeace's primary resource.

The public and politicians were not the only ones to respond to the media. Business has discovered the blessings of this domain as well. In fact, after environmental disasters started to appear in the mediascape more often many of them have started advertising with 'environmental friendly' or 'biologic' products themselves. Linguists have shown that adequate language is absent in many of these advertisements (Harré et al. 1999). Another author reports producers of a dish washing detergents advertising their product as being phosphate free, while these chemicals are not used in dish washing detergents in the first place (Yearley, 1992)! This is why deep ecologists speak of a 'green con' when business turned green. Obviously, the media provides many opportunities to frame and hide environmental problems

### **6.3. Discursive struggles in the EU: subsidiarity & the democratic deficit**

As noted before, communication has a linguistic feature. To make policy, actors have to interpret definitions on which they build their policy. Examples could be 'a healthy environment', 'substantial reduction', 'subsidiarity', etc. According to Harré et al. (1999) definitions are not set facts, but rather metaphors that show an amount flexibility. Chapter 4 featured some struggles over the interpretation of treaty principles and definitions. Here, two focal points of these discussions are examined. In a way both of them are related to the central dilemma of the EU, who should hold the competence to act? In part 6.3.1. the principle of subsidiarity is dealt with and in part 6.3.2. the focus lies with the EU's attempt to resolve its 'democratic deficit'. In this part the question is, how these definition struggles have guided environmental politics.

### 6.3.1. Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity was the principle originally laid down in the treaty of Rome to make sure that decision-making would remain at the lowest level possible. Over time however, it is both used to kill proposals and to expand competencies. This is why Jordan (1999) remarks that subsidiarity has been a political rather than a legal tool. For this thesis, it displays how linguistics are linked to the dispersal of power, a central feature of discourse. Because, by making one interpretation of subsidiarity, many competencies could be transferred or withdrawn from the EU. Related to this is the position of environmental legislation in respect to the single market: does regulation distort competition or does it provide more equal circumstances. If the last interpretation is chosen, as is done by the ECJ many times, the EU is able to make more legislation. For instance a European directive regulating noise levels only seems viable when the competition element is considered.

In the early years of the EU, subsidiarity was an important tool to mark the boundaries of the competences that were held by the new supranational actor (Jordan, 1999). Subsidiarity was very instrumental in keeping environmental legislation out of the EU. First of all, no mandate for environmental legislation was provided in the Treaty of Rome. And secondly, the importance of transnational protection was still low, leaving environmental issues with national politics. In the early years some directives on water-issues and dangerous substances were drawn.

When the EU was well under in way the 70's and 80's development mainly had an economic impetus. Most importantly, the EU was kept up to create a common market. While this purpose held advantages for most groups, little attention was paid to acquisition of tasks by the EU (see part 4.3.1 on functionalism as well). At the same time, the transnational nature of environmental conflict became more apparent. Acid rain and trouble surrounding the Ozon layer became important issues that demanded a supranational approach (on acid rain see Hajer, 1995; on the Ozone layer see Yearley, 1992). Also, the idea that environmental regulation supports the single market objective was popular. This made it possible for the EU to frame itself as the 'competent actor' to regulate the environment. Because the environment was an important political issue in general, it was relatively easy to propose new legislation.

Halfway the 80's the EU, led by Commissioner Jacques Delors, tried to attract a lot of new competencies, broadening the interpretation of the subsidiarity principle in many instances (Jordan, 1999). Sometimes, new proposals even conflicted with the market objectives, the central theme of European integration till then. Also, new decision-making procedures left more room for influence by supranational structures (see part 4.2.2.). Of course *these* developments were less easy to accept for Member States and brought the discussion of subsidiarity right back to the mainstream discourse during the early 90's (see Jordan, 1999). During the 90's, a lot of Member States grew more skeptic about the outcome and the course of EU-integration. Within environmental politics the production of legislation quickly decreased.

Many countries felt that the legislation proposed by the EU was eroding their sovereignty as a political actor. Therefore they started to question the transfer of competencies to the EU. For instance the British

firmly held that financial policy was a domain for Member States separately. This mainly explains why the EU could not develop a CO<sub>2</sub>-tax (Zito, 2002). Also, Danish reluctance to ratify the TEU illustrated that countries that are more oriented to green legislation did not favour a loss of sovereignty either (Jordan, 1999). Of course, the struggle over a new constitutional treaty is a more recent example.

On the other hand, Andrew Jordan (1999) claims the EU was still able to propose legislation that could have been left to national governments as well. Here it proves that 'integration by stealth' remains a vital tool within the EU. In the same period DG Environment tried to clear its name of being a nest of green radicalism, by a technocratic approach. This again reinforces the importance of knowledge-supply for decision-making as observed earlier in this chapter. The retreat of competencies by Member States and a flight to technocratic decision-making resulted in an overwhelming preference for directives as a regulatory instrument. Because it leaves some space for both to operate in.

Another way the EU is involved with the definition of subsidiarity is their effort to strengthen the position of regional actors and citizens in comparison with national governments. This 'institutionalization from below' is discussed in relation to the restoration of a 'democratic deficit' in the next part.

### 6.3.2. *'Democratic deficit'*

To keep itself well informed and to attract the support of civil society the EU has keeping an open structure. The effort of the Commission to the activate and support of interest groups has been noted in earlier chapters (see also Greenwood, 2003). Furthermore, the EU has been involved in strengthening the positions of regional entities, illustrated clearly by the creation of the CoR. In Ireland the regional level even had to be 'invented' to facilitate the distribution of European funding. Representatives of both ICLEI and EUROCITIES point out that legislation aimed at cities is a burden on one side, but on the other hand gives them an important mandate to pursue other interests than their national framework prescribes (Interview Alfons Finkers 13-07-2007; Interview Cristina Garzillo, 26-07-2007). It is now possible, for instance, to make a city cleaner than necessary because the EU has funding for these kind projects national governments do not have.

But then, what is done to get citizens involved? While the EU has acquired more and more decision-making power and competencies over time, its interaction with citizens has remained very low. The first big step towards the citizens was the creation of the EP and later the more important role in decision-making for this institution. Also, less tangible proposals have been tabled. In order to make itself more accountable, to make more informed decisions and, as the Commission writes in her White Paper on Governance (CEC, 2001), to improve the implementation of legislation the EU has to establish more dialogue with its citizens. Correspondingly, the EU wanted to work on its image, because now many people saw them as an ineffective, complex and distant political actor.

Amongst the measures proposed was the supply of better information about the tasks of the EU and the status of legislation-making. (see also Jordan, 2002). Pivotal in this effort was the creation of a website in all languages of the Union, <http://europa.eu/>. The ineffectiveness of decisions had to be reduced by thoroughly

considering the tenability of legislation in an early stage of decision-making. Also, institutions would have to refocus on their own task, rather than being up in strategic games. For instance, if the Council is able to reach a qualified majority in an earlier stadium, a second reading by the EP would not be necessary. This could speed up legislation procedures by months (CEC, 2001).

Besides more informed and better decision-making, involvement of lower parties would muster more commitment to the implementation of regulation. Two important remedies have been proposed. Firstly, the involvement of local actors through tripartite partnerships should lead to more effective implementation of legislation. Secondly, the use of directives would leave more space for local actors to implement legislation. (CEC, 2001).

So, the EU seems to be well on their way to solve the democratic deficit and win the citizens for the European cause. Or is it? All intentions in this part of the chapter sound very laudable from the communicative perspective, but there are some cracks in the ice. Firstly, as the EU aims its attention at citizens it leaves out possibly very effective lobby groups and NGO's (see Greenwood, 2003). Secondly, it is hard to expect that citizen involvement goes any further than informing them. Work by Sager (1994) and Healey (2006) suggests that participation will only create committed actors when the participants are given an important stake. Sherry Arnstein, adds to this that a merely informing actors may be seen as what she calls 'tokenism' (Arnstein, 1969). Disappointment with this kind of symbolism could distance European citizens further still.

In chapter 4 it was shown that an expanded role of the EP coincided with a more open EU and a fast expansion of environmental legislation. Another sign of democratization is the increased importance of directives as a regulatory instrument. On the one hand directives allow to account for different environmental circumstances. On the other hand it leaves more space for local configurations of government. Both consequences provide local governments with more flexibility and less chance to be confronted with an 'institutional misfit'.

Besides a more important role for regions, the EU's investments in information-supply has a marked effect. Citizens are now able to use EU-law to confront their own government with choices of spatial planning through infringement procedures (see part 4.2.2. as well). For instance the Habitat Directive has a major impact on spatial planning in the Netherlands (Ravesteyn et al., 2004). However, direct involvement of citizens remains a mystery.

#### **6.4. Reflexivity in EU's environmental discourse**

When the environmental legislation gradually became a part of the EU, there was a certain setup of power relations and a dominant way of thinking. Over time, thinking has partly changed. Amongst other things, decision-making procedures were altered. In part 6.4.1. it is shown how the environmental discourse has interacted with the European institutions. This is done by displaying how the 4 discourses of chapter 3 have overlapped with the institutional changes of the last 30 years.



Not only institutions have been altered. Environmental politics in the EU have changed by themselves as well. On the one hand, new lines of thinking have entered the EU through a more open discourse. On the other hand, the dominant paradigm was somewhat revised. It may be expected that both developments have interacted fiercely. In other words: at the time the EU was more open, there has been more thorough input from external groups and more thorough revision of the dominant liberal paradigm. In part 6.4.2. it is shown what kind of reflection on the environmental subject took place.

In part 6.4.3. then, the extent the EU lives up to the communicative or reflexive ideal is discussed. In the final paragraph, 6.4.4., the limits of reflexive ideal are considered as well.

#### *6.4.1. Institutional setting and the environmental discourses*

By origin the EU was not a regulatory institution, it was founded to maintain peace in the European region. Economic cooperation was the most important fundament to build peace on. In the beginning the EU expanded its competencies very gradually, just as their founders intended too (Hildebrand, 2002). In these days, the liberal paradigm dominated most EU decisions. Environmental regulation was issued very incidentally and was mostly related to acute matters.

However, as the EU gradually grew more important, so did a call for democracy. In 1979, the European Parliament was elected for the first time. During the 80's, when the course of the EU was under discussion, it was decided to give the EP more legislative powers as well. In 1985 this resulted in the creation of the Single European Act. The 80's clearly was a period in which European cooperation was popular. The relative ease in the acquisition of new tasks in this period has been underlined by others as well (see for instance Greenwood, 2003; Hildebrand, 2002)..

Around the same time green issues quickly rose as a public concern. Environmental problems were either so urgent, or appeared to be urgent, that a regulatory response was demanded.<sup>10</sup> This is why the Single European Act provided a base for environmental regulation (Hildebrand, 2002). The relative expansion of the regulatory paradigm, ecological modernization, was supported by the idea that environmental regulation and the creation of a single market could be combined objectives. The same tendency can be seen in the EU's commitment to the sustainability principle. This principle entered the policy dialogue with the first EEA, but did not find an institutional basis on the formulation of the TEU (Wilkinson, 2002).

At the same time regulation was gaining territory, relatively 'radical' Green Parties were formed and expanded their electoral performance (Bomberg, 1998: chapter 4). From them, other parties learned that green issues paid political credit and started to include these issues on their agenda. The broad politicization of environmental issues led Sara Parkin, leader of the British green Party, to cynically say: 'What is it that makes us the party that everyone else wants to be? The answer is very simple. We are right and they know it' (quoted in Yearley, 1992: p.93). Overall, EU-institutions were very willing to address green issues, since it gave them an opportunity to expand their own mandate and standing.

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<sup>10</sup> For analysis of social problems this does not make a real difference. See Yearley (1992) for treatment of the environment as a social problem.

Green Parties on the other, needed to include more issues and become an all-round parties since their claim to solve the environmental crises was not original any more. Especially after the iron curtain fell, they took on board many issues they were pursued by the former Marxist groups. Some of these merged parties are known as so-called rainbow parties. Together with their transformation political parties and the necessity to work on other issues, green groups started to leave their movement roots. Correspondingly, they committed themselves to compromises in order to get things done. While still using publicity and the media as a force, radical methods such as demonstrating were long gone (Bomberg, 1998). A tendency towards professionalism seems to go for green NGO's as well (see Mazey & Richardson, 2002).

While green politics were widely dispersed among MEP and business groups (see part 3.3.1.), a lot of legislation was passed in the late 80's and 90's. However, new winds started to blow through Europe. While it saddled them with a heavy regulatory burden, countries became more and more doubtful about the expansion of the EU. In 1992, the Danes were reluctant to ratify the TEU unless some guarantees were given. Other countries were negotiating warrants as well (Jordan, 2002). The Europhoria of the 80's was coming to an end. A steady decline of regulatory output was a tangible result of this.

In the 90's environmental regulation was supposed to take due account of the subsidiarity principle. These considerations were advertised as 'Better Law-making'. However, Jordan (1999) has shown that decisions still could have an impact way beyond the set normally attributed to the EU. So, technocratic decision-making could still pull through new regulation, but countries were more reticent to give their consent. As Europhoria came to an end, so did the environmental regulation paradigm. Also, with the entry of many eastern European countries an accent on liberalization can be expected.

Then, during the 90's the call for democracy came back to the European scene again. The SEA and the TEU had given the EP a larger role, but direct communication with citizens was still poor. With the treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 and the Convention of Aarhus one year later, commitment was made to keep citizens well informed (Jordan, 2002). Further moves are shown by many national governments and European institutions in recent years. The White paper on Governance has been the central document in this effort. Of course, tendencies of inclusiveness and deliberation of information are well suited with the communicative perspective.

#### *6.4.2. Revising environmental politics*

In the early years the EU was mainly concerned with economic development. In the field of agriculture Europe wanted to be independent from the world market. This meant a high, and often unsustainable, output of produce (CEC, 1999: p.39-42). Comparable statements go for the supply of energy. Because Member States held a veto in the Council of Ministers it was virtually impossible to make proposals that would defy the imperatives of national economies. All funding and European regulation had a very exploitative character in these early days (Bomberg, 1998).

Then, during the 70's and 80's the public and politicians became more and more convinced about the urgency of environmental issues. Two developments guided these observations. On the one hand, concern

was stirred up by the publication of scientific literature. One of the most important reports of those days was *Limits to Growth*, a scientifically oriented essay on the problems of consumption. On the other hand the media started providing spectacular footage of the earth's natural beauty and the places where nature started to degenerate. As said before, groups like Greenpeace were very eager to contribute to media representations (Yearley, 1992).

While the state of the environment could still be explained in many ways, there was a distinct feeling that something had to be done. A liberal attitude would not do anymore. After that, important progress was made to regulate emissions, assess environmental impacts and green other sectors of policy. Halfway the 90's all spheres of the environment were regulated. While there was a lot of regulation, not all economic and industrial activity would bow for a clean environment.

Of course industries held a liberalist perspective on the environment, they would only favor regulation when it improves their position (this has been called 'first mover principle', see part 4.4.2.) (Mazey & Richardson, 2002). Besides that, countries that were build on liberalist foundations, for instance Ireland and the UK, did not want to put any fiscal restrictions on their businesses. This can be seen around the development of the CO<sub>2</sub>-tax. In fact, more countries grew frustrated with the administrative and economic burden imposed by European regulation. In the 90's there has been an overall decline of European environmental legislation. Liberalist ideals like deregulation and decentralization made political headway in the EU. It resulted in a 'decentralized interpretation' of the subsidiarity principle (see part 6.3.1.).

Because regulation could not proceed, European integration and the economic progress related to it, remained, in essence, an ecological damaging project. Greens even hold that, despite a steady growth of legislation, environmental degradation has continued (Bomberg, 1998: p.54). At the same time, alarm bells were ringing worldwide as well. The very influential Bruntland report was published in 1987. This report emphasized that ecological problems were worldwide problems with worldwide solutions. That is to say, environmental problems are related to social and economical systems and therefore require regard of these aspects as well (Rydin, 2003). This line of thinking was an important step in introducing the dominant sustainability concept. In the TEU sustainable development and the integration of environmental concerns in other policies was an important theme.

Ecocentric thinking made its way to the EU as well. This development seems to be related to scientific developments. To an increased extend it has been shown how intricately natural systems are connected and how hard it is to regulate individual parts (Mitchell, 2002: chapter 2). An example of these considerations in the European arena, is the introduction of the Habitat-directive. Not only does it protect animal health, the directive is also aimed at the protection of habitats instead of individual species. Both elements reflect the influence of the ecopocentric paradigm. Another piece of legislation representing the importance of connections in environmental policy is the Water Framework Directive. By monitoring the status of rivers trough a river basin approach, 'land and water have to be viewed in mutual coherence' (Woltjer & Al, 2007).

#### 6.4.3. *Living up to the communicative ideal*

As was shown in part 6.4.1. and 6.4.2. much of the environmental discourses are dependent on some kind of momentum. Change in environmental thinking can be driven by multiple things: the status of the environment, like the urgency of environmental problems in the 70's and 80's; the political tide, like the Europhoria of the 80's; but also the development of science or the effect of the media. However, there have been more structural changes for the four worldviews as well. When talking about the point of the communicative ideal, the EU has displayed an enormous amount of change over the years.

At first, the EU was a pure bureaucratic institution. Later, by adding an elected branch to its institutions, the opinion of citizens was represented. More steps towards democratization were taken when the EP got a larger legislative role. Besides indirect representation of citizens, the EU has had a lot of input from external parties. While the EU has not set any limitations to enter their arena, they have cooperated with all kinds of groups (see part 4.4.3.). Every group has the opportunity to be heard. However, there have been some distinctions.

Groups are not equally equipped with financial resources. On the one hand this gives groups a disadvantage to keep track of developments in the Brussels arena. On the other hand they can not afford an office in Brussels, which would give them opportunities to hook up with 'networks' of information. While most business groups seem to be well equipped with resources, environmental groups are mostly dependent on a large membership base. For large groups like WWF and Greenpeace this works well, but smaller green groups may have trouble (Mazey & Richardson, 2002). Of course most citizens do not have these kind of means either.

Another resource that has proved to be important is specific knowledge, or, in the environmental arena, mostly 'the highly praised' scientific knowledge. Chapter 5 has shown how specific knowledge has put lobby groups in a position to contribute to legislation. Not all groups hold this resource either. Here, most environmental groups come off fairly well (Yearley, 1992). Local governments often hold important information about the implementation of regulation and reception of legislation. Again, citizens have little chance of making it in Brussels. At the same time, the absence of 'scientific proof' has made institutions slow to respond. This goes for the developments surrounding climate change, for instance.

To make decision-making more communicative, several things *could* be done. One step is to institutionalize external voices further. For citizens this is partly done by the opportunity to appeal decisions at the ECJ. To include civil concerns at an early stage an advisory committee for citizens could be appointed. Interests with a more established stake in decision-making, could be given more than an advisory role. Secondly, external interests should be less dependent on the resources mentioned before. Weakly represented interests could be supported financially. Also, knowledge resources should be opened up to citizens (see part 6.3.1.). Finally, regulation should leave blanks to be worked out at a local scale. On this scale it is easier to account for diversity and cooperate with 'others'. Directives are the most suitable instrument for this objective.

It must be said then, that the communicative ideal certainly has institutional boundaries in the European arena. While the EU deals with so many interests, it is virtually impossible to institutionalize them and to account for them all. The trouble to involve all actors can be demonstrated most easily for European citizens. In order to establish more contact with its citizens, the EU has employed various tactics. Informing them has been the most substantial gesture so far. By the sheer size and diversity of the people, involving citizens with the legislative process is just not possible. More inclusive cooperation might work at a local scale (see CEC, 2001).

#### *6.4.4. Ideological limits to the communicative ideal*

Besides institutional trouble to provide resources and access for all external voices, there have been some ideological deadlocks as well. In other words, it is not possible to unite the three worldviews on the environment. It can be said that the EU never truly revised all its liberal foundations. In the 80's there has been a time in which regulation and market competition were not seen as contradictory goals. However, later it proved that countries had a hard time to agree on European regulation. As a second example, greens have remained critical towards the 'greening' of business. To them it is another way to keep the consumerist system going.

The liberal foundations of the EU are visible in its treaties as well. For liberal 'crown jewels' a closed voting procedure is kept. This means a consultative role for the EP and requirement of an unanimous vote in the Council. In practice it means that there is little regulation and change possible, because consent has to be given by all Member States. Issues belonging to this realm are energy policy and financial regulation. Unless there is a paradigm-change, it will probably take a long before these issues can be 'opened up' to more democratic decision-making. Unfortunately, paradigm changes usually correspond with a 'crises' (compare the theory of Kuhn, van Bersselaar, 2003).

### **6.5. Conclusion**

First of all this chapter has shown how the characteristics of two branches of sub-politics influence environmental discourse on every level. As environmental problems are increasingly characterized by remoteness and invisibility, we are more and more dependent on science and the media to provide us with relevant information. Moreover, in part 6.3.1. the claim was made that scientific data often is a key resource in discussions about the environment. However, total reliance on scientific evidence can create an indecisive situation when there are opposite claims. Media, the second entity to influence the political agenda, provides many opportunities to give a biased picture of the environment. Interestingly enough, the involvement of the media was an important factor in making green issues known to the public in the first place.

Then, within the political setting of the EU, two discursive struggles have guided the environmental discourse very distinctly. Subsidiarity is the principle that was used to determine 'who should act'. During the 80's a 'generous' interpretation of this principle led to a lot of environmental legislation on the

European level. In the beginning of the 90's many countries regretted the expansion of the EU and they became more careful handing tasks over to the European arena. To expand its base of competence and to make more informed and swift decisions, the EU has tried to make itself more democratic and legitimate. This was most effectively done by revising decision-making procedures and more vaguely by establishing a 'dialogue' with citizens. Besides having more informed citizens, it is not clear where this commitment should lead.

In part 6.4.1. it was explained how the different worldviews have interacted with the institutional framework of the EU. In general it can be said that the EU had a very liberal start, was able to expand its regulatory impact in the late 80's and got back a lot of liberalist tendencies in the 90's. Communicative ideas were present in this period as well. Besides the opportunities offered by institutional changes, environmental politics have been revised by themselves as well. While environmental regulation was seen as hostile to the liberal framework at first, environmental problems urged the need for regulation. Later on, regulation was seen from a wider perspective. By integrating environmental concerns into other fields of policy, sustainable development was to be achieved. Also, the environment was approached with a more inclusive framework. The respect paid to interconnections and animal health we can see as ecopocentric tendencies.

In part 6.4.3. and 6.4.4. the communicative ideal was touched upon shortly. The EU does not show a preference for a certain kind of external interest, and has cooperated with all sorts of groups. However, there have been some distinctions. Groups with more financial resources and scientific background were able to keep track of opportunities in the EU arena and distinguish their own voice more easily. Inequalities can be resolved for some part by institutionalizing weak voices, supporting several groups or leaving more room for local cooperation. Then, there are some ideological issues. Some fields are not flexible enough to be discussed within a communicative arena. Here, the liberalist foundations of the EU is still very much intact.

So, in the end it can be concluded that the communicative ideal has been met by several developments within the EU. Among these are the institutionalization of interests and support of weaker voices. On the other hand, reflection and communication is troubled because the some interests have more resources and some ideas have more priority in the Council of ministers. This could mean that environmental problems are not always addressed with the pro

# 7. Conclusion

## 7.1. Introduction

In this final chapter a reflection on the general themes of this thesis is made. Also, these themes are related to other debates in policy-making. The first part of this chapter, 7.2., will return to the questions asked in the introduction of this thesis. Chapter by chapter the outcome of these questions are discussed.

In part 7.3. the implications of this thesis for the EU are discussed and some policy recommendations will be provided. Part 7.4 then, places this thesis in relation to other academic debates and proposes a couple of topics for further research. Finally, in part 7.5, a couple words are addressed to the reader.

## 7.2. Answering research questions

In this part the questions posed in the part 1.4.2. will be answered. As mentioned before in the same part, these are not questions with a very straightforward answer. Rather, they require a blurred vision and a certain feeling for abstraction. Or, as our German neighbors say, some 'Fingerspitzengefühl'. Unfortunately, these are indispensable qualities for academic research. Therefore, the questions can only be answered with the amount of abstraction the author has acquired so far.

Chapter 2:        *What are the elements of the concept discourse and how do these relate to the communicative approach?*

The discourse method is not a clearly defined tool to use for scholarly investigation. It is related to multiple philosophical debates, and therefore calls for a specific accent by the investigator. Usually, discourse is used in relation to the representation of reality through language. Originally, this debate belonged to the realm of epistemology and ontology, but more recently it has been related to the distribution of power and politics as well. Supported by the theory of Anthony Giddens, this thesis emphasizes the interaction of two elements of discourse. In chapter 3 the representation of the environment is discussed and in chapter 4 the dispersal of power within the EU.

The communicative approach then, is about opening up discourse to all worldviews. Habermas proposes that actors can work out an unbiased consensus when power relations are frozen. While it allows actors to exchange their knowledge, the communicative approach will deliver well-informed decisions. Also, the cooperation of multiple actors will create a feeling of unity, or 'social capital', among the contributors. Sociologist Ulrich Beck tells us it is essential to open up politics and science in order to revise the dominant paradigm of industrial modernism.

Chapter 3: *Where do the roots of modern day environmentalism lie and to which political philosophies are they related?*

Environmentalism is rooted in a wider social and mental system and displays interaction with other thoughts and values. In ancient times, people worshipped their environment as it provided them with their daily needs. Then, the introduction of monotheist religions, sort of separated the human concerns from the environment. Christianity for instance, led to the dominant view that humans were the centre of creation and they should dominate the earth. Even later, many of these anthropocentric assumptions were questioned by scientists like Copernicus and Darwin. More recently, successful distribution of wealth has led to a rise of post-materialist values in western society.

While the environment was suffering the industrialization, a healthy environment became one of the new values demanded by society in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the environment has not been a straightforward problem. While many environmental issues are placed further and further from everyday life of humans, our cognitive system has trouble to estimate the risks related to them. This is why multiple perspectives on the environment have tried to determine politics

In part 3.3. these perspectives of environmental politics are analyzed shortly. For analytical reasons 4 categories have been chosen, in real life there are probably as many flavors of environmentalism as there are people. Some groups would like the government to intervene in environmental issues, others expect the market to solve all problems and still others would like the whole human system to take a couple of steps back. The fourth kind of environmentalism, a communicative one, tries to let all ideas interact together and reach an innovative consensus.

Chapter 4: *In what way is the decision-making power of the EU distributed between the European actors?*

Over time the EU has acquired quite a lot of competencies in the field of environmental policy. Expansion was huge in the 80's, as the politicization of green issues and the popularity of Europe seemed to coincide perfectly in those days. As a lion's share of environmental legislation is made in Brussels, the decision-making procedures of the EU grossly determine how power is distributed within the EU. Because in most procedures decision-making power is distributed between three EU-institutions, power is necessarily dispersed.

Besides a dispersal of power between the European institutions, the EU is dependent on a lot of other actors to feed and legitimize their legislation. Member States are well represented by the Council and lobby groups NGO's and citizens can use opportunities provided by the Commission and the EP. In this context, the expanded role of the EP granted by the SEA and the TEU, has made the EU more democratic and responsive towards public interests. However, the EP still holds the lowest stake in the decision-making process and yields little involvement of European citizens.



Chapter 5: *How can interest groups like ICLEI and EUROCITIES get access to the EU?*

Because lobby groups like ICLEI and EUROCITIES hold valuable knowledge and operate the right level of abstraction to the EU, they are seen as lucrative decision-making partners. Both ICLEI and EUROCITIES, while having a different approach, were able to contribute directly to the formulation of legislation. In this way they were able to get some of their own agenda adopted. Access essentially depends on the ability to keep track of the Brussels agenda and react to it at the right moment by introducing of new and innovative ideas. In this, financial resources and a 'network of people' are indispensable. Having a lot of influence on the legislation-game is nearly impossible, because many groups compete for funding, attention and access to the EU.

Chapter 6: *How much of the communicative ideal was adapted by the EU within the territory of environmental politics?*

Both science and media have taken an important role to frame the discourse of environmental policy before it enters the political stage. Actors lacking scientific resources or training will experience difficulties to take part in European decision-making. As Rydin notes, many green lobby groups learned to speak the scientific language to get access to the discourse. This of course displays an important paradox of discourse: one must speak the language of a discourse to be included. It is contrary to the communicative ideal as well, since a communicative discourse would allow access to all languages. Science should therefore be opened up to all actors.

In part 6.3. and 6.4. it was shown how the interpretation of political definitions has guided environmental decision-making. The central objective of the EU, the creation of a single market, has put an exploitative stamp on the EU for many years. During the 80's however, a legal base for environmental policy was created and the interventionist worldview could gain some territory. The combination of market objectives and environmental regulation can serve as an example of reflexivity within a dominant paradigm. However, by the beginning of the 90's Member States began to see European involvement as a threat. Consequently, they summoned the principle of subsidiary to retain competencies at a national level.

Conclusively, the diversity of EU legislation does not point to a consensus between the actors, but more to outside factors, like political momentum and the popularity of environmental issues, that have guided environmental decision-making. Moreover, the EU has tried to be open to all the different worldviews, but in the end retains a liberalist core. Until a 'crisis' calls for it, some ideas just seem to be impossible to unite with this paradigm. It is for instance possible to issue a Water Framework Directive that has far reaching implications for the governance of water bodies, but not attainable to issue a CO<sub>2</sub>-tax. So, opportunities to change the environmental discourse of Europe exist, but an 'ideal speech situation' does not.

### **7.3. Policy implications and appeal for open decision-making**

That the environment is suffering from human development is not under much debate. But there is one problem, we have no idea how deep the crisis goes. And, keeping politics in mind, which of the 3 worldviews is efficient enough to address environmental crisis.

Because the scale of environmental problems has increased through time, a supranational approach seems to be a useful addition to national policy. However, if environmental policy-making in the EU is not able to account for the diversity and the problem-solving strategies pursued by different Member States and regions, the question should be raised if the environmental policy by the EU is adequate. In this thesis a couple of dilemmas have been touched upon. Here a couple of changes are proposed.

This thesis has shown that the EU has quite an open structure for lobbying groups, often way more open than national governments. As has been suggested in part 4.4.1., the thin EU-bureaucracy makes the institution able to account for diversity. Even more, it makes itself dependent on diversity, because it needs the knowledge input by these groups. National governments with a more extensive bureaucracy will more easily close off interests and make decisions on their own.

While the EU seems to be a suitable and informed institution to make legislation for the environment, it is getting more and more hard to prescribe specific aims to achieve set targets. Enlargement of the Union and the trend of globalization both cause more variation between regions. To allow for variety, directives should be more open ended on the implementation-side and sometimes regions might even call for deviation from original targets. This approach seems to have worked in the Netherlands yet (see VROM, 2003).

That the environment is suffering from human development is not under much debate. But there is one problem, we have no idea how deep the crisis goes. And, keeping politics in mind, which of the 3 worldviews is efficient enough to address environmental crisis. What is important here, is that knowledge is not monopolized by certain groups, but remains open to public scrutiny. Weaker voices could be supported and institutionalized by resources from the EU. Publication of scientific reports might therefore be a good method to keep innovation going (see CEC, 2001 as well). A good and efficient way to do this, is to keep lobby groups active, diverse and innovative. The same specifications go for the media. Eventually it is essential to politicize environmental risk in all realms, because the market may not be the proper way to deal with them.

Politicization also serves the purpose of reflection. By reflecting on the problem, people will be able see if their own behavior is in line with the environmental situation they propose. Also, citizens will get more involved if they are confronted with environmental problems in their own proximity (Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004). As citizens take an ever larger stake in environmental degradation it is impossible for the EU to deny their role. More and more they will have to cooperate together on the creation and implementation of policy.

So, conclusively it can be said that in order to address environmental problems more adequately the EU should keep out and ear for different needs and ideas. On the one hand, this is done by opening monopolized structures as science and politics. On the other hand, groups can be stimulated to contribute to solutions. Supporting Local Agenda 21 initiatives would be an example of stimulating bottom-up institutionalization, innovation and action.

#### **7.4. Related discussions and further research**

During the creation of this thesis a lot of different subjects were touched. Some of them were extremely interesting, but could not be address within the scope of this project. A couple of them might provide interesting leads for more research. These are the most important ones.

- We should always be careful about stable political situation. As Ulrich Beck (1992) demonstrates so convincingly, we might just be collectively ‘legitimizing’ unsafety. So, although liberalism has ‘won’, or we have entered the ‘end of history’, as Francis Fukuyama claims triumphantly in his famous book, it does not mean the Western system is flawless. Even a critical and negative approach to modernism will eventually make us meek. When things do not really change, we eventually are forced to love what we hate (Beck 1997). We have to stay awake and give ourselves a whack on the head every now and then to revise the patterns we live in (see van Oech, 1998). Psychologists suggest the same thing: we must confront our behavior to see what causes it. In turn, we can change it (Du Nann Winter & Koger, 2004). The interesting question here is: what kind of environmentally damaging habits and could (easily) change?
- Another thing that has surfaced in this thesis is the central versus local debate. While the uniqueness of a local arena seems to call for a local approach, central organs can be very useful agree on common goals. Research could focus on the effectiveness of goal setting on different scales. For instance the outcome of the Kyoto negotiations, and the regional response to such a global mandate. More simply put: are supranational politics effective?
- Thirdly, this: the US-lifestyle is known for its environmentally devastating impact, but trough television or other media, it still serves as a role model for many other countries.<sup>11</sup> China for instance, is swiftly becoming the first economy of the world, can the earth supply them with rate of car-ownership and energy consumption they copy from the US? And if not, should the Western world maybe change its consumption pattern as well? Can the EU give a more progressive example?

#### **7.5. Epilogue**

This thesis has been a very rewarding experience. Rather than summing up some theories it became a journey which has deepened my interest for a whole range of topics. Over time one gets to see how multiple things affect each other. In the end politics have to be at least as complex as ecosystems. For this

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<sup>11</sup> An averaged American need 7.2 times the biological capacity of the Earth. In other words, if we all lived like Americans, we would need 7.2 globes to support our consumption pattern.

complexity I did not get tired of the original subject, which happens sometimes with assignments that are fenced off. In contrast, I got more and more involved with it and I have not stopped reading on either Europe, the environment or the communicative approach.

Being at the end of my thesis, I would gladly want to thank my readers for working through this and as for me it represents the interests that are now widely awake in me, I welcome them to discuss every part of it.

Evert Stellingwerf,

Balk, 2007.

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