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**Intergovernmental cultural policy coordination in the European
Union: the Open Method of Coordination and the 2011-2014 Work
Plan for Culture**

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Thesis submitted for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis examines the European Union's Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in the field of cultural policy. The OMC, a method of intergovernmental policy coordination that is centrally coordinated by the European Commission, was introduced in the cultural field in 2008. Using a case study of Policy Priority A in the 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture, this thesis examines how the OMC operates as well as what outcomes it produces. It does so using a sociological institutionalism theoretical framework, supplemented with insights from the literatures on multi-level governance and policy learning. It uses a combination of research methods including document analysis, interviews with key actors, and participant observation, ultimately leading to new insights into the processes and practices of EU policy coordination.

Findings on the processes of coordination reveal insights into the EU's inter-institutional dynamics and demonstrate that the European Commission is a key player in the culture OMC. They also indicate considerable heterogeneity in how Member States 'approach' participation in the OMC and indicate that ultimately there is a weak connection between the OMC and national-level politics. Findings also show that the outcomes of coordination are multifaceted; while few examples of direct political and programmatic change were found, there is a complex set of other outcomes, including increased vertical coordination, socialisation and networking, and heuristic learning and concept usage.

The thesis' findings make contributions to several multi-disciplinary areas of academic research. They add most directly to the literatures on EU cultural policy, specifically on the processes and outcomes of policy coordination in the field, and contribute a new sectoral case study to the existing literature on the Open Method of Coordination as well. They also make broader contributions to the study of cultural policy (in particular cultural policy approached from a political science/public policy perspective), policy learning, and European governance and integration.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

CAC	Cultural Affairs Committee
CCI	Cultural and creative industries
CEC	Commission of the European Communities
CoE	Council of Europe
CoR	Committee of the Regions
COREPER	Committee of Permanent Representatives
DG	Directorate-General
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECoC	European Capital of Culture
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
MLG	Multi-level governance
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
NI	New institutionalism
QMV	Qualified majority voting
SI	Sociological institutionalism
TEC	Treaty Establishing the European Community
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TEU	Treaty on European Union
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

PART I: THE RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“I strongly believe in this idea of culture being really the soul of Europe – and not just saying that! It’s not appealing if we say we’re together just because of finances! We have to have something deeper that connects us. I strongly hope that it’s culture and cultural heritage.”

Viktoria (interviewee), interview, October 2014

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research project began in October 2012. Since then, the European Union has faced several crises: recovery from the 2008 financial crash, austerity, Greece, Russia, ISIS, the 2014 European Parliament elections and the rise of anti-EU/European sentiments and far right parties across the continent, the heart-breaking tales of migrants who risk their lives to come to the EU, the 2016 UK referendum on EU membership... the list goes on. These are political, economic, and social challenges, but cultural ones too. Because of this climate, I often received “wows” and looks of incredulity when strangers asked me the subject of my PhD. Typical responses included “cultural policy in the European Union – can’t think of a better and more relevant time to be studying that!” Or, “wow, how topical.” Yet what struck me every single time I heard these responses is how isolated and removed what I was studying actually was from these observations. Strangers’ perceptions were nowhere near what was really going on in the day-to-day conversations about culture in the EU.

This thesis examines the process and outcomes of cultural policy coordination in the European Union. Culture¹ became a European Union competence in the 1992 *Treaty of*

¹ The European Union does not explicitly define cultural policy, but it is generally agreed to be policies associated with the arts (museums, the visual arts, the performing arts, heritage and historic preservation, and humanities programs such as literature poetry), and may also extend to other areas such as libraries, zoos, botanical gardens, fairs and festivals, folklore, and crafts (Mulcahy 2006). Craik, Davis, and Sunderland (2000) have identified four key areas that cultural policy can encompass; these are *arts and culture* (including cultural institutions), *communications and media* (including, for example, broadcasting

Maastricht.² Since then, the EU has been involved in a variety of programmes, funding opportunities, and initiatives in the field. In 2008, the European Commission initiated a process of policy coordination between Member States, in the form of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), a method of intergovernmental coordination already in use in other policy areas and associated primarily with the 2000-2010 Lisbon Strategy. The introduction of an OMC, along with the solidification of an overall EU cultural strategy in the 2007 Agenda for Culture, represented a turning point in the EU's cultural agenda (CEC 2010a, McDonald et al. 2013a). Yet, until now, no one has asked crucial questions about the OMC: how does it work? Who participates in the coordination process and what do they discuss? Does it produce any results? The objective of this research is to thus examine the *process* – why and how do Member States coordinate cultural policies and how is this facilitated by the EU – as well as the *outcomes* of the EU's culture OMC. This research thus seeks to bring cultural policy 'out of the dark' by providing a detailed public policy study of a policy sector in the EU that has in general been the subject of little scrutiny, particularly from a public policy perspective.

The European Union has been described as the most unique and complex system of governance in the world because of its exceedingly complicated bureaucratic and multi-level structure and the wide variety of internal and external actors involved in its policy-making: “[i]n few areas of interstate politics are ideals so often invoked, identities so clearly at stake, and interests so complex, challenging, and uncertain” (Moravcsik 2001, p.176). However, while there has been unprecedented interest in the study of the EU, and in particular of European integration, among a variety of academic disciplines, EU cultural policy – and particularly the *processes* of policy-making in this sector – still sits on the sidelines. It is true that the European Union is first and foremost a union of economics and trade; “[c]ulture has never been at the core of European integration” (Bozoki n.d., p.1). Yet, since the Maastricht Treaty, the cultural and the social have played a more prominent, if still ill-defined, role in European integration. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that cultural policy has received so little attention in the literature

and publishing), *citizenship and identity*, and *spatial culture* (urban policy and cultural planning, and cultural heritage).

² Note, however, that there was informal action in the field prior to this, which occurred without legal grounding (see more on this in chapter 2). Before Maastricht, the treaties contained only “fleeting” references to culture (Sandell 1996, p.268), such as article 36 of the 1957 Treaty of Rome, which concerns the protection of national treasures with “artistic, historic or archaeological value.”

on European public policy, even more so because this sits in direct opposition to the attention it has been given by EU public figures as well as what appears in policy documents (Langen 2010), where its many “integrative powers” are strongly stressed (Staiger 2009, p.2).³

Culture is a competence that “entered the arena of EU jurisdiction under complex and contradictory conditions” (Sarikakis 2007b, p.14). It is a ‘functional’ policy area in the European Union, meaning that the EU has a narrow and specific remit (Versluis, van Keulen, and Stephenson 2011). It is also a supporting competence: the EU *supplements* but does not override the cultural policies of the Member States (and/or regions).⁴ There is strong adherence to the principle of subsidiarity,⁵ which means that EU involvement in the field must be continuously justified. EU cultural policy faces unique challenges in that culture is a policy sector imbued with symbolic and political tensions, and is often used rhetorically and symbolically as a catalyst for European integration. Uta Staiger (2013) also identifies the polysemic nature of culture, the range of cultural policy traditions in the Member States, and thus the form and legitimacy of EU involvement in the field as complexities of cultural policy at the supranational level (see also Barnett 2001). It is these challenges that make EU cultural policy such a fascinating object of study.

In their book on analysing EU policy processes, Versluis, van Keulen, and Stephenson (2011) designate culture as a policy area in which ‘the EU’ (perhaps left vague due to competing positions among main institutions) would like to have more involvement but is met by resistance from Member States, who still see culture as best handled at the national or even sub-national level. Similarly, Littoz-Monnet (2007, p.2), says that culture

³ Consider this excerpt from a speech by Past President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso at the opening of the 2013 EU Culture Forum in Brussels: “[c]ulture is, and always has been, the cement that binds Europe together. It is an essential part of the very foundations of our European project and must remain firmly entrenched in our ideals if we are to succeed in achieving a more united, a stronger and open Europe” (Barroso 2013).

⁴ Differing from other areas of EU competence which are *exclusive* (such as competition policy related to the common market) or *shared* (such as agriculture and fisheries).

⁵ Subsidiarity, outlined in article 5(3) of Maastricht (TEU) is a principle of EU law based on taking decisions as close to the citizen as possible “and that constant checks are made to verify that action at EU level is justified in light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level. [...] Specifically, it is the principle whereby the EU does not take action (except in the areas that fall within its exclusive competence), unless it is more effective than action taken at national, regional or local level” (EUR-Lex [n.d.]).

has been a field that Member States have been “particularly disinclined” to transfer competence to the EU. Simply put, culture is a controversial policy area in the EU. Indeed, it is not obvious as to why there *should* be a cultural competence at the EU level; the existence of a competence does not necessarily mean that intervention in it is rationally justified or explained. This is especially true for the OMC, which is a process initiated by the Commission but in theory ‘by and for’ Member States. For a student interested in everyday decision-making processes, this raises many important questions about how decisions are made and who they are made by in a system as complex as the European Union whereby 28 Member States must work together with each other and with supranational institutions to achieve consensus.⁶

Because of its interdisciplinary nature combining EU public policy and cultural policy, this work has, in essence, two audiences. First of all, it speaks to public policy scholars, in particular those who study EU public policy, because of its focus on the processes and institutions. It thus directly contributes to the ‘governance turn’ within European Union studies (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006; see also chapter 3 of this thesis), particularly to the literature on institutions from a sociological institutionalism perspective. It also speaks to cultural policy scholars, a multidisciplinary and diverse group that comprises a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches within a wide umbrella of research. Even within a diverse body of work, political science and/or public policy approaches to cultural policy remain in the minority.⁷ However, this thesis makes use of insights from cultural policy studies, which tends to treat the sector as *sui generis* (see chapter 3), and thus speaks to this discipline as well. As both disciplines are marked by theoretical and methodological pluralism, this allows for scope in combining insights from other disciplines.⁸ Every effort has been made so that this thesis is comprehensible to both groups and thus there is some theoretical and conceptual ‘bridging’ involved throughout.

⁶ By ‘everyday’ practices I mean not the ‘high politics’ of the European Council or Commissioners, but the actions of policy officers (Lewis 2003).

⁷ Note that in North America, these are two distinct fields; the former concentrating more on political parties, interest groups, and behaviour, the latter on why and how specific policies are chosen (the study of public policy tends to be a graduate-only program). In the UK, the distinction is much more blurred, and the use of ‘political studies’ is a broader term that encompasses the study of both. I use the term ‘public policy’ for sake of consistency throughout.

⁸ Indeed, “one of the explicit challenges of cultural policy research is the variety of audiences than can (and, perhaps, must) be addressed” (Scullion and Garcia 2005, p.114).

1.2 RESEARCH PUZZLES AND QUESTIONS

The reasons for undertaking this study can be split into two closely linked areas of inquiry, the empirical puzzle and the theoretical and methodological puzzles. These are discussed in turn below, relating to both the study of cultural policy and the study of EU governance/policy coordination.

1.2.1 The empirical puzzle

The basic goal at the beginning of this research project was to discover more about how a controversial, sensitive, and little-studied policy area was governed in the EU. It is not obvious, in a union of 28 Member States, how ‘culture’ should be treated, approached, or governed (or even defined). More specifically, while academic research exists on many aspects of EU cultural policy (see chapter 3), there is no existing work on the EU’s policy coordination efforts in this field. I was interested in both *how* the OMC worked and also in *what effects* it had and whether participants felt that ‘progress’ had been made. Who controls and manages this process? Is it driven by the Member States? Had dialogue advanced on these topics? Are the norms and ideas emanating from the European Union being “appropriated by national actors and diffused to national discourses and identities” (Meyer, Linsenmann, and Wessels 2007a, p.21-22)? Had any domestic policies changed as a result of the OMC?

The direct coming-together of 20+ Member States discussing cultural matters needs to be examined from both a process and content point of view: not only the content and themes that are discussed, but *how* policy is coordinated. Policy coordination is not a simple matter of administrative decision-making; these are political choices (Lascoumes and Le Gales 2007). Too many existing studies on both EU cultural policy and cultural policy more generally obfuscate the everyday ‘nitty gritty’ of policy-making – how policy is made and who is responsible for decision-making. These micro-level details are the subject of study for many other policy fields but have been overlooked in the cultural field, generally in favour of analysing the *content* of policies rather than the processes by which they come together.

Attention to process is important, as it helps “us uncover new terrains which could not be appraised by looking only at outcomes; this approach stresses the activities of actors rather than their accomplishments...” (Ripoll Servent and Busby 2013, p.8). It reveals vital details about power relations and dynamics within a political system. Focusing on process also illuminates the inherent challenges of multi-level governance. The EU “is characterised by constant interaction and negotiation, where borders between national and supranational, but also between politics and administration, are blurred” (Jacobsson and Vifell 2007, p. 164). In the case of cultural policy, we know little about the ramifications of MLG. Nowhere can we see these tensions so clearly as in a process such as the OMC, which involves the participation of EU, national, and subnational actors as well as civil society platforms, external experts, and non-government organisations (NGOs).

The second puzzle concerns the study of policy coordination, one of five modes of governance in the EU.⁹ Each mode differs in the way that policy is made – the actors, institutions, and procedures involved. In policy coordination, understood to be an interactive process that, in its ideal form, involves a “common search for optimal solutions through openness, sharing information, and cooperation rather than through applying authority and control” (Ben-Gera 2009, p.2), no law is made and decisions are not legally-binding.¹⁰ Rather, it is a non-hierarchical system based on voluntarism, subsidiarity, sharing, socialisation, and collective problem solving (Héritier 2001, de la Porte 2002, Borrás and Jacobsson 2004). These coordination mechanisms are used when Member States are unwilling to transfer further competences to the EU but where there is a shared commitment to act. Policy coordination is “part of a more abstract move from ‘government’ to ‘governance’...based on procedures that are voluntary, open, consensual, deliberative, informative” (Caporaso and Wittenbrinck 2006, p.471-474, as quoted in Twena 2012, p.50).¹¹ This approach thus stands outside of the traditional regulatory-focused Community model whereby law is passed that must then be transposed within the Member States.

⁹ The others are the traditional Community method, EU regulatory mode, EU distributional mode, and intensive transgovernmentalism (Wallace and Wallace 2007).

¹⁰ Coordination involves “a division of labour, the development of standard operating procedures and a programme, the creation of transmission channels for decisions, the provision of communication channels for information and means of training and ‘indoctrination’” (Simon 1957[1997], p.112, as quoted in Lodge 2007, p.347).

¹¹ See chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of *governance*.

The Open Method of Coordination is one type of coordination, based on an intergovernmental logic of Member States coordinating policies outside of the traditional Community method. However, in defining and delineating the OMC, agreement ends there. Zeitlin refers to the OMC as an ‘unidentified political object’ (2005a). There is a lack of clarity both in the academic literature but more crucially within the EU itself. It is *not clear* how to define the Open Method of Coordination, nor what it is exactly meant to achieve, nor indeed when it should be used. It thus seems best to categorise the OMC as a process of policy coordination that is continually evolving and being re-defined, with the knowledge that “variability may actually be an inherent and intentional characteristic of the OMC, reflecting the need to adapt the OMC to different contexts and over time” (van Homeyer 2007, p.46, as quoted in Twena 2012, p.28).

Despite this conceptual lack of clarity, “[t]he growing political salience, proliferation, and variety of OMC processes has elicited a bewildering array of contradictory assessments from both academic researchers and EU policy actors alike” (Zeitlin 2005a, p.22). Much of this research emerged in the first half of the last decade, in the midst of the Lisbon Strategy (see more on this in chapter 3). There are two gaps within the OMC literature that this thesis seeks to fill. The first is empirical in nature in that, in a cultural policy context, there is little known about why and how cultural policy is coordinated among the EU-28. This needs to be further interrogated, as, as Armstrong (2010) discusses, just because policy coordination *exists* in a given field does not mean that there is a rational reason for its existence. As a fairly new working method in the cultural field, representing a new form of consultation, participation, and representation (Barnett 2001), there is very little available information on the culture OMC, its rationale, and the way it works in practice. Thus, exploring this “cognitive and normative tool for defining and building consensus around a distinctive European social [cultural] model and policy paradigm based on common objectives and values” (Zeitlin 2005a, p.22) is the basis of this research, representing as well a novel contribution to the literature on the OMC.

The second (partial) gap in the OMC literature is a conceptual one. Too many existing studies of the OMC obfuscate *how* the OMC works in favour of *whether* it works. The result is that while we are much wiser about many of the OMC’s benefits and flaws, there is not a lot known about how exactly coordination functions (for exceptions see Kröger 2008’s book and 2009 edited special edition and Armstrong 2010). This is important

because working methods are not neutral (Borrás and Jacobsson 2004, Lascoumes and Le Gales 2007); they are political choices, even though the selection of policy tools and instruments is “generally presented, in a functionalist manner, as a matter of simple technical choices” (Lascoumes and Le Gales 2007, p.8). We thus need to interrogate the OMC as a tool of governance and examine both how it operates and what, if any, outcomes it produces. In this vein, the thesis offers, in the conclusion, some ideas on how the OMC could be modified. This thesis thus contributes to what Mark Dawson (2011) calls the ‘third wave’ of OMC research, where the focus is on empirical inquiry and detail.

1.2.2 The theoretical and methodological puzzles

The second part of the research puzzle concerns the theoretical and methodological dimensions. Both the study of public policy and cultural policy are marked by theoretical and methodological diversity (Scullion and Garcia 2005, Gray 2010, Cairney and Heikkila 2014). By applying under-used theoretical and methodological approaches this research represents advancements in both disciplines.

First of all, one of the underlying arguments of this thesis is that in order to better understand cultural policy, more in-depth analysis is needed into the *processes* by which decisions on policy are made. This is a line of investigation that has to date been under-utilised in the disparate field of cultural policy studies (see chapter 3): much existing cultural policy literature focuses on the content of policy, presuming rationality in policy-making (Gaio 2015) and thus neglecting the inherent ‘messiness’ of politics. However, like any other policy area, making cultural policy presents difficult questions, of “values, judgments, tastes, and preferences, rather than facts” (Cummings and Katz 1987b, p.15), and, “...with limited resources, decisions must be made” (*Ibid.*). Too much existing cultural policy research neglects these conditions. Politics is about power, choices, and constraints. It is humans making choices and operating within these constraints, and they are made within a specific setting; in other words, decisions are made within a particular institutional *context* and must be studied in situ. Thus, by using research methods that allow in-depth exploration of process, deeply contextualising it, I show how useful theories from the discipline of public policy can be in studying cultural policy. A sociological institutionalism perspective, covered in much more detail in chapter 4, is interested in role of institutions, broadly defined to encompass social and cultural norms within a given organisational setting, and their roles in political outcomes.

Secondly, the literature on the Open Method of Coordination is noted for its theoretical and methodological pluralism (see Borrás and Radaelli 2010), which there is certainly room for in studies of EU governance (see Zahariadis 2013; Lynggaard, Manners, and Löfgren 2015). New institutionalism, particularly the sociological strand, is an under-used method in the study of the OMC. It is concerned with the socio-cultural characteristics of political action and therefore allows an explicit focus on organisational practices, both formal and informal, within the operation of the OMC. In terms of research methods, research that uses original data in the study of the OMC is in the minority: in a 2010 literature review of 52 studies, 21 used original data or survey methods, while 29 articles did not use any original data (two were missing) (Borrás and Radaelli 2010, p.28). This means that a large percentage of the literature makes normative statements about the effectiveness of the OMC but is often imprecise on details and in some cases does not use primary sources to come to these conclusions. The “need to ground policy co-ordination processes in better analytical and normative frameworks” (Armstrong 2008, p.414) is therefore a very real one.

1.2.3 Research questions

The overall research question that this project deals with is *What are the processes and outcomes of cultural policy coordination in the European Union?*

Table 1.1 Thesis research questions

<p>Main research question: How is cultural policy coordinated in the European Union and what are the outcomes of EU cultural policy coordination?</p> <p>Sub-questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the roles of the European Commission and Council of the European Union in the OMC? 2. What are the roles of the Member States in the operation of the OMC? 3. Does the culture OMC result in any policy learning or change?

These questions contribute to existing literatures in both a narrow and broad sense. Results will add to our understanding of EU policy coordination in the field of culture, by exposing how and why policy is coordinated and also whether learning and change

occurs as a result of this (and, if so, how). More broadly, because of the interdisciplinary nature of the research, findings also contribute to our understanding of cultural policy more generally, to the study of EU cultural policy, to the study of the Open Method of Coordination, to the study of EU governance and integration, and finally to the study of policy learning.

1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The overall objective of this research is therefore to determine how the culture OMC works and what outcomes it produces. The goal of this study is not to determine causal predictive relationships but rather to *construct a narrative surrounding the processes and outcomes of policy coordination*.

1.3.1 Theoretical and methodological approaches

The ontological base of this research is one that favours constructivist explanations. This allows for an in-depth exploration of institutions and structures, based on the argument that the EU is “so complex and unpredictable, [that] institutional and structural factors are more influential than calculated rational action in determining policy outcomes” (Hix 1998, p.54). This perspective is thus a step forward in trying to combine insights from different scholarly traditions, EU public policy and cultural policy, that unite in methodological approaches (Rosamond 2015).

The thesis sits within the body of work known as ‘the governance turn’ in EU studies. The focus of this perspective is not on theorising Member State behaviour in terms of international relations theory and bargaining according to Member State preferences, but the *everyday processes of policy-making in a multi-level system*, reflecting that whereas a modern state was characterised by its unitary nature,

“[p]ost-modern European states operate within a much more complex, cross-cutting network of governance, based upon the breakdown of the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs, on mutual interference in each other’s domestic affairs, on increasing mutual transparency, and on the emergence of a sufficiently strong sense of community to guarantee mutual security” (Wallace 1999, p.519).

My focus is thus how policy is coordinated, who it is coordinated by, and what outcomes emerge from coordination. Analysing governance is “not just a matter of the macro or

trans-sectoral level. Rather it is also necessary to take into account the policy- or issue-specific level” (Bulmer 1993, p.353) and place analytical primacy on institutions, decision-making procedures, and rules (*Ibid.*)

As mentioned above, the thesis is theoretically rooted in a sociological new institutionalism (SI) perspective (March and Olsen 1989,¹² Powell and DiMaggio 1991) with added insights from the literatures on multi-level governance (Hooghe and Marks 2001, Bache and Flinders 2004) and policy learning and change (Zeitlin 2005b, 2009, 2011). This perspective is an interpretivist one that focuses on both process (analysed from an SI perspective) and outcomes (using Zeitlin’s categorisations of learning and change). An institutional perspective is concerned primarily with the *structure* of political activity and argues that institutions – defined as stable, regularly occurring norms, rules, and patterns of behaviour – are the most important part of political life (March and Olsen 1989). Institutions both constrain and enable actors, who behave according to a *logic of appropriateness* (March and Olsen 1984). Institutions also *create opportunities for* and *constrain* learning. Institutional approaches are suited to studying policy coordination given their pliability (in that they do not make strict predictions) and their focus on the differentiation between formal and informal institutions as well as on socially-embedded norms and beliefs within these institutions (Bulmer 1993).

The sociological strand, one of the three ‘main’ strands of institutionalism (discussed in much more detail in chapter 4), originated in the study of organisations in sociology. This framework,

“comprises a rejection of rational-actor models, an interest in institutions as independent variables, a turn toward cognitive and cultural explanations, and an interest in properties of supra-individual units of analysis that cannot be reduced to aggregations or direct consequences of individuals’ attributes or motives” (Powell and DiMaggio 1991, p.8)

In this perspective, institutions are defined broadly to include not only unwritten norms and rules but also “symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral templates” (Hall and Taylor 1996, p.14). Actors behave according to a logic of appropriateness, which is based on ‘acceptable’ behaviour in a socially-constructed setting. In order to move past one of the main criticisms of sociological institutionalism, my conceptualisation of the logic of

¹² March and Olsen’s work is sometimes classified as normative institutionalism rather than sociological. This distinction will be covered in more detail in chapter 4.

appropriateness extends to the logic of practices (Jenson and Mérand 2010), a concept developed in some work in EU studies which links appropriate behaviour with organisational and professional practices. This allows us to conceptualise agents not as simply blindly following rules but able to effect change as ‘change agents.’

A sociological institutional lens is supplemented by additional insights from the literatures on multi-level governance and policy learning. These two sets of frameworks help to further contextualise the complexity of EU policy coordination. Multi-level governance (Marks 1993) focuses on the relationships between nested levels of government and changes in sovereignty that come about as a result of supranational governance. Because it moves beyond the dialectic of integration theory (supranationalist versus intergovernmentalist), it is particularly useful for analysing the relationships between Member States and supranational institutions such as the European Commission; one of the tenets of MLG is that there is a loss of power to the Member States due to the nature of cooperation and co-decision in EU policy-making.

In order to analyse the outcomes of policy coordination, I also draw on the literature on policy learning, and, more specifically, Jonathan Zeitlin’s work on policy learning and change in the OMC. Learning in the OMC happens via deliberation, whereby “actors’ initial preferences are transformed through discussion by the force of the better argument” (Sabel and Zeitlin 2008, p.272). Zeitlin’s categories of outcomes encompass a wider variety of influences and more comprehensively reflects the diverse potential of impacts that the OMC has. His framework is adopted in order to,

“draw attention to a wider range of potential influences, including not only procedural changes in governance processes, but also ideational and discursive shifts, along with changes in issue salience and political agendas, through which the OMC may affect policies and policymaking at both national and European levels” (Zeitlin, Barcevičius, and Weishaupt 2014, p.8).

Coupled with an SI perspective, this approach produces a much more comprehensive understanding of learning and change as processes which are socially constructed.

The information that is relevant to answer the research question above pertains to the institutional environment of the Open Method of Coordination and includes routines, processes, contexts, constraints, and procedures. Because only a certain amount of

information can be gleaned from official documents, to get insider information one must go to more direct sources. The thesis therefore draws on three connected research methods: document analysis, semi-structured interviews with key actors, and participant observation. Each of these methods has its own strengths and weaknesses, which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5. Due to the challenges of studying the OMC (also covered in chapter 5), the triangulation of information through different research methods helps to ensure its validity and reliability.

Desk research in the form of document analysis involves a detailed review of relevant policy documents in order to become familiar with the policy language and main debates of EU cultural policy. Secondly, the collection of primary data took place in two different ways. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with key policy actors. The purpose of the interviews was to learn new information that is not attainable elsewhere; to get behind official narratives of policy documents and expose the ‘behind the scenes’ day-to-day elements of policy-making – aspects of managing the OMC that are not described in textbooks. However, interviews still “maintain distance” between the object of study and scholarly practices; therefore, participant observation “adds value because it opens black boxes of elite behaviour...that would otherwise stay closed” (Rhodes, ‘t Hart, and Noordegraaf 2007b, p.2). The result is that I am able to get ‘up close and personal’ to a specific process. This approach follows a subset of the public policy literature that is interested in ethnographic methods to study political outcomes (see, for example, Gains 2011; Rhodes, ‘t Hart, and Noordegraaf 2007a).

1.3.2 Case study approach¹³

In order to focus this study and to set boundaries, a case study approach was also adopted (Stake 2000, Cresswell 2007, Yin 2009). This research is concerned with the Council of the European Union’s 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture. This document set out foci for the EU’s policies and programming in the field of culture for this period. It was divided into six priority areas (see appendix 2). These priorities build on the Council’s previous Work Plan (2008-2010) and were developed in conjunction with the European Commission’s 2007 Agenda for Culture. They also directly relate to objectives for the EU’s Europe 2020 strategy.

¹³ Please note that the *methodological* implications of case studies will be discussed further in chapter 5.

Specifically, Priority A of the 2011-2014 Work Plan is the focus of this research. Priority A is ‘*Cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and accessible and inclusive culture*’ (for more information on these themes, see chapter 2). More specifically, its topics of focus identify the following more concrete sub-priorities:

1. better access to and wider participation in culture;
2. cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue (these first two via the role of public arts and cultural institutions);
3. development of a key competence ‘cultural awareness and expression,’ following a recommendation from a 2010 OMC group;
4. promotion of culturally inclusive cities; and
5. promotion of multilingualism.

These five points represent areas of interest and priority but do not refer to or mandate specific policies. Instead, they act as guidelines for both national and EU cultural programmes. The priorities are created at EU level and lie in a shared jurisdiction of EU and Member States. They are ‘assigned’ to a jurisdiction; in the five areas listed above, Member States are responsible for the first three and the European Commission the second two. The OMC is the main working method for those in the jurisdiction of the Member States and so the first three topics have OMC groups associated with them (herein referred to as groups 1, 2, and 3):

Table 1.2 Priority A’s Open Method of Coordination Working Groups, Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Name	The role of public arts and cultural institutions in the promotion of better access to and wider participation in culture	The role of public arts and cultural institutions in the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue	Development of the key competence ‘Cultural awareness and expression’
Task	Experts will identify policies and good practices of public arts and cultural institutions to promote better access to and wider participation in culture,	Experts will identify policies and good practices in creating spaces in public arts and cultural institutions to facilitate exchanges among cultures and	Experts will identify good practices for the development of this key competence and its integration into education policies, on the basis of knowledge and attitudes

	including by disadvantaged groups and groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion	between social groups, in particular by highlighting the intercultural dimension of the heritage and by promoting artistic and cultural education and developing intercultural competences.	identified in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning
Output	Identification of policies and good practice manual for public arts and cultural institutions.	Identification of policies and good practice manual for public arts and cultural institutions.	Good practice manual for culture and education authorities at national and European level.

Source: Council of the European Union (2010); see also appendix 2.

To date, two out of the three reports have been published. Group 1’s report was published in October 2012. This group was composed of 33 individuals from 24 Member States. The second report was published in May 2014 and was composed of 34 individuals from 24 Member States. The third report is currently being written.

This priority area and its subthemes concern pluralism and diversity in society; they fit into two of the four core area of cultural policy identified by Craik, Davis, and Sunderland (2000) – *arts and culture* (which includes cultural institutions) and *citizenship and identity*. Priority A is directly linked to the 2007 Agenda for Culture’s first strategic objective, *promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue*, as well as the ‘inclusive growth’ priority (priority three) of Europe 2020. The theme refers to participation in arts and cultural activities (and in the case of Group 3 more widely in society) by groups of society who may not otherwise choose or get the opportunity to do so.

Priority A is the most symbolic, intangible priority area of the 2011-2014 Work Plan. It was chosen as a case study for this research because of its interconnectedness with European cultural identity and diversity, which has come to be a symbolic, politically-charged, and strategic narrative for the European Union (see Sassatelli 2002, Shore 2006).¹⁴ It also has close linkages with typical justifications for government involvement

¹⁴ As one Member State expert I interviewed put it, “they are very much about values...these types of themes have high symbolic value” (Oskar, interview, June 2014).

in the arts and culture at the *national* level, based on the idea of promoting and fostering ‘good’ citizenship via support for cultural institutions, the regulation of production and distribution of cultural products, and influencing the market for cultural goods (Craik, Davis, and Sunderland 2000). However, in the case of the EU, there is an assumption “that culture can be harnessed unproblematically as a tool to promote the project of European construction” (Shore 2001, p.117). The purpose of investigating Priority A is therefore to gain more insight into the politics of European cultural identity and diversity and more importantly *how* these issues are conceptualised and discussed in a supranational context (the process) and what kind of influence they have (the outcomes).

1.3.3 Limitations

Equally important as acknowledging what questions the research answers is those it does not. First and foremost, and most fundamentally, because the case study is Priority A in the 2011-2014 Work Plan, results concerning the outcomes of coordination cannot be generalisable to the OMC in the field of culture.¹⁵ This is a weakness, but can be explained through tracing the development of the project, which necessitates going back in time to explain how its focus changed to place the *process*, rather than the content of the OMC, at the centre of analysis. I was initially interested in how issues of cultural identity and diversity were represented in policy and how they were handled administratively – who got to talk about these issues and how were they discussed. The choice of Priority A, “Cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and accessible and inclusive culture,” was therefore strategic.

However, I soon realised, when I began speaking to key actors, that individuals spoke much more about *how* (and by whom) the issues were discussed, rather than the content of the discussions themselves. This is not something I anticipated before the beginning of my fieldwork, but is telling because for most participants and even EU staff, process dominated content. Interview subjects had much more to say on the process of participating in the working groups than on their thematic content, even when the subjects were quite political and divisive, and even if they had an intense personal interest in them (the reasons for this are ultimately linked with the design of policy coordination and will become apparent throughout the thesis).

¹⁵ Here I distinguish findings on process and findings on outcomes; this is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

Likewise, the findings cannot be generalised to EU cultural policy as a whole. As will be described throughout chapters 2 and 3, ‘EU cultural policy’ is an extremely fragmented set of programmes and decisions. While my findings on the OMC can lend support to various arguments, it still has to be seen as separate, having different goals altogether than many of the EU’s other cultural programmes.

In addition, the design of this research means that the outcomes of policy coordination in the Member States are not addressed in-depth. This would have required a different research design and the selection of case study Member States. I have therefore prized breadth over depth when it comes to the outcomes (chapter 8). However, respondents came from 15 different EU states – and represent the west, east, north, south, ‘old’ and ‘new’ EU members – so thus represent a good spectrum from which numerous conclusions can be drawn. Finally, the focus of analysis is not the OMC reports themselves. While these reports are fascinating documents, the analytical focus has been to concentrate on the process of forming and writing the reports, not specifically on what they say (although, in the context of outcomes, this is covered briefly in chapter 8).

1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into two main parts – Part I, the Research Foundations, and Part II, the Empirical Contributions.

Part I begins with **Chapter 2**, entitled *Contextualising the research puzzles*. This chapter provides important background information concerning the European Union competence of culture. It shows the development of the competence, including what I identify as three important turning points, the inclusion of a cultural competence in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, the adoption of the 2007 Agenda for Culture, and the creation of an Open Method of Coordination in 2008. It also describes the development of the Open Method of Coordination in general, having emerged at a specific time in the history of European integration. The chapter also discusses the policy themes of Priority A in the 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture.

The role of **chapter 3** is to situate the research questions within existing literature, which it does in three categories: European Union governance, cultural policy, and EU cultural policy. This division was created in order to situate the research interdisciplinarily and describe what gaps the thesis fills and how.

Chapter 4 outlines the theoretical frameworks, which is based, as discussed above, on a sociological institutionalism approach to policy coordination, along with added insights from multi-level governance and policy learning. The goal of this chapter is to explain the strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical approach chosen.

Chapter 5 lays out the methodological approaches to the research and describes what steps I took to answer my research questions. It discusses the methodological limitations of case study research as well as the challenges of access in researching bureaucracies. It also covers in detail how I analysed my data and what kind of results this produces.

Part II is the empirical contributions, which draws on the extensive fieldwork undertaken for this study. Chapters 6 and 7 are the first two findings chapters and work together to reveal the *process* of cultural policy coordination. **Chapter 6** tackles the OMC from the perspective of the European Union (European Commission and Council of Ministers) and **chapter 7** from the perspective of the Member States, which is separated into three levels of analysis, encompassing the Council, the ministry level, and the expert level).

Chapter 8 is the third and final analysis chapter. It discusses the *outcomes* of coordination, which are determined by the information gathered for chapters 6 and 7. This chapter makes use of Jonathan Zeitlin's categories of OMC influence and demonstrates the various types of effects that the OMC has. It also directly addresses the logic and design of EU cultural policy coordination.

Finally, **chapter 9** provides concluding thoughts on the thesis' main findings and discusses its main contributions to existing academic literature. It also discusses practical policy implications of the findings and offers directions for future research.

1.5 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis ultimately offers fresh insights to both the study of European Union cultural policy coordination as well as the Open Method of Coordination more generally. It thus makes contributions to the field of cultural policy studies, in particular cultural policy approached from a political science/public policy perspective, as well as to the literature on EU governance. The contribution to the cultural policy field is in two ways; first of all, the focus of a governance perspective is on the day-to-day processes and procedures of policy-making, an area that has been neglected in the study of cultural policy. Secondly, the contribution adds a European dimension to the study of cultural policy, which has traditionally been focused at the nation-state level; this work leads to new knowledge on the administration and governance of cultural policy in the EU. In addition, the research is also a contribution to the OMC literature by representing both an addition to debates on everyday decision-making (and, more specifically, that on policy coordination, i.e. *how* policy is coordination and not only what the outcomes of coordination are) as well as a novel contribution from a policy area that to date has not been studied. Finally, the research also adds a voice to debates on culture's role in European integration.

Research always takes place in a certain time and place context, and since the 2008 financial crisis, “the European Union has been hit by what most observers...describe as a series of interlocking and seemingly intractable crises at home and abroad” (Copsey and Haughton 2015, p.1).¹⁶ The years since 2008 have seen extraordinary challenges, leading one commentator to decry that “Europe is beset by so many crises that it can be hard to remember them all” (Porter 2016, p.62). 2014, the year that I completed my fieldwork for this project, was indeed a fascinating year to be studying the EU: the European Parliament elections in May, the ‘election’ of the new Commission president under the Lisbon Treaty rules, the new Commission, and a general rise in ‘Euro scepticism’ and nationalistic movements across the continent.

¹⁶ The *Journal of Common Market Studies*’ annual European Union reviews, published in September each year, are a good marker of years gone by. See also chapter 11 in Bache et al. (2015).

The difficulties and ironies of finishing a thesis on culture and the European Union in 2016 are not lost on me. Any thesis being written on the EU in 2016 cannot ignore the unprecedented and challenging reality currently facing the continent. As the 2015 Ward Report on the Role of Intercultural Dialogue, Cultural Diversity and Education in Promoting EU Fundamental Values expresses,

“The European Union is at a particular point in history where notions of identity and belonging are being contested, reconfigured and defended, with strong feelings from a diversity of voices and divergent political perspectives” (European Parliament 2015, p.13).

This thesis indirectly addresses issues such as integration, interculturalism, and identity: all three of the OMC groups have investigated ways that arts and cultural institutions can respond to these challenges. These expansive issues have almost contradictory implications for this research; in one sense, culture has never been more important, as the EU struggles institutionally and politically to move forward as a cohesive body. However, in another, ‘culture’ is frequently deemed an inconsequential policy area. When cultural cohesion, diplomacy, and intercultural dialogue *are* mentioned, it is nearly always encased in symbolism, myth-making, and grandiose statements, which renders it so vague as to be almost meaningless. These tensions embedded in the cultural competence are becoming more obvious as the EU faces numerous crises; if the social and the cultural dimensions of the EU are to ‘work,’ it follows logically that they need to be more properly defined and delineated, which is a matter of political will. The “challenges Europe is facing are predominantly of a cultural nature” (Hassemer 2006, p.137), and yet, the nature of current political cooperation and coordination in the field of culture is at odds with this reality.

To set these issues in better context, I now move on to tackling the historical progression of the EU competence in culture, as well as the Open Method of Coordination, the subject of chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALISING THE RESEARCH PUZZLES

“It is very difficult, if not impossible, to describe the policy of the European Union towards culture. Some authors, taking a lead from the dominance of the subsidiarity principle in matters of EU cultural policy, maintain that there is no such policy. There are others who have recognized that even though this policy is not explicitly formulated, it exists and has a significant impact on EU member countries.”

Nina Obuljen (2004, p.29)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contextualises my research questions by providing important background information on cultural policy in the European Union as well as the Open Method of Coordination. It is divided into five main sections. The first, 2.2, briefly tackles the rather expansive theme of the history of the European Union and discusses how we can understand it as an imagined community. Section 2.3 then looks at the history of cultural policy in the EU, focusing on a post-Maastricht (1992) narrative. This section contextualises the cultural competence by outlining the EU’s legal powers. It also discusses the roles of the main actors in EU cultural policy. Section 2.4 changes direction by looking at the development of the Open Method of Coordination in the context of its genesis at the March 2000 Lisbon Summit and its use as a working method of the 2000-2010 Lisbon Strategy. In section 2.5, the development of the culture OMC, a moment which represents deeper cooperation among Member States in the field, is discussed, and section 2.6 details the case study focus for this research, Policy Priority A in the 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture.

2.2 MAKING SENSE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Although the focus of this research is a small-scale process, the culture Open Method of Coordination is part of a much wider ‘project,’ the European Union. This section thus

situates the research topic within its wider political and historical contexts, which is necessary in order to understand how and why the EU became involved in the cultural field. Indeed, in order to properly understand the culture OMC, one must understand culture's role in European integration more generally. Themes introduced in this section, such as the 'imagined' nature of the EU, therefore run throughout the thesis.

The European Union has been described as a state-like political system above state level, a quasi-state, an international state, a "post-modern pattern of government in a post-modern European order" (Wallace 1999, p.519), a post-national polity, a network polity – the list goes on. At its most basic level it is "a process of voluntary integration between the nation-states of Europe" (Hix and Høyland 2011, p.1) and is characterised by a

"complex, cross-cutting network of governance, [...] on mutual interference in each other's domestic affairs, on increasing mutual transparency, and on the emergence of a sufficiently strong sense of community to guarantee mutual security" (Wallace 1999, p.519).

In April 1951, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, West Germany, and Italy signed the Treaty of Paris, establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). As historian Tony Judt (2005, p.158) put it, "[a]ll six member countries of the new ECSC had only recently seen their sovereignty ignored and trampled on, in war and occupation: they had little enough sovereignty left to lose." This was the beginning of what would eventually, with the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, become the European Union. Today, the EU encompasses 28 Member States and 503 million inhabitants.

In the period between 1951 and 1992, there are usually two key periods identified as 'turning points' for European integration. The first, in the mid-1960s, saw the beginnings of a customs union, a common agricultural policy, and a common market. In the mid-1980s, the Single European Act was signed, which continued momentum towards an Economic and Monetary Union.

The EU, and its previous incarnations as the European Community, has been primarily a union of economics and trade as opposed to a social or cultural one. Social and cultural policies have sat uneasily in a framework that is heavily guided by a legal division of competences and subsidiarity. Culture is a policy field in which the subsidiarity principle is applied because it is a supporting competence only; Member States still want to retain

control over their own cultural policies. However, the development of a cultural competence must be seen as a part of the drive for popular support for further integration (Shore 2000). Underlying the concept of an EU that is involved in the social and the cultural is a fundamental tension of how to bridge divides between Member States. Is there some sort of shared European identity? Or is it rather ‘united in diversity’? What does Europe have in common? Do flags, anthems, and currencies unite, or is the nation-state still the primary level of political and cultural attachment?

Insight from Anderson’s (1991) imagined communities thesis and Hobsbawm and Ranger’s (1992) work on invented traditions helps to shed light on these difficult questions. Taken together these theories examine the socio-political characteristics of societies and how they are defined and formed. Anderson (p. 6) defines a nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” Hobsbawm and Ranger’s arguments centre on demystifying tradition, elements of which often form the basis of nationalism and legitimise political power in modern nation-states. Certain ‘traditions’ which seem to be old may in fact be both recent and invented. In the case of the European Union, symbols such as the flag, passports, and anthem, as well as the creation of the notion of ‘European citizenship’ are all symbols that are meant to unite its citizens in some way.¹⁷

At the beginning of his *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, Gerard Delanty writes that ‘Europe’ is a contested concept – an idea as much as reality (Delanty 1995, p.1). Defining Europe is “not something self-evident” (p.3). Echoing Hobsbawm and Ranger, he writes that Europe is an “interpretation of community: a fantasy homeland that goes hand in hand with a retrospective invention of history as well as a moralisation of geography’ (*Ibid.*, p.8). Indeed, underlying the project of European integration is an unspoken assertion that there are certain shared values among this population, such as freedom, reason, and progress (Shore 2000, Calligaro 2013). But a part of delineating what is shared is defining what ‘Europe’ is and what is not, since “[t]he very concept of a European union makes little sense if something is not going to be excluded.” (Delanty 1995, p.157). Indeed,

“The construction of this ‘Europe’ has depended on the parallel construction of ‘others’ (variously located in the East, South, West or in Europe’s past) against which a separate

¹⁷ Oriane Calligaro (2013) refers to this as “designing Europeanness.”

European identity is seen as being constructed, created or invented” (Christiansen, Jorgensen, and Wiener 2001, p.14).

This begins to highlight a key tension in the study of ‘culture’ and the European Union. Cultural symbols and policies have been implemented in order to encourage popular support for the European project (see more below), but there is a paradox in that these shared traits are never explicitly defined. And, implicitly or explicitly, “[m]ost attempts to define Europe ‘from a cultural perspective’ are laden with ethnocentric and elitist assumptions about what constitutes Europe’s ‘cultural heritage’” (Shore 2000, p.63). More specifically on the question of its cultural governance, Shore (2001, p.117), asserts that the European cultural model “does little to acknowledge the cultural diversity that now exists in Europe’s increasingly multicultural societies.” A discussion of EU cultural policy coordination, therefore, cannot be divorced from the broader picture of European identity and society. With these insights in mind, I now turn to a historical overview of the cultural competence in the EU.

2.3 CULTURAL POLICY AND THE EUROPEAN UNION¹⁸

This section gives a brief overview of the history of the EU’s competence in culture.¹⁹ This background information is necessary in order to properly set the Open Method of Coordination in context with the development of the competence in general, to understand the fragmentation of the competence in terms of its programmes, as well as the complex and competing ‘positions’ among the Union’s various institutions.

One of the difficulties in studying cultural policy is knowing where cultural policy begins and ends, since cultural policies can be both implicit and explicit (Ahearne 2009). As Langen (2010) has pointed out, nowhere is this more challenging than in the European Union, with much existing research on EU cultural policy encompassing a huge range of ‘policies’ that take us far beyond activity in the Commission’s Directorate-General for Education and Culture. Therefore, in order to better focus this discussion, ‘cultural policy’

¹⁸ Parts of this section draw on Mattocks (2017).

¹⁹ Note that throughout this section I use ‘the EU’ for simplicity, even though throughout much of this period of history it was the European Economic Community.

is defined as the areas and activities encompassing DG-EAC's remit. This excludes audiovisual policy, which has its own historical trajectory (see Collins 1994, Wheeler 2004, Harcourt 2006, Sarikakis 2007a, and Erickson and Dewey 2011), copyright and intellectual property, and the structural funds used for regional cultural projects (see Delgado-Moreira 2000).²⁰

Legally and officially, culture made its first appearance in the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht, the treaty that created the Union and represented a “watershed” moment in EU integration (Puetter 2014, p.9). However, before it was formally included, there were several Community cultural initiatives that occurred throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In order for the cultural competence to develop, two ‘lines of argument’, or justifications for intervention, dominated throughout the pre-Maastricht era. One was an economic argument, which focused on industrial aspects of cultural production and consumption such as training, working conditions, and the distribution of cultural goods. The second was the political rhetoric of a shared European identity. Both of these narratives co-existed and developed in the 1970s and 1980s and to some extent are still present today, although the economic argument has since gained considerably more ground (see Bruell 2013, Littoz-Monnet 2015).

Pre-Maastricht cultural actions that were framed around the economic/industry argument (driven by both the Commission and European Parliament) included rules about the exports of cultural goods, cultural exchanges, training, translation, and sponsorship of the arts (Shore 2000). This framing (Kingdon 1984) was a “successful agenda-setting exercise,” which led to “extending the reach of its competence to the cultural sector when its formal powers were limited to the economic sphere” (Littoz-Monnet 2007, p.43-4). The European Court of Justice also made judgements on topics such as copyright and book trade in this period (*Ibid.*).

At the same time, framing was also *political*, focusing on identity – “a crucial necessity for integration, which hitherto had barely been touched upon” (Urwin 1996, p.9). Sentiments expressed in a series of high-profile reports throughout the 1970s and 1980s

²⁰ The importance of indirect funding in the form of cohesion policy monies cannot be understated, although a full discussion of this lies beyond the scope of this thesis. In general, the Structural Funds' impacts on the cultural sector would benefit from much more scholarly attention.

advocated a deepening of cultural action in the Community in order to encourage popular support for European integration. Leo Tindemans, in his 1975 *Report on European Union*, outlined several ideas for implementing a ‘Citizen’s Europe’ such as fundamental rights and consumer rights. Similarly, the 1985 Committee on a People’s Europe (Adonnino report) recommended various developments concerning television, an Academy of Science, Technology, and Art, a Euro-lottery (“to make Europe come alive for the Europeans” [p.12]), and access to museums and cultural events. The report argued that culture and communication can contribute to “support for the advancement of Europe” which “can and must be sought” (p.21) in order to “strengthen and promote [European Community] identity and its image both for its citizens and for the rest of the world” (p.5). While the ideas articulated in these reports had few direct impacts on cultural policy (Craufurd Smith 2004b), this momentum laid the ground for more cooperation in the field.

In the early 1980s, the EU’s cultural ministers began meeting, first informally and then formally. Early cultural programmes, including the European Youth Orchestra and the European City (now Capital) of Culture programme emerged, respectively, in 1976 and 1985. In the 1987 Communication *A Fresh Boost for Culture in the European Community*, the Commission argued for a deepening in cultural cooperation in advance of the Maastricht Treaty, arguing that “...it is this sense of being part of a European culture which is one of the prerequisites for the solidarity which is vital if the advent of the large market ... is to secure the popular support it needs” (CEC 1987, p.5).

While most of the intergovernmental cultural initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s were modest and symbolic, they demonstrated a certain acknowledgement on behalf of the EU institutions and Member States that intervention in the cultural field was acceptable (Langen 2010). The European Parliament, Council, and Commission all played a role in advancing the competence, to varying extents at different time periods,²¹ and these initiatives thus paved the way for culture’s more formal introduction in the early 1990s. The lead-up to the Maastricht Treaty was the first time that “sufficient opposition” to Europe had been placed on national agendas (Judt 2005, p.716). In this context, with

²¹ The Council of Europe (CoE) – an entirely separate supranational institution – had also been involved in the cultural field since just after the Second World War, and the development of EU cultural policy should be seen in conjunction with the CoE’s development (see Sassatelli 2009).

many citizens ‘waking up’ to the presence of the EU, the development of the competence focused on the intrinsic value of culture and initiatives to promote a European identity.

The Maastricht Treaty, signed on 7 February 1992 and entered into force on 1 November 1993, created a “new social-political framework within an accelerated economic and monetary union” (Nectoux 1996, p.31).²² Article 128 of the Treaty on European Union (now 167 in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) stated that,

“1. The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.

2. Action by the Union shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas:

- improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples,

- conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance,

- non-commercial cultural exchanges,

- artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector.

3. The Union and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of culture, in particular the Council of Europe.

4. The Union shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of the Treaties, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures.”²³

The article both legitimised the EU’s prior activities in the field and paved the way for new ones (Shore 2001). It was a compromise:

“While the broader and historically more significant principle of culture being a legitimate area of Community competence was secured by the countries which took a maximalist approach, the minimalist countries built into the drafting various restraining, defensive elements...” (Sandell 1996, p.270).

Because of the need to please a large number of Member States and thus competing positions, the article is imbued with controversies (see Shore 2000). The full discussion of these lays outside the scope of this thesis, however one important one is whether in fact the article is restrictive or enabling; some see it as paving the way for expansionist

²² Maastricht also created the concept of European citizenship.

²³ Article 167 also contains a fifth paragraph referring to legal and policy-making procedures, which explicitly excludes policy harmonisation in the field of culture (see appendix 1).

intervention in the sector where as others view the prohibition of harmonisation as a clause protecting the further development of the competence. Another contradiction is about the nature of *culture* itself. Because it is not defined, many have argued that it is open to different interpretations, again, both restrictive and expansive. A final contradiction, which has already been mentioned, concerns cultural identity and its explicit making into a political object. As Shore argues sceptically, “European culture and identity already exist in the ‘collective conscience of its peoples’, but bureaucratic intervention is nevertheless needed to ‘defend’ it from assault and to make Europeans ‘more aware’ of their cultural identity” (Shore 2000, p.52).

2.3.1 Legal powers and current cultural programmes

The introduction of a cultural competence was therefore “not to establish a ‘common’ cultural policy but to bring to the forefront Community efforts rooted in the protection and promotion of Member States’ diverse cultural systems” (Psychogiopoulou 2006, p.583). Member States thus maintain full autonomy over their own cultural policies: “[I]legally speaking, it is not for the EU to take the lead or to control” in this sector (Sandell 1996, p.271). According to the European Commission,

“[the] work done by the EU complements [...] and adds a different dimension. Information gathered from the EU as a whole can be used to support national policy decisions or provide examples of best practice that others can share. Programmes run across the EU can have a greater overall impact than those just run on national grounds, and policies put in place throughout the EU can help further national goals” (CEC 2013, p.3).

The EU has three main powers related to cultural policy: (1) encouraging and facilitating cooperation between Member States; (2) promoting the incorporation of culture into other areas of EU jurisdiction; and (3) cooperating with Member States on cultural action.

An overview of the EU’s current overarching cultural policy priorities can be found in the 2007 *Agenda for Culture*. This outlines the three main strategic objectives around which it bases its activities:

1. Promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue;
2. Promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs;²⁴

²⁴ The Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) has been succeeded by Europe 2020 (2010-2020), emphasising “smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth.”

3. Promotion of culture as a vital element in the Union's international relations (CEC 2007).

Current cultural programmes and initiatives encompass a wide variety of areas and scope. These can be classified into three categories: supporting, coordination and communicative, and supplementary measures. This does not necessarily mean that these initiatives represent a congruent 'policy' or set of policies. Rather, they should be seen as a series of co-existing programmes, projects, and initiatives that operate in relative isolation to one another. Each programme has a very different history, having emerged at various points throughout the past 40 years.

Supporting measures are programmes like Creative Europe, the EU's current arts and culture funding programme (see Kandyla 2015). The EU began funding arts and cultural activity in 1996. In this current programme, between 2014 and 2020 Creative Europe will award €1.46 billion within its two sub-strands, MEDIA and Culture, used to support cooperation projects involving three or more Member States. The other supporting measures are annual prizes in the fields of literature, music, heritage, and contemporary architecture, as well as the EU's ongoing efforts in heritage protection, including annual heritage days and the heritage label (see Lähdesmäki 2014).

The second category is *policy coordination and communication measures*. The OMC is a part of this category, along with Structured Dialogue, which is a formal exchange between the cultural sector and the EU via a series of transnational platforms and a biennial Culture Forum. As part of its dialogue with the sector, the EU also supports a transnational network of experts, the European Expert Network on Culture. The Commission has also undertaken or commissioned a large number of studies about various issues relating to the cultural sector and it also cooperates with other European networks on information dissemination and networking.

The final category is *supplementary measures*. These include the European Capital of Culture programme, perhaps the most well-known of all of the EU's cultural programmes, which began in 1985 (see Palmer-Rae Associates 2004, Sassatelli 2009, Garcia et al. 2013, Patel 2013a). It also includes cultural mainstreaming whereby the Commission works with other EU and external organisations to 'incorporate' culture in other areas,

such as external relations and European Neighbourhood Policy (for more on this see Craufurd Smith 2004b, Psychogiopoulou 2006, Isar 2015).

2.3.2 Governance and institutions

Of the seven official European Union institutions, the most important ones for cultural policy are the European Commission, European Parliament, and the Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers).²⁵ This subsection gives a brief overview of these bodies and their roles in cultural policy. As described in chapter 1, due to the complexity of the European Union, quite a bit of organisational ‘unpacking’ is required in order to clarify the roles of the various bodies, agencies, and individuals involved. Determining exactly how subsidiarity works in practice, and who does what, it is not immediately evident (Dewey 2008). The discussion also highlights fragmentation between EU institutions.

European Commission

The Commission is the executive institution of the European Union. It is composed of a core appointed College of Commissioners (one President, seven Vice-Presidents, and 20 Commissioners – one individual per Member State), as well as an administrative bureaucracy of Directorate-Generals (DGs), of which each Commissioner is head. The Commission employs approximately 32,000 staff (CEC 2016a). Each DG contains its own micro-level bureaucratic structure within it, consisting of directorates and units within those directorates.

Culture is part of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture, known informally as DG-EAC.²⁶ The main personnel within DG-EAC consists of the Commissioner (currently Tibor Navracsics of Hungary), a Director-General, and a network of civil servants. The role of the Commissioner is a public and political one but the hierarchical structure underneath the Commission is rather akin to a national civil service. The DG is split into five directorates; culture is part of Directorate D, Culture and Creativity. The

²⁵ Note that scholars have also shown the importance of the European Court of Justice in the cultural field in areas such as book pricing and copyright. See Craufurd Smith (2004a) and Littoz-Monnet (2007).

²⁶ Although DG-EAC is the main DG for culture, other DGs’ remits fall into the cultural realm as well, reinforcing both the fragmented nature of organisation as well as the often controversial breakdown of where culture ‘starts and ends.’ For example, DG Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG-CONNECT) is responsible for audiovisual policy; DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship, & SMEs (DG-GROWTH) for copyright; and DG Regional Policy (DG-REGIO), for regional funding.

two units within the Directorate are *Cultural diversity and innovation* and *Creative Europe programme*.²⁷ According to DG-EAC's website,

“... the role of the European Commission is to help address common challenges, such as the impact of the digital shift, changing models of cultural governance, and the need to support the innovation potential of the cultural and creative sectors. The Commission is also committed to promoting cultural diversity, protecting cultural heritage, easing obstacles to the mobility of cultural professionals, and supporting the contribution of cultural and creative industries to boosting growth and jobs across the EU” (CEC 2016b, n.p.).²⁸

The Commission enjoys substantial policy-initiation powers within the Community method. There are competing views on whether this is the case with regards to culture, which does not enjoy ‘full’ competence and has a comparatively low budget to other DGs (see Sassatelli 2006, Gordon 2010, Littoz-Monnet 2012). For example, Gordon (2010) argues that the DG has failed to adopt a ‘systematic’ approach to the way culture’s legal justification for EU involvement, Article 167 in the 2007 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, can best be used to their advantage. Langen (2010), meanwhile, taking a historical approach, shows that, pre-Maastricht, the Commission, Parliament, and Council of Ministers all occupied agenda-setting positions, depending on the context and the resources at hand.

Others have identified the Commission as the main agenda-setter and driver of further European cooperation in the cultural field. The work of Littoz-Monnet (2007, 2012), for example, shows how the DG took an active stance in advancing cultural action by framing intervention in terms of the power of culture to foster economic growth and competitiveness. Langen (2010) has also shown that since the 1990s the Commission has been instrumental in deepening cultural cooperation through its funding programmes, creation of cultural networks and exchanges, and the strengthening of programmes via the instrumentalisation of culture in socio-economic goals and contexts.

Insight from two of the DG-EAC’s policy officers helps to contextualise their position:

“... we are restricted by the treaty’s non-competence. We’re already doing quite a lot in terms of coordinating – everything that we can do which has an added value and is okay

²⁷ These units were established in fall 2014 with the appointment of the Juncker Commission. When the fieldwork for this project was undertaken, in spring and summer 2014, the units were called *Culture programme and actions* and *Culture policy and intercultural dialogue*.

²⁸ Many of the programmes outlined above are administered by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), which is an administrative agency within the DG.

with the subsidiarity principle. We're really trying to exploit all matters we can and any action we can at the EU level to help cultural policy, but of course we are limited" (Corrine, interview, April 2014).

"[w]hat the Commission can do is to support [Member States'] policies, complement them, but the purpose is not to have ONE policy because it's not in the treaty, it's not an EU competence" (Fatima, interview, May 2014).

These statements therefore show that while the DG's objective is not policy harmonisation, which is explicitly prohibited in the treaty, this does not mean that they are not able to maximise the competence within their limits. The Commission is constantly engaged in negotiation with the Parliament, Council, and external stakeholders, regarding the extent to which the EU should be involved in this policy field and what that involvement might look like. Anything the Commission presents must be approved by the Council and Parliament, the former which has historically been more restrained, the latter which has pushed for a more expansive agenda. It therefore has "very little to gain" by proposing something which has little or no chance of being approved by these bodies (Langen 2010, p.59).

Historically, the DG's cultural policy agenda has fluctuated between "an economic approach, which could be better justified under the EU Treaty principles, and promoting a cultural policy in its own name" (Littoz-Monnet 2012, p.506). The lines of argument developed throughout the 1990s were both economic and political, as discussed above. Littoz-Monnet's work has demonstrated how the DG adopted a dual approach to increase the visibility and prominence of its portfolio. It first framed its policy objectives strategically in order to be justified under the subsidiarity principle. This was done by emphasising the discourse of the creative economy and job creation potential. (This brought it in line with competition and economic policy that the Lisbon Strategy specified). The second part of the strategy was collaboration with other DGs and external cultural networks (Sassatelli 2006, Littoz-Monnet 2012).

European Parliament

The European Parliament (EP) shares legislative power with the Council of the European Union. It is composed of 751 directly elected representatives from the Member States. Legislation is brought to the EP and is then sent to one of 22 parliamentary standing committees, where it is evaluated. The decision-making system in the EP operates entirely

on negotiation and consensus-building because by design there is not a majority political party: to achieve anything, compromises must be made (Versluis, Van Keulen, and Stephenson 2011).

Culture is represented in the standing committee on Culture and Education, composed of 31 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). The committee outlines its priorities as such:

“the cultural aspects of the European Union, and in particular: (a) improving the knowledge and dissemination of culture, (b) the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, (c) the conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage, cultural exchanges and artistic creation” (European Parliament 2015, p.144).

There is not much research dedicated to the role of the EP in cultural policy-making, although the consensus from what does exist is that the Culture and Education Committee has in general advocated for an increased role for the EU in this field (European Parliament 2001, Littoz-Monnet 2007, Staiger 2013). The EP has argued that EU cultural action must go beyond a symbolic role for culture and has emphasised the “specificity of culture and the need for special laws” to govern it (Littoz-Monnet 2007, p.34). It has often focused on specific problems, such as labour market issues for artists in Europe (Gordon and Adams 2007). Barnett’s (2001) findings also indicate that the EP has tried over the years to expand the EU’s cultural programme but has not met with much success. His findings are supported by Gordon and Adams (2007), who argue that more robust proposals from both the Parliament and Commission are often stymied by the Council of Ministers, and in particular the larger Member States.

Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers)

The Council of the European Union, also known as the Council of Ministers, represents the interests of Member States. It is composed of current ministers from Member States’ national governments. Since the Treaty of Maastricht, within the ordinary legislative procedure, the Council has shared legislative powers with the European Parliament. Broadly, its role is to evaluate legislation from the point of view of perceived benefits or losses to citizens in their Member State.²⁹ The Council’s Presidency also rotates every six

²⁹ In some policy areas, such as the common foreign and security policy, defence, justice and home affairs, and some aspects of the monetary union, the Council of Ministers has much stronger powers and controls the agenda (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006).

months, allowing limited agenda-setting power for that particular Member State. The Council is split into ten groups, or formations. What this means is that “*the Council*” is actually several policy sector-specific “Councils.”

Cultural policy is the responsibility of the Education, Youth, Culture, and Sport Council (EYCS). This Council, which would include in it national ministers of culture, typically meets three to four times a year to debate relevant issues. However, outside of these meetings, there is an extensive system of work that is done by permanent representatives in both ad hoc and permanent committees and workings parties, and a high percentage of decisions are ‘settled’ at the level of permanent representatives, rather than by the EU-28 Culture Ministers themselves (Versluis, van Keulen, and Stephenson 2011). The Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC), composed of seconded representatives from the Member States, prepares the work of EU ministers for culture. One member of the CAC describes her role as such:

“I am trying to coordinate all cultural files that have a European angle to them, and trying to be the mediator between the European policy and the <country’s> policy”
(Darya, Member State representative, April 2014)

The members of the CAC, like many EU officials in general, thus work with two hats on. They represent their Member State but work in a transnational environment.³⁰

Most legislation in the field of culture is non-binding, and does not legally require national Parliaments to adopt it. Until November 2014, decisions on cultural policy matters had to be taken by unanimity. This changed with the introduction of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) as a part of the 2007 Lisbon Treaty, though in practice the decisions taken this way are mostly to do with the funding programmes. According to the official Council website,

“The policy areas covered by the EYCS Council are the responsibility of member states. The EU’s role in areas of education, youth, culture and sport is therefore to provide *a framework for cooperation between member states*, for exchange of information and experience on areas of common interest” (Council of the European Union 2015a, n.p.; emphasis added).

³⁰ For insights into how this works both practically and in terms of identity as a ‘Eurocrat,’ see chapters by Geuijen, ‘t Hart and Yesilkagit, and Thedvall in Rhodes, ‘t Hart, and Noordegraaf (2007a)’s edited volume.

With decisions taken in the ordinary legislative procedure, the Council co-legislates, along with the Parliament, the proposals that are received from the Commission. Most legislation in the field of culture is non-binding, and does not legally require national Parliaments to adopt it (bindings agreements are known as regulations, directives, and decisions; cultural policy is mostly decided upon via recommendations – which are not binding yet have political force – and opinions).³¹

The two ways of theorising the Council's role tread the intergovernmentalist/supranationalist line (see chapter 4). There are those who believe that the Council 'gets in the way' of the dynamism of European integration, representing the Member States who 'hold back,' and a second group which believes that the Council 'saves' the Member States from unnecessary and overly integrationist proposals (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006). The Council can therefore be thought of as both an EU and national actor, which presents analytical challenges in conceptualising both of these roles (this is discussed in more detail in chapter 7).

There is little empirical work devoted to the current role of the EYCS Council and how it works. One of the biggest challenges in studying the Council is that meetings take place behind closed doors and only conclusions are in the public domain, meaning that it is difficult to observe how consensus-building works in practice. Historically, the Council played a role in the development of early cultural activity at the EU level. Culture ministers first started meeting informally in the early 1980s, and in 1985, the European City of Culture programme was initiated in the Council by then Greek Minister for Culture Melina Mercouri. The founding principles were based on culture as a vehicle of cohesion, along with the special role of cities as locales of cultural exchange. However, in general, the Council, acting in the interests of the Member States, is deeply respectful of subsidiarity and cannot be considered an agenda-setter in the field.

Other actors

Committee of the Regions (CoR)

³¹ Exceptions to this include the 2008 regulation on the export of cultural goods and the 1993 directive on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of an EU country. The former is a binding act that must be applied across the EU; the latter is also binding, however it is up to the individual state as to *how* they achieve it.

The Committee of the Regions is an advisory body composed of 350 members that are regionally and locally elected in the Member States. Its role is to represent regional interests at the European level and to provide a local viewpoint on relevant legislation that impacts regions – to bring regional and local perspectives into EU policy-making. For a competence like cultural policy, this is important, as cultural policy is a subnational competence in some EU Member States. The CoR is consulted on all cultural policy proposals.

The CoR is divided into six ‘Commissions,’ one of which is Education, Youth, Culture, and Research. The body has, since its inception in 1992, argued for an enhanced role for local and regional actors in the design of cultural policy (Barnett 2001). Barnett outlines that the CoR has had some influence in helping strengthen networking systems within the cultural field through increased dialogue. It has also questioned the meaning of subsidiarity and argued that cultural action is not necessarily the responsibility of the Member States (since this incorrectly assumes homogenous national cultures within them), and that culture is best handled at the sub-national level. Despite this, since the CoR is an advisory body and not a decision-making one, their overall influence has been relatively limited (Gordon 2010; Versluis, van Keulen, and Stephenson 2011).

Lobby groups and civil society platforms

Brussels is the second most lobbied city in the world after Washington (Versluis, van Keulen, and Stephenson 2011), and lobbying has been the subject of a large amount of research regarding the role it plays in agenda setting and policy making, particularly within the European Parliament. The role and influence of lobbying is better understood in other sectors because it has been the subject of more scrutiny. However, it is often difficult to determine the precise role that lobby groups play, particularly as politicians may be reluctant to admit how much they are influenced by them. There is even less known about relatively smaller lobbying presence of cultural groups and organisations and the amount that they may or may not influence decision making. Historically, professional cultural networks in Europe have been critical of the sector’s slow development and fragmented funding schemes within the EU (Barnett 2001). This gave rise to the mobilisation of arts and cultural advocacy organisations, particularly after the inclusion of the competence in the Treaty of Maastricht, who have generally advocated a

greater role for culture in European integration.³² However, while they have participated in a great deal of dialogue and cooperation concerning cultural matters, particularly with the Commission, it is more difficult to trace the precise impact this has had in EU decision-making.

2.4 THE OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION

This section departs from a focus on cultural policy specifically and outlines the evolution of the Open Method of Coordination as a mode of European Union governance. This is in order to set the origins of the OMC in a historical context. ‘New’ modes of governance in the EU are associated with the establishment of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the development of the Lisbon Strategy in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Lisbon aimed to make the EU “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” (European Council 2000, p.2), and had as its core issues of competitiveness and social cohesion (Borrás and Jacobsson 2004). Because some of these policy areas fell outside the EU’s jurisdiction, the Community Method – ‘traditional’ legally binding policy-making – was not appropriate. As a way of attempting a coordinated effort at some of these challenges, new strategies of political coordination were created; the Open Method of Coordination was one of them.

The conclusions of the Lisbon summit stated that,

“Implementation of the strategic goal will be facilitated by applying a new open method of coordination as the means of spreading best practice and achieving greater convergence towards the main EU goals. This method, which is designed to help Member States to progressively develop their own policies, involves:

- fixing guidelines for the Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals which they set in the short, medium and long terms;
- establishing, where appropriate, quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks against the best in the world and tailored to the needs of different Member States and sectors as a means of comparing best practice;
- translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies by setting specific targets and adopting measures, taking into account national and regional differences;

³² According to Culture Action Europe, one of the main lobby groups in the arts and cultural sector, created in 1992, their aim is to “be the leading platform for representing the diverse interests of the sector with a coherent and clear message.”

- periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review organised as mutual learning processes” (European Council 2000, para.37)

The OMC is thus a non-legally binding mode of governance guided by the principles of voluntarism, subsidiarity, and inclusion (Héritier 2001). It works on the basis of benchmarking and the sharing of best practices (borrowing this approach from the Organisation for Economic Coordination and Development [OECD]) that is coordinated by a central actor, the European Commission. The OMC is a

“fully decentralised approach...in line with the principle of subsidiarity in which the Union, the Member States, the regional and local levels, as well as the social partners and civil society, will be actively involved, using variable forms of partnership” (European Council 2000, para.38).

Policy coordination is a much more flexible approach than traditional legislation via the Community method. It is attractive to Member States “because of its low degree of legalization and limited potential for unintended consequences” (Schäfer 2004, p.13), therefore respecting subsidiarity.³³ In theory, it seeks to “put the EU Member States on a path towards achieving common objectives, while respecting different underlying values and arrangements” (de la Porte 2002, p.39). The OMC initially began in six fields – information society, research and development (R&D), enterprises, economic reforms, education, and employment and social inclusion (European Council 2000). It has since expanded to other areas including youth, cohesion, security, and innovation policy (see chapter 3 and also Borrás and Radaelli 2010, ch.2).

The OMC works as follows (the procedures are slightly different for the cultural field, which will be explained in more detail in the next section). Member States in the Council agree on a common set of targets. Each Member State then decides how to best achieve the targets, which may involve reforms and changes to domestic policies and programmes. Member States report back on progress, which is monitored by the European Commission. The cycle then continues with new targets set on the basis of previous results.

³³ Lodge (2007) discusses how Spain and the UK, agenda-setting countries at the 2000 Lisbon Summit, advocated for the OMC because it would increase the role of the Council, reduce input from the Commission, and eliminate the European Parliament.

The introduction of this mode of governance can be seen along two parallel lines: it was a way for Member States to cooperate on shared goals without transferring more powers to the EU and by mechanisms that did not involve legislative changes. But it was also a response to a call for greater transparency and legitimacy in EU decision-making more generally, in the period post Maastricht, a time where a “large gap” appeared between the public and European elites, “a gap concerning the most appropriate contents and tempo of European integration” (Borrás and Jacobsson 2004, p.186). This is reflected in the Commission’s White Paper on Governance (CEC 2001), which outlined five principles of ‘good governance’: openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence. The OMC, with its emphasis on ‘bottom-up’ coordination and civil society participation, thus in theory increases the ‘input-based’ legitimacy (Scharpf 1999) of the EU’s actions in policy sectors where it has a supporting competence. The participation of civil society is thus a key factor in the OMC’s operation,

2.4.1 The philosophy of coordination

Before the development of the *culture* OMC is outlined, it is important to take a step back and ask why Member States coordinate policy in the first place. After all, as Kenneth Armstrong (2010, p. 41) argues, “the mere resort to ‘coordination’ as a technique of governance does not itself resolve debates about the allocation and exercise of competence: coordination still demands justification.” It is in fact not obvious why states coordinate policy, particularly in sectors that the EU has no or limited jurisdiction in.

According to the White Paper on EU Governance (CEC 2001, p.18), there are four circumstances for the use of the OMC:

- it should be used to achieve defined Treaty objectives,
- regular mechanisms for reporting to the European Parliament should be established,
- the Commission should be closely involved and play a coordinating role,
- the data and information generated should be widely available. It should provide the basis for determining whether legislative or programme-based action is needed to overcome particular problems highlighted.”

In general, the ‘push’ for common action may be driven by various forces, including external shocks, policy-related objectives (for example, in relation to the Lisbon Strategy), institutional and constitutional factors, or normative impulses to improve decision-making due to, for example, concerns about legitimacy (Diedrichs, Reiners, and Wessels 2011). The treaty bases of policy fields operating with an OMC vary. In some

areas, such as employment or immigration policy, the EU operates alongside a legislative approach; in others, such as cultural policy, the OMC “adds value at a European level where there is little scope for legislative solutions” (CEC 2001, p.18).

Armstrong (2010), referencing the work of Iain Begg (2008), discusses a ‘spectrum’ of rationales for EU-level coordination. These range from a ‘damage control’ model of minimising spillover effects in the case of, for example, common economic or monetary policy (where individual states have ‘something to lose’ if things go wrong), to looser coordination such as capacity-building and learning facilitation. However, as Armstrong identifies, the multitude of reasons suggest different logics of coordination. Similarly, Biagi (1998)’s work, which Armstrong builds on, differentiates between coordination as *cooperation* and coordination as *convergence*. The former “works with the autonomy of states to define their policies but promotes elective and selective learning across states” (Armstrong 2010, p.41). This is indeed what we see in the case of the culture OMC, whereas other OMCs promote ‘convergent coordination.’ This is an important distinction as it influences the goals of the group, the way that success is evaluated, and indeed how policy learning (and change) is conceptualised.

2.5 THE CULTURE OMC

The first ‘official’ mention of an Open Method of Coordination in culture is in the European Commission’s 2007 Agenda for Culture. Referencing the first Work Plan for Culture in 2005-2007, the Agenda stated that “the Commission believes that the time is ripe for Member States to take their cooperation one step further, by using the open method of coordination (OMC) as a mechanism to do so, in a spirit of partnership” (CEC 2007, p.12). It goes on to say that the OMC is “an appropriate framework for cooperation in the field of culture” because “[i]t is a non-binding, intergovernmental framework for policy exchange and concerted action suitable for a field such as this, where competence remains very much at Member State level” (*Ibid.*).

From June-December 2007, Portugal held the presidency of the Council of the EU. As a basis for consultation on the Commission’s Agenda for Culture proposal, the Portuguese presidency prepared a questionnaire which contained specific questions on the proposed

Agenda. On the OMC, the question was “Do you agree with the setting up of an open method of coordination in the field of culture, in the way that is suggested by the Commission?” (Council of the European Union 2007, p.3). Based on discussions in the Council, it was decided that the culture OMC would be a ‘soft’ version of policy coordination, due to subsidiarity and the sensitivity of the policy area.³⁴ Most other fields (the one other exception being youth policy³⁵) feature guidelines, target-setting, peer review, benchmarking, and reporting; ‘naming and shaming’ based on targets and progress is a key component. However, these elements are absent in the cultural field. According to the Agenda for Culture,

“It is essential ... for the special features of the cultural sector to be fully taken into account in the design of an OMC in this area. In a spirit of partnership with Member States, this implies adopting a *flexible approach*, entailing the setting of *general objectives* with a *light regular reporting system*” (CEC 2007, p.12; emphasis added).

The culture OMC is thus an example of cooperative coordination. Because of subsidiarity and the difficulties in establishing benchmarks in the cultural field, it is very unlikely that the culture OMCs will ever move towards convergent coordination. However, there is weak coordination in the field of culture to begin with. In other OMCs that have a ‘very strong’ or ‘strong’ level of institutionalisation, these areas often, although not always, have treaty bases (for example, macro-economic policy and fiscal surveillance).³⁶ They also have been in existence for longer periods of time and are supported by other EU coordination processes in the same field (Laffan and Shaw 2005).

The emphasis in the culture OMC is learning and exchange. Even so, it is not always clear what is expected to be learned and/or exchanged. The purpose of the culture OMC is a tricky question because one must dig deep to find an articulation of its aims and goals.³⁷ These aims are never explicitly addressed in policy and documents from the Commission.

³⁴ There is no straightforward answer as to why this is the case. Indeed, the ‘culture is different’ discourse is prevalent in policy documents and from Commission officials. This is explored in more detail in chapters 6 and 8.

³⁵ Youth policy enjoys a higher position on the political agenda than culture due to rampant youth unemployment in the EU since the 2008 financial crisis, and this being identified as a target in the Europe 2020 program. On the youth OMC, see ter Haar and Copeland (2011).

³⁶ One example of an exception is the OMC in education and training. Though education is a Member State competence lacking a treaty base, it has managed to become strongly institutionalised and moreover observable impact is occurring in Member States. This OMC also benefits from a parallel coordination process, the Bologna process (Laffan and Shaw 2005).

³⁷ In addition, as logics of policy coordination differ depending on the policy field in question (Armstrong 2010), it is not appropriate to look to other OMCs to infer goals or aims.

The closest justifications can be found in two main policy documents, the 2011-2014 Work Plan and the 2007 Agenda for Culture:

“... the Council Work Plan for Culture 2008- 2010, in particular through its use of the open method of coordination (OMC), constituted a new and important stage in the development of Member State cooperation on culture, improving the coherence and visibility of European action in this field, while underlining the horizontal role of culture” (Council of the European Union 2010, p.1).

“The OMC offers an appropriate framework for cooperation in the field of culture between the Member States. It is a non-binding, intergovernmental framework for policy exchange and concerted action suitable for a field such as this, where competence remains very much at Member State level” (CEC 2007, p.12).

These statements do not address *why* the OMC is introduced and what goals it expects to achieve. However, after some digging, I found three aims in the commissioning document that the Commission signed with the private consultancy firm Ecorys (McDonald et al. 2013b), which carried out an evaluation for the Commission, in 2012:

- Foster exchange of best practice between Member States with a view to improve policymaking. This is done in the culture OMC via a best practice report, which each group produces.
- Structure cooperation around the strategic objectives of the European Agenda for Culture, as defined in the Council Work Plans for Culture 2008-2010 and 2011-2014.
- Generate policy recommendations to feed EU and national policy-making.³⁸

Table 2.1 Features of the culture OMC

Treaty basis	Indirectly, article 167 (TFEU)
Instruments	Best practice reports
Policy goals	Outlined in Work Plans for Culture
Sanction mechanisms	Not applicable
Learning mechanisms	Information exchange, deliberation (no benchmarking)
Voting procedures and policy cycles (Council)	QMV, three-year cycle
Role of Commission	Drafts reports and monitors
Involvement of non-governmental actors	Involved directly in meetings

Source: Adapted for the culture OMC using Borrás and Jacobsson’s (2004) classifications.

³⁸ See chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of policy transfer.

The adoption of the Agenda for Culture and its new working methods thus “opened a new chapter of cooperation on culture policy at European level” (McDonald et al. 2013b, p.2), building on the development of the competence that had taken place over the past decade and a half. The first OMC groups started in 2008 under the 2008-2010 Work Plan for Culture (the ‘first generation’). This cycle featured four groups. The 2011-2014 Work Plan was unveiled in December 2010 and included ten OMC groups under six more concretely laid out ‘Priority Areas’ (see more detail on this below). The current plan, 2015-2018, contains nine OMC groups under four priority areas. The groups’ primary instrument of working (see Table 2.1 above) is via best practice reports, which is the ‘output’ of each group. The reports contain recommendations, examples of best practice from the Member States, as well as some analysis (see more on this in chapters 7 and 8).

2.6 2011-2014 WORK PLAN AND PRIORITY A

The Work Plans for Culture outline the EU’s strategic priority themes for the period concerned. The Work Plans are developed within the overarching Agenda for Culture (still considered the ‘baseline’ policy document for EU cultural action) in mind. The Plans contain priority areas and sub-priorities within them. Each sub-priority is assigned a jurisdiction; some are the provenance of the Member States, some the European Commission’s, and some are shared. The 2011-2014 Work Plan featured six priority themes (see appendix 2). Within this there are ten OMC groups – three under Priority A, three under B, three under C, and one under D.

Priority A of the 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture is *Cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and accessible and inclusive culture*. All of the themes in Priority A are linked to wider objectives in both Europe 2020 and the Agenda for Culture. Because it is politically difficult for the EU to operate a cultural programme on *cultural grounds*, a theme which will be discussed throughout this thesis, culture is instrumentalised and expected to achieve other goals, often relating to social or economic aims (in the case of Priority A, this is often social inclusion). Priority A’s themes, as mentioned in chapter 1, are closely linked to what one might refer to as the citizenship and cultural identity aspects of cultural policies, which differs from the current dominant discourse of ‘the cultural and

creative industries' (CCI; CCI policies often share more similarities with industrial policies [Pratt 2009b]).

In order to address the 'state of the union' of Priority A's themes, the subsections below give a brief outline of the themes of each OMC group. They are all wide, interdisciplinary topics and there is an extensive literature on each of them (as well as on closely related areas, such as the European public sphere and European citizenship). Space has therefore constrained the depth of the overview.

2.6.1 Group 1: Better access to and wider participation in culture

This working group, the first under Priority A, was tasked with identifying "policies and good practices of public arts and cultural institution to promote better access to and wider participation in culture, including by disadvantaged groups and groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion" (Council of the European Union 2010, p.3). According to the group's final manual,

"Policies for access and participation aim to ensure equal opportunities of enjoyment of culture through the identification of underrepresented groups, the design and implementation of initiatives or programmes aimed at increasing their participation, and the removal of barriers" (European Union 2012, p.7).

Access to culture is a cultural policy concern across many countries worldwide among not only public administrations but arts and cultural institutions as well. Public funding for the arts and culture is also linked in many jurisdictions to plans for access and participation.

The underlying assumption of the group's work is that there are intangible social benefits associated with participation in arts and cultural activities.³⁹ The report links the group's work closely with social inclusion and social innovation, two 'themes' that permeated the EU's justifications for intervention particularly through the earlier years of the new millennium:

"Culture is a positive element that can facilitate social inclusion by breaking isolation, allowing for self-expression, supporting the sharing of emotions, and bringing a 'soul' to measures tackling material deprivation" (European Union 2012, p.12).

³⁹ For an overview of this debate, see Belfiore and Bennett (2007).

Greater access to culture leads, in the EU's view, to more inclusive societies and more inclusive growth, a goal of the Europe 2020.⁴⁰

2.6.2 Group 2: Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue

Priority A's second group was responsible for identifying

“policies and good practice in creating spaces in public arts and cultural institutions to *facilitate exchanges among cultures and between social groups* in particular by highlighting the intercultural dimension of the [*sic*] heritage and by promoting artistic and cultural education and developing intercultural competences” (European Union 2014, p.3; emphasis added).

The basis for including such a subtheme can be found in the Agenda for Culture:

“... cultural diversity needs to be nurtured in a context of openness and exchanges between different cultures. As we live in increasingly multicultural societies, we need therefore to promote intercultural dialogue and intercultural competences” (CEC 2007, p.8).

This extract from the Agenda for Culture exemplifies some of the biggest tensions in EU cultural policy, as discussed above. Is there a common heritage? If so, what is this built on? Both *cultural diversity* and *intercultural dialogue* need further unpacking and are discussed in turn below. These themes are, of course, combined in the group's final report, with cultural diversity positioned as a precursor to intercultural dialogue.

Cultural diversity

The inclusion of cultural diversity in the Work Plan is based on the belief that “unity in diversity, respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and promotion of a common cultural heritage lies at the very heart of the European project” (CEC 2007, p.2).⁴¹ The OMC group took cues from UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). They did not define diversity, but rather say that,

“Cultural diversity implies the existence of common characteristics of a *group* of people, such as language, religion, lifestyle, artistic expressions, relations between men and women, young and old, etc. But cultural diversity is also present in the characteristics of each *individual* in modern society, [...] it is a mix that everyone experiences in his life

⁴⁰ Other priority areas are associated with economic benefits. For example, Priority Area C, Skills and Mobility, is linked to all three of Europe 2020's goals: smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth.

⁴¹ There is a whole literature dedicated to the study of the political uses of cultural identity rhetoric in the EU, which space does not allow a thorough examination of (but see Delanty 1995; Shore 2000, 2006; Sassatelli 2002, 2009; Eder 2009, Vidmar-Horvat 2012, and also chapter 3).

through meetings, travel or migration, reading, projects and examinations” (European Union 2014, p.10).

According to ERICarts, “there is no uniform approach to implementing or interpreting cultural diversity in national policy frameworks and structures” (ERICarts n.d.).⁴² In some countries, cultural diversity is referred to as the openness and inclusion of third country nationals, while in others it means the acceptance and advancement of minorities *within* a country (for example the Basque in Spain). Finding common ground and meaning within such a broad theme and a large diverse group is a challenge, and, indeed, it is difficult to separate a discussion on cultural diversity from one on cultural identity/ies. Scholars studying European identity have long remarked on the contradictory nature of rhetoric found in various EU documents: unity, diversity, and unity in diversity. The latter has been a focus over the last decade or so, although, as discussed above, there is no official articulation of what this means or how it operates in practice.

Intercultural dialogue

The concept of ‘intercultural dialogue’ has its genesis in the Council of Europe and its discourse is well-supported by international bodies such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe. ‘Intercultural’ arose from multicultural, which gained traction in the 1960s in North America and in the 1970s in parts of Europe. While multiculturalism is generally understood in terms of coexistence, interculturalism emphasises sharing, transfer, and exchange among cultures (Saez 2008).⁴³ Saez (*Ibid.*, p.14) argues that while intercultural dialogue was first recognised and promoted at UNESCO, the EU “gave it a special symbolic dimension showing a glimpse into what needs achieving in order to move from the preservation of cultural diversity to the meeting of cultures.”

The definition of intercultural dialogue is notoriously prickly to pin down, and, like cultural diversity, can be interpreted in many ways. ERICarts defines it as,

“a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups and organisations with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes” (ERICarts 2008, p.13).

⁴² To compare countries’ approaches to cultural diversity, see:

<http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/cultural-diversity-policies.php> [accessed 3 June 2016].

⁴³ For an example of indicators to measure national approaches to intercultural dialogue, see http://www.ericarts.org/web/files/131/en/intercultural_dialogue_indicators.pdf (Cliche 2004).

Meanwhile, Group 2's report says that, "[b]eing intercultural means questioning the content of what one transmits, the works of art one puts up for display, and the memories and stories that education favours or disregards" (European Union 2014, p.10). Debates concerning intercultural dialogue often go deep to the roots of a nation's identity and history, and are thus sensitive, normative, and political discussions.

Intercultural dialogue is a fairly well-established concept in the European Union (see Vidmar-Horvat 2012), particularly within cultural, communication, and education programmes and discourse, but its transposition into national policy varies considerably within Member States (for a now outdated but comprehensive overview, see Autissier 2008). 2008, the official 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue,' brought much spotlight on the theme, and the Commission has commissioned several reports, including a special Eurobarometer, on the topic since then (see, for example ERICarts 2008). Vidmar-Horvat (2012, p.31) argues that since 2006, "[b]y being placed on the intercultural dialogue's agenda of combating the rise of racism, xenophobia and discrimination, the notion of cultural diversity was reformulated into a political tool for furthering social solidarity and cohesion on the home front." Intercultural dialogue is thus positioned as a strategy, with associated networks and resources, to be harnessed for social and political advancement.

2.6.3 Group 3: The development of a competence in cultural awareness

The final group in Priority A was tasked with identifying "good practices for the development of this key competence and its integration into education policies" (Council of the European Union 2010, p.3). This group is a bit different from the other two, being first of all closely linked with education policy and secondly emerging out of a recommendation from the European Parliament (which traditionally has very little to do with the OMC) and Council of Ministers. Group 3 was listed under the 2011-2014 Work Plan but did not meet until March 2014, so it is also included in the current 2015-2018 Work Plan.

In December 2006, the Parliament and Council released their *Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning*, which is based on the following rationale:

“As globalisation continues to confront the European Union with new challenges, each citizen will need a wide range of key competences to adapt flexibly to a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world. Education in its dual role, both social and economic, has a key role to play in ensuring that Europe's citizens acquire the key competences needed to enable them to adapt flexibly to such changes” (European Parliament and Council recommendation 2006, p.13).

It sets out eight key competences, one of which is cultural awareness and expression,⁴⁴ defined as “[a]ppreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature, and the visual arts” (p.18). The group is tasked with creating a good practice manual for culture and education authorities at national and European level, a monumental task, especially for such a broad subject. It also builds on a previous OMC group’s work on developing synergies with education (June 2010).

2.7 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has contextualised the development of the European Union’s cultural competence, framed around the key theme of culture as a tool to promote deeper European integration (Shore 2000), as well as the development of the Open Method of Coordination as a tool of the Lisbon Strategy. The discussion has primarily focused on the development of the cultural competence since the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, a key turning point in the history of EU cultural policy, and has discussed the various roles of the key European institutions as well as given an overview of the EU’s current programmes and actions in the field. In doing so it has also demonstrated the fragmented nature of EU cultural policy as well as its controversial nature as a supporting competence. The discussion in the latter part of the chapter on Priority A’s working groups’ topics links closely with the chapter’s opening section, which discussed the social and cultural construction of ‘Europe’ and ‘European identity.’ The chapter has highlighted tensions in both article 167, outlining the EU’s competences in the field, as well as the notions of identity and diversity, which all of Priority A’s groups deal with directly. Incorporating insight from work on sociology and anthropology of Europe, it has also shown that by very definition there is an ‘us

⁴⁴ The others are 1) Communication in the mother tongue; 2) Communication in foreign languages; 3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; 4) Digital competence; 5) Learning to learn; 6) Social and civic competences; 7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship.

versus them' mentality built into the EU's construction and that the precise definition of European identity is never explicitly defined by the EU.

While this chapter has provided an historical overview of EU cultural policy, it has not addressed where the culture OMC sits within existing academic literature on the European Union or on cultural policy. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: SITUATING THE ARGUMENT AND REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

“Europe is not just an economic project, but ‘a state of mind.’”
Androulla Vassilou (2013, p.36)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter builds on reflections developed in the introduction and lays the foundations for this study by introducing relevant literature and situating the culture Open Method of Coordination within it. In doing so it also exposes the gaps in the literature and how they are addressed with this project. The chapter situates the research within the framework of European Union governance as well as cultural policy studies. As discussed in more detail in the opening chapter, this dual framing is essential in order for the research to be relevant to both public policy/political science and cultural policy scholars, the latter who may be coming from varied disciplinary backgrounds, the former who mostly will be unfamiliar with culture as a policy sector.

The culture OMC can therefore be considered an interdisciplinary topic, and determining which literature to ‘start’ with is not immediately obvious; it fits as a part of the literature on European Union governance (or more specifically as a part of the study of non-legislative modes of governance and policy coordination), as a part of policy coordination exercises more generally (within and outside of an EU context), as a subset of European Union cultural policy, or as a part of the study of cultural policy more generally. This is a multi-disciplinary challenge not only for the researcher but for the reader as well: the task is to find coherence in a subject that can be approached from a variety of academic perspectives.

The chapter situates the research within the framework of EU integration and governance as well as cultural policy studies. It highlights the empirical gaps that the research fills,

including the lack of attention to cultural policy within the study of the European Union and the lack of focus on policy coordination measures within existing studies on EU cultural policy, as well as a more general theoretical gap of public policy approaches to the study of cultural policy, more particularly those focusing on topics of policy-making and day-to-day processes within cultural governance. This positioning builds up to the choice of a sociological institutionalism approach.

The chapter is organised into three main sections. The first two position the research within two much larger bodies of work: that on European Union governance and that on cultural policy. Since both of these areas are such broad topics, they are broken down into relevant subthemes. Section 3.2 positions the research within governance and integration studies of the European Union (3.2.1) and non-legislative policy-making and the Open Method of Coordination (3.2.2). Section 3.3 situates this work within the disparate area of ‘cultural policy studies’ and discusses the field more generally before specifically addressing cultural policy from a public policy perspective. Finally, section 3.4 brings these two broader subject areas together and directly addresses cultural policy in the European Union, situating the study of the OMC within existing studies on EU cultural policy-making and programmes.

3.2 SITUATING THE RESEARCH WITHIN THE STUDY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Scholars have been studying the supranational polity now known as the European Union since the European Coal and Steel Community was created in 1951. For political scientists, the main areas of inquiry have been questions of European integration and governance. The objective of this section is to situate the study of the culture OMC within the study of EU governance.

3.2.1 The European Union: integration and governance

The culture OMC fits within a small part of an expansive literature on EU integration and governance. Although there is a lot of overlap between these two areas, their analytical focus is slightly different: integration looks at how political matters are being transferred

to the EU whereas a governance perspective focuses on how everyday decisions are made by looking at decision-making processes.

Until the 1990s, *integration* was the primary lens from which the EU was studied. It was dominated by two main approaches, supranationalism (also known as neofunctionalism⁴⁵), pioneered by Ernst Haas (1958), and intergovernmentalism, associated with Stanley Hoffmann (1966) and Alan Milward (1984, 1992). These theories focused on how the Member States were theorised and conceived and how political matters were being transferred to the EU. The EU ultimately contains both supranationalism and intergovernmentalist elements and mechanisms of rule-making (Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2012); how one explains the *theory* of integration is where these theories have a much bigger role to play: while supranationalists posit that supranational institutions have “autonomous capacity to resolve disputes and to make rules” (Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 2012, p.20), intergovernmentalists believe that it is the Member States, bargaining and operating at an intergovernmental level according to domestic preferences, that control the agenda.

In recent years, various scholars have ‘updated’ these grand theories. Sandholtz and Stone Sweet (1998) have refreshed supranationalism with a strong institutionalist bend; for them, there are three important elements: that actors have transnational interests, that supranational institutions have autonomous capacity to change law, and finally that the rule system defines the polity. Andrew Moravcsik (1993, 1998), meanwhile, has expanded upon the original intergovernmentalism and argued that Member States’ positions can be traced to their national economic interests. In his ‘liberal intergovernmentalism’ thesis, Member States aim to maximise their gains in negotiations.

By the early 1990s, a ‘governance turn’ began to emerge alongside the study of EU integration. This occurred in response to the perceived inadequacy of the grand theories in explaining everyday decision-making, as well as an increased in Community competences and decision-making as a result of the Single European Act (Kohler-Koch

⁴⁵ The name ‘neofunctionalism’ is so because of the *functional spillover* that happens when nation-states collaborate.

and Rittberger 2006).⁴⁶ Governance, a notoriously difficult word to define (Rhodes 1996, 2000), is here interpreted to mean the combination of the act of governing combining institutions, instruments, and actors: “authoritatively allocating resources and exercising control and coordination” (Rhodes 1996, p.653). In the case of the EU, argues Simon Bulmer, it is an appropriate term to use because “the EU represents governance without a formal government and it is not just concerned with formal institutions but can encompass procedures, norms, conventions and policy instruments as a core around which interest groups and other actors cluster” (Bulmer 1993, p.371).

A governance perspective moves beyond the integration debate and treats the EU as a political system that is neither a quasi-federalist state nor an international playing field. The focus is on the EU *as a system of governance* (Hix 1998, Eberlein and Kerwer 2004):

“First, [the governance turn] has an elaborate process dimension that explores the patterns, instruments and conditions of policy formulation and implementation and the diversity of actor constellations. Second, it reflects the different aspects of ‘system transformation’ (at both EU and national levels) and its likely impact on problem-solving capacity and democratic accountability” (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006, p.33).

The turn ultimately represented “renewed interest in the impact of institutions, the role of ideas and the place of symbols, norms and rules in political life” (Rosamond 2000, p.189). Processes of day-to-day policy-making are the focus. The complexity of the EU, with decision-making including both internal and external networks (non-state actors) (Bache and Flinders 2004), is also taken into account.⁴⁷ Scholars within this camp ultimately therefore argue that the emphasis on policy-making represents a “fuller account of EU politics” (Jupille and Caporaso 1999, p.440).

3.2.2 Policy coordination and the Open Method of Coordination

A subsection of the literature on EU governance focuses on policy coordination mechanisms, sometimes known as non-legislative or ‘new’ modes of governance. Policy coordination is one of five distinct modes of governance in the EU (Wallace and Wallace 2007). There are key differences between modes regarding the actors involved, their

⁴⁶ In addition, both supranationalism and intergovernmentalism have been criticized by different camps for inadequately addressing the nuances, complexity, and *sui generis* characteristics of the EU (some also argue that the way the supranationalism versus intergovernmentalism debate is presented, often as a duality, is too simplified [Schneider and Aspinwall 2001]).

⁴⁷ There are many ways to theorise actors and behaviour within the governance turn (see Zahariadis 2013). This is addressed in more detail in chapter 3.

roles, in the approaches to policy dilemmas, in the policy instruments used⁴⁸ (*Ibid.*), and most importantly in legal and treaty-based differences. Policy coordination involves non-hierarchical relations, policy learning and deliberation, and “example rather than negotiation” (*Ibid.*, p.350).

Almost as soon as the Open Method of Coordination was formalised in March 2000, it began to be the subject of academic attention. In the academic literature, the OMC has been called a tool, a method, a mode, an instrument, and a methodology, among others. The OMC exists in many policy fields and has been the subject of a vast number of studies over the years: “[t]he growing political salience, proliferation, and variety of OMC processes has elicited a bewildering array of contradictory assessments from both academic researchers and EU policy actors alike” (Zeitlin 2005a, p.22).⁴⁹ Much of this scholarship is from the fields of political science and law. There is also a sectoral majority: the balance of studies have been on the original OMCs: *social* (O’Connor 2005, Pochet 2006, Kröger 2008, Dawson 2009, Horvath 2009, Heidenreich and Zeitlin 2009, Vanhercke 2009, Armstrong 2010, Zeitlin 2010, Zeitlin, Barcevičius and Weishaupt 2014), *employment* (de la Porte 2002, Regent 2003, Nedergaard 2006, Trubek and Trubek 2005, Deganis 2006, Hartlapp 2009), and *economic* (Casey and Gold 2005, Pochet 2006, Heidenreich and Bischoff 2008, Heidenreich and Zeitlin 2009). Other sectors have been studied too: see Criado 2009 and Harcourt 2013 on the information policy OMC; ter Haar and Copeland 2011 and Banjac 2014 on youth policy; Souto-Otero, Fleckenstein, and Dacombe 2008, Normand 2010, Alexiadou, Fink-Hafner, and Lange 2010, Serrano-Valverde 2015 on education policy; Begg 2003, Dasi 2007, Faludi 2007 on cohesion policy; Kay and Ackrill 2007 on social and cohesion; von Homeyer 2007 on environment; Prange and Kaiser 2005 and Young 2012 on research policy; Ekengren 2006 on security policy; Caviedes 2004 and Velluti 2007 on immigration policy; and Kaiser and Prange 2004 and García Manjón 2010 on innovation policy.

⁴⁸ Terminology can be confusing. According to Borrás and Radaelli (2010, p. 12), “... ‘modes of governance’ is a concept defining the general processes of policy-making (e.g., Community Method, or Open Method of Coordination), whereas ‘policy instruments’ is about the concrete tools that unfold those in particular mixes (e.g., regulatory practices, benchmarking, best practices etc.). Having said that, however, the distinction between both these concepts might be difficult to pin down in the day-to-day practice of policy-making.”

⁴⁹ See also the now outdated OMC database compiled by the University of Wisconsin-Madison: <http://eucenter.wisc.edu/OMC/index.htm>

Beyond sector-specific analyses, the OMC has also been the subject of other studies, many of which revolve around its properties as a method or tool of coordination that is based on non-hierarchical governance and civil society participation. Various foci in the literature have included the OMC's democratic legitimacy (de la Porte and Nanz 2004, Büchs 2008, Smismans 2008, Borrás and Eijmaes 2011, Borrás and Radaelli 2015); its origins in relation to the EMU (Schäfer 2004); its role in the governance architectures (Borrás and Radaelli 2011) of the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020 (Zeitlin 2008, 2010); its use in national parliamentary debates (de Ruyter 2010); as a form of experimentalist governance (Zeitlin 2005c, Sabel and Zeitlin 2008, Zeitlin and Sabel 2010, Sabel and Zeitlin 2012); its prospects for policy learning (Nedergaard 2005, Kerber and Eckardt 2007); and its propensity as a soft law instrument (Zeitlin 2011).⁵⁰ There are also Member State-specific analyses, but most of these are n=1 as opposed to comparative cases (for an exception, see Kröger 2008).

The OMC literature, diverse as it is, shares a few characteristics. First of all, discussions often take an implicit or explicit normative tone (Kröger 2009), with opinion divided as to whether the OMC is 'bad' or 'good.' The second is that most of the literature aims to *evaluate* the OMC in terms of effectiveness, with 'effectiveness' most often conceptualised referring to national-level policy change. How this is done and according to what criteria differs, but many scholars are primarily interested in *whether* the OMC 'works' as opposed to *how* it does. A focus on civil society participation, a unique aspect of the OMC's operation, is also apparent. Another characteristic is that some of the OMC literature lacks empirical detail (Borrás and Radaelli 2010), explicit theoretical positionings (Idema and Kelemen 2006), and is not situated in time and place (Armstrong 2010). This is significant because discussions tend to be decontextualised and micro-level details about the OMC's day-to-day management and operationalisation left out. This has led to what Mark Dawson (2011) refers to as the need for a 'third wave' of OMC research which is engaged in empirical work and looks at the OMC's effects at a micro level. Finally, much of the literature conceptualises learning, whether about ideas, policies, or procedures, as a positive and desirable outcome of the OMC (Kröger 2009). (Learning is addressed separately in the next subsection).

⁵⁰ These categories are not mutually exclusive. They have been categorised according to their main focus, but many studies touch on more than one theme and/or Member State and sector.

Beyond these characteristics, the OMC literature is rather diverse, although Borrás and Radaelli (2010) have identified three main analytic perspectives in the study of the OMC into which most although not all work can be categorised. The first is the *experimental governance* lens (exemplified in Jonathan Zeitlin and Charles Sabel’s work referenced above). Here, the focus is on policy innovation, deliberation, and new ways of exploring policy solutions. The second perspective is *principal-agent theory* and looks at the relationship between the Commission and the Member States. The third perspective sees the OMC with a *post-regulatory politics* lens (Lodge 2007). While this research has elements of all three perspectives, it fits best within the experimental governance lens, looking at a wide range of possible outcomes of coordination and a comprehensive explanation of them (see chapter 8). The OMC thus operates in its ideal form as a “deliberative polyarchy” (Dorf and Sabel 1998, p.321, in Héritier 2001, p.5).

One crucial factor to highlight in the study of the OMC is that OMCs in different policy fields have vastly different histories and degrees of institutionalisation. There is no such thing as ‘the’ OMC; rather, important differences exist in terms of compliance mechanisms, treaty bases, the nature of objectives (loose or strict), and the involvement of actors (Borrás and Jacobsson 2004). There is a tendency to assume that the OMCs all operate in the same way when in fact ‘the’ OMC is a *multitude of different processes in different policy fields*.

There are different methods of categorising the OMCs. One way is to separate them into ‘large’ and ‘small’ OMCs – the former closely connected to governance architectures such as Lisbon and Europe 2020, the latter “which are not explicitly or procedurally linked” to these strategies but “are nonetheless following a similar OMC philosophy and similar normative logic” (Borrás and Radaelli 2010, p.49). According to this, economic and social OMCs would be large, and OMCs such as research and development, education, and culture, small. This categorisation has its weaknesses though, as boundaries of justifications and goals – the culture OMC, for example, *is* linked to Europe 2020, but it has not received anywhere near the attention that the social or economics OMCs have.

To more effectively categorise OMCs we must examine the reasons for policy coordination in the first place. There are a range of reasons why states may coordinate

policy (see earlier discussion in chapter 2 and Begg 2008), which indicates different *logics of coordination* (Armstrong 2010). Biagi (1998) distinguishes between coordination as *cooperation* and coordination as *convergence*. The former “works with the autonomy of states to define their policies but promotes elective and selective learning across states” (Armstrong 2010, p.41). This is indeed what we see in the case of the culture OMC, whereas most other OMCs promote convergent coordination. This is an important distinction as it influences the goals of the group, the way that success is evaluated, and indeed how policy learning (and change) is conceptualised. The culture OMC is an example of *cooperative coordination* and is therefore a looser type of coordination (along with, for example, youth policy [ter Haar and Copeland 2011]).

Since part of this research involves the analysis of the roles of two key EU institutions, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers) within the operation of the OMC, it is important to situate this perspective within the OMC literature. As detailed above, the vast majority of the literature examines whether the OMC has worked, not *how* it works. A focus on the OMC’s everyday operationalisation, the subjects of chapters 6 and 7, therefore means looking in-depth at the actors and institutions that are involved.

While the European Commission has been the subject of numerous studies, this work mostly focuses on its role within the traditional Community method; this body of research has added valuable insight into the Commission and the way it works, most notably with regards to its agenda-setting powers. However, simply extrapolating this body of work to study policy *coordination* is not appropriate: the institutions do not have the same responsibilities and the products of coordination are legally very different to the traditional Community Method. Within the OMC literature, there is also a lack of empirical focus devoted exclusively to the Commission’s role (for an exception see Deganis 2006). It is sometimes often only mentioned in passing, typically in regards to its role of target monitoring and reporting (see, for example, de la Porte 2002, Nedergaard 2005, Deganis 2006). There is also some work that has looked at the Commission’s coordination capacities more generally (see Jordan and Schout 2006).

The situation with the Council of Ministers is similar. Much of the (small body of) literature on the Council focuses on its role within the Community method and focuses

on a few of its defining features: the multi-level nature of bargaining; the role of committees (Häge 2008), COREPER, and the comitology system; voting and representation; and the rotating presidencies. The most comprehensive empirically-rich study on the Council to date is Fiona Hayes-Renshaw and Helen Wallace's 2006 volume.⁵¹ The authors lament the lack of academic attention to the Council and partially blame the lack of transparency of the body, as, with a few exceptions, activity in the Council takes place behind closed doors. To date there has been very little research that looks at the Council's role within non-legislative modes of governance such as policy coordination (Puetter 2014). Again, within the OMC literature, the Council is usually referred to in passing as the body responsible for setting overarching aims and goals.

The lack of focus on the EU institutions within the OMC literature is something that I address directly in my research, for several reasons. The first is that examining roles and actors moves away from the tendency to gloss over micro everyday aspects of the management of the OMC. Secondly, by studying these roles, we have a much better idea of the agenda-setting power dynamics within the EU. For example, there currently exists a debate in the literature on whether coordination in supporting policy areas, such as social and cultural policy, 'empowers' the Commission or takes away from it (see Puetter 2014; Bickerton, Hodson, and Puetter 2015). Some believe that the stronger intergovernmental position of the Council diminishes the Commission's role whereas others comment that the Commission, despite the rising importance of the European Council, is still in the driving seat. Addressing these roles therefore enables contributions to wider debates about the dynamics of supranational agenda-setting.

A final angle to approach the OMC literature from is its treatment of *policy learning*.⁵² Learning is an important part of the literature on non-legislative modes of governance and indeed the OMC because it is a desired outcome of coordination. The EU has been described as "a platform for learning and policy transfer" (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004b, p.372) and the study of policy learning, transfer, and change is now one of the major foci within the governance turn (see Schmidt and Radaelli 2004a and 2004b, Dunlop and

⁵¹ Note that this volume is now out of date due to the ever-changing organisational and legal structure of the EU. It does not include changes made under the Lisbon Treaty, the most important of which (for the Council) are changes in voting procedures from unanimity to Qualified Majority Voting, increased visibility of Council's proceedings, and the "Trio" presidency system.

⁵² Theories of learning will be discussed in chapter 4.

Radaelli 2013, Citi and Rhodes 2007). This is largely because of the potential for diffusion and cooperation in a transnational environment (see Egan 2009). Within the OMC literature, learning is addressed both explicitly and implicitly, but often “without specifying its scope or questioning its utility – or even considering the conditions under which it might actually function” (Citi and Rhodes 2007, p.15). This is a weakness of some of the existing literature, which tends to evaluate outcomes without explicitly discussing learning (for exceptions, see Nedergaard 2005, Kröger 2008, Zeitlin 2011). In order to overcome this I have made learning a key point of analysis. With the OMC, learning is a deliberative process that is cooperative and reflexive. It also done in a collective setting. Ultimately, learning is a highly complex process “affected by organizational resources, institutional structures and the dispersion of authority, the logic of membership and the logic of access, and whether the policy mandate is statutory, advisory or deliberative” (Egan 2009, p.1246-7). Thus, while learning is present but implicit in much existing research on the OMC, within this research it is explicitly addressed.

3.3 SITUATING THE RESEARCH WITHIN THE STUDY OF CULTURAL POLICY

The next task in situating my research is to explain how it relates to existing work on cultural policy. I do this in two categories. First of all, I look at an overview of the field and discuss one of the main approaches to cultural policy, that from a critical cultural studies lens. I then contrast this approach with the one I adopt, a public policy perspective.

3.3.1 Cultural policy studies: an overview

Cultural policy studies is an interdisciplinary and imprecise area of study, encompassing approaches from a variety of disciplinary angles such as cultural studies (Bennett 1998, Miller and Yúdice 2002, Lewis and Miller 2002, McGuigan 2004), sociology (Hall, Grindstaff, and Lo 2012; O’Brien 2014) political science (see below), economics (Throsby 2000, 2010; Hutter and Throsby 2008), urban planning (Landry and Bianchini 1996, Schuster 2002, Bloomfield and Bianchini 2004, Wood and Landry 2008), and many others (for overviews, see Scullion and Garcia 2005 and Gray 2010). There is also sometimes overlap between these disciplinary approaches as well as some cultural policy

research that does not explicitly position itself within a particular academic discipline. Separating the research disciplinarily is therefore only one way to categorise it but I have done it in this chapter in order to impose some order on this vast body of work.

Cultural policy research is interested in many questions; in particular, some of the major themes over the past ten years have included the impacts of the cultural and creative industries (Garnham 2005, Pratt 2005, Galloway and Dunlop 2007, Cunningham 2008, Hesmondhalgh 2012), the social impacts of culture and the arts (Belfiore 2002, Belfiore and Bennett 2007), cultural heritage (Hoffman 2006, Pyykkönen 2012, Van der Auwera 2013, Falser 2015), culture and urban regeneration (Pratt 2009a, Grodach and Silver 2013, Stevenson 2014), the connections between cultural policy and cultural identity (Craik, Davis, and Sunderland 2000; Mercer 2006), cultural value (Holden 2006, O'Brien 2010, Warwick Commission 2015), cultural labour (Gill and Pratt 2008, Ross 2009), and cultural diplomacy (Nisbett 2013; Ang, Isar, and Mar 2015).

Within these thematic areas there is a great deal of methodological and theoretical pluralism, largely stemming from disciplinary cleavages. Each discipline has its own theoretical approaches, definitions of culture and cultural policy, goals, and ontological and epistemological assumptions; there are no agreed-upon definitions or approaches within cultural policy studies, which is also marked by a strong applied research tradition. This wide range makes cultural policy an area of study “predicated on competing (and sometimes contradictory) audiences, purposes and even academic traditions” (Scullion and Garcia 2005, p.122), but an intellectually rich one. It is both the discipline’s biggest challenge and advantage: the field lacks an agreed-upon set of theories and methodologies, but this leaves room for its scope and development as well as the incorporation of insight from a variety of perspectives (Gray 2010).

The study of cultural policy is mired by a number of distinct challenges, such as problems with definition, causality, measurement, attribution, and questions related to the degree with which governments should be involved in the sector (Gray 2009). This is not to say that other policy sectors do not share the same challenges, but these, coupled with culture’s small budget and perceptions of its relative unimportance as a policy sector (Littoz-Monnet 2007, Gray and Wingfield 2011) make it an unconventional area in the

wider field of policy studies. Indeed “the foundations and aspirations of research in this field remain unclear to many” (Scullion and Garcia 2005, p.113).

Do these varying perspectives converge anywhere that we might be able to make comments about them, given the plethora of definitions of culture and cultural policy (Gray 2010)? Cultural policy studies,

“draws on the social sciences for both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and to articulate its social and economic role, its models of application and territorial difference. From the arts/humanities it draws on history and historiography – to understand policy making in the past and influence its future development and implementation – as well as cultural studies, from which come a concern with sign, representation and identity and, indeed, definitions and experiences of culture and its role in society” (Scullion and Garcia 2005, p.122).

The categorisations are not necessarily as clear-cut as Scullion and Garcia make them out to be because there are overlaps in these two research traditions. (Moreover, this polarisation can discourage the cross- and interdisciplinary dialogue needed to further refine the parameters of the field). As Gray (2010) shows, cultural policy scholars ultimately differ in three main ways: in how culture is defined, in how cultural policy is understood, and in what methodologies are used to investigate the research question(s). Space constrains what I am able to offer in terms of the main views within the variety of approaches. For this reason I have decided to contrast one main disciplinary approach – cultural studies – with that of my own, which is informed by theories in the discipline of public policy, discussed below.

A cultural studies approach to cultural policy is concerned with “examining cultural practices from the point of view of their intrication with, and within, relations of power” (Bennett 1992, p.23): there is usually an overt political and critical agenda (Miller and Yúdice 2002, McGuigan 2004), reflecting the discipline’s concerns with critiquing hegemonic influences in society. This perspective is “driven by the major strands of neo-Marxist, structuralist, poststructuralist and postmodern thought, which treat film, the arts, media and communication, as well as lived, everyday culture” (Cunningham 2003, p.14).

Within the discipline, there has been an ongoing debate concerning the nature of and degree to which cultural studies should engage with policy, and where it fits within the field. Prior to the 1990s, “questions of policy had previously been largely absent from

both theoretical discussions about cultural studies and programmatic statements made on its behalf” (Bennett 1998, p. 5). The debate, mostly played out in Australian, British, and American discussions (O’Brien 2014), was a response to a disciplinary attitude in (British) cultural studies not to study policy:

[p]ractical engagement with a politics of culture, including policy analysis and policy formulation, however, has been restrained..., due perhaps to an excessive critical purity and a suspicion of becoming involved with regulatory processes (McGuigan 2003, p.23).

Broadly we can divide the main positions into two camps – an engagement with government (Tony Bennett) versus a critical approach (Jim McGuigan) (O’Brien 2014). Bennett, in an extension of Foucault’s (1979) concept of governmentality, argued that cultural studies should take a more active role in the formation of policy. In the introduction of his 1998 book, he states that,

“...a cultural studies that does not take account of the varying and complex forms in which culture is managed and administered in modern societies will be considerably impoverished in terms of both its historical understanding and its theoretical capacities” (Bennett 1998, p.4).

McGuigan sees this activist stance defined quite broadly as power in the sense of “disputation over cultural issues” (McGuigan 2004, p.5). His position is that cultural analysts must continue to probe into the wide-reaching echelons of power and cultural control, particularly in the context of neoliberalism.

Cultural studies has added vast and sophisticated theoretical frameworks to the study of cultural policy as an *object* (Colebatch 2002). However, what is neglected from this approach is attention to policy as *processes* - policy-making and formulation, or, in other words, policy before it appears in its ‘final form.’ It is not enough to study what is already there. This perspective involves asking questions such as, who creates policies and under what circumstances? What is the division of power within and between levels of government? How are policies negotiated and managed? These questions still concern the *politics of cultural policy* but concentrate on the *structure, practices, and process* of governance and administration; in other words, how (and why) policy is made, which is done in specific organisational and institutional environments. They can be answered with insight from public policy theories, moving away from the presumption that policy-making is a rational process and accounting for the messiness of politics and policy-making.

3.3.2 Cultural policy from a public policy perspective

Culture is an under-researched policy sector in the fields of political science and public policy. Writing of the cultural industries, Pratt (2005, p.31) asserts that cultural policies “sit uneasily within the public policy framework.” Why is this? Possible reasons include an argument that culture is a symbolic policy area with little impact. Another is the proliferation of controversial debates surrounding involvement and the degrees to which governments should support culture and the arts. Finally, culture is seen by many as intangible, subjective, and elusive, and it presents numerous methodological challenges in quantification and determining outcomes (Selwood 2006). It is also an area that usually does not represent a large percentage of government budgets. It is perhaps for these reasons that culture has been largely ignored in mainstream public policy analyses.

However, one of the goals of this research is to illuminate the ways in which cultural policy has something to offer policy scholars. Studying public policy is the “examination of the creation, by the government, of the rules, laws, goals, and standards that determine what government does or does not do to create resources, benefits, costs, and burdens” (Birkland 2005, p.5). As David Throsby comments,

“political scientists, economics and self-styled ‘policy analysts’ ...have studied processes of cultural production and consumption, the collection and interpretation of cultural data, and the purposes and mechanics of government involvement with the arts and culture in order to draw theoretical and applied conclusions, both positive and normative, concerning the practical administration of cultural policy in the contemporary world” (Throsby 2010, p.232).

The essence of politics is about who gets what, when, where, and how. As a policy sector, culture is no different in this respect. But culture, like any sector, also has its own peculiarities. Culture is an essentially contested concept (Gallie 1956), meaning that there are numerous definitions of the word and any of them can be plausibly argued for or against. As a policy sector culture is often viewed as symbolic, elusive, and imprecise. But investigating how this manifests itself in policy – and the justifications governments give for intervention – is a rich area of exploration for policy scholars. For analysts interested in policy evaluation, cultural policy also presents many challenges regarding evaluation as its outputs are difficult to quantify (Selwood 2006, Warwick Commission 2015). Finally, cultural policy is often intertwined with notions of cultural identity (Mulcahy 2006), which deserves closer analysis because of its symbolic role in

citizenship and political legitimacy (Habermas 1989, Shore 2000, Delanty and Rumford 2005), raising important questions on the intermingling of political goals and the treatment of culture and cultural issues by policy-makers. Simply put, the cultural is political: “[c]ultural politics make salient issue of identity and expression, inclusion and exclusion, voice and silence, and the power of symbols” (Singh 2010, p.2).

From a public policy perspective, studying culture is not necessarily about *defining* it, but knowing that how a particular government conceptualises culture (and/or the arts) will in part shape the types of policies that it implements (Bell and Oakley 2015).⁵³ Gray’s definition is a useful one: cultural policy is “the range of activities that governments undertake – or do not undertake – in the arena of ‘culture’” (Gray 2010, p.222). This, in turn, “can also be seen to provide an image of the underlying values and/or ideologies that governments support, and are certainly the product of political choices amongst a range of potential forms and levels of support that governments can provide” (*Ibid.*, p.222-3). While this definition may be regarded as narrow by some, it reflects public policy definitions used in other sectors.

The existing body of work that looks at various aspects of cultural policy from a political science/public policy perspective is rather wide-ranging.⁵⁴ For example, in the US, this work has looked the arts and public policy (Mulcahy and Swaim 1982; Mulcahy and Wyzsormirski 1995; Cummings and Katz 1987a).⁵⁵ In the UK, at governance issues in museums and galleries sector (Gray 2011, 2015; McCall and Gray 2014), the state’s role in cultural policy (Gray 2000, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2011), democracy and cultural policy (Gray 2012), and commodification in arts policy (Gray 2007). In Canada, cultural policy, labour, and identity (Paquette 2012a), neoliberalism in provincial cultural policy (Gattinger and Saint-Pierre 2010), mentoring and change in arts institutions (Paquette 2012b), colonialism in Canadian cultural policy (Paquette, Beauregard, and Gunter 2015), and provincial cultural policy and policy analysis (Gattinger and Saint-Pierre 2008, 2011; Gattinger, Saint-Pierre, and Gagnon 2008), and cultural citizenship (Andrew et al. 2005). In the Nordic context, Anita Kangas and Geir Vestheim have made contributions, looking

⁵³ Of course, ‘culture’ is rarely defined so straightforwardly by policy-makers (Stevenson, Rowe, and McKay 2010).

⁵⁴ This is not an exhaustive list but aims to highlight some of the main scholars and works in the area.

⁵⁵ Again, categorising by country is only one such way of doing so.

at Nordic cultural policy (Kangas and Vestheim 2010) and the ‘who’ of cultural policy-making (Vestheim 2012). In supranational context, contributions from Annabelle Littoz-Monnet (2007, 2012, 2015) have examined agenda-setting and framing in EU cultural policy.

A strand of Clive Gray’s work has looked at the ontology and methodology of the study of cultural policy (Gray 2010, 2015). This work is valuable because it clearly acknowledges the disparate approaches to the subject. Gray is also explicit about the advantages of a ‘generalised’ public policy perspective: the use of “features of policy that have been developed within the larger public policy field may be more helpful as these are concerned with policy as policy, rather than with the specificities of individual policy sectors” (Gray 2012, p.4) and most characteristics of policy-making apply across all areas of public governance. The objective of using political theory is to leverage the advanced theoretical work that has been done in the discipline, and apply this knowledge to the cultural policy sector. Knowledge accrued through studying policy processes can therefore aid in influencing policy (how can you influence it if you do not know who it is made by and how?).

Jim McGuigan writes that “[c]ultural policy, from the point of view of cultural and media studies, is about culture and power” (McGuigan 2004, p.5). The same could be said about a political science/public policy perspective: the making of policy is an inherently political process because politics is about who gets what, when, why, and how. In their 2002 *Cultural Policy*, Miller and Yúdice explain that they position themselves “within the committed norms of cultural studies rather than the objective claims of orthodox policy research” (p.5), and are concerned with theory, history, and politics, rather than efficiency, effectiveness, and description. Similarly, Rothfield (1999, p.2) claims,

“To study policies, we imagine, is to deal with measurable aggregates rather than aesthetic particularities; costs and benefits rather than pleasures and values; objective facts and figures rather than subjective experiences and meanings; institutions rather than texts or images – at least that’s the way we like to think about what ‘they’ do versus what ‘we’ do.”

These passages read true for anti-rational choice and anti-behaviouralist perspectives, both of which have their roots in neoclassical economics and tend to prize parsimonious explanations from a rationalist ontology. However, there are many different perspectives

within political science and public policy theory – critical ones, even – that are rooted in a long history of political theory. Interpretivist and constructivist approaches are enjoying a revival in policy studies (see chapter 4) and offer more comprehensive explanations of the policy process and its analysis.

Ultimately, cultural policy research is an interdisciplinary and multifaceted field. Each disciplinary approach brings with it its own strengths, weaknesses, and gaps. The challenge is to situate cultural policy research within a tight theoretical framework, something that, especially in the case of an interdisciplinary approach, is not always straightforward. While cultural policy is a relatively ignored topic in public policy studies, the theoretical frameworks of the discipline are useful in helping to understand the dynamics of the policy process.

3.4 SITUATING THE RESEARCH WITHIN THE STUDY OF CULTURE, CULTURAL POLICY, AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

The final literature to discuss is that on cultural policy and the European Union, which combines the two larger surveys outlined above. To think about ‘culture’ and ‘European Union’ brings to mind innumerable themes, from big questions on European identity, to sociological constructions of Europe, to the narrower remit of specific cultural programmes administered by the EU. In addition, as Langen (2010, p.26) notes, the work on “EU cultural policy” encompasses a very broad notion of what might be considered ‘cultural,’ showing once again the difficulties of where cultural policy stops and where other closely related areas, such as education and communication policy, begin. In both the study of cultural policy and the study of the EU, EU cultural policy is a marginalised area of study.

The objective of this section is to situate my research on EU policy coordination within the existing literature on EU cultural policy. This body of work encompasses a variety of disciplinary perspectives including politics, sociology, anthropology, and law. This section is separated into three subsections which serve to outline where the majority of the literature to date has been concentrated. The first looks more generally at cultural policy beyond the nation-state. The second, 3.4.2, reviews the literature on cultural policy

and identity and European integration. Finally, 3.4.3 looks at narratives of EU cultural policy.

3.4.1 Cultural policy beyond the nation-state

Before I address the EU specifically, it is worthwhile to pause to think about the development of cultural policy analyses that move beyond the methodological focus of the nation-state (Beck and Sznaider 2006). This has traditionally been the most common level of analysis of cultural policy, due to the relationship between culture, cultural identity, and political legitimacy and its symbolic association with nation-building, stability, and boundary-marking (in both a literal and metaphorical sense). This historical relationship between citizenship, sovereignty, and nationalism helps us to understand the nature of governments' interventions in this field (Flew 2005). Cultural features, including language policies, education, and media, are indeed crucial to understanding nation-states and their societies (Schudson 1994, in Flew 2005). In an extension of Jürgen Habermas' work, Kalberg (1993, in Shore 2001, p.108) notes that the cultural foundations of modern citizenship are civic responsibility and social trust. Both of these, in turn, "depend upon the sense people have of belonging to a political community" (Shore 2001, p. 108). From a historical standpoint, cultural policy has "constantly affirmed and re-affirmed, produced and reproduced, the deepest and most embedded sense of the nation and the national: what is inside and what is outside, the borders" (Mercer 2006, p.1).

Moving beyond this methodological nationalism raises interesting questions about territory, identity, and governance. While the nation-state is still the most dominant locus of identity and thus cultural policy, the role of the European Union and other supranational institutions is becoming increasingly important. The influence of international cultural policies, such as those of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe, while not legally binding, is increasing due to interdependence and the 'transnationalisation' of governance – activity that cuts across traditional territorially-bound societies and forges links between

government and society.⁵⁶ Their importance is evident in terms of setting standards and creating and sustaining discourse.⁵⁷

3.4.2 Cultural identity and European Union integration

As discussed in chapter 2, cultural policies in the EU “cannot be understood outside of the wider context of the political project for European integration” (Shore 2001, p.107). There is also considerable overlap with the complex notion of European cultural identity.⁵⁸ As these discussions showed, the development of the first Community cultural actions in the 1970s and 1980s and the formal introduction of culture as a Community competence were closely, formally, and explicitly linked with a desire to deepen European integration (Delanty 1995, Shore 2000, Fossum and Schlesinger 2007):

...it is this sense of being part of a European culture which is one of the prerequisites for the solidarity which is vital if the advent of the large market - and the resulting radical changes in living conditions within the Community - is to secure the popular support it needs (CEC 1987, p.5).

Even in the study of the most minute cultural programmes or processes, this link to integration cannot be forgotten.

As such, the idea of ‘Europe’ can be considered an elite-driven project. Symbols such as the flag and anthem were ‘invented’ with the purpose of achieving a closer union in order to garner more political support for the ‘project’ of European integration (Shore 2000). Europe is indeed a contested concept – it is an idea as much as reality, and is not something that is self-evident (Delanty 1995). As per the discussion in chapter 2, we can think of it as an imagined community (Anderson 1991) with invented traditions and symbols (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992). It is an “interpretation of community: a fantasy homeland that goes hand in hand with a retrospective invention of history as well as a moralisation of geography” (Delanty 1995, p.8). This discussion is closely linked with the ideas of a European public sphere and European civil society, often associated with

⁵⁶ This is part of a broader trend moving from government to governance (Stoker 1998) and the hollowing out of the state (Rhodes 1994), whereby government has moved *away* from centralised control to de-centralised governance in regions, as well as to non-departmental agencies.

⁵⁷ In addition, forms of cultural identity in a globalised world are very fluid; modes of self- and group-identification are no longer confined to the realm of the nation-state. Beck and Sznaider (2006, p.6) argue that, given globalisation, establishing a “convincing contrast” between two homogenous units is no longer possible.

⁵⁸ Here I do not address *all* works on European cultural identity, of which there are many (for an overview see Sassatelli 2009, p.25-39, and Bourne 2015), but rather those that are explicitly linked to cultural policy (see Bonet and Négrier 2011).

the work of Jürgen Habermas. For Habermas (1989, 2012), a public sphere is about space for talking and communicating, and it is a key element of democracy. In the case of the European Union, a public sphere is challenging because of linguistic diversity and the absence of EU-wide media (Schimmelfennig 2012); the EU's public sphere is indeed "largely a national sphere" (CEC 2006, p.4), hence the perceived need by European elite to 'invent' traditions to increase popular support for integration (Shore 2000). This has led Gerard Delanty to argue that 'unity in diversity' is an idea(l) driven by the political elite: "...when the idea of Europe emerged as a cultural idea it became associated with structures of power and [elites'] identity projects" (Delanty 1995, p.16).⁵⁹

Contributions on European identity come from a range of fields, but are particularly strong from anthropology and sociology. A number of these focus on the contradictory nature of 'European identity' articulated in policy – unity, diversity, or unity in diversity (Shore 2001, 2006, Mokre 2007, Sassatelli 2009, Näss 2010). Shore has studied representations of identity in EU cultural policy and has published on the dualism of identity discourses and its problematisation (Shore 2001, 2006).⁶⁰ He has also written about culture being used instrumentally as a mechanism to further integration (Shore 2000). On a similar topic but taking a different approach, Monica Sassatelli's work has examined the concept of European identity from a sociological lens (with a particular focus on the notion of its creation and rhetoric in the European Cities of Culture program) within the broader context of Europeanisation (Sassatelli 2002, 2006, 2009). Sassatelli approaches identity as that created through the 'peoples' of Europe within established programs.⁶¹ Philip Schlesinger (2007) has explored the relationship between cultural identity and the European public sphere, arguing that nations and regions remain "crucially important" (p.424) as locations of debate and identity. Meanwhile, Monika Mokre's work (2003, 2007) has looked at the notion of cultural democracy and its application to the EU case; she argues that the EU should be focused on encouraging conceptualisations of identity that are plural and dynamic, rather than a unified approach.

⁵⁹ Consider this: "The public sphere is a central feature of modern society. So much so that, even where it is in fact suppressed or manipulated, it has to be faked" (Taylor 1995, p.260, as quoted in Fossum and Schlesinger 2007, p.1).

⁶⁰ The contradictory nature is emphasized in varying approaches to European cultural identity: unity, unity in diversity, or simply diversity (Shore 2001). See also the short essay by Picht (1994) on diversity and European cultural identity.

⁶¹ Methodologically, students of EU cultural policy from a public policy perspective can learn a lot from both Shore and Sassatelli's work. Their use of interviews in particular highlights the richness that this method can bring.

While this body of work is strong in articulating the various ways that the EU has co-opted the discourse on European identity over the years (the content of policies), in general it has not been as strong on the processes by which these narratives came about, nor on specific programmes and how they may (or may not) contribute to narratives of EU identity.

3.4.3 Narratives of EU cultural policy

The second major area of concentration in the literature has been narratives of various aspects of EU cultural policy, although this is a diverse categorisation and body of work. Until recently, a holistic picture of EU cultural governance was difficult to find (see Psychogiopoulou 2015a and Mattocks 2017).⁶² This is perhaps due to the intense fragmentation of the competence which has translated into a variety of different academic approaches. To better categorise the interventions, I have divided them below into agenda-setting, framing, and historical progress; legal perspectives; and those on specific programmes and actions.

Agenda setting and historical progression

Several scholars have examined the origins and general development of EU cultural policy (see also chapter 2). Forrest (1994) and Sandell (1996) have examined how the culture competence came into being, while Annabelle Littoz-Monnet has looked at the role of the French government (2003) and agenda setting and power relations within the competence since Maastricht (2007, 2012, 2015). The period around the Maastricht treaty also produced some ad hoc commentary on the notion of European cultural policy and what its future involvement might be (see Duelund 1992, Picht 1994), while Littoz-Monnet has studied the Education and Culture Directorate-General's agenda setting dynamics and shown that by strategically framing debates in terms of economic gain, the DG has brought increased attention to what was previously a small inconsequential policy area. Her work has been valuable because it has been one of the few to study the innerworkings of the DG (see also Shore 2000).

⁶² It should be noted that this applies to English-speaking academic work only. The EU's cultural policies have received a lot of attention in the French-speaking world. See, for example, Forrest (1987), Doutriaux (1992), Esmein (1999), and Granturco (1999).

Legal perspectives

A second category of scholarship on EU cultural policy comes from the field of law, from which there have been several interesting and valuable contributions. Culture has attracted attention from legal scholars in part because of its unique constitutional position and in part because of the role of the European Court of Justice in further defining the parameters of the competence (Craufurd Smith 2004a). This work is useful because – as the EU is governed by its treaties, by its very nature as a supranational body – understanding culture’s legal place is essential for any scholar looking at EU cultural policy, irrespective of their discipline. Craufurd Smith’s 2004 edited volume, for example, is an excellent overview of culture’s place in legal terms and a good starting place. Chapters in this volume explore where exactly culture sits legally and also look at the role of the European Court of Justice. Another area that has received some attention from the legal field is ‘cultural mainstreaming’ (article 167.4), the incorporation of cultural concerns into other areas of EU policy (see Craufurd Smith 2004b, Psychogiopoulou 2006, and on culture in EU external relations specifically, Isar 2015). Legal contributions have contributed a lot to understanding the role of the treaties and the limitations of the competence.

Specific programmes and actions

From chapter 2, we know that the EU is involved in a variety of different programmes, some prominent ones with long histories, such as the European Capital of Culture, some small and recent, such as the European prizes in architecture and film. Perhaps surprisingly, specific programmes and actions have actually not received much attention within the literature on EU cultural policy (Langen 2010), although that is starting to change.

In terms of supplementary measures, the emphasis by far has been the European Capital of Culture, which, has been the subject of rather a lot of attention over the past couple of decades years (see, generally, Myerscough 1994; Palmer-Rae Associates 2004; Garcia 2005; Sassatelli 2002, 2008, 2009; Garcia et al. 2013; Patel 2013a, 2013b)⁶³ – not surprising given its prominent symbolic position and long history in comparison to other programs. Much of this literature, among other goals, is critical of the program’s bold

⁶³ These sources offer general commentary and overviews but see also city-specific analyses of the programme.

claims, as the ECOC has suffered from unclear justification and purpose, resulting in varying and ambiguous outcomes since its inception. Economic and social benefits are now a key element of the programme, and there is some evidence that hosting the cultural year can lead to strategic investment and development of infrastructure that may not otherwise have taken place (Garcia 2005, CEC 2010b). Some of these issues transcend EU cultural policy in general, but given the highly fragmented nature of the EU's involvement in the sector, this work cannot be said to be emblematic of EU cultural policy as a whole.

Another supplementary action is audiovisual policy. Traditionally this has been treated as slightly separate from cultural policy as it has had a different historical development – having, in the initial days (the 1980s), been much easier to justify from an economic and competition policy perspective (Harcourt 2006). The literature also reflects this gap, as ‘audiovisual and media policy’ have typically been studied separately from EU cultural policy (see Collins 1994, Wheeler 2004, Harcourt 2006, Sarikakis 2007a, and Erickson and Dewey 2011). Much of the focus of this work is the Television Without Frontiers directive (TWF), established in 1989 and amended in 2007 to the ‘audiovisual media services’ directive (DIRECTIVE 2010/13/EU) and the impacts these policies have had in the Member States.

Over the past fifteen years, supporting programs and actions have begun to receive more attention. European heritage, for example, is an area of growing importance for the EU (see Calligaro 2013, Lähdesmäki 2014). The EU promotes annual heritage days⁶⁴ (started by the Council of Europe and co-organised with that body since 1999) and also has its own heritage label.⁶⁵ Another important area of focus is the EU's cultural funding programmes (see Kandyla 2015 on the current one, Creative Europe). The impact of these funds is only just starting to emerge, so this is a growing area of study.

The EU's *coordinative and communicative measures* are still a growing area of study. This includes Structured Dialogue, which exists to foster exchange between the cultural sector and the EU via a series of transnational platforms and a biennial Culture Forum (Ecorys 2013, Littoz-Monnet 2015); the Open Method of Coordination (see

⁶⁴ <http://www.europeanheritagedays.com/>

⁶⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/heritage-label/discover_en.htm

Psychogiopoulou 2015b); and other transnational networking building and support. These initiatives are not as promoted nor are they as visible – they often take place behind closed doors – and it is perhaps for these reasons that they have not received much scholarly attention. They are also relatively new areas of involvement for the EU. However, the EU plays a key role in coordinating all of these initiatives, as well as distributing and disseminating information. As part of its dialogue with the sector, the EU even supports a transnational network of experts, the European Expert Network on Culture (EENC). According to its website, the group “contributes to the improvement of policy development in culture in Europe, through the provision of advice and support to the European Commission in the analysis of cultural policies and their implications at national, regional and European levels.” The Commission has also undertaken or commissioned a large number of studies about various issues relating to the cultural sector and cooperates with other European networks on information dissemination and networking. These activities are important to study because they illuminate power dynamics within both the everyday management of these initiatives as well as the broader picture of where the initiatives fit within European integration.

3.5 CONCLUSION: FILLING THE GAPS

This chapter has shown the multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional nature of the study of the culture Open Method of Coordination. The culture OMC does not neatly fit into one particular box; rather, it is multi-faceted, with several ‘ways in’ from different disciplines and perspectives. This means that carving out tight theoretical and methodological frameworks are necessary.

This chapter first situated the OMC within the broader contexts of the study of European Union governance. This demonstrated how policy coordination is different to legislative modes of governance, as coordination is voluntary and deliberative in nature. In order to overcome several of the weaknesses of the current literature on the OMC, I place primacy on situating the culture OMC in time and place and moving beyond a normative tone (the ‘good’ or ‘bad’ OMC) and looking specifically at structures and actors within the system. Finally, the emphasis in evaluating outcomes is learning – placing learning at the forefront of analysis means that findings reveal *who* is learning, *what* is being learned, and *under what conditions* might learning be most ‘successful.’

Section 3.3 located the study of the culture OMC within the literature on cultural policy. This is a disjointed ‘field’ marked by a great deal of theoretical and methodological pluralism. However, comprehensive in-depth knowledge of exactly *how* cultural policy is made and who it is made – a governance focus – is in general lacking in the literature. These questions are important ones, not only for the discussion of cultural policy in a supranational and global context, but also to deepen the understanding of the EU in cultural terms. The focus on the everyday, seemingly mundane tasks of policy coordination actually sheds light into where power lies in the system (Deganis 2006), what the competing positions and roles of various actors within policy coordination are, as well as how the institutional design of the OMC influences its outcomes.

This research therefore addresses a ‘double gap’ in the literature: as the chapter shows, EU cultural policy has been left out of much of the work on the European Union and within the study of cultural policy itself. In addition, *cultural policy as studied from a public policy approach* has been a neglected theoretical perspective that is worthy of much more attention. Moreover, within existing literature on EU cultural policy, *policy coordination* has been side-lined for more visible aspects of the Commission’s activities. Coordination does not explicitly involve making policy; rather, the EU is as the facilitator of cooperation among Member States (and the sector). It is important to study not only because of its potential outcomes but also to more firmly determine the EU’s role in this cooperation.

The next step is to outline a theoretical approach enables us to makes sense of this complex topic. This is the subject of chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS: AN APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

“EU policy-making is very messy because it is characterized by heavy doses of complexity. This is not to say that national policy-making is not messy, but rather the complexity of the EU renders policy-making difficult to understand.”

Nikolaos Zahariadis (2013, p.810)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to outline a theoretical approach to analysing the culture Open Method of Coordination. This project investigates two different aspects of the OMC: first, how it is organised and how it operates, and second, the outcomes of coordination. The overall aim is therefore to “reveal deeper understanding of processes occurring at the everyday level” (Ripoll Servent and Busby 2013, p.9). As such, the complex and multifaceted nature of the OMC requires a clear and robust theoretical base to make sense of what is going on. The chapter develops an approach rooted in sociological institutionalism theory, an established theoretical framework in the study of the European Union and public policy more generally. An institutional approach focuses on “the rules, norms and values that govern political exchanges” (Stoker and Marsh 2010, p.4) and it enables in-depth exploration of actors, roles, processes, and institutions. Alongside this, the chapter also introduces two complementary theoretical frameworks that work with institutionalism to explain certain characteristics of European Union governance and the OMC: multi-level governance (MLG) and a constructivist approach to collective learning.

The framework outlined in this chapter can be thought of as a ladder, with each ‘step’ (section) building on the foundations of the previous one. The chapter proceeds as such. Before I tackle the specific approach adopted in this work, section 4.2 first discusses theoretical pluralism in the study of policy and politics more generally. Section 4.3 then

outlines an institutionalist approach rooted in an interpretivist ontological perspective. It introduces sociological institutionalism as the backbone of the theoretical framework, starting with an overview of institutionalism and then going specifically into the sociological variety, including the main debates within it. Section 4.4 then tackles the theoretical approaches to the European Union, focusing specifically on situating institutional perspectives within the study of the EU. It also introduces multi-level governance as a complementary framework that helps to answer some of the questions that are specific to EU governance. Finally, section 4.5 brings together the discussion and looks at how the processes and the outcomes of the OMC are evaluated in this project. This section makes use of theories on learning from a constructivist perspective.

4.2 PLURALISM AND THEORY

Before I delve into a theoretical discussion, it is worthwhile to briefly reflect on pluralism in the study of politics. There are many ways of ‘doing’ political science and policy studies. Stoker and Marsh (2010) put this down to the “complex, contingent and chaotic” (p.1) nature of politics itself, and argue that because of this it is not surprising that such a plurality of approaches exists.⁶⁶ In the same vein that there is no one ‘general’ definition of ‘the political’, there is no one general way to study public policy. Rather, there are what one might term general approaches and subsequent further theories within these. Each theory has its own concepts, premises, variables, foci, and assumptions (Cairney and Heikkila 2014) and “contains a different logic of explanation and assigns different weight to relevant factors” (Zahariadis 2013, p.810). To explain what happens in the policy process, which is inherently complex, one needs to place emphasis on certain things and not others. This is a give-and-take dilemma: “[g]iven that we must simplify a complex world to understand it, which elements do policy scholars treat as crucial to explanation?” (Cairney and Heikkila 2014, p.364).

One obvious ‘faultline’ is the divide between rationalist and constructivist explanations. As previously stated, the ontological position that this work adopts is constructivist/interpretivist, which can be roughly defined as the view that reality is

⁶⁶ Of course, political science is not alone in this (Abbott 2001, in Stoker and Marsh 2010).

socially constructed.⁶⁷ This perspective argues that individuals' views are informed by political, social, and cultural factors (Furlong and Marsh 2010). This is in contrast to foundationalism, which posits that there is a "real world" which exists independently of one's knowledge of it (Furlong and Marsh 2010); subscribers to this ontological position believe in objective and absolute truths.

The advantage of a constructivist approach is the focus on

“[t]he crucial role played by the contextualization of processes, i.e. the fact that they are embedded in a certain social, political or economic context, based on an important number of variables that cannot be reduced to a simple linearity between interests and outcomes, advocated by constructivist approaches, leads to a rather detailed research protocol and precise statements on policy processes” (Saurugger 2013, p.901).

A constructivist point of view therefore holds that “social norms and frameworks on which reality is based are constructed and redefined through permanent interaction” (Saurugger 2013, p.890). In a sociological institutionalist perspective, institutions themselves are social constructs (Parsons 2010). A constructivist approach thus more widely accounts for social elements and a wider set of influences rather than just presupposed choices or positions.

Ultimately, there are many ways to explain politics and policy. This chapter provides one such account, based on informed choices and rooted in clear ontological and epistemological positions.

4.3 AN INSTITUTIONALIST APPROACH TO POLICY COORDINATION

The term *new institutionalism* was coined by political scientists James March and Johan Olsen in their 1984 article, “The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life.” Along with rational choice theory and behaviourism, new institutionalism (NI) is one of the main theoretical approaches in the study of political science and public policy. Whereas the former two view political outcomes as products of aggregate individual choice, institutionalism examines how and to what extent individuals' behaviour is

⁶⁷ Please note that that ontology and epistemology are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

constrained and enabled by structural factors. In their seminal work, March and Olsen (1984, p.738) differentiate their perspective from rational choice and behaviouralism theories by arguing that “political action is inadequately described in terms of rationality and choice.” NI’s premise is that institutions – defined as formal and informal rules and stable, regularly occurring patterns of behaviour – are the most important part of political life and that “seemingly neutral roles and structures actually embody values (and power relationships), and determine ‘appropriate’ behaviour within given settings” (Lowndes 2010, p.65). The dynamism of the relationship between structure and agency is therefore at the heart of institutionalism.

The origins of the so-called ‘new’ institutionalism go back to the development of post-World War II political science. Students of politics have always been interested in institutions (Steinmo 2008); until the 1950s, “institutionalism *was* political science” (Lowndes and Roberts 2013, p.1; emphasis in the original). Much of this early work in the field centred on the legalistic analysis of institutions, voting procedures, legislations, and executives. What is now sometimes referred to as ‘old’ institutionalism tended to be mostly descriptive in nature and was not primarily focused on theory. There also was little, if any, emphasis placed on informal institutions – unwritten rules and norms. The 1960s and 1970s saw a departure from this towards a move to explain *who* governs and on what interests they act upon. This period was marked by the development of actor-centred approaches, which in part emerged out of a need for quantifiable and measurable ‘results’ if political science was to be taken seriously as a *science*. These theories were based on microeconomic theories of the rationality and utility-maximisation of individuals. What is now known as *new institutionalism*, in turn, developed out of a backlash to the rise of these models. The study of institutions had “come around again” into mainstream political science by the 1980s (Lowndes and Roberts 2013).

Rather than one unified theory, new institutionalism is better thought of as an overarching term for many different approaches. Depending on whom one asks, there are at minimum three and potentially up to eight or nine different variants.⁶⁸ The three most developed

⁶⁸ These are rational choice (Ostrom 1990, North 1990), historical (Hall 1986; Thelen and Steinmo 1992; Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth 1992; Pierson 2004; Steinmo 2008), sociological (DiMaggio and Powell 1991), discursive/constructivist (see Schmidt 2008, 2011), feminist (see Krook and Mackay’s edited volume, 2011 and Mackay, Kenny, and Chappell 2010), empirical (see Peters 2012, ch.5), international (see Keohane 1989), and network (see Ansell 2006). Some scholars, such as Peters (2012) identify the

strands are rational choice, historical, and sociological. The strands differ in several fundamental categories, most notably in how an institution changes and how agency is conceptualised.⁶⁹ Cairney (2012) helpfully suggests that the differences in variants is not so much to do with major contradictions, but to the relative attention given to certain factors.⁷⁰

There are some shared features between the variants. In general, institutions are acknowledged to be formal and informal; stable and dynamic; and constraining and enabling. Firstly, whereas ‘old’ institutionalism was exclusively devoted to physical institutions such as legislatures and courthouses (using *organisation* and *institution* interchangeably), the ‘new’ version has a broader interpretation and includes informal rules and norms. Informal institutions are those that may not be written down or formalised in any way, but are still followed (‘habitual actions’ [Thielemann 1999, p.401]). Secondly, describing institutions as stable yet dynamic seems contradictory, however, institutions *do* change – it is the *contexts* and *processes* of change that are of most interest to institutional scholars. Change can be conceptualised in two main ways: exogenously, referring to ‘shocks’; or endogenously, referring to the agency of actors in both creating change but also maintaining stability through repetitive behaviours (institutionalists believe that political systems are complex and open to influence from both internal and external sources, not closed and predictable [Hay 2002]). Finally, individuals are both constrained by institutions but through agency are also creators of change. Institutions are constraining in three respects: formally, through rules and sanctions; informally, through practices, repeated behaviours, and norms; and narratively, through spoken stories or symbolism (Lowndes and Roberts 2013). However, agents are also empowered by institutions and thus are have some “reflexive and strategic capabilities,” enabling them to learn and adapt (*Ibid.*, p.44). In addition, institutions are not ‘accepted’ at face value – as was the case with old institutionalism; rather, values and power relationships are viewed critically (*Ibid.*).

institutionalism of March and Olsen (1989) as normative, but for the purposes of this particular research this is subsumed into the sociological strand.

⁶⁹ March and Olsen (2006, p.4) argue that approaches to institutionalism differ in terms of the understanding of (a) “the nature of institutions, as the organized setting within which modern political actors most typically act; (b) the processes that translate structures and rules into political impacts; and (c) the processes that translate human behavior into structures and rules and establish, sustain, transform, or eliminate institutions.”

⁷⁰ For an excellent analysis of institutionalism that moves beyond the strands, see Lowndes and Roberts (2013).

The theoretical framework for this project takes its cues from the work on institutional theory pioneered by Vivien Lowndes and colleagues (Lowndes 2010, Lowndes and Roberts 2013). This ‘third-phase institutionalism’ moves beyond pitting strands of institutionalism against each other and is a robust theoretical discussion of what unites, rather than divides, institutionalists. Lowndes’ work addresses head-on the tension between inductive and deductive approaches. She suggests a continuum, a constant re- definition of the two ‘poles’; this “requires the researcher to reflect at regular intervals on the relationship between the two and respond sensitively to what they are finding in any particular context” (Lowndes and Roberts 2013, p.20). This approach stresses the importance of “a dialogue between theory and evidence” which the analyst must be constantly be renegotiating (Hay 2002, p.47). It “puts limits on knowledge claims” (Lowndes and Roberts 2013, p.21) in the sense that the researcher is looking not for the truth, but a *theoretically-rich explanation*. A clear ontological position is thus essential.

4.3.1 Sociological institutionalism

Sociological institutionalism (SI) is one strand of new institutionalism.⁷¹ It originated in the study of organisations in sociology, most commonly associated with Philip Selznick (1957)’s work in the 1940s and 1950s.⁷² Selznick and his associates examined values and meaning within organisations and it is from this standpoint that the perspective began to evolve in a political science context. It is also closely associated with March and Olsen’s work, typically considered the ‘cornerstone’ of the reorientation towards institutions in the 1980s. While some scholars including Peters (2012) call March and Olsen’s work *normative institutionalism*, and name it so due to their emphasis on the importance of norms, many other subsume them within the sociological strand, which is the position I have also adopted.

Sociological institutionalism ultimately

“comprises a rejection of rational-actor models, an interest in institutions as independent variables, a turn toward cognitive and cultural explanations, and an interest in properties

⁷¹ This conceptualisation of sociological institutionalism is that which is used in the disciplines of public policy and political science. These have their origins in sociology, but are distinct from the sociological study of organisations as well as, more generally, sociological theoretical studies of of the EU (see Parsons 2010). Sociological positions are not analogous to constructivist ones, though they do share some similarities.

⁷² Selznick’s ideas in turn have their roots in the work of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber.

of supraindividual units of analysis that cannot be reduced to aggregations or direct consequences of individuals' attributes or motives" (Powell and DiMaggio 1991, p.8)

In SI, an institution is defined as both formal and informal cultural conventions, norms, cognitive frames, and practices. This is a somewhat broader definition than other strands of institutionalism because it includes influence from wider social and cultural contexts. Individuals are not presupposed to have self-serving desires and goals but rather act according to social norms, which are "culturally specific practices" (Hall and Taylor 1996, p.14). Agency is ascribed to institutional norms rather than actors' maximising their individual preferences: "institutions influence behaviour not simply by specifying what one should do but also by specifying what one can imagine oneself doing in a given context" (Hall and Taylor 1996, p.15). This is known as the *logic of appropriateness*, which says that there is an unspoken, implicit understanding of appropriate behaviour within institutional settings (March and Olsen 1989). Acts are thus interpreted as socially-meaningful. Individuals accrue their values through membership in formal or informal institutions. Actors are thus not assumed to be fully rational but rather bounded: membership in an institution provides the context of appropriate behaviour.

Sociological institutionalists believe institutional creation and change to be culturally-specific phenomenon that has to do with enhancing social legitimacy. Institutions are "built through social processes rather than merely by rational intention or mechanical reproduction" (Jenson and Mérand 2010, p.82). Institutions can also be a pattern of social relations, "which can be competitive, oppositional and characterized by unequal power relations" (Jenson and Mérand 2010, p.82). There are also varying opinions on institutional change within sociological institutionalism, ranging from the proliferation of professional communities and organisations and the isomorphism of behaviour to interactive processes of discussion among individuals within an organisation. The idea with the latter is that discussion stimulates 'cognitive maps' of solutions (based on institutional appropriateness) which in turn creates new rules (Hall and Taylor 1996, p.17).

The main theoretical premises of sociological institutionalism are therefore:

- An institution is defined as a collectively understood norm, routine, or rule.
- It is institutional norms and values that explain behaviour – the logic of appropriateness. Individuals make conscious choices, but these will be

constrained by norms. Institutions “give order to social relations, reduce flexibility and variability in behaviour, and restrict the possibilities of a one-sided pursuit of self-interest or drives” (March and Olsen 2009, p.8).

- Institutions are not static. With regard to how they change, this is a combination of factors over time that is predicated on learning and gradual adaptation. Actors also are able to act as change agents, seeking change based on appropriateness. The idea of change due to “historical efficiency” is rejected.

4.3.2 Institutionalism debates

As mentioned above, there are two main debates within institutionalism. The first concerns the role of agency and the second how institutions change. These will be discussed briefly in turn with a focus on setting out how the debates are treated within the sociological strand. Ultimately, “the most interesting puzzles lie at the nexus where structure and agency intersect” (Checkel 2001, p.62). Taking the lead from several scholars who wish to move past the structure *versus* agency debate, my focus is on understanding how they work together (Lowndes and Roberts 2013, Ripoll Servant and Busby 2013):

“...if we accept that actors are engaged in a dialectic relationship with institutions, then what we most frequently observe in politics are the interactions between actors who are attempting to ‘square the circle’ of contemporary mixed motivational demands from the past” (Lowndes and Roberts 2013, p.13).

I thus conceptualise the relationship between structure and agency as relational, not separate (Ripoll Servant and Busby 2013), taking into account formal and informal institutions. This moves away from a binary approach of either-or (Jenson and Mérand 2010) and also takes into account changes in attitudes and ideas via a method of learning and exchange such as the OMC.

Agency

Agency is defined as “the ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously and, in doing so to attempt to realise his or her intentions” (Hay 2002, p.79). The role of actors is one of the biggest debates within institutionalism: what kind of role do individual actors play, and do they act on their preferences or not? Human behaviour is complex and so too is theorising it. Whereas a rational choice perspective argues that individuals act according to their own preferences and seek change or stasis based on these, sociological

institutionalists see it as more complex than this; blanket rules and predictive behaviour can only go so far in explaining the diverse ways that humans act. However, it is important to keep in mind that “[t]here is a great diversity in human motivation and modes of action. Behaviour is driven by habit, emotion, coercion, and calculated expected utility, as well as interpretation of internalized rules and principles” (March and Olsen 2009, p.17).

A SI perspective on agency is guided by March and Olsen’s concept of the logic of appropriateness. In this perspective, individuals are not presupposed to have self-serving desires and goals but rather act according to social and cultural norms, seeking self-definition and expression within a specific (social) context. Individuals are constrained by institutions in that they operate within and interact with them. To ‘act appropriately’ means “to proceed according to the institutionalised practices of a collectivity, based on mutual, and often tacit, understanding of what is true, reasonable, natural, right, and good” (March and Olsen 2009, p.4). Institutions thus “define a set of behavioural expectations for individuals in positions within the institution and then reinforce behaviour that is appropriate for the role and sanction behaviour that is inappropriate” (Peters 1999, p.30). There must be sanctions if behaviour is not followed; these may be formal, such as a disciplinary procedures, or informal, such as desocialisation from a peer group.

To take forward the debate on the relationship between structure and agency, I employ the concepts of *embedded agency* (Ripoll Servent and Busby 2013) and the *logic of practices* (Jenson and Mérand 2010), which link the notion of appropriateness with social norms and organisational practices. These concepts are rooted in sociology but have been used in the study of EU governance. Embedded agency can “unveil hidden processes and particular biases in the formulation and development” of policy (Ripoll Servent and Busby 2013, p.14), and produce fuller, more comprehensive understandings based on the inclusion of *wider contextual elements* in explanations: “[r]ather than focusing on whether and how much influence is exerted, more attention should be paid to how actors exert influence.” Influence, A’s ability to change B’s course of action, without threats, is therefore defined separately from power (*Ibid.*).

This focus takes the logic of appropriateness even further, into a logic of practices. This approach places more emphasis on agency than some sociological perspectives do. Agents are conceptualised as “conscious and reflexive actors embedded in a given

(institutional and indeed social) context” (*Ibid.*, p.6). They choose actions based on fit and appropriateness within a setting, which are based on social norms and thus grounded in a social context. This leads to the concept of *change agent*, an important one in the context of the OMC. Actors are not conceptualised as blind ‘rule followers’, but rather adopt strategies which are seen as appropriate. These in turn become routines that are reproduced in organisations (March and Olsen 1989). The extension of the logic of appropriateness to the logic of practices thus takes into account the importance of socially constructed *roles* influencing preferences, more so than individuals’ own preferences (From 2002). This thus overcomes one of the critiques of the SI perspective that actors simply ‘blindly’ following rules without thinking.⁷³

How institutions change

A second debate within institutionalism is how actors create and change institutions. As Peters (2012, p.38) says, both relationships need to be made clear, or institutions will be “abstract entities.” However, change is a complex concept; even though nearly all major theories of the policy process incorporate some explanation of change, there is still a lot of room for theoretical and empirical advancement. Ultimately, change “is not likely to be governed by a single coherent and dominant process” (March and Olsen 2009, p.17). Sociological institutionalists believe change to be a culturally-specific phenomenon that has more to do with enhancing social legitimacy. This is to suggest that new practices may not be efficient or even functional (Hall and Taylor 1996). March and Olsen argue that organisations have a ‘garbage can’ of potential solutions to problems, and that in any given situation requiring change, actors pick from the ‘available’ choice in the garbage can. These choices are still norm-bound and institutionally-appropriate.

As outlined above, the conceptualisation of agency I am using means that actors are not simply blind rule-followers but seek social and cultural legitimacy based on accepted practices. Change is therefore also associated with learning and change agents, as above, are able to adopt strategies to seek change based on appropriateness. According to Lowndes and Roberts (2013, p.129-130), change can be as the result of both endogenous

⁷³ ‘Precise’ prediction based on rule-following behaviour is not a feature of the SI or NI variants: “[w]hile rules guide behaviour and make some actions more likely than others, they ordinarily do not determine political behaviour or policy outcomes precisely” (March and Olsen 2009, p.10). However, (rule-driven) behaviour “associated with successes or survival is likely to be repeated,” whereas behaviour associated with failure is not (*Ibid.*).

and exogenous factors; gradual change can have ‘transformative effects’; and both change and stability are the product of agency. Taken together these go a long way in moving past the structure versus agency debate that has weighed down so much scholarship on institutions from all schools of thought. They argue that change and stability “must be understood simultaneously, not separately” (p.129). They place great emphasis on the temporal aspect of change; that is, that all change must be understood as relative and in the context of its political environment. In their cinematic analogy they cast the institutional environment as the background setting and the actors as the cast, “who are empowered and constrained in very specific ways by their institutional setting” (Lowndes and Roberts 2013, p.143). This is similar to the notion of embedded agency. Their final aspect is what goes on ‘offscreen,’ the exogenous aspects that can affect both shocks and gradual change.

4.3.3 Sociological institutionalism’s critiques and weaknesses

No theory can explain everything, and it is important to address the theory’s weak points in order to be clear on its limitations. One of the more straightforward criticisms is to do with terminology and the definition of an institution: if everything is an institution, what is an institution? The way around this is to use Peter Hall’s (1986) ‘standard operating procedures’ guideline: institutions should be viewed as rules that are agreed and generally followed, both implicitly and explicitly, by agents. This is a move away from a more anthropological “broader customs and habits” definition of institutions (Lowndes 2010, p.73), while still paying close attention to both formal and informal rules and behaviours.⁷⁴

A second issue concerns the conceptualisation of *power* and *strategy* in politics. Some critics of the sociological variety (and indeed other strands of NI) argue that power is under-theorised in institutionalism, and, more specifically, that potential power clashes among individuals on the creation and change of institutions is not taken into account. However, this critique is somewhat unfounded, since institutions are *not* conceived as neutral; rather, they embody power relationships and give voice to some and not others. Institutions are structures of power in that by examining institutions we can see who controls them and where power lies in a particular setting. With regards to strategy,

⁷⁴ Finnemore and Sikkink (1998, p.895) define norms as “a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors within a given identity.”

analytically, attention should be paid to the *context* within which strategic behaviour take place (Lowndes and Roberts 2013). The concept of the logic of practices takes influence into account by outlining what is considered appropriate within a certain context; that is, based on appropriate norms and behaviour, some of which may be interpreted as strategic.⁷⁵ Another concern is the claim that institutionalism neglects networking in politics. Politics is and has been influenced by a complex blend of internal and external actors, and it is important that this is taken into account. This is certainly an area that would benefit from being theorised in a more nuanced fashion, but can be incorporated into institutional analysis using insights from multi-level governance.

A final set of critiques of institutional perspectives are methodological in nature. These will be addressed more in the next chapter, but briefly outlined here. Since one of the main research questions of this thesis is how the structure of the OMC – how it is organised – affects its outcomes, it is important to be able to identify the institutions that make it up:

“[t]he researcher claiming an ‘institutionalist’ approach needs to be sure that they are privileging institutions over other possible explanations of political behaviour, and indeed that they are able to identify clearly the institutions in question” (Lowndes and Roberts 2013, p.199).

How to *recognise* institutions is difficult, since institutions are invisible (Ostrom 1999). Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) argue that researchers can only have indirect evidence of them; after all, like other political concepts such as motivation or interest, they are not tangible or measurable. The same authors say that while they cannot be seen, their evidence is everywhere and thus can be evaluated: “norms prompt justification for action and leave an extensive trail of communication among actors” (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, p.892). These *can* be studied. Another methodological concern is that the logic of appropriateness is not falsifiable: “[t]here is no independent means of ascertaining whether it was values that produced behaviour, and no way of arguing that it was not the root of behaviour” (Peters 2012, p.45). Peters argued that as the theory cannot be disproved, there is no way of testing it. However, the objective in a sociological institutionalism approach, in line with constructivist epistemology, is not to make

⁷⁵ An example of this will be seen in chapter 6 relating to the European Commission’s role in the culture OMC.

predictions or blanket statements. It is rather to produce an in-depth *theoretically-rich explanation* of specific phenomena.

At this point, I now turn to how we can apply a sociological institutional perspective specifically to the study of the European Union.

4.4 THEORISING POLICY COORDINATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The objective of this section is to discuss how European Union governance, and more specifically policy coordination, is analysed from a sociological institutionalism perspective. It first briefly discusses the application of an SI approach to the EU, and then introduces a complementary theoretical framework, multi-level governance, which allows more analytical focus on the EU's *sui generis* characteristics.

4.4.1 Institutional approaches to European Union governance

Despite the increasing importance of EU policy-making in many sectors, a robust conversation on theoretical approaches to studying EU policy-making has only emerged rather recently. In an attempt to address this, a special issue of the *Journal of European Public Policy* in 2013 was dedicated to this very topic, on the basis that “[f]rameworks dedicated to explaining EU policy remain for the most part theoretically underdeveloped and empirically incomplete” (Zahariadis 2013, p.809). The *JEPP* special issue represented the first systematic overview and comparison of policy frameworks as applied exclusively to analysing and making sense of EU integration and governance. It contained articles that addressed seven different frameworks, all with diverging ontological and epistemological groundings. Some models include those based on a rational choice or behaviouralist model of actors within the EU while others were based on constructivist approaches.

In general, one of the biggest challenges in theorising EU policy-making is the sheer complexity and multi-level nature of the polity, and also that governance is sector- and

institution-specific.⁷⁶ This is why there is no catch-all theoretical approach that will accurately explain everything that goes on in the EU:

“the complexity of the EU policy process means that we must learn to live with multiple models and learn to utilize concepts from a range of models in order to help us describe it as accurately as possible” (Richardson 2006, p.25 in Zahariadis 2013, p.813).

Institutionalism is a widely recognised theoretical lens from which to study the EU. In this account, institutions shape policy processes and policy outcomes. Institutional work has made distinct contributions to the study of the European Union and, with its focus on structure (and complex rather than parsimonious approaches to explain behaviour), it has been a favoured approach within the governance literature (Hix 1998, Schneider and Aspinwall 2001). Institutional approaches focus on routine procedures, rules and codes of conduct, and norms and values in everyday policy processes (Armstrong 2010). Typically, an institutionalist explanation does not attribute behaviour to utility-maximisation of individuals;⁷⁷ behaviour is conceptualised as rather more complex than this and influenced by a combination of agential and structural factors within a specific institutional setting. It is important to keep in mind that

“there is no single institutionalist explanation of the EU. ... Nevertheless, there is a common strand in these approaches: because the EU is so unique, with multiple actors, highly differentiated and changing preferences, and complex and uncertain outcomes, existing theories of preference-formation and strategic interaction, based on individual rationality in stable institutional settings, with perfect information about preferences and outcomes, can only ever provide limited explanations” (Hix 1998, p.48).

One of the main advantages in an institutional approach to studying the European Union is that it is useful in “identifying diverging formal and informal decision-making rules at the national and the supranational level [and] can help to explain tensions in the relationship between the European, national and subnational actors” (Thielemann 1999, p.414). An SI perspective can thus help explain national preferences (as well as changing national preferences, via learning), Member State behaviour, informal rules and behaviours, vertical interactions in multi-level systems, and decision-making outcomes (Awesti 2007). One of the main challenges facing those who study the EU is how to explain how decisions are made and how preferences are formed (Checkel 2001). The

⁷⁶ ‘EU’ policy-making is in fact misleading, as there are so many different ways policy is made and so many different institutions involved in it.

⁷⁷ The exception is the rational choice strand of NI, which says that individuals maximise their own gain within a given institutional setting – the ‘rules of the game’ (Ostrom 1990).

advantage of an SI approach is that it is “a decision-making theory which includes in its analysis the ways in which preferences, beliefs and desires are shaped by participation in the decision-making process itself” (Kerremans 1996, p.221, as quoted in Checkel 2001).⁷⁸

An institutional perspective helps to explain actors’ roles and political outcomes, but as a general theory it does not specifically count for all of the *sui generis* characteristics of the European Union, in particular its multi-level nature, blurring the boundaries between domestic and international organisation. To help address this gap, I turn to a complementary framework within the study of the EU, multi-level governance (MLG).

4.4.2 Making use of multi-level governance

The concept of multi-level governance was developed initially by Gary Marks (1993), who used it in a study of the way the structural funds are allocated in the EU. MLG was a response to the “false boundary between the study of domestic and international politics in the EU” (Cairney 2012, p.163). Rather than a strict theory, MLG is a conceptual model to describe how the EU works. Its focus is the changing nature of boundaries and sovereignty between different levels of government – subnational, national, and supranational – and the challenges and changes in governance that this brings about. MLG’s uses and applications have evolved considerably since Marks’ initial paper (see Stephenson 2013). The concept has been used in relation to domestic federal systems as well but is one of the foremost approaches to studying the EU. Indeed, MLG has gained so much ground over the past twenty years that it used by the EU itself to describe the way policy is made.

MLG has three main premises (Hooghe and Marks 2001). First of all, decision-making in the EU is more than bargaining among national governments – supranational institutions such as the European Commission exert their own influence (on the supranationalist-intergovernmentalist spectrum, therefore, MLG sits much closer to the former).⁷⁹ The second premise is that this “involves a significant loss of control for

⁷⁸ For a comparison of rationalist versus constructivist analyses of decision-making in the EU, see Lewis (2003).

⁷⁹ However, this point is debated; Hooghe and Marks (2001) believe that MLG offers a move away from theories of integration, whereas others believe that this is a falsity and that MLG more supports a view of supranationalism (George 2004).

individual national governments” (*Ibid.*, p.4). The final premise is that actors operate in both subnational, national, and supranational arenas and these are not nested but interconnected. Complex domestic relationships therefore extend to the supranational level, and the relationships within different levels of policy-making are contested (Piattoni 2010).⁸⁰ Simona Piattoni’s (2010) work has brought more rigorous theoretical and empirical application to MLG. For example, she has developed a three-step ‘test’ to determine whether a policy area is multi-level ‘governed.’⁸¹

Critics of MLG say that it is not a theory but merely an explanation – that it does not tell us anything new (for discussion, see George 2004). Using MLG does not, for example, shed any light why one decision might be made over another, nor does it explain why European integration happens. However, MLG is an effective way of explaining how decision-making occurs and how relationships are connected. The perspective enables researchers to address the complexities of diffused competences as well as the interactions between various levels of government (Littoz-Monnet 2007). It is best approached as a characterisation and conceptualisation of EU governance in the face of “weakening state sovereignty” leading to many new challenges for nation-states (Piattoni 2010, p.1): there are changes and challenges that come about as a result of continuously changing sovereignty (*Ibid.*). Cultural policy embodies this multi-level nature perfectly: it is heavily guided by the principle of subsidiarity and the balance of power still rests with the Member States. In addition, it is also a policy area that tends to have large input from (or in some cases exclusive jurisdiction with) regional governments.

4.5 ANALYSING THE OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION

Now that the institutionalism and multi-level governance approaches have been outlined, it is time to apply these approaches directly to the analysis of the culture Open Method of Coordination. As touched upon in the previous chapter, much like the EU in general, there is no one ‘magic’ theory to explain the Open Method of Coordination. In fact, academic

⁸⁰ One of the ways that Piattoni (2010) distinguishes MLG from a networked governance approach is on this basis of consensus; she argues that in a networked governance approach, consensus is the glue that holds a network together.

⁸¹ As a policy field, culture ‘passes’ the test. We find that (1) there are different levels of government in cultural governance; (2) non-governmental actors are also involved; and (3) that interrelationships can be non-hierarchical or defy existing hierarchies.

research on the OMC is marked by its variety of theoretical approaches; in their 2010 literature review, Borrás and Radaelli identify at least eight different theoretical approaches that have been used to study it. Of 52 studies, five adopted a rational choice institutionalism approach and three an institutional approach other than the rational choice variety.

The research questions for this project can be divided into two: those on *process*, including actors' roles and organisational practices, as well as those on *outcomes* of coordination. This perspective is inspired by the need to create a richer, more comprehensive account of the OMC:

“...policy coordination as ‘the OMC’ tends to be treated as a coherent entity with little attempt made to judge whether the different elements of the policy coordination architecture are fit for purpose; how well the elements interact; or what the relationship might be between seeking to strengthen ‘top-down’ substantive influences on the domestic strategic and policy environment, and seeking to enhance ‘bottom-up’ or ‘horizontal’ mechanisms of accountability for the strategies states choose to follow. Detailed analysis of the intricacies, ambiguities and tensions within the policy coordination governance architecture was absent” (Armstrong 2010, p.288).

This section therefore looks at a sociological institutional approach to 1) examining actors' roles, both formal and informal, and the process organising and carrying out the OMC, and 2) examining the outcomes of the culture OMC with a focus on policy learning and mutual exchange. Both of these areas demand similar but slightly different theoretical tools. They are discussed in turn below.

4.5.1 Analysing roles and process

The first part of this study, the findings of which are presented in chapters 6 and 7, looks at the everyday operation of the OMC. This involves studying key actors' roles as well as organisational and administrative practices, allowing for “a richer, more holistic picture of what happens day-to-day” (Ripoll Servent and Busby 2013, p.8). The theoretical backbone of this is a sociological institutionalism perspective on agency, outlined above. The chapters that look at roles and process therefore are theoretically framed around embedded agency, the logics of appropriateness and practices, and formal and informal institutions.

Analysing political processes involves looking at everyday procedures and actors' roles. Theoretically this involves looking at the relationship between structure and agency. Actors are not blind 'rule followers' without agency, but adopt strategies which they view as appropriate, which, in turn, become routines that are reproduced in organisations (March and Olsen 1989). While institutional approaches emphasise rules – perspectives that assume self-interest and rationality tend to obfuscate the importance of rules and acting within them. In the logic of practices, socially constructed *roles* (which influence preferences) are an important theoretical factor (From 2002). With the concept of embedded agency, in which agents are understood as “conscious and reflexive actors” situated within a given institutional and social context, we can “think of them as choosing strategies which better fit or are most appropriate in a given setting” (Ripoll Servent and Busby 2013, p.6). This means that identities, attitudes, and role perceptions are intrinsic to social context, but that interaction can lead to a “redefined or expanded sense of self” (Lewis 2003, p.103) via learning.

In addition, as one of the foci of the research project is the differences between formal roles, or what appears on paper and what happens in practice, *informal institutions*, which can “shape even more strongly [than formal] political behaviour and outcomes” (Helmke and Levitsky 2004, p.725), are a key piece of the theoretical and empirical puzzle.⁸² The “policy-action relationship needs to be regarded as a process of *interaction* and *negotiation*” (Barrett and Fudge 1981, p.4; emphasis added), but this cannot always easily be captured by looking at formal institutions only. Indeed, ignoring informal aspects “risks missing much of what drives political behaviour and can hinder efforts to explain important political phenomena” (Helmke and Levitsky 2004, p.726). This gap between formal structure – the organisational ‘blueprint’ (Finnemore 1996, p.329) – and the day-to-day goings on is one of the key target areas in studying informal institutions. It also demonstrates the value of ‘insider’ work showing what really goes on within bureaucracies.

⁸² Christiansen and Neuhold (2012, p.4) distinguish between three types of usage: informal frameworks, informal processes, and informal outcomes. It is the second one that is of most relevance here. The *framework* within which decisions are made in the EU is a relatively formal one – it is elements of the decision-making *processes* that are key to understanding the institutional environment that there is not as much known about.

4.5.2 Analysing the OMC's outcomes

This subsection explains the theoretical frameworks used to make sense of the *outcomes* of the Open Method of Coordination (the subject of chapter 8). There is no agreement on the analytical tools to analyse the effectiveness of the OMC (Hamel and Vanhercke 2009) and there are various approaches, from a variety of perspectives, as to how one might do so, involving a number of practical and conceptual concerns (Cairney 2012). Evaluating outcomes is a political activity.

The conclusions of the March 2000 Lisbon summit specify that the principal goal of the OMC is mutual learning (European Council 2000, para.37). I therefore focus on *learning* as a key analytical component and make use of theories of policy learning in a collective setting. While learning is taking place in a group setting, translating learning into outcomes depends on individual actors. So, although I am evaluating the system as a whole, the role of individual actors as outlined above is important.

Much of the OMC literature has an implicit normative bias that learning is a desirable outcome (Kröger 2009). However, the literature on 'policy learning' has exploded in recent years, and the term has come to mean an umbrella of many references in many different contexts (see Bennett and Howlett 1992, Freeman 2009, Dunlop and Radaelli 2013). What is being learned? Who is learning, and why? How and when does it happen? It is present in one form or another in most major theories of the policy process. It is also a concept that is difficult to define, although "most accounts depict learning as the updating of beliefs based on lived or witnessed experiences, analysis or social interaction" (Dunlop and Radaelli 2013, p.1). Beyond this, there is disagreement in the literature on who learns and how learning takes place, leading Dunlop and Radaelli (*Ibid.*, p.2) to comment that "the field is struggling to produce systematic and cumulative knowledge on this topic."

There are two main ontological approaches to learning, one from a positivist tradition and the other from the constructivist. The latter conceives of policy as *emergent*; learning does not exist somewhere, but is "produced in the act of looking" (Freeman 2009, p.379). The advantage of constructivist approaches is that, in keeping with the epistemological views already outlined, constructivist explanations of learning allow for the changing of views through socialisation. Learning is a "process whereby actors, through interaction with

broader institutional contexts (norms of discursive structures) acquire new interests and preferences” (Checkel 1999, p.548). OMCs represent a “powerful learning instrument, insofar as they are expected to destabilise prior understandings of issues and thus lead to incremental changes via an ideational shift in framing policy problems” (de la Porte and Pochet 2012, p.340). Ideas, or “collective understandings of social facts” (Béland 2009 in Saurugger 2013, p.891) help to construct the problems and frame basic assumptions (Saurugger 2013). Knowledge acquisition is therefore a socialised process “mediated by power relations” (Tucker 2003, in Kröger 2004). In the OMC, learning involves multi-level interaction among many different actors both horizontally and vertically.

Both structural and agential effects must be considered in the analysis of policy learning and change. It is the *structure* of the OMC – how it is organised and run – that will in large part determine the conditions for learning; the environment must be “conducive to consensus-building and cost-sharing” (Börzel and Risse 2003, p.59) in order for learning to take place. This will impact upon *how* information is exchanged. However, experts from Member States also exercise their own agency. Experts therefore can act as ‘change agents’ who “mobilize in the domestic context and persuade others to redefine their interests and identities” (Börzel and Risse 2003, p.59). As de la Porte (2010, p.31) comments, “the OMC is effective only when actors use it.”

The groups are composed of a diverse group of actors, each with their own professional norms, values, and systems of practice, heavily influenced by their membership in a domestic institution. The OMC meetings are held on an *ad hoc* basis. Actors are thus socialised in the first meeting into a particular context. For the majority of experts, it is their first time. This is where the multi-level nature of the OMC is important because first and foremost Member State experts will be ‘socialised’ by and familiar with their particular national political and administrative traditions, not the EU ‘way of doing things.’⁸³

Establishing norms early on is thus important both in terms of guiding behaviour (‘how should I act in this meeting?’) and the content of discussions – norms “provide actors with a particular understanding of their interests regarding a particular policy issue”

⁸³ The exception to this, of course, is experts who have participated in a previous OMC working group. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

(Thielemann 1999, p.402). Rules and norms therefore reduce ambiguity in a given context, and constrain and enable behaviour: an “institutional context can ... create expectation about what is considered ‘appropriate’ behaviour and legitimize particular categories of social actors” (*Ibid.*, p.400). However, very quickly, the experts must learn to work together in order to complete the task they have set for them. This setting is largely determined by the Commission, as the OMC’s facilitator. A highly institutionalised environment like the EU and in particular the OMC can be considered a self-policing environment, since “individuals who have become members have for the most part done so willingly, and may have even accepted the values of the institutions even prior to having joined” (Peters 2012, p.41).⁸⁴

Learning in a collective, intergovernmental setting

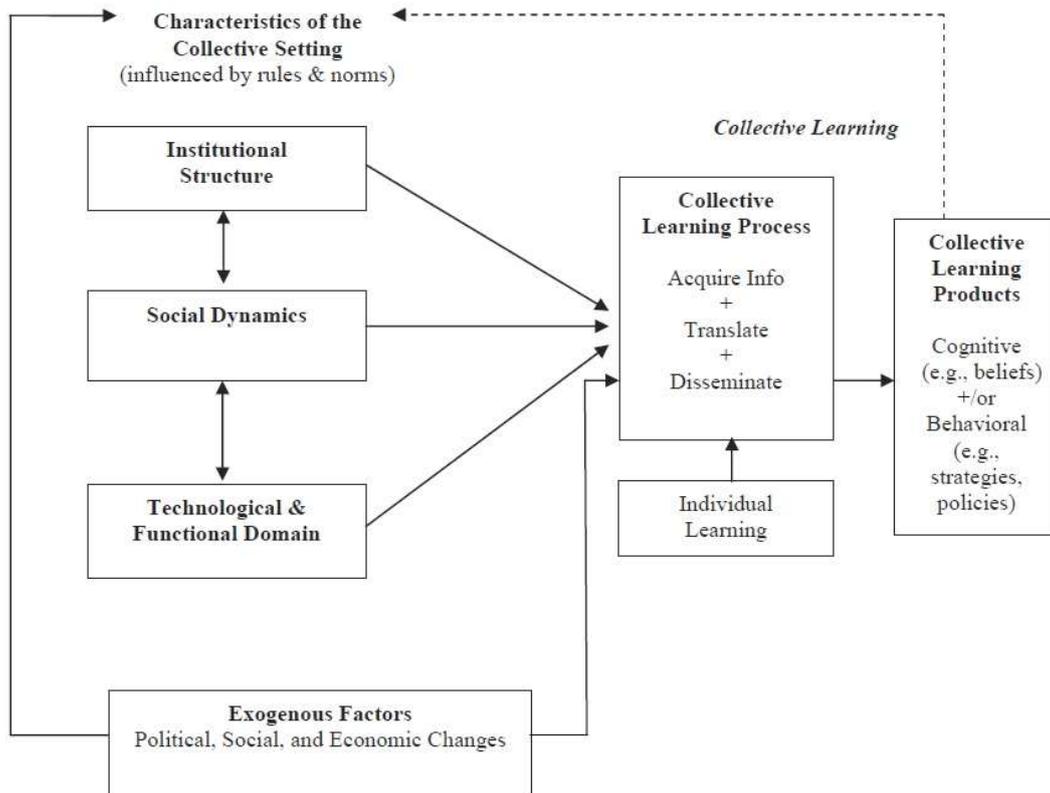
The relationship between individual learning and collective learning is an area that the literature has grappled with. While theories of the latter are built on the former, it must be kept in mind that “collective decisions are not equal to the aggregate decisions of individual members” (Heikkila and Gerlak 2013, p.486). Who ‘holds’ power and controls the learning process are questions that must be posed in any study of learning. In the case of the OMC it is particularly important because “the OMC not only sets a procedural but also a normative mechanism in motion, thereby advancing a particular vision of what appropriate policy is about, while other options are left out” (Kröger 2009, p.12). It is not enough to discern power relations from treaties and law, or what is ‘on paper’; this “fails to offer a comprehensive account of the reality of the power games at play” (Deganis 2006, p.33).

Heikkila and Gerlak (2013) divide collective learning into *process* – comprised of acquisition, translation, and dissemination of information – and *products*, which are new shared ideas, rules, or policies. Acquisition refers to information being collected and/or received, which, importantly, is done through individuals. There are many mechanisms through which this happens, via formal and informal group dialogue (see Heikkila and Gerlak 2013, p.488-9). The second phase is translation, when new information is interpreted, translated, or applied to new contexts, and knowledge is created. Finally,

⁸⁴ This makes even more sense in the context of the OMC which is a *voluntary* coordination exercise.

dissemination involves knowledge becoming embedded across a group, when individual learning is likely to spread across different members.

Figure 4.1: Framework for Collective Learning



Source: Heikkila and Gerlak (2013)

It is also necessary to reflect on the OMC as a process within an intergovernmental setting such as the EU. The study of learning in the EU is on the rise (see for example Nedergaard 2006; Bulmer et al. 2007; Egan 2009; Zito and Schout 2009; Dunlop and Radaelli 2013, 2016a), and this is particularly the case within the literature on ‘new’ modes of governance (Zito and Schout 2009). Indeed, “scholarly literature is trying hard to become more precise regarding conditions for learning” in the EU (*Ibid.*, p. 1116), and this is a challenge because of the complexity of multi-level settings. The EU is an organisation ripe for learning because of its multitude of interactions between and among Member

States as well as its networked structure, but ultimately there is still debate in the literature as to the real potential of diffusion and transfer given the heterogeneity of national systems.

Linking learning with outcomes

Policy learning is closely linked with policy change (Zito and Shout 2009), a core competence of many studies of the OMC. This is not surprising given that the basic premise of the OMC – even though it is not always made explicit – is that Member States coordinate on certain themes, share ideas, and then ‘go home’ and implement some of them, based on the potential of policy transfer and lesson drawing.⁸⁵ Many studies on the OMC make use of change extensively when analysing the results of the OMC, with ‘visible’ policy change often the benchmark for ‘successful’ coordination. But how does learning theoretically link with outcomes?

What options do Member States have when it comes to the outcomes of the OMC? In their 2010 report, Borrás and Radaelli outline different usages of the OMC: no usage, exploration, convergence, in combination with the Community Method, or ancillary (p.54). De la Porte (2010), meanwhile, distinguishes between downloading, where governments use OMC ideas and concepts, and uploading, which goes a step further than downloading and includes shaping of these concepts. Other scholars have come up with different ways of determining OMC effects. Schmidt and Radaelli (2004, p.203) for example distinguish between first order change, a change in policy instruments; second-order, a change in policy objectives, and third-order, where “the core” of a policy paradigm shifts entirely.

Another approach, and the one adopted in this thesis, is Jonathan Zeitlin’s categorisations of learning and change. Zeitlin’s approach is precise on the nature of learning and change and also captures a fuller range of outcomes than other models do. Zeitlin argues that to think about learning just in terms of measurable, ‘visible’ policy change is misleading and incorrect (indeed, as will be shown, if learning was thought of only in this way with regards to the culture OMC, it would more than certainly be viewed a failure). He has come up with three categories of OMC effects. The first category is *substantive policy*

⁸⁵ Several scholars have discussed the limits of policy transfer and lesson drawing (see for example James and Lodge 2003 more generally, or Pratt 2009b specifically on the cultural sector).

change, which he has further broken down into 1) changes in national policy thinking (cognitive shifts), 2) changes in national policy agendas (political shifts), and 3) changes in specific national policies (programmatically shifts). The second category is *procedural shifts in governance and policy-making arrangements*. Again, there are four types of influence here: 1) increased horizontal and cross-sectoral coordination and integration, 2) increased steering and statistical capacities, 3) enhanced vertical coordination, and 4) increased involvement of non-state actors in domestic policy-making. Finally, Zeitlin's third category is *mutual learning*, of which there are three types: 1) heuristic learning, referring to increased awareness of policies and practices in other Member States, 2) capacity-building, and 3) maieutic/reflexive learning, the most 'gentle' form of effect, which refers to increases in states' abilities to rethink and re-evaluate policies and programmes.⁸⁶ Given the discussion above, the role of *change agents* is important in *linking learning with outcomes*. Actors seek change based on appropriateness and legitimacy, which are derived from embedded practices.⁸⁷

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined a theoretical approach to examining the processes and outcomes of the European Union's culture Open Method of Coordination. The chapter has explained an approach using sociological institutionalism theory, which is rooted in a constructivist ontology. This approach takes "a broader view of institutions, encompassing formal institutions, informal norms, shared systems of meaning, discourse, knowledge and routinized practices" (Idema and Kelemen 2006, p.114) into account in analysis. It has demonstrated the strengths and weaknesses of a sociological institutionalism perspective that conceptualises actors as having "a distinctly institutional form of agency" (Lowndes and Roberts 2013, p.201), embedded agency, leading to a logic of behaviour based on institutional appropriateness and existing practices. I have emphasised the dialectic relationship between structure and agency in an attempt to move

⁸⁶ The methodological challenges of studying policy learning and change will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

⁸⁷ In addition, the literature on domestic level 'uptake' of EU norms often emphasises the importance of national norms and traditions in these differences: "...decisions from Brussels are likely to be resisted when the institutional logic of a particular EU policy clashes with key institutionally entrenched domestic traditions" (Thielemann 1999, p.402-3). This will be discussed in much more detail in Part II: the Empirical Contributions.

away from what is a weakness of some of the institutionalism literature – a tendency to treat actors as ‘blindly following rules.’ This conceptualisation also makes the link to theories of socialised and collective learning (and thus the OMC’s outcomes) much smoother. The discussion on learning, again theorised in a constructivist manner, has demonstrated the importance of actors as change agents who seek organisationally-appropriate change.

Schneider and Aspinwall (2001, p.178) recount the reaction of “heartfelt yawning” when ‘institutions matter’ is mentioned at academic job interviews. Indeed, the assertion is banal, overly simplistic, and vague. Their point is well-made and demonstrates the need of the institutionalist researcher to go beyond stating that they matter and *showing* that they do. An institutional approach allows a focus on both formal and informal rules and norms. It prioritises the complicated interaction between institutions and individuals (Lowndes 2010); individuals are both constrained by institutions but through agency are also creators of change. This relationship is acknowledged – even embraced – as both political systems and human behaviour are complex. To help sift through the complexity of the European Union as a *sui generis* polity, I have also introduced the concept of multi-level governance which is a conceptual framework that accounts for changes in sovereignty as a result of EU integration as well as the complex and multi-scale interconnectedness of actors.

With this theoretical framework in mind, I now turn to the steps I took to answer my research questions, the subject of chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

“Political structure simplifies a complex world for the individuals in it. It does not necessarily, however, simplify the problems of the political theorist.”

James March and Johan Olsen (1984, p.741)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters have situated this study within existing literature as well as outlined the theoretical approaches to studying the culture OMC. This chapter discusses the research methodology and methods for this project, including an overview of the research design and process, a step-by-step record of what was done, as well as the methodological challenges and limitations of the study. The discussion also highlights novelty in the methods used, in both the study of cultural policy and the study of the Open Method of Coordination.

The objective of this research is ultimately to determine how the OMC works as well as what outcomes it produces. It asks how the design of policy coordination influences mutual learning and exchange with regards to the policy themes in Priority A. In order to answer these questions, in-depth information about both the process and outcomes of the OMC is necessary. It is only possible to identify institutions, much less determine their relevance, with deep knowledge of the system. Relevant information therefore includes that on routines, roles, procedures, and contexts. Yet, the information that is publically available (in both the academic domain and otherwise) is limited – it does not begin to answer these questions. The culture OMC has not been the subject of any in-depth academic study to date, and the OMC reports and associated documents from the European Commission tell us a bit about the final outcome but little about the working methods or how the report was received in the Member States. Moreover, the *gap* between what is on paper and what happens in practice is of prime interest and is indeed where the richness lies in studying institutions. Other sources of information are therefore

necessary, and information has been gathered for this study from three different types of sources: desk research in the form of document analysis, in-depth semi-structured interviews with key policy actors, and participant observation.

This thesis seeks to determine the role that institutions play in the determination of political outcomes (Hall and Taylor 1996). But it also goes beyond the assertion that ‘institutions matter’ and seeks to explain the *degree* to which they do. As a common criticism of the institutional approach is that it is not theoretically robust enough – that institutionalism privileges description at the expense of critical analysis – the research design must be explicit about the limits of the study; credible qualitative work is transparent, consistent, and communicable (Rubin and Rubin 1995). Demonstrating a clear link between the policy *environment* and policy itself is also a difficult task. It is a challenge that depends on what material is available and what kind of access there is to it, and on the use of multiple methods and sources and triangulation where possible.

Chapter five proceeds as follows. Section 5.2 outlines the study’s ontological and epistemological approaches. Section 5.3 explains the research design and discusses the case study approach as well as its limitations, while 5.4 looks at the research process and provides a step-by-step chronology of what was done. Finally, section 5.5 discusses how the data analysis was conducted.

5.2 ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACHES

In any research project, the methodology must be consistent to the object of study and to the research design and theoretical positioning. Ontological and epistemological positions are therefore important to clarify because they signpost the reader as to what can be expected in the results of a study. To borrow Furlong and Marsh’s (2010) analogy, ontological and epistemological positions are a skin, not a sweater, and thus ever-present. Ontology reflects what one believes about reality; an ontological position therefore is a ‘metapolitical’ decision as it structures presuppositions and scope of the nature of inquiry

(Kauppi 2010).⁸⁸ It thus determines the content of analysis, as well as what one “regard[s] as an (adequate) political explanation” (Hay 2002, p.61). The ontological position of this project is *constructivist*. Although there are factions within this approach, it can be roughly defined as the view that reality is socially constructed and that individuals’ views are informed by political, social, and cultural factors. This is in contrast to foundationalism, which posits that there is a ‘real world’ which exists independently of one’s knowledge of it; subscribers to this ontological position believe in objective and absolute truths.

Similarly, epistemological divisions in the study of politics often occur along the faultline of qualitative versus quantitative research, or research that seeks generalisations and predictive results versus research that is interested in understanding specific cases, the latter to “speak not of underlying attributes, objective observables and universal forces, but of perceptions and understanding that come from immersion in and holistic regard for the phenomena” (Stake 2000, p.21). Quantitative methodologies “often say relatively little about the processes by which decisions are made or implemented” (Peters, Pierre, and Stoker 2010, p.329), which is precisely what this research is interested in. An interpretivist epistemology, which often privileges qualitative methodology (Furlong and Marsh 2010), recognises that all political research is inherently political in itself, and seeks an informed *interpretation*. Explanations are based on a “narrative which is particular to that time and space, and partial, based on a subjective interpretation” (Furlong and Marsh 2010, p.202).

One of the main epistemological concerns with political research is the place of the analyst/researcher in relation to what is being studied. As a researcher, I am not a neutral observer from the sidelines, but bring with me my own experiences and values – my own constructed vision of the world shaped by particular social, cultural, and political processes. I am not detached from the cultural conditions and positioning in the interaction (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

⁸⁸ The word ‘decision’ in this sentence is a bit misleading, as, as Kauppi (2010, p.22) who uses ‘choice’ for lack of a matter option, outlines, ontological positions “are assumed and presupposed and not explicitly selected and motivated.”

5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This section outlines how I have designed this project and expands on the introduction provided in chapter 1. Both the study of the Open Method of Coordination and the study of cultural policy are marked by a great deal of theoretical and ontological pluralism.

When people study ‘the OMC’ they are studying many different things: effects of the OMC at the national level; effects at the EU level; effects on EU law; and effects on participation and state-society relations (Borrás and Radaelli 2010). Many studies of the OMC are within one policy field (see chapter 3). Exceptions exist, but studies do not tend to transverse policy areas in order that in-depth cross-country comparison, another feature of much of the literature, can be done. This design reflects what a large number of OMC studies aim to do, i.e. compare performance across Member States within one field, in order to determine whether any progress has been made with respect to a specific area of policy. In this respect, this project both follows the literature’s norms and departs from them. I examine the OMC in one policy area– culture – but do not adopt a particular case study (n<1) or comparative approach between Member States. Instead, I look at the system as a whole, focusing on how the OMC works and what outputs it produces.

5.3.1 Case study approach

In order to better focus and specify the area of inquiry, and to establish boundaries in research (Stake 2000), I have focused only on the 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture.⁸⁹ Concentration on this Work Plan forms a natural bookend for the research and provides organisational boundaries. This bookending will also be beneficial for any future comparative work. At the start of this project in fall 2012, the 2011-2014 Work Plan was in its second year and still ongoing, meaning that when interviews took place the information was fresh in people’s minds. The study also fits within the timescale of the second Barroso Commission (2010-2014), which was in power until November 2014. All fieldwork with EU officials was conducted before the introduction of the Juncker Commission, to ensure institutional continuity and stability. It thus also roots the study

⁸⁹ Where appropriate, some of the discussion makes comparative reference to the first cycle of the OMC (2008-2010), in particular changes reflecting ‘learning at the top’ (Radaelli 2008).

firmly in time and place, avoiding the decontextualisation of much existing literature on the OMC (Armstrong 2010).

Priority A of the Work Plan was chosen as a case study (see chapter 2). The case study approach is used to achieve greater in-depth knowledge about one particular area that is considered to be of importance in this policy community. A case study approach is most advantageous when “the aims are understanding, extension of experience and increase in conviction in that which is known” (Stake 2000, p.21), making it ideal for this study. This is also a tangible focus for fieldwork with limited resources. Priority A is composed of three different groups.⁹⁰ At the time of the start of fieldwork in April 2014, group 1 was complete; they met first in March 2011 and the report was published in October 2012. Group 2 met for the first time in December 2012 and its report was published in May 2014. Group 3 met for the first time in March 2014 and its final report was released in December 2015. These timelines thus allowed for varied reflections from participants at different stages of the OMC process.

5.3.2 Methodological challenges

This subsection discusses the methodological challenges of this research design, with a focus on the type of findings and their generalisability. It is split into two sections – methodological concerns regarding case studies and methodological concerns regarding studying the OMC from an institutionalist perspective.

Methodological issues with case study research

Choosing one policy priority as a case study has implications for the way fieldwork will be carried out as well as the end results of the thesis as a whole. What do findings tell us about the area of study, and to what extent are they generalisable?

While the findings on outcomes (chapter 8) apply to Priority A exclusively, findings concerning the roles of the Commission, Council, and Member States (chapters 6 and 7) can be reasonably extended to the culture OMC as a whole. The main reason for this is that all EU interviewees and some of the expert interviewees had not been only involved with Priority A but had been part of previous culture OMC groups. While I made it clear

⁹⁰ See chapter 2 and appendix 2.

that my questions were to do with their experiences with Priority A only, constructivist theory says that it is impossible to divorce ourselves from previous experience and be ‘neutral’ or isolated from that other experience. Participants’ observations are thus *concentrated* on Priority A’s groups but cannot exclusively be applied only to Priority A. In addition, the treaty base and principle of subsidiarity applies to the entire Work Plan (and the entire field of cultural policy), not just in policy areas to do with identity and diversity. The working method is also the same for all culture OMC groups, and there are ‘field-wide’ challenges that apply to all areas of cultural policy, not just Priority A (see Gray 2009). It is my contention that if the same study was done taking any other priority area as a case study, very similar results would be achieved. Ultimately, chapter 8’s findings on outcomes are, however, only relevant to Priority A. While I believe that it is reasonable to expect similar findings with other priorities, this cannot strictly be said as the outcomes were only evaluated with respect to these three OMC groups and this priority area.

Similarly, the study cannot be thought of as findings on European Union cultural policy in general, nor be applicable to the workings of DG-EAC. This is for two reasons. Firstly, the OMC is a non-legislative mode of governance; it cannot be analysed in the same manner as other parts of EU involvement in the cultural sector, such as, for example, the European Capital of Culture, which is agreed up using the traditional Ordinary Legislative Procedure. Secondly, with regards to the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG-EAC), the DG operates not only in culture but in education, youth, and sport policy, which have different treaty bases, historical trajectories, and working methods. It would therefore be inappropriate to apply these findings to other sectors. Finally, insofar as findings are applicable across the Open Method of Coordination in general, while there are definitely many similarities in findings across policy fields, findings correspond to the culture OMC only due to the unique aspects of its institutional architecture (see chapter 2).

Methodological challenges of studying the OMC

There are also specific methodological challenges in studying the OMC, empirical assessment of which is “extremely challenging” (Zeitlin 2009, p.214). Specifically, I will address the challenges in establishing causal relationships, the lack of formal goals and

thus before-and-after ‘goalposts’ in assessing change, and more general challenges in studying processes and informal behaviour.

The first challenge is establishing causal relationships: even “if we observe policy change, how can we be sure that it is due to OMC and not other variables?” (Borrás and Radaelli 2010, p.30). This is a concern in studying the OMC in all fields. Establishing causation, even through careful process-tracing, is difficult. It is not easy to determine whether learning has taken place and if so whether it is due to the OMC (and not from other EU, international, or national processes). There is a “causal boundary” between the national and EU levels – ideas (and learning) come from multiple places (Zeitlin 2011). It is therefore difficult to isolate the OMC’s precise impact. Yet, it is important to *ascertain*, not assume, that “the contribution that these instruments can make to enhancing ‘policy learning’ as a major mechanism for advancing collective decision-making and regulation” (Citi and Rhodes 2007, p.6). This is very difficult, and is what Borrás and Radaelli (2010, p.30) term “the classic counter-factual problem,” or, what could have happened without the OMC? Pinpointing the exact nature of the OMC’s influence is therefore difficult, but triangulation helps to ensure as robust a picture as possible.

This challenge has been discussed in the literature on Europeanisation, which is often split into ‘top down’ versus ‘bottom up’ approaches. The former starts at the top and looks at Europe as a ‘cause’ and then seeks to explain behaviour by Member States, whereas bottom up approaches start at a domestic effect and work up. In this manner, Europe becomes a possible variable. The approach taken in this study is a top down approach for two reasons. The first is that isolating a variable to ‘measure’ at the domestic level is difficult to do in an n=28 case. This approach is better suited to case studies with a smaller number of cases so that variable isolation is easier. Secondly, there is no one precise change, policy, or programme that I am ‘measuring’, but rather I am looking at the process as a whole; evaluating in-depth the impact of Priority A in every Member State would require more resources than in this particular project, as well as a different research design.

A second and related challenge is to do with evaluating change. Typically, to study change there must be some sort of before-and-after goalpost. This is difficult in the case of the culture OMC for two reasons. The first is that learning is occurring in over 25+

separate national contexts.⁹¹ Speaking to everyone who might be a part of this learning is difficult to do, thus the Member State representatives are relied on. However, there are concerns about speaking to individuals about whole states' experiences or positions. Most experts were the only spokesperson from their country in that OMC group. Experts tended to speak personally about themselves and more generally about their Member State ('the way my country does it'), depending on the topic of discussion. Most *did not speak with absolute authority* (reflecting that most experts were not top-level officials in state governments), but about their own experiences.⁹²

The second reason that evaluating change is difficult is because the culture OMC's goals and aims are not well-defined (see section 2.5). Aims such as fostering exchange of best practice and structuring cooperation around strategic objectives are difficult to evaluate and 'measure.' Citing Lodge's (2007) critique, Armstrong (2010, p.286) argues that "OMC processes often fail precisely to define the standards that could form the normative basis for domestic policy influence and against which the extent of influence might be judged." The culture OMC has its own additional challenges in conceptualisation goalposts, because, as the 'softest of the soft', the culture OMC does not produce any monitoring documentation as is the case with other OMCs. To take one example, in Armstrong's (2010) analysis of the impact of the OMC on UK social protection and inclusion policy, he is able to analyse National Action Plans, Common Objectives, Joint Reports, and Peer Review reports. All of these different sets of documentation, coupled with more sanctions and accountability (and *systems* to monitor progress) produce a more robust set of source material. In the culture case, the only document sources are the Work Plan and reports produced by each working group. Thus, in other fields where benchmarking is a feature, there is often a clearer idea of what target is to be achieved (despite problems with identifying and measuring targets) and therefore what 'progress' might look like. To address this, the focus of analysis in this project is not about labelling the OMC a success or failure but about digging deeper into its processes and outcomes, based around the aims that the EU has identified itself.

A final challenge is to do with studying a *process*. The OMC takes place within a highly complex multi-level context that is ever-changing (Bache and Flinders 2004). There are

⁹¹ None of Priority A's groups had participation by all 28 EU Member States (see appendix 6).

⁹² See also further discussion of expertise in chapter 7.

a multitude of actors and interactions between these actors, but, with limited resources, the researcher must try to fully capture the richness (and messiness) of what is going on. This involves taking into account informal behaviour and procedures. By its very nature, informal behaviour is elusive. In effect, it is “an attempt at studying the invisible or at least the opaque” (Christiansen and Neuhold 2012, p.2). It requires knowing a particular institutional setting intimately in order to determine what is formal and what is informal. In this complexity it is difficult to isolate specific variables and to be precise about them. This requires the researcher to have detailed in-depth knowledge of a particular political setting before studying it. In order to mitigate these challenges as far as possible, I have followed Jonathan Zeitlin’s strategies. Zeitlin advises triangulation of data using diverse sources. I have done this using a combination of approaches: desk research, corroboration with a large-scale research survey on the OMC done in 2013, and my own fieldwork consisting of interviews and participant observation. I have also spoken to a wide cross-section of actors involved in the OMC, in order to access as many viewpoints as possible. This leads on to the next section, in which I describe the research process and methods.

5.4 RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODS

In this section, I discuss step-by-step how I gathered the data for this project. The research methods employed in this study form a triangulation – desk research, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. Each method has its own purpose and goals and has produced a different type of material; taken together they aim for as robust a picture of Priority A in the Open Method of Coordination as possible; or, what Stake (2000, p.22) calls “a full and thorough knowledge of the particular.”

5.4.1 Desk research

The first step was desk research, which involved a detailed review of relevant policy documents. Documentary analysis provides a basic source of information, which allows the researcher to become familiar with the main debates, historical trajectories, and progression of policy, as well as the language used. Relevant documents include legislation, in particular the Work Plan, the 2007 Agenda for Culture, and Europe 2020 strategy; reports published by the Commission, including the 2014 report on the implementation of the Work Plan; and Conclusions from Council meetings. Two other

sets of documents are also pertinent: the two OMC reports themselves, as well as the 2013 evaluation study on the OMC and Structured Dialogue, commissioned by DG-EAC and carried out by the international consultancy group Ecorys (McDonald et al. 2013a and 2013b).⁹³

Access and availability of these documents varied and proved challenging at times. This is because EU cultural policy documents are not all collected in one place, requiring online digging. In addition, in spring 2014 DG-EAC's website underwent a redesign. For many months documents were not available to the public, and even now, two years later, not all OMC reports are posted online. In addition, relevant documents are not all collected in one place, making searching for them time-consuming. One of the best sources of information, found at a rather late stage in the study, was the 2012 commissioning background document provided by the Commission to Ecorys. This included the first-ever list of culture OMC objectives laid out as such, as well as a list of pertinent policy documents with links. To my knowledge this information is not available publicly elsewhere in this form.

One source that is referenced repeatedly in this thesis is the 2013 Ecorys report (McDonald et al. 2013a and 2013b). This is a report that was commissioned by the European Commission in order to independently evaluate the OMC and Structured Dialogue. Ecorys is an international consultancy group which specialises in EU institutions and policy-making. Their report is useful because it deploys a robust methodology – combining survey, interview, focus group, and case studies – that takes on a much broader set of research questions. Where possible I have used it to corroborate my own findings. There is, however, a limit in using this source, as outlined by Christopher Gordon,

“No consultancy wanting to obtain repeat contracts from the EU's bureaucracy (vested as it is with a largely unaccountable monopoly of legislative and operational initiative) is going to use anything more robust or critical than neutered diplomatic language, let alone be candid about the emptiness of much Commission rhetoric or the gulf between its claims for the ‘European cultural space’ and actual reality” (Gordon 2012, p.188).

⁹³ I only made use of publically-available documents, which is consistent with other studies of the OMC (Kröger 2015, personal communication).

While pointed, Gordon makes a point that is worth remembering; even in ‘independent’ research there is bias and, while extremely useful, it is to be treated critically like any other source.

Documents, as valuable as they are, only tell a small part of the story. This is particularly true in a system such as the EU which relies on bargaining and consensus to achieve results; official statements thus “represent both a compromise of internal diverging views and an attempt to nevertheless show that something is being done...” (Kröger 2008, p.81), lacking a richness.⁹⁴ I now therefore turn to the empirical data I collected.

5.4.2 Interviews

Between April and December 2014, 30 semi-structured interviews were carried out among three categories of policy actors: European Union officials; Member State experts; and invited guest experts who were representatives of non-government organisations or civil society platforms (see full interview list in appendix 3). The purpose of the interviews was to learn new information that was not attainable elsewhere to a degree of depth that would not be possible using other methods such as a survey. Interviews add context to previously-known information (in this case, documentary analysis) and corroborate information from other sources.

Interviewing is not “conducted with a view to establishing ‘the truth,’ in a crude, positivist manner” (Richards 1996, p.200). Nor can we expect interviews to ‘tell us everything.’ Rather, interviews serve as a key source of information on actors’ interpretations of events and roles: the objective was an in-depth understanding of how the Open Method of Coordination worked and what outcomes it produced. Nine interviews were conducted in-person, 14 on the phone, six via Skype, and one by email.⁹⁵ While in-person would have been ideal for all interviews, the subjects were located in over fifteen countries and this was not possible due to limited resources. Most interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes.

⁹⁴ Surprisingly, “many of the most critical assessments of the OMC are not based on original first-hand research on the method in action” (Zeitlin 2011, p.139).

⁹⁵ See appendix 3.

Sampling

The relevant interview participants are individuals who had knowledge of the Open Method of Coordination: those who played a role in the creation of the Work Plan (Council), those involved in the administration and facilitation of the OMC (Commission), and the participants and invited experts in Priority A's working groups. The sample is therefore a theoretical one. These three groups were targeted to achieve different perspectives on the same process for as comprehensive an analysis as possible, describing all stages and angles of the OMC. This range also sheds light on vertical and horizontal relationships within the OMC. The sample is thus sufficiently large in order to answer research questions, but small enough to be contained in a relatively small research project in terms of scope and resources.

Access and gatekeeping

EU officials

The first step was accessing the European Union officials. While much research in many different fields has been conducted about and in the EU, there is remarkably little information available on how to access EU officials; the Union has no overall policy for researchers wishing to access its staff. According to a representative from the European Commission in the UK's office as well as an employee of the Commission, there are no official guidelines or protocol for members of the public wanting to access Commission officials. The only document of partial relevance is the Code of Conduct on Good Administrative Behaviour, which includes information on Commission staff's rules and obligations in their contact with members of the public.⁹⁶

The first step was to identify the individuals in both the Council and the Commission that I thought would be able to point me in the right direction of who might be able to help me. The relevant officials in the Commission were located within one unit in the Directorate General for Education and Culture⁹⁷ while in the Council of Ministers, culture is a part of the Education, Youth, and Culture Configuration. Identifying who to contact

⁹⁶ This document is available online at the following link:
http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/code/docs/code_en.pdf [accessed 4 June 2016].

⁹⁷ There has since been a restructuring of the unit; in spring 2014, when the fieldwork for this project was undertaken, the units were called *Culture programme and actions* and *Culture policy and intercultural dialogue*, with the latter involved in the OMC. These have now been renamed *Cultural diversity and innovation* and *Creative Europe programme*.

proved challenging initially, as very little information about employees and roles is publically available. At that time, only the names of heads of units were posted online.⁹⁸ In addition, only mailing addresses were posted, not email addresses, although I managed to determine the format of the emails and so was able to contact the relevant heads of units in both the Commission and Council. I had an idea of the types of people I wanted to interview (policy officers), but did not know any by name nor did I have much idea of how the units were organised and who was responsible for what. I was thus reliant on these initial gatekeepers for access, although fortunately this proved fruitful for both the Council and Commission.⁹⁹ Once I had names, initial participants were contacted by email. One surprising finding was just how few people at the Council and Commission were involved with the OMC/cultural policy. In the Council's administrative body, there were only two people (a head of unit and policy officer), and in the Commission there was a handful of policy officers plus a deputy head of unit. These numbers were lower than I expected and reflect the DG's small size as well as the low profile of culture as an EU competence (Littoz-Monnet 2007).

Interviewees were chosen based on gatekeepers' initial responses and targeted to those identified to be influential or relevant to this policy priority area based on information I received. Subsequent interviews were achieved using the snowballing method whereby interviewees identified people they believed were important for me to speak to. Unfortunately, the policy officer who was assigned to Groups 1 and 2 had since left the DG and moved to another one. Despite numerous attempts to contact her, she did not reply to emails. This meant that some of policy officers I spoke to at the Commission had followed other OMC groups.

National experts and invited external experts

Each OMC group had roughly 25 participants and around 10 invited external experts.¹⁰⁰ To access the experts, two strategies were necessary because different information was

⁹⁸ For the Commission, this is no longer the case; surnames and first initials of policy officers are now available in the EU's Who's Who directory (<http://europa.eu/whoiswho/public/>)

⁹⁹ Other sources have indicated that access is more guarded in higher profile DGs. For example, Hooghe and Marks (2001, p.143) said that interviewing in the "most powerful" DGs is "carefully regulated, perhaps because the prey is much in demand, highly prized, and occasionally somewhat threatening to the hunter."

¹⁰⁰ Not all names on the list were accurate, and some experts only attended one meeting or filled in for someone temporarily.

provided for the two groups.¹⁰¹ Group 1's report simply listed the person's name and country (no affiliation), while Group 2's included name, Member State, and affiliation. However, in both cases, email addresses still had to be obtained.¹⁰² Some of these were easy to find – particularly with group 2 as I had their workplace – but many required serious 'digging.' The first port of call was a Google search, and if I could not find it that way, I emailed the country's Ministry of Culture – sometimes to a generic email address and sometimes to a specific person if I could identify one who might be relevant. This still yielded very mixed results as emails often did not get responded to and I had to chase on many occasions. In the end, I was able to find 17/31 email addresses for group 1 and 27/34 for group 2.

Once I had all of the email addresses I could find, I sent out a mass-email to all participants at the same time. I sent another whole-group reminder (minus those who had already responded) two weeks after the initial email, and a final reminder six weeks after the initial email. In this way, I was not prejudging who would reply but used the same system in order to make the sample random within the groups. Responses varied: some, agreed to participate; some declined, for example for reasons of maternity/paternity leaves, a change of job since the OMC had taken place, and one or two said that they had only attended one meeting and did not feel sufficiently engaged with the process to respond. Some did not respond at all. There were also issues with the accuracy of the lists. One person, who was included in the report's participation list, said she had never attended an OMC meeting and did not know what the OMC was. A Ministry of Culture representative from a different country, on enquiry for an email contact for a different individual, said that no one by that name had ever worked in the ministry.

In the end, I interviewed five experts from group 1 and nine from group 2.¹⁰³ The differences in these numbers and response rates can be explained by three factors. The first is that group 1 was the first to take place chronologically and so the most time had lapsed for this group. In addition, as already outlined, getting a hold of contact information for group 1 was much harder, so there were fewer people in the initial sample.

¹⁰¹ Note that interviews were only carried out with Groups 1 and 2. Group 3 was still ongoing at the time of fieldwork, and I did not have the contact details for this group nor was the Commission able to provide names for confidentiality reasons. I did, however, reach this group during the participant observation.

¹⁰² Email addresses were not available from the Commission, (understandably) due to privacy restrictions.

¹⁰³ One person participated in both groups.

Thirdly, because of the time lapsed, group 1 had a higher percentage of experts who both did not respond and also did not want to be interviewed (either simply because they thought it was too long ago or they were not still sufficiently engaged enough in the OMC to care).

For the external (guest) experts, a similar system was used: I gathered all of the contact details I could find and emailed everyone (BCC'ed) at the same time. For this category of interviews, I was able to interview five external experts from Group 1 and three from Group 2. In the end, there were numerous challenges to accessing all three groups. However it is my contention that the sample I achieved represents a pool that is reliable and from which numerous reasonable observations about the Open Method of Coordination can be made.

Carrying out the interviews and interviewing 'elites'

Interviews took place in three 'rounds.' EU officials were interviewed in April and May 2014; experts between June and October, and external invited experts mostly in October and November 2014. All interviews were carried out anonymously, and participants understood that they may be quoted but that quotes would not be attributable. Participants were provided with a participant information sheet, detailing the project and their ethical rights, and were also required to sign a consent form. In the early data analysis stage, pseudonyms were given to all participants. Quotes throughout this thesis are therefore completely anonymous.

In-person interviews were held in Brussels and all but two were recorded.¹⁰⁴ The location of interviews was mostly the office of the participant (in one case, we met in a café). The workplace location added an element of formality as in all cases I had to register and show my passport before the interviewee was called up to get me, and in the case of the Council I also had to go through an airport-like security check as well. All phone and Skype interviews were recorded. Although in person interviews would have been preferable, I was able to establish rapport with participants for the phone and Skype interviews and did not notice any major detrimental effects of the different medium. In general, I was met with enthusiasm and support from all interviewees. Many individuals,

¹⁰⁴ The two that were not recorded was because the participants did not wish to be.

especially at the EU, were pleased that someone was taking an interest in their work. The Council employees in particular said that not even their counterparts in different areas of the Council ‘took an interest’ in culture. Most interviewees were genuinely curious about my research and some had questions of their own.

The subjects interviewed for this project can be categorised as elites.¹⁰⁵ ‘Elite’ is a problematic concept but despite reservations with terminology, there is a whole literature dedicated to interviews with this type of people.¹⁰⁶ In *Elite and Specialized Interviewing*, one of the early books wholly devoted to the subject, L.A. Dexter (1970, p.5) defines elites as “...people in important or exposed positions may require VIP interviewing treatment on the topics which relate to their importance or exposure.” David Richards (1996, p.199) has critiqued this definition and suggests the following in lieu: “a group of individuals, who hold, or have held, a privileged position in society and, as such, [...] are likely to have had more influence on political outcomes than general members of the public.” This definition still includes a great degree of subjectivity with the use of ‘privileges’ and ‘influence.’

The late sociologist David Riesman conceded that he was

“not happy with the term ‘elite’ with its connotations of superiority. Yet I have found no other term for the point I want to make, namely that people in important or exposed positions may require VIP treatment on the topics which relate to their importance or exposure” (Riesman 1964, p.528).

Why are these individuals different than other subjects? First of all, “by the very nature of elite interviews, it is the interviewee who has the power” (Richards 1996, p.201). In other words, I needed my interview participants far more than they needed me. This power dynamic was mostly implicit rather than explicit, but it can pose problems for the researcher in terms of trying to achieve the appropriate rapport within the interview, as well as with more practical matters relating to access, interview timings, and location. Secondly, elites may be much more difficult to access, and they may initially be difficult to identify given a lack of publicly-available information. A third consideration is that individuals will often be under severe time constraints and may only have a pre-determined short amount of time to devote to an interview. This was often the case for

¹⁰⁵ Although many, particularly some of the Member State experts, would not self-identify as so.

¹⁰⁶ Please also see discussion in chapter 7.4.2, on OMC participants as *experts*.

me and the short time span stresses the importance of being flexible and well-prepared in order to make the most of the time available.

Interviews are an “*interactional* process” (Kahn and Cannell 1957, p.23 [emphasis in original]) and communication is the most important aspect of any interview. Kahn and Cannell also argued that the process of interaction is constantly being renegotiated throughout the interview, as both parties respond to the cues of each other. One of the challenges I had was how knowledgeable to appear, and this conundrum continued throughout the seven months of interviewing. It was a double-edged sword: I was in the process of completing a doctorate on the subject, and therefore knowledgeable, but was relying on these individuals to help me with information I did not know. As Harvey (2010) discusses, the relative inexperience of a researcher can be both an advantage and disadvantage; young researchers may be viewed as vibrant and cutting edge, or inexperienced (p. 20). Subjects must feel and understand that their input is valuable and is being taken seriously. The dangerous case is if the person being interviewed gets the impression that the interviewer is trying to come across as more knowledgeable than the interviewee. This did not happen in my case. If anything, I downplayed what I knew in order to make sure that I was receiving the most information possible. However, it was always something to be negotiated as each participant was different.

I had a guiding list of questions (see appendix 4) that were tailored for each of the three categories of interview participants. I allowed the direction of conversation to flow on its own as much as possible. Only in a few cases was major ‘steering’ necessary. I tried to seem neutral and avoided asking leading questions as well as simple yes/no answers. I continued interviewing until I felt that I was not learning anything new and that I had an in-depth understanding of the OMC from different viewpoints.

5.4.3 Participant observation

The third method employed in this project was participant observation, which took place over two days in March 2015. The purpose of participant observation was to explore the OMC in more depth and observe first-hand what goes on ‘behind the scenes.’ Observation has been under-utilised in the study of the OMC and similarly in the study of cultural policy. However, it has many advantages. It “gets below and behind the surface of official accounts by providing texture, depth and nuance, so our stories have richness as well as

context” (Rhodes 2014, p.326).¹⁰⁷ It also served to triangulate information with other sources as it allowed me to further confirm whether the differences in what I have found between rules and practices in the interviews were in fact the case in observation, thus improving reliability of my data.

Gaining access to this group – Priority A’s Group 3, the only group ongoing at this stage of the research – was relatively straightforward. From interviewing participants, I knew the name of the Commission policy officer in charge, and approached her first. She was very encouraging and helpful and agreed that it would be possible if and only if all experts consented. She also provided me with a list of remaining meeting dates. Only one worked within my personal timeline and the timeline of this research. Had time and resources been less constrained, it would have been ideal to partake in more detailed observation in order to observe the OMC at different stages. However, with the groups only meeting a few times a year, for two days at a time, I had to work within the constraints of the OMC itself. In order to get the approval of the group, I prepared a short description of who I was, what I was studying, and what I wanted to do, and the policy officer distributed this message to all of the experts. There was a bit of a time delay while I waited but eventually I was given approval to attend. From this point on I was also included in all email correspondence with the group which gave me great insight into what had been done to date as well as the practical factors involved in organising such a meetup.

The OMC meeting I observed was Group 3’s fourth of six meetings, and was the group’s only study visit.¹⁰⁸ Before the observation took place, I made a list of practical and ethical concerns. I was particularly concerned with protecting anonymity, as I had interviewed a few of the participants in this group (had met some in person and spoken to others on the phone). I was also concerned about the blurring of boundaries between being a silent observer and what I knew was inevitable that people would be naturally curious and ask questions about myself and my research. I anticipated that experts would be curious to know what my findings ‘so far’ were, and prepared in my mind a generic but not unhelpful answer beforehand which would satiate curiosity but not give too much away.

¹⁰⁷ For an excellent collection on elite government behaviour using observation methods, see Rhodes, ‘t Hart, and Noordegraaf (2007).

¹⁰⁸ The fieldtrip meeting was not chosen on purpose but was the only set of dates that worked with my schedule and the research project’s timing.

For most of the time I simply sat in a corner of the room and observed unobtrusively. When the larger group split into smaller groups, I moved around and sat with each group for a short period of time. I did not participate at any stage of the discussions and in fact I think most people forgot I was there. However, I was also kindly invited along to the group's dinner and cultural activity (traditional folk music concert and dancing), held on the evening of day 1, and to the tour of an arts high school on the morning of the second day. On these occasions I spoke to many of the participants and on so was a 'participant' as well as an observer.

This reflects the ever-changing nature of the positioning of the researcher and the blurring of boundaries in observational work: “[o]ne day you are the professional stranger walking the tightrope between insider and outsider. Next day you are the complete bystander, left behind in the office to twiddle your thumbs” (Rhodes 2014, p.323). I was a researcher, yet was also already part of this community. The gap between me and the experts felt very narrow in terms of formality. Since this was only over a period of 48 hours, it was not as extreme as Rhodes' intense immersion, but it is still a reflection of the way positioning can change. As Gains says, “[i]mmersion within a group or culture creates challenges for the researcher in how to develop and maintain an understanding, and yet deliver a critical or neutral analysis” (Gains 2011, p.158). A constructivist-interpretivist ontological approach acknowledges this, and sees the researcher as part of the process.

5.5 DATA ANALYSIS

This section explains how I analysed my data and translated it into findings. Analysing data requires making sense of the information in a way that is easily understood by others – making it accessible. This is not always a straightforward process due to the subjectivity of qualitative data. It is therefore up to the researcher to ensure that, above all, “[r]eaders must be able to see the evidence and the logic that led the researcher to his or her main conclusion” (Rubin and Rubin 1995, p.92).

5.5.1 Interviews

First of all, interviews were transcribed as quickly as possible. Transcriptions also included notes on the time and location of the meeting, nonverbal indicators, and any comments I noted down before, during, and after the interview. As interviews were spread out over a period of seven months, I transcribed as I went. After all interviews were complete, a thematic analysis was carried out in three stages. In the first I identified broad themes that emerged from the transcripts. These themes/categories included categories such as ‘composition of the group participants,’ ‘unclear nature of OMC aims,’ ‘dissemination,’ ‘good practice report,’ ‘roles of Commission,’ and so forth. I began to pull quotes from the transcripts and continuously reflected on each theme as I went.

In a second phase, I refined these themes more comprehensively based on associations between interviewees. I also looked for connections and linkages across the themes, and began to identify illustrative examples to support the eventual explanations. In a third phase, I began to further reflect on signposting ‘before’ fieldwork and ‘after’ fieldwork reflections to determine how what I had found differed from what I had expected.

I took anonymity very seriously in order to protect the individuals who had so willingly shared their thoughts and time with me. In writing up and selecting quotes, all identifying information was removed from participants’ answers, and each interviewee was given a pseudonym. I also changed some job descriptions (to make them more general) and deleted parts of sentences that would possibly identify anyone, including workplaces, jobs, and Member States.

One of the challenges in qualitative interviewing is determining validity; as previously discussed, the purpose of interviews is not to achieve the truth, but rather a plausible explanation, which will by its very nature be subjective. In addition, “[a]ctors tend to use interviews to support a precise position, a precise interpretation of reality, in order to strengthen their own position” (Kröger 2008, p.81). Qualitative study is fraught with these types of challenges.

Part of the analysis also included interpreting some diverging views. Of the three groups I interviewed, this was most common among Commission officials. Hooghe and Marks (2001, ch.9) suggest that Commission officials may have divergent preferences, or view

their jobs differently, due to differences in, for example, length and history of career, previous transnational experience, country of background (small/large, federalist or not), national economic interest of EU integration, and in national control over officials' careers. In other words, diverse experiences mean divergent views. I have included these where relevant and analysed discrepancies in my findings where possible. Another consideration is the 'norm' to conform to institutional pressure (a 'bog standard' response). In a private and confidential interview setting some individuals followed this and some went 'off-piste' and spoke much more personally. This only really occurred regarding the role of the Commission in 'advancing' the culture case. There is some diversity in response, but findings represent the general tenor of conversations.

Validity and reliability of the data can be augmented in a few key ways. The first is to ensure that prior knowledge is in-depth enough; it is only by knowing a policy environment intimately that one can begin to determine what goes beyond 'formal' architecture, or, what one might read in books. This was achieved by a rigorous examination of the policies, EU documents, and working group reports, as well as extensive secondary material. The second method is through triangulation and targeting different sources. When possible, therefore, responses were cross-referenced with other sources of data such as the Ecorys survey as well as material gathered from participant observation.

5.5.2 Participant observation

Over the two days of meetings, I took notes which included both procedural elements, i.e. what the group was doing, what type of discussions were taking place, how long each activity lasted, as well as my reflections and thoughts during this time. At the end of the second day I typed up my notes from these sessions. About a week after this I arranged my thoughts thematically based on the top 'observations' and how I thought this material worked with my previous findings. As the observation took place over three months *after* I had done my final interview, a considerable amount of reflection and analysis had been done by that time. I was thus able to slot these observations into thematic areas that I had already identified.

At minimum, participant observation corroborated the material I already had. However, it also deepened and extended my understanding of the OMC considerably and therefore

was an extremely valuable exercise. The project's findings are therefore much richer and comprehensive as a result of the observation. It is a powerful research method that should be used much more in the study of public policy.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed this study's research methodology and methods. It has shown how the research process can be a "messy and fraught business" (Burnham et al. 2008, p.38) and, through the discussion of epistemology, how "there is no such thing as a neutral or value-free political science" (Peters, Pierre, and Stoker 2010, p.327). It has demonstrated my approach of a reflexive research practice that acknowledges the weaknesses and strengths of the research design.

The discussion in this chapter has highlighted the importance of the *methods* of inquiry being "determined by the *objects* and the *purposes* of inquiry" (Isaac 2013, p.933; emphasis added). Research from an institutionalist perspective necessitates in-depth knowledge about the rules, processes, and behaviours being studied. In a complex and multi-layered system such as the OMC, this presents challenges. Access to EU officials, via the expected gatekeepers, proved relatively straightforward, but what was more challenging was access to certain documents as well as reaching the OMC experts themselves. While there are some weaknesses in the access I was able to achieve, the challenges in access illuminate several features about the European Union and the OMC itself – in particular the at times impenetrable, bureaucratically isolated nature of both.

The chapter has set out the limitations of the study and outlined steps I have taken to corroborate and triangulate my findings. This was achieved by using a range of complementary but varied research methods – desk research, interviewing, and participant observation. All methods presented issues of access that were eventually negotiated. In particular, the use of participant observation – a method that has been used very little in both the study of the OMC and cultural policy – was a valuable exercise as it confirmed much of the information I had gathered via interviews and added an additional layer to my understanding.

The next chapter is the start of **Part II: The Empirical Contributions**. To start off, chapter 6 examines the Open Method of Coordination from the point of view of the European Union.

PART II: THE EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

CHAPTER 6: THE CULTURE OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION AND EU INSTITUTIONS

“Learning in a political context is eminently (albeit not exclusively) about power.”

Claudio Radaelli (2003, p.13)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the first of three findings chapters. It focuses on the process of facilitating the Open Method of Coordination and examines the roles of the two European Union institutions involved in the culture OMC, the European Commission and the Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers). The concentration on the roles of European institutions is an atypical lens of analysis in the study of the OMC, since most of the literature focuses on the outcomes in Member States (see chapter 3). However, in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the culture OMC, an investigation of the roles that these two bodies play is essential; they cannot simply be thought of as neutral facilitators; the OMC is a Member State process, however “the central role is played by a supranational actor [...] empower[ing] the European institutions with very specific tasks central to the whole process” (Regent 2003, p.191), and in order to fully capture this process in its entirety, it is necessary to study these tasks and responsibilities of both the Commission and the Council. Doing so helps to understand where power lies within the culture OMC (Deganis 2006), where the OMC fits within the broader picture of EU governance (particularly with regard to supporting competences), and where the ‘drive’ for increased coordination in the field of cultural policy comes from.

The goal of this chapter, then, is to analyse the roles and responsibilities of these two institutions: how is the OMC managed and facilitated? This represents a novel contribution to the OMC literature, which is mostly concerned with *whether* the OMC works rather than how. The chapter is organised around the differences between the formal descriptions of the Commission and Council's roles, found 'on paper' in official policy documents, and what happens in practice – in other words, the gaps between what might have been expected at the start of this research (expectations) and the findings that emerged throughout my fieldwork, which raises questions regarding legitimacy and power relations within the culture OMC – what Deganis (2006) calls the “politics of consensus.” Information for this chapter therefore draws primarily on empirical material gathered throughout interviews with key policy actors, and the participant observation outlined in chapter 5. Where possible, it also draws comparisons and similarities with the 2013 Ecorys survey and with the literature on the OMCs in other fields. This discussion is framed by the theoretical lenses of new institutionalism and multi-level governance; behaviour is theorised via the lens of the logic of appropriateness, whereby “[a]ctors seek to fulfill [*sic*] the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions” (March and Olsen 2009, p.3).

This chapter is split into two main parts, each which focuses on the role of an EU body. Section 6.2 addresses the European Commission and 6.3 the Council of Ministers. Both sections examine the roles of the respective institution in the operation of the OMC: who is responsible for the OMC's organisation and how does it work? Both sections are organised the same way, starting with a general description of the institution in question and a brief analysis of how it can be conceptualised within the EU policy process, which properly sets the organisations in a wider context. Following this, the institutions' formal and informal roles in the culture OMC are discussed, followed by a summary. This penultimate section of the chapter, 6.4, synthesises the findings to provide an overview of the EU's role, which links into the next chapter looking at the role of the Member States and the OMC from their perspective.

6.2 THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

This section focuses on the role of the European Commission in the culture OMC.¹⁰⁹ To begin with, it briefly discusses how we can conceptualise the Commission more generally within EU governance. This is important because it is not possible to fully understand the Commission's role in the culture OMC without understanding to some extent the complexity of its responsibilities and roles within the wider EU policy-making system.

6.2.1 Conceptualising the European Commission's role in the EU

The European Commission is an institution “at the very heart of the EU system” (Nugent 2010, p.105). It is a complex bureaucratic organisation that occupies several different positions depending on what type of policy-making mode it is acting in. In general, the Commission's role can be separated into six areas (Nugent 2010; for more information on these roles see his book, chapter 8). The Commission:

1. Proposes and develops policies and legislation. It enjoys power of policy initiation within the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (OLP; previously known as co-decision).
2. Performs a variety of ‘executive’ politics functions to do with the “management, supervision and implementation of EU policies” (Nugent 2010, p.125), including making rules, managing the EU's finances, and supervising the national-level implementation of EU policy.
3. Guards the treaties, the EU's legal framework.
4. Represents and negotiates for the EU externally.
5. Performs a degree of mediation in decision-making, particularly in the Council of Ministers. Nugent (2010) argues that because the Commission is present at almost all stages of the policy process, it is well-informed of the positions of other actors in the system and as a result is often looked to for advice. Egeberg (2010) argues that once a proposal has been put to the table, the Commission does its best to see that all parties agree and that it is put through.

¹⁰⁹ Although I am using ‘the Commission’ for the sake of simplicity, the culture OMC is the responsibility of one unit within the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG-EAC).

6. Promotes the general European interest. The Commission is seen as a politically neutral body that “should avoid partisanship and look to the good functioning and cohesion of the Union as a whole” (Nugent 2010, p.135).

However, the Commission does not necessarily do all of these things for each policy area: its role depends on the treaty base and which of the five ‘policy modes’ is involved (Wallace and Wallace 2007), as each mode “reveals differences in the roles and behaviour of the various key actors, in their variety of approach to policy dilemmas, and in the diversity of instruments used” (Wallace and Wallace 2007, p.341). Within the OLP, the Commission’s role can be thought of as an agenda setter, a policy shaper, a decision maker, an implementer, and an evaluator of policy (Versluis, van Keulen, and Stephenson 2011). In the literature, the Commission has therefore been theorised as a policy entrepreneur, whereby it can strategically set agendas according to its particular circumstances and wishes: “[t]he Commission has specific policy preferences: like any bureaucracy it has an incentive to promote its own power and organizational development” (Hix 1998, p.52). By authoring the initial proposal, the Commission is able to “pre-decide” certain policy options and begin the process of a proposal coming into law (Christiansen and Larsson 2007, p.4).

However, the Commission’s role in policy *coordination*, particularly in policy sectors where the EU has a supporting competence, has not been the subject of as much attention. On paper at least, the Commission’s role in policy coordination measures such as the OMC appears to be less prominent. It is not responsible for proposing legislation but rather facilitating the coming-together of Member States to exchange ideas and learn from each other. However, as Deganis (2006, p.22-3) reminds us, this is *not* a neutral activity:

“[c]onceptualising the Commission as disinterested [*sic*] authority that simply overlooks co-ordinative initiatives taking place among Member States repudiates a substantial body of empirical work demonstrating how the Commission, since its inception, has continuously pushed to increase its powers within the EU and promoted a further integrationist agenda in line with its own interests.”

The OMC is based on creating common understanding and mutual priorities. This process is facilitated by the Commission.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Commission's democratic legitimacy, as an unelected body with considerable agenda setting power, has been a strong theme in the literature (Deganis 2006). There is a dichotomy at play: the Commission is seen as the EU's most expert and neutral body (in that it is working for the 'greater European good'), and yet as an unelected body it has been criticised for its lack of legitimacy. For example, there are those who believe that the Commission has too much power as an unelected institution with almost sole power of policy initiation within the EU (typically, these come from the intergovernmentalist camp). There are others who perceive the Commission as a relatively neutral body working diligently towards a better Europe. However, rarely has the Commission's role been examined in terms of its role as a coordinator of *policy coordination mechanisms*, such as the OMC. This is important to look at because of the OMC's lack of treaty basis, weak institutionalisation (Laffan and Shaw 2005), and the post-OMC potential of shifting discourse and creating new norms. Even though legislation is not being created via the OMC, it still has 'soft power' potential to lead to change, and the Commission is at the centre of this process.

6.2.2 The Commission's formal role in the culture OMC

Having addressed the Commission's role in the context of its overall position in EU policy-making, this subsection looks specifically at the European Commission and the culture Open Method of Coordination. It is split into two parts. In this subsection I discuss the Commission's formal role, which is followed by a discussion on its informal role in section 6.2.3. Analytically separating these clearly delineates between expectations at the start of the research (formal) – what one might expect – and new knowledge relating to the roles and positions of key actors within the OMC (informal). This therefore highlights the gaps between expectations and what actually happens in practice.

As explained in chapter two, one of the principles at the heart of the OMC is that it is a *Member State process*. It is for Member States to,

“exchange good practice, experiences, and so on. They should come back home with more knowledge about what is done in certain fields, what can be done and what should be done and maybe impact it on national level” (Corrine, Commission, interview, April 2014).

However, while the OMC is a Member State process, in order to work properly it requires central coordination. This is the European Commission's role. The 2001 *White Paper on*

EU Governance stipulates, as one of its four ‘circumstances’ for the use of the OMC, that “the Commission should be closely involved and play a coordinating role” (CEC 2001, p.18). However, it is not possible to find a more detailed overview of the Commission’s role in the OMC; to find other official descriptions of what the Commission does requires a policy sector-specific search of Work Plans and other documents. There is no ‘one’ OMC, and different institutional characteristics and setups mean that the Commission’s role is slightly different depending on whether the coordination is convergent or cooperative (Armstrong 2010; see also chapter 2). We simply cannot ‘deduce’ the role of the Commission in the culture OMC according to what happens in other fields, although many similarities do exist. Generally, the Commission “presents proposals on the European guidelines, organises the exchange of best practices, proposes indicators and benchmarks, and provides support to the process of implementation, monitoring, and peer review” (de la Porte 2002, p.44).

As previously stated, the culture OMC was proposed and created by the Commission in 2007 (CEC 2007; McDonald et al. 2013a). The 2007 Agenda for Culture states that,

“The work plan now needs to be renewed and the Commission believes that the time is ripe for Member States to take their cooperation one step further, by using the open method of coordination (OMC) as a mechanism to do so, in a spirit of partnership” (CEC 2007, p.12).

This suggestion was then endorsed by the Council in a November 2007 resolution (see chapter 2). That the suggestion of an OMC and its drive into being came from the Commission is important. Though they are constricted by subsidiarity, the Commission has an interest in furthering EU cultural cooperation and aim to maximise the competence within the limits of the treaty:

“We always try to push for more competence because in this context and at EU level we think that it’s a good way to go, because it’s maybe not always so efficient to ‘go’ only national at this stage, so we think that it’s good to coordinate more and more together, which of course doesn’t mean imposing anything, or deciding anything, just trying to coordinate maximum [sic] and harmonise what can be harmonised ...” (Corrine, Commission, interview, April 2014).

The ‘activist’ stance outlined by Corrine tallies with Littoz-Monnet’s (2012, 2015) findings of a body that has pushed to achieve further cultural action at the EU level within its remit (the possible reasons for this are developed further on in this chapter).

The Commission's *formal* role in the culture OMC, as outlined in the 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture, is to,

“provide logistical and secretarial support to the work of the groups. As far as possible, it will support the groups by other suitable means (including studies relevant to their field of work)” (Council of the European Union 2010, p.9).

The key words in this description are *logistical* and *secretarial*. The emphasis in the Work Plan is a managerial, facilitative role. Further information is found in the Agenda for Culture (CEC 2007), which describes that the Commission would be responsible for drafting a “joint [progress] report with high level representations of Member States” (p.12) as well as organising stakeholder participation via the biennial Cultural Forums and meetings with civil society. Here we see an overlap of the OMC with the DG's other activities, namely the Cultural Forum it organises as well as its ongoing activity with civil society experts (see chapter 2 for more information on this). The DG is therefore responsible for monitoring progress on the Work Plan (and thus the OMC, as its main working method) as a whole, meaning that the Commission has an overview of how the policy priorities develop throughout the course of the three-year Work Plan.

The formal descriptions give us some idea of what the Commission's role is within the OMC, but they are vague on how precisely the organisation of the OMC is carried out. It is therefore necessary to dig deeper into the day-to-day practices of facilitating the OMC, and also more generally about how policy officers see their role, and to what degree of ‘control’ and power the Commission has in the overall OMC process. We know that the Commission occupies a central position in the OMC, but what *exactly* does it do?

6.2.3 The Commission's informal role in the culture OMC

On paper, the Commission's role appears to be one that is limited to facilitating, managing, and administering the OMC. It is presented in a de-politicised way, because (political) policy priorities are set by Member States in the Council. However, findings suggest it is more complicated than this; they point to a more developed role than the Commission's (limited) role description in the Work Plan suggests.

The word that is most used to describe the Commission's role in the culture OMC by the Commission itself is “secretariat.” One policy officer is assigned per OMC group, and follows that group from beginning to end (this fact alone is not intelligible from policy

documentation). That individual is responsible for coordinating with Member States on the appointment of experts, coordinating with group chairs, organising meetings, and distributing information to the group. Fatima, one such policy officer, described her role as such:

“I hold the secretariat – all the basic administrative support, but also support in terms of contact. So my role is not only to disseminate information - the agenda, the minutes, all that - but give the group specific information on certain topics, of which we have some information, reports, studies, and so on, I provide this to them. But the work is done by them” (interview, May 2014).

Fatima’s indication that she disseminates information to the OMC groups begins to show the gatekeeping and thus agenda-setting role that the Commission can play. However, others were even more frank about the way things work in practice:

“The word used is secretariat. I would suggest it’s slightly more” (Jette, Commission, interview, May 2014).

“... the Commission – they’re doing [sic] much more than it’s written in the documents, where it says simply ‘secretariat,’ sending the emails, etc. They do a lot more” (Viktoria, Member State expert, interview, October 2014).

From the literature on institutions in public policy, we know that informal institutions and practices are just as important, and sometimes even more so, than formal rules (see chapter 4). From the primary data gathered during fieldwork, there are therefore two main points to develop with regards to the Commission’s central role. The first point is the DG’s monitoring responsibilities, meaning that it has a ‘bird’s eye view’ of the entire OMC process; the second is its responsibilities for the day-to-day operation of the OMC. Taken together, these informal practices exemplify the Commission as both a *political* and *administrative leader* of the culture OMC (Hix 1998, pp.45-6), not simply an administrative one as the literature suggests and as one might expect. These two points are expanded upon in turn below.

Monitoring

First of all, the Commission has a unique overview of the entire OMC process that neither the Council of Ministers nor the Member States enjoy. In order put this into better perspective, it is useful to draft a brief historical timeline, using the 2011-2014 Work Plan

as an example. This will show the Commission's central role in the creation, carrying out, and evaluation of the Work Plan.

First of all, the Work Plan and its policy priorities are set in the Council of Ministers. The Council, representing the Member States, is (in theory) "to be found at the top of the decision-making pyramid, setting the overall objectives to be achieved by the Union" (de la Porte 2002, p.44), because the policy priorities are agreed upon there. However, while the formal *final* decision on the Work Plan takes place there, in practice, the Commission was found to play a strong role in the *creation* of the policy priorities:

"I have to admit that a lot of the drafting work came from the Commission side, as a sort-of ghost writer. They drafted a lot, which was then amended by the presidency team, but not dramatically. It isn't supposed to be like that! Because it's a Council work plan, but in reality a lot of the preparation was done with intensive cooperation of the Commission [civil] servants" (Darya, Member State representative, interview, April 2014).

This is so because, at any one time, the DG has the most knowledge about progress on the Work Plan. The Commission also has a keen sense of what will be accepted in the Council, as a Commission official is present at the Council meetings. However, it also raises questions about legitimacy. Even though the Council must formally adopt the Work Plan, the advanced drafting that the Commission is involved in gives it scope to shape the content and direction of the policy themes by advancing certain proposals and not others: the "search for cognitive convergence, which is at the heart of the OMC, involves tasks the Commission is better able to accomplish than any other institution" (Dehousse 2002, p.14, as quoted in Deganis 2006, p.23).

Secondly, the Commission is also responsible for monitoring progress *during* the period of the Work Plan, as well as disseminating the completed OMC groups' work to the Council and any other relevant bodies. After each OMC group is finished, the policy report

"...is presented to the EU Member States gathered together in a working committee in the Council [Cultural Affairs Committee]. There is a presentation of the report, and then at European level we can discuss, politically" (Jette, Commission, interview, May 2014).

However, as will be extrapolated on further below in the discussion of the Council's role, this presentation often occurs rather briefly and is a summary of what has happened rather than an opportunity for true dialogue. Therefore, while the Council is informed of what

is happening in the OMC groups, it is more of a one-way presentation than a discussion (see more on this below).

Finally, towards the end of a three-year Work Plan cycle, the Commission is involved in evaluating progress in preparation for the next plan. Slightly ironically, the institution of rotating Council presidencies, designed to make the Council more geographically representative, equal, and fair in terms of agenda-setting, has meant an increase in the Commission's role:

“[W]e really feel that we're holding all of that together as the Commission, because [Council] presidencies come and go. We have the overview of the Work Plan, and we feel a bit of an ownership” (Jette, Commission, interview, May 2014).

Jette's comment highlights two important factors. First of all, the Commission feels ownership in part because it has an overview of the entire Work Plan in its role as an evaluator and facilitator. Given how the roles are divided up in practice, there is no other institution that has the knowledge or capacity to do this. Secondly, this is exacerbated by the fact that the presidency of the Council changes every six months, meaning, in the period of one Work Plan there will be six presidencies, and a further two or three in the period of drafting and evaluating it.¹¹⁰ This lack of continuity means that it is the Commission who assumes responsibility for evaluating progress. The Council's Cultural Affairs Committee sees the evaluation documentation produced by the Commission, but ultimately determining progress on the policy priorities is monitored and determined by the latter.

Therefore, due to their overseeing and monitoring responsibilities, the Commission finds itself at the centre of the operation of the culture OMC. While this is a less developed role than other DGs have in the OMC in other policy fields, this is a central role, giving the Commission rather a lot of scope to shape and influence the policy coordination agenda.

Day-to-day management

The second point to develop with regards to the Commission's role is that not only does it play a role in the creation and overall monitoring of the Work Plan, the DG is also responsible for the OMC's day-to-day management. These tasks include scheduling and

¹¹⁰ The 2015-2018 Work Plan, released in December 2014, tries to link the policy priority areas more closely with the work of the rotating presidencies.

organising meetings, taking notes during meetings, coordinating the appointment of Member State experts, and supplying additional information when necessary:

“...we also play a role in the management of the meetings in the sense that when they arrive, chairs are often quite new, often their first OMC meeting, so we explain what the OMC is, how it works, and we help with managing the meetings. [...] [W]e try to guide the management of the meeting” (Jette, Commission, interview, May 2014).

On the whole, Member State experts interviewed for this research were of the belief that the OMC was administratively well-supported by the Commission. Most had positive things to say about the individual policy officers assigned to their group(s):

“They do their job well. Usually they are highly-qualified people. In bureaucratic terms, they do an excellent job, whether it’s the minutes, or the agenda, or the information they share with you” (Oskar, expert, interview, June 2014).¹¹¹

Expanding on the description of the policy officer’s role above, Jette, an employee of the Commission, explained the unique ‘European’ perspective that the Commission’s policy officers bring to the OMC groups:

“... the people in charge of assisting the groups would also be policy officers so they have a deep knowledge of the policy. They also have a European overview – which Member States don’t always have, because they represent their country, and they know what happens in their country. So we bring in this knowledge and we are able to advise the chairs of the meetings with the way for example...typically, we would give advice about which external speakers would be very good, whether there was any university research, or museum research, or something which is really interesting that they may not always know about” (Ibid.).

Jette’s comment is interesting for two reasons. The first is her assertion that the policy officers have a ‘European overview’ and expertise that is not shared by any other institutions, implying that there is value to be added at a European level and the Commission is working for the ‘greater good’ of the Union (Hooghe 1999).¹¹² This is also the case within the wider EU policy-making picture; the main role that the Commission plays – as initiator of policy proposals – means that they often have a good idea of how

¹¹¹ This is consistent, for example, with the experience of the European Employment Strategy OMC as studied by Deganis (2006). Deganis found that the national representatives commended the Commission on their expertise and competence.

¹¹² This was not the focus of my fieldwork, so it is impossible to come to a conclusive stance on whether this is the case of culture/culture OMC. However, I got the general impression from Commission staff that, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity, they want to achieve further integration in the field based on the underlying belief that it is in the Union’s best interest and that they were pursuing goals that benefit the entire EU.

consensus can be achieved via the different parties within the EU. The second is that, by directing and funnelling information to the OMC groups, the Commission is in effect acting as a gatekeeper, passing on the types of research they see as appropriate. No other member of the group has the resources to do so, putting the Commission in a strong position to influence the direction of discourse and norms of the groups. In this way, the Commission “socializes the players to internalize its conception of issues and objectives” (de la Porte 2002, p.44, referring to Goetschy 1999).

The Commission also has another way of influencing the groups through its role in appointing an ‘independent’ external facilitator to work with the groups’ chairs, acting as facilitator and structuring the general framework of the discussions. Again, this varied a bit per group, but this facilitator was someone who the Commission believed to be an expert in the topic, and they were able to exert a certain amount of influence within the groups. Interestingly, the role of the group’s chair(s) was found to be a determinant in how much the Commission was involved: a strong chair with considerable organisational skill and capacity to achieve consensus in a heterogeneous group means that the Commission rarely has to intervene in the meetings themselves. Conversely, a weak chair means that the Commission has a stronger hand in the operation of the meetings. Wasil, a Member State expert, described his experience as such:

“...at the last meeting [the Commission] took a very ... a big role in steering us; I guess they saw that if they don’t, it will be a report with no target group. They were kind of editors, which I guess was good. Some of us wanted to be stronger in some recommendations, and they said that that’s not our role. There was a discussion within the group what [the Commission’s] mandate was, what our mandate was. In the end it was clear to me that they weren’t only facilitating but also had the final say” (interview, October 2014).

Wasil’s comments demonstrate just how much influence the Commission can have. In one group in Priority A, the Commission wrote most of the final report – typically, this is done or coordinated by the elected chair of the group or the external facilitator. This was due to the ineffectiveness of the chairs and not a case of the Commission ‘forcing’ itself upon the group, however, it demonstrates the centrality of the Commission’s role and just how far it can extend in terms of shaping ideas and advancing agendas. Findings from other OMCs show similar results. Writing in the case of the Employment OMC, Deganis (2006, p.29) found that “[w]hereas a strong Chair will direct Committee proceedings a weak Chair will inevitably allow the Commission to assert itself as a dominant actor

within EMCO.” Deganis also includes a quote from one of her interviewees, an official within DG Employment, who said “...the role of the Commission is sometimes co-chair and sometimes more behind the scenes” (2006, p.35, note #20).

6.2.4 Summary of the Commission’s roles in the culture OMC

The discussion above has demonstrated that the role the European Commission plays within the culture Open Method of Coordination is one that is more developed and stronger than what one might infer from a formal document analysis, thus demonstrating the value of insider work that looks closely at what is going on ‘behind the scenes.’ The Commission’s role as both an overseer and day-to-day manager have ultimately meant that it “enjoys a superior political presence and visibility” and also “is in a better position than others to manage the content and the directions of the information flows within the group” (Borrás 2007, n.p.). Not only does the DG play a hand in drafting the Work Plan’s overarching policy priorities – a role that, on paper, appears exclusively in the domain of the Council – it also has input into the final policy reports, “structures the framework in which different players are to interact, and contributes to the structuring of the discourse through the documents it prepares” (de la Porte 2002, p.44, referring to Goetschy 1999). We might therefore say that even though the OMC is ‘by and for’ the Member States, the Commission has a great deal of influence and plays, in the words of one commentator, a “*situation-defining role*” (Nedergaard 2005, p.12; emphasis in the original) in the culture OMC.

Findings therefore show that the Commission occupies both a political and administrative leadership role in the administration and management of the culture OMC:

Table 6.1 European Commission’s roles in culture OMC

Political	Administrative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting the Work Plan; • Monitoring progress of policy priorities in the Work Plan; • Aiding Member States in the appointment of participating experts; • Appointing the external facilitator; • Writing the report;* • Evaluating progress of the Work Plan in general; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising meetings; • Taking notes at OMC meetings; • Distributing minutes.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributing material such as case study information, studies, and other such reports; • Disseminating groups' outputs to the Council's Cultural Affairs Committee. <p>*Note that this role was only performed once in the three OMCs studied.</p>	
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This assessment raises crucial questions about the balance of power dynamics in the culture OMC and by extension in EU policy coordination in general: while the OMC is meant to be by and for the Member States, in reality it is driven by the Commission (as we will see in the next chapter, some Member State representatives do not understand the purpose of the OMC and do not know why they are at the meetings). No other actor in the process has as much knowledge about or involvement in the OMC at any one time than the policy officer(s) in the Commission, nor does any other actor have the Commission's policy expertise and its ability to achieve consensus through knowledge of Member States' positions. The Commission's central place in this process is therefore one that enables it to influence and set certain terms of reference, and the OMC's political objectives "represent a powerful learning instrument, insofar as they are expected to destabilise prior understandings of issues and thus lead to incremental changes via an ideational shift in framing policy problems" (de la Porte and Pochet 2012, p.340).

This makes the Commission a powerful actor in the culture OMC. Taken together with literature on agenda-setting in EU cultural policy and on the Commission's agenda-setting power in general, it shows that the Commission is a driving force behind continued policy coordination in the field, and not simply an apolitical facilitator. This reinforces the need for more studies of the OMC to probe into the roles of EU institutions in facilitating policy coordination in more detail, since policy coordination exercises imply the (re-)construction of norms. In this case, these norms are in large part constructed by the Commission, in its role in the creation and evaluation of the policy priorities and in the management of the OMC groups, which enables the Commission to influence the platform for discussion and exchange in what is meant to be a *Member State process*. I now turn to the other important EU organisation in the culture OMC, the Council of the European Union.

6.3 THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

This section addresses the role of the Council of the European Union, also known as the Council of Ministers, in the culture OMC. As with the Commission, the analysis of the Council's role in the culture OMC is split between formal role and informal practices. As above, I first start with its general position with the European Union.

6.3.1 Conceptualising the Council's role in the EU

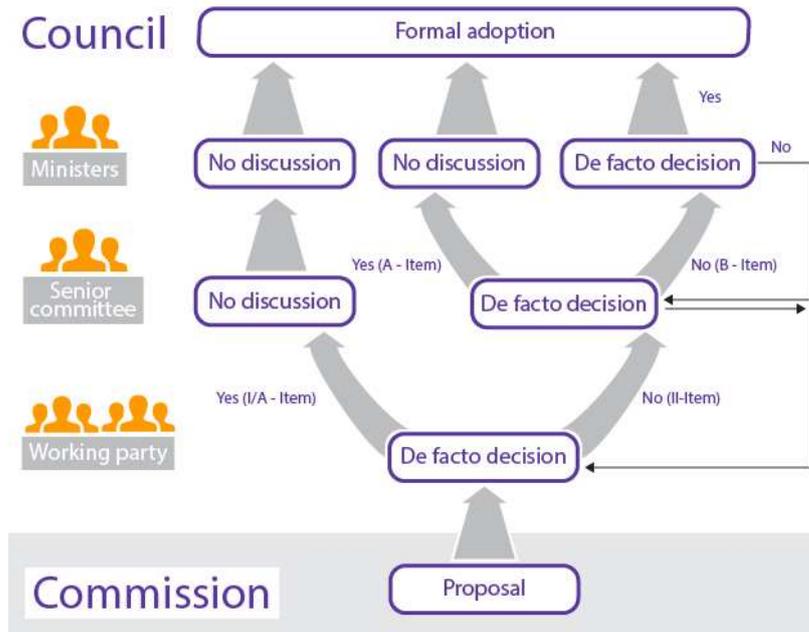
This subsection situates the Council of Ministers within the broader framework of EU governance. The Council is the body that represents the interests of the Member States and is composed of current ministers from Member States' national governments. In the Community method, the Council shares legislative power with the European Parliament, making it "more or less a permanent negotiating forum and recurrent international conference" (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006, p.2). Broadly, the role of the Council is to evaluate legislation from the point of view of perceived benefits or losses to citizens in their Member State. The workings of the Council are additionally complicated by the institution of the rotating presidency, which changes every six months.¹¹³

The Council's organisational structure is highly complex. It is composed of:

- National ministers, who sit in one of ten Council configurations;
- the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER I and COREPER II);
- Working committees and parties; and
- the General Secretariat, the body of 3,500 civil servants responsible for administratively supporting the Council and the work of its rotating presidencies.

¹¹³ Trio presidencies were implemented with the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon, which means that three Member States cooperate together in terms of political priorities, although the presidency is only held by one state at a time.

Figure 6.1: Decision making in the Council



Source: University of Portsmouth¹¹⁴

Within the OLP, proposals (dossiers) come to the Council and are sent to one of more than 150 working parties and committees (in the case of cultural matters, it is the aforementioned Cultural Affairs Committee). From the working committee, points that have not reached agreement or consensus are flagged to be dealt with at COREPER level. This means, as shown in Figure 6.1, that if agreement is reached at working committee level, the item is formally adopted in the Council without discussion among the EU-28 Culture Ministers. The Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) is a network of permanent ambassadors and Member State representatives in Europe and is the next ‘level’ of hierarchy in the Council. The ‘permreps’ are a combination of senior-level diplomats from the Member States as well as seconded representatives from national ministries. COREPER is split into two bodies, COREPER I and II (with only the former concerning cultural policy, as a part of social policy). Proposals that have not reached consensus in working parts are debated within COREPER and then finally presented to the relevant Council. The Council system is thus one that,

¹¹⁴ Available online at <http://hum.port.ac.uk/europeanstudieshub/learning/module-1-understanding-eu-institutions/the-council-of-the-european-union/the-legislative-function-of-the-council/> [accessed 4 June 2016].

depends on a crucial assumption that there is give and take between the positions of the member states, and that, whatever the starting positions of the members, there is both scope for those positions to evolve and a predisposition to find agreement (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006, p.17).

A high percentage of decisions are ‘settled’ at committee and COREPER level,¹¹⁵ meaning that the vast majority of decisions are taken without a formal vote, since these bodies operate by consensus.¹¹⁶ Of the issues that reach ministerial level in the Council – those that are not settled at working party or COREPER level – only 14% of these are “explicitly contested” (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006, p.259).¹¹⁷ It is via this complicated system that EU legislation is passed in the Council.

The Cultural Affairs Committee, composed of seconded permanent representatives from the Member States (typically individuals who have extensive experience in their national ministry of culture or equivalent), “prepares the work of EU ministers for culture in a wide range of areas relating to EU cultural cooperation and to cultural cooperation between the EU and non-EU countries” (Council of the European Union 2015b, n.p.).

One member of CAC describes her role as such:

“I am trying to coordinate all cultural files that have a European angle to them, and trying to be the mediator between the European policy and [country]’s policy” (Darya, Member State representative, interview, April 2014).

The committee meets roughly once a month (Corrine, Commission, interview, April 2014). These meetings are also attended by at least one Commission official, as well an administrator from the Council’s General Secretariat (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006).¹¹⁸ Permreps in the CAC operate “on the basis of instructions emanating from their respective national capitals” (*Ibid.*, p.97).¹¹⁹ Achieving consensus is an important principle at the committee level as well.

¹¹⁵ Calculations on this exact percentage vary: Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (2006) suggest 90%; Kuosmanen (1998), quoted in Nugent (2010), suggests 75-85%; and Häge (2008)’s calculations are 65%.

¹¹⁶ It is not until proposals reach the minister stage that formal votes are taken.

¹¹⁷ Half of these are on agriculture and fisheries (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006).

¹¹⁸ Culture in the General Secretariat is represented by a small unit in DG-E. It is composed of one head of unit, three policy officers, and two assistants. These individuals view themselves as independent and impartial and describe their role as one of advising and supporting (Alfred and Beatrice, Council, interviews, April 2014).

¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, the innerworkings of the CAC are still rather elusive. The committee would benefit from more academic attention, since it is difficult to ascertain exactly what goes on in practice as the meetings are closed and the minutes are not made public (common problems those studying the Council face). Analytically, we can only extrapolate from what is known generally about the working committees in that their role is to “reduce the number of problem areas to be dealt with by Coreper and subsequently by the Council” (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 2006, p.99).

6.3.2 The Council's formal role in the culture OMC

This subsection introduces the Council's formal role in the culture Open Method of Coordination. As discussed in chapter 3, the roles of the EU institutions have not been the focus of much research on the OMC. The Council has received even less attention than the Commission. It is usually only referred to in passing as the body that sets common policy priorities. Given this main role, this omission is somewhat surprising. As the first 'principle' of the OMC is to jointly identify and define objectives (adopted by the Council), in theory at least, the Council's role is very important.

'New' methods of governance pose an analytical challenge because "they occupy an unsettled constitutional space" (Armstrong 2008, p.416, quoted in Puetter 2014, p.45). It is difficult to determine the Council's *overall* role within the OMC as first of all, it is sector-specific, and secondly, much of its activities are done behind closed doors and not easily accessible by the public, making it difficult to determine exactly how decisions are made and according to what criteria. The obvious place to turn to for a formal description of the Council's role in the culture OMC is the 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture. However, it is not clear from the Work Plan exactly what the Council is responsible for. It is mentioned in the body of the document as well in one point in the "Principles relating to the setting up and functioning of the working groups":

"INVITE THE PRESIDENCIES OF THE COUNCIL TO:

- take into account, in the context of the trio Presidency, the Work Plan priorities when developing their programme, to report on the implementation of the Work Plan and to build upon the results achieved,
- in particular, organise, when appropriate:
 - a meeting of senior officials of Ministries of Culture with a view to discussing and taking up the results obtained in the Work Plan,
 - a joint informal meeting of senior officials of Ministries of Culture and senior officials responsible for culture in Ministries of Foreign Affairs, with a view to developing a strategic approach to culture in external relations and enhancing cooperation in this field,
- consider organising, in the context of the implementation of the Work Plan, meetings of senior officials of Ministries of Culture and senior officials from other policy domains" (Council of the European Union 2010, p.2)

In addition, the Work Plan also specifies that the chairs of the OMC groups will report "as necessary" (*Ibid.*, p.9) to the Cultural Affairs Committee regarding progress in the various groups. It also says that the CAC will be allowed to "give guidance to the working

groups in order to guarantee the desired outcome and the coordination of the groups' work" (*Ibid.*). In addition, the Council presidencies are invited to incorporate the Work Plan's priorities into their programmes, exchange results and findings with senior officials in EU-28 Ministries of Culture, and create dialogue with other policy fields. From this description, we would expect there to be a certain amount of dialogue between the Presidencies, Member States, and Commission.

On paper, then, the Council's main activity is during the creation of the Work Plans as well as evaluating progress afterwards (in preparation for the next one). With the exception of the points outlined above, they do not have much to do with the *carrying out* or implementation of coordination, which is the shared responsibility of the Commission and Member States. The Council's role appears to be limited but crucial – to establish themes and sub-topics within the Work Plan and monitor progress on these themes so that it can prepare the next Work Plan. In the words of a manager in the Council Secretariat, the Council of Ministers "act[s] as a platform to set out a strategy" for the Work Plan's policy priorities (Alfred, interview, April 2014). Identifying common aims and objectives thus "shows a consensus on certain things, certain priorities" (Fatima, Commission, interview, May 2014), since the Council represents the interests of Member States.

6.3.3 The Council's informal role in the culture OMC

I now turn to what happens in practice. Section 6.2.3 above outlined the timeline of the 2011-2014 Work Plan, and indicated that while the Council is technically responsible for drafting the policy priorities, in practice this is largely steered by the Commission. One member of the CAC described the process as such:

"The Commission based their drafting on the experience of the previous Work Plan and the results and recommendations that resulted from the OMC groups that worked in that framework. So it was just a matter of selecting the recommendations that were more or less realistic and then trying to put them into a coherent framework" (Darya, Member State representative, interview, April 2014).

Similarly, Corrine, a policy officer in the Commission, described the lead-up to the 2015-2018 Work Plan¹²⁰ and how the process operates:

¹²⁰ The 2015-2018 Work Plan was in the process of being negotiated as I undertook fieldwork in Brussels in spring 2014.

“The Commission is proposing something to the CAC for them to discuss, and we’ve done a consultation of the CAC members [...] about what they want for the next Work Plan” (Corrine, Commission, interview, April 2014).

Corrine further specified that timing (duration) of the OMC groups, the selection procedure for experts, and policy themes, as three main topics of discussion. Her insight demonstrates once again that the Commission has more involvement in the setting of priorities than what one might assume, although this is in the form of *influence* rather than absolute control over the process.

During the operation of the groups, the outputs, a best practice or policy manual, are presented to the Cultural Affairs Committee. Viktoria, one expert who was interviewed, had participated in an OMC group but was also a member of the CAC, said that,

“There is not such a strong relation between OMC groups and the Council. For me it was easier because I was a member of both! But at the end of the day, it’s very different how Member States coordinate their work with regards to the OMC groups, their contacts, and their relation to the decision-makers. I believe here there could be a lot more done” (interview, October 2014).

Asked why there was a disconnect between the work of the OMC groups and the CAC, Viktoria expanded,

“It’s mainly because of lack of time. Some from the group – usually chairs – come to the CAC and present the work, but it’s one of the point on the agenda, and it’s done once. A lot of workload, other things you have to deal with – sometimes members of the CAC simply do not have time to read everything. The reports are long. [...] Maybe it would be fine if the work was closely connected, if chairs of the working groups would come to CAC more often – maybe in between and during their work, to present what they’ve done [so far]. Afterwards, we don’t have a system to check what has been done” (Ibid.).

Therefore, while the CAC is informed of the *outputs* of the groups, this is done *post-OMC* only, and not during the operation of the groups. In addition, as Viktoria indicates, there is not much opportunity for back-and-forth dialogue between the OMC groups and the CAC. This was also raised by Edward, a Commission staff member, who said that:

“The Council is set up to be a decision-making body and whether it works well as a forum for non-decision-making exchange, which OMC is all about, is a good question” (interview, April 2014).

Edward’s comment highlights the fact that the ideas raised in the reports often do not ‘travel’ as far at the EU level (and, by definition, to the Member States – see chapter 7) as they could, due to a lack of opportunity for discussion.

This leads onto the next crucial point, which is that the results of the OMC work do not reach the ‘high politics’-level politicians (in this case, the ministers of culture for EU-28). As will be further discussed in chapters 7 and 8, the current method of dissemination and lack of feedback and linkages to national cultural policy means that visibility of the OMC beyond the invited experts is poor. There is a sense that the work done in OMC groups remains there, and that the dissemination that is done in the Council could be more robust, linking the work of the OMC groups more strongly to both the priorities of Council presidencies, but also to the national level. The work done in OMC groups *should be relevant for all ‘levels’ – working parties, COREPER, and the ministers – in the Council, as well as national ministries (ideally for regional/local bodies as well).*

Despite this, according to one member of the CAC,

“There is a very very strong participation in the debates in the Council, very alive. Member States are really are in favour of continuing this exercise and changing and learning from past experiences” (Ulla, expert, interview, October 2014).

Ulla’s comments challenge some of the difficulties in governing cultural policy in a multi-level setting and of the OMCs: culture is a politically-sensitive competence, and the work of the OMC lacks a robust system of dissemination in the Council to ensure its relevance to the national level. Yet, it is an exercise that seems to be appreciated and favoured within the Council. The Commission has therefore succeeded at institutionalising the OMC, at least to some degree. However, while there is a degree of engagement at the committee level, there is a lack of dissemination within the EU-28’s top cultural officials, meaning that instead of vertical and horizontal policy dialogue, the visibility of the OMC and the ideas it produces does not translate into all levels of the Council. This is in part due to the loosely defined goals of the OMC, which will be expanded on in more detail in chapter 8.

6.3.4 Summary of the Council of Ministers’ role in the culture OMC

The discussion above has highlighted the differences between the Council’s formal role in the culture OMC and what happens in practice. The Council is a complex, multi-layered body that operates on the norm of consensus-seeking. I have demonstrated how the Council plays a more limited role in practice than what might be assumed from reading the Work Plan. While the Council is still the institution responsible for formal

adoption of the Work Plan, it does not occupy a leadership role in the operation of the culture OMC.

Therefore, while the Work Plan is officially a Council document, the Council does not play a major role in managing the OMC groups or creating the policy priorities. This is facilitated by the European Commission, although the Council, via the Cultural Affairs Committee, *is* informed of the results of the OMC work. The consensus among the Commission and Member State experts, however, is that there is space for a more hands-on role in the Council, “through the promotion of well-defined dissemination and communication strategies on behalf of national ministries” (Psychogiopoulou 2015b, p.46).

The second finding is that the culture OMC has low visibility among top cultural policy officials in the Council/Member States. The extent to which OMCs have been visible and politicised varies across policy fields. Radaelli (2003, p.8) has argued that the preconditions are there for both a low and high level of politicisation, as “on the one hand, [the OMC] works on innovation and improvement on a case-by-case basis,” which “should keep politicisation at low levels.” However, “the aim in the OMC is to promote convergence and coordination at the highest political levels, notably at the European Council. This makes politicisation unavoidable” (*Ibid.*). As a supporting competence restricted by the principle of subsidiarity, in theory this is a necessary enough condition for the ‘high politicisation’ of culture: Member States do not want to transfer more powers to the EU and do not desire more European integration in this field (Littoz-Monnet 2007). That makes it sensitive and controversial. On the other hand, the OMC in general has been criticised for its political irrelevance at the national level (Kröger 2009, Borrás and Radaelli 2010) due to low visibility and low adaptation pressures.

Findings indicate a similar situation for culture. However, there is a paradox: the strict adherence to the principle of subsidiarity means that Member States keep a close eye on what happens in the EU in the field of culture, yet, there is low visibility of the OMC among the EU’s top cultural officials. Most obviously, this is because the ‘results’ of policy coordination are never presented directly to national top officials, meaning that it is harder to connect the OMC work back to the national level (nationally-appointed experts are relied on for this; see chapter 7). The linkages to *learning*, to be addressed in

chapter 8, begin to emerge at this point: has any learning taken place? If so, is it being ‘passed on’ and/or effectively communicated to the national level? Or is the OMC simply a technocratic exercise?

6.4 SYNTHESISING THE CULTURE OMC FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE EU

In thinking about the EU’s role in the culture OMC, the findings presented in this chapter highlight a paradox: the OMC is a Member State process, but was created by and is coordinated by and heavily dependent on EU institutions, specifically the European Commission. *If it were not for the Commission, would a culture OMC exist?* Evidence points to no, as the impetus for implementing the OMC came heavily from the Commission and has been steered by them since. The roles described in this chapter indicate differences between formal role descriptions and what happens in practice in the culture OMC, a key finding that also became an organising principle in this chapter. From this, conclusions can begin to be drawn about the roles of these key actors and how these practices impact the overall outcomes of the culture OMC.

The European Commission has a more prominent role than its formal description would suggest. The Commission is responsible for not only the day-to-day operation of the OMC groups but also an overview of the Work Plan. It therefore sits at the epicentre of coordination. As the central body responsible for drafting policy priorities, facilitating the OMC, and monitoring progress of the Work Plan it is in a position to shape many of the terms and conditions of coordination. In doing so it enables the Commission influence the direction of policy coordination, “advancing a particular vision of what appropriate policy is about” (Kröger 2009, p.12). A related angle to this, which will be discussed in more detail in the chapters to come, is some invited experts’ confusion surrounding the purpose of the OMC and the Commission’s role. For example, Nils, one expert, proclaimed that,

“...if we want to make more clear the role of the Commission in the process, we need to understand the Commission’s idea [with the OMC] and why they give us the subject to work on” (interview, June 2014).

From this comment alone we can see that for Nils, despite participating in an OMC group that was finished, is not clear on why the group got together in the first place. It shows not only that the logic of policy coordination is not always made clear to the participants, but it is an example of how the Commission is perceived by experts as the *driver* of coordination. It has led one scholar to rename the OMC the Open Method of *Centralisation* (Smismans 2004).

Conversely, the Council of Ministers, the ‘voice of the Member States,’ was shown to play a less prominent role than what one might expect. The body has final approval on the Work Plan and thus approves the policy priorities, but these have been largely shaped by the Commission as ‘ghost writers.’ In addition, the Cultural Affairs Committee is informed of the OMC groups’ conclusions, but they do not play any role during the OMC meetings, nor does there appear to be time for true dialogue about the policy themes and issues. This demonstrates a disconnect between the policy priorities outlined in the Work Plan, their relative importance at the national level, and how the OMC works in linking them. This is a complex topic that will be further expanded on in chapters 7 and 8.

The link between the OMC and national level policy is weak and not well understood (Borrás and Radaelli 2010, Zeitlin 2011). However, as the body representing the direct interests of Member States, there is more that could be done in the Council to support the OMC work and communicate it more widely at the Member State level – dissemination that goes beyond simply that which is done by the expert (see chapter 7). Why this is not done was attributed to a lack of time and resources to properly address the OMC reports within the CAC. In the 2013 Ecorys survey, out of 93 respondents, 51.6% said that programming the OMC work through the Council Work Plans was relevant “to a great extent,” with 35.5% saying “to a modest extent” (McDonald et al. 2013a, p.26). However, most experts that were interviewed for this research were not familiar with the Council’s role. This is because they had no interaction with anyone from the Council, but also because the institutional complexity of the Work Plan, and how and why it is created, is poorly understood among the experts, and was not explained to participants:

“It wasn’t quite clear to me how the OMC was interconnected with the CAC, the group from the Council of Ministers. So I think they were kind of informed, but if they did anything with it? To me it’s not totally clear” (Markus, Member State expert, interview, June 2014).

Markus' comments further reflect the sense of disconnect between the work of the Council and OMC groups: there is a role for increased involvement from the Council in connecting the work of the OMC more clearly to national cultural ministries where it could be made clearer to the designated experts what is expected of them and how their work feeds into national policy processes (see more on this in chapter 7).

The Commission has consistently, both in the evaluation of the 2008-2010 and 2011-2014 Work Plans, recommended that the work of the OMC groups be more closely tied to the Council's rotating presidencies (McDonald et al. 2013a, 2013b; CEC 2014). However, this connection was made clearest in the 2015-2018 Work Plan, published in December 2014; one of the guiding principles is:

“To build on the achievements of the previous Work Plan for Culture (2011-2014) while adding to it a more strategic dimension in order to reinforce the link between the Work Plan and the work of the Council and its rotating presidencies” (Council of the European Union 2014, p.4).

This suggests that the Commission recognises that there needs to be a stronger link between the OMCs and the Council – also a finding of this work and a point that will be developed further throughout the remaining chapters.

From the literature on EU cultural policy, we know that the Commission has pushed, perhaps tentatively at times, for further coordination in the field since the early 1990s (Littoz-Monnet 2012, 2015). As formal guardians of the treaty, the Commission's first responsibility is consideration for the principle of subsidiarity. This means that while the Commission cannot create an 'EU-wide' cultural policy, it can and does maximise its power within the narrow remit of the competence. One commentator has speculated that by positioning itself as the institution with the most knowledge and expertise on the policy issues in question, the Commission has been able to make up for its lack of formal leadership role within non-legislative modes of governance (Jabko 2004, in Deganis 2006). This is an interesting perspective and one that appears to be the case here, given comments made by Jette, a mid-level civil servant in the Commission, above concerning the 'added value' and 'European overview' that the Commission brings to the process.

The Commission therefore takes the position that it is acting for the greater good of Europe in advancing(further) policy coordination. Appropriate action is based on a logic

of practices centred on knowledge, experience, and authority (March and Olsen 2009). As the Council operates around consensus, the more ‘radical’ viewpoints on either side can usually be mollified with small changes in the wording or focus of the documents.¹²¹ In addition, the linkage of the Work Plan’s goals with Europe 2020 objectives gives them greater legitimacy, and it is the Council who is involved with the management of Europe 2020 (Laffan and Shaw 2005). Ultimately, “[i]t seems unlikely [...] that [the Commission’s] autonomy ... is of such strength and breadth as to dictate directions that go against the will of the member states” (Psychogiopoulou 2015b, p.45). In other words, the Commission will not propose anything drastic that it knows would not be accepted in the Council, is rather maximising potential within the competence in ‘by stealth’ (Edward, Commission, interview, May 2014), or in a ‘creeping’ manner (Princen and Rhinard 2006). The Commission thus has a great deal of *influence*, but not absolute power: “[t]he Commission is simply not strong enough to lead the EU, regardless of who its president is. But the Commission remains the straw that stirs the drink when it comes to advances in European policy cooperation” (Peterson 2015, p.206).

6.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter told the story of the culture Open Method of Coordination from the perspective of the two European institutions involved in its operation, the European Commission and Council of the European Union. The primary purpose of the chapter was to investigate what exactly these institutions do in the organisation and facilitation of the culture OMC. This perspective, as previously mentioned, is often overlooked in the study of the OMC: impacts (or lack thereof) of the OMC at the *national* level are the primary area of focus of much of the existing literature. However, examining their roles is just as important as determining whether the OMC has had any effect domestically, and even more so in the case of policy coordination where the policy areas in consideration are those that the EU occupies a supporting role only. This approach thus represents a novel contribution to the literature.

¹²¹ The vagueness and looseness of the policy priorities and OMC groups has been attributed to greater potential for achieving consensus in the Council. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

Prior to fieldwork, all knowledge about these roles came from official documentation; one would assume from that that the Council played a strong agenda-setting role and the Commission a facilitation role. The chapter thus has a particular focus on the ‘gaps’ between formal and informal institutions, roles, and practices – the added insight and new knowledge that has come from fieldwork. This has demonstrated the value of ‘insider’ information gained from interviews and participant observation.

One of the paradoxes in the culture OMC is that it is articulated repeatedly as a *Member State process*, driven by the Member States themselves in the Council. However, it is one that is was created by and is now steered heavily by the Commission in both a political and administrative role. While the Commission’s policy officers say that they are *facilitating* and *adding value*, a majority also believe that more can be done in terms of EU cultural cooperation – within the treaty’s legal limits – and are advancing an agenda that aspires to this. The Council has acted in a more restrained manner, aware and attune to the principle of subsidiarity, yet has ultimately agreed to further cooperation in the spirit of consensus and under the narrow remit of the EU’s powers in the field.

At this point it is now necessary to tackle the OMC from the perspective of the Member States. This is the subject of the next chapter, which analyses the complex and multi-level role of the Members States in the culture OMC. Chapter 8 then links chapters 6 and 7 and discusses the goals and aims of the OMC in the context of policy learning and mutual exchange.

CHAPTER 7: THE CULTURE OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION AND THE MEMBER STATES

“PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE: The Union must renew the Community method by following a less top-down approach and complementing its policy tools more effectively with non-legislative instruments.”

Commission of the European Communities (2001, p.2)

“...diversity is the founding principle of the European Union.”

Robert Picht (1994, p.278)

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Having examined the culture Open Method of Coordination from the perspective of the European Union institutions in the previous chapter, this chapter tells the story of the OMC from the point of view of the Member States. This is therefore the second of two chapters that work together to outline the *process* of the culture Open Method of Coordination – the roles of the key actors and institutions involved in the OMC’s setup, organisation, and operation.

As previously explained, it is the Member State level that has been most commonly studied within the existing body of OMC research (Borrás and Radaelli 2010), with the most common research design being the examination of whether or not policy learning and/or change has occurred in individual Member States as a result of the OMC. However, as this chapter argues, the role of the Member States is complex, and must be studied from a more holistic approach so that the multi-level, fragmented nature of Member States’ participation is able to be taken into account. This complexity emerged throughout my fieldwork; in the literature, the ‘Member States’ tend to be treated as a singular unit of analysis. The objective of this chapter is not to *evaluate* the OMC in terms of success in Member States – that will be discussed in chapter 8 – but to rather, as in the previous chapter, explore the various roles involved. Through this, the complexity of

Member States' participation is shown. While one might expect there to be many differences in Member State approaches to the OMC among the EU-28, there are also factions within and among the different levels of participation *within* a Member State, and this must be reflected and incorporated into the analysis.

The chapter is divided into five main sections. Section 7.2 conceptualises the Member States' role in the OMC process and argues that their participation is more complex and multi-layered than what the literature suggests. It introduces three categories of levels of nested and interconnected Member State participation: the Council, ministry, and expert levels. Section 7.3 builds on the arguments advanced in chapter 2 and expands on the logic of policy coordination – why might Member States want to coordinate cultural policy? Sections 7.4 and 7.5 look at what exactly the Member States do before, during, and after the OMC.¹²² It is divided temporally because of the distinct roles involved – particularly in the appointment of before an OMC round and the dissemination afterwards. This section goes into minute detail on the types of experts and how the meetings themselves operate. Finally, section 7.6 synthesises the role of the Member States in the Open Method of Coordination. As with chapter 6, the sources of information for this chapter mainly come from the empirical information gathered during fieldwork. This is supplemented by the OMC literature in other fields and by the Ecorys survey.

7.2 CONCEPTUALISING THE ROLE OF THE MEMBER STATES

This section picks apart the role of the Member States in the culture Open Method of Coordination. This is essential in order to fully set the multi-faceted role of the Member States in context. At first glance, this might seem obvious – in much EU governance literature there is a common distinction between 'European Union' and 'national' levels of governance. However, I found this was too simplistic to accurately reflect the complex dynamics of policy coordination. It is not easy to 'pin down' the role of the Member States because of the multi-faceted and multi-level nature of their participation, and treating the Member States as a single unit of analysis is misleading.

¹²² By 'OMC', I mean a specific group's cycle (5-6 meetings), with a completed report at the end, *not* each meeting individually or the whole Work Plan period (three years) as a whole.

Instead, I have categorised Member States' participation into three different spheres which more accurately encapsulates the different roles involved. First of all, via the Council, Member States are responsible for *creating* the three-year Work Plans for Culture, in which the policy priorities and specific themes for the time period are outlined. As detailed more in the previous chapter, the Council and its committees are composed of representatives from Member States whose job it is to act in the interest of their country. However, we also know that the Commission plays a stronger role in the setting of priorities than what appears on paper. This is the first 'level' of Member State participation. Secondly, Member States are also responsible for *coordinating participation* and *participating* in the OMC groups. This involves two different levels of actors: the *ministry level*, where the decision is typically made about which expert will be appointed per group, and the *expert level*, the individual(s) who represents their Member State in the group.

The role of the 'Member States' can therefore be broken down into these three nested and interrelated categories, typifying the 'multi-level' nature of European governance and the OMC:

1. *Council level*: Comprised of the ministers for culture of national governments, as well as national representatives in COREPER and the Cultural Affairs Committee;¹²³
2. *Ministry level*: National-level ministries of culture, which are responsible for coordinating the appointment of the expert and dictating the nature of participation; and
3. *Expert level*: The appointed expert(s) participating in the working groups' meetings.

Given that this system exists in 28 different Member States, the role of the national level in the OMC is therefore very complex. Treating it analytically as one is dangerous as it implies congruence among these levels. The significance of this complexity is to do with the communication and interaction between these levels, and the necessity of clear dialogue and direction among them. In the EU the "co-ordination chain extends from that within each ministry and interministerial co-ordination (of both a vertical and horizontal

¹²³ Given that the Council itself is such a complex institution, this could, in fact, be broken down even further (see chapter 6). It is the working party committee level that has the most to do with the OMC.

nature) at domestic level, to co-ordinating the domestic-EU interaction and then to co-ordinating within Brussels” (Wright 1996, p.149 as cited in Kassim, Peters, and Wright 2000, p.6). This is a great deal of coordination. The more layers of participation, the greater potential for divergence between them. Therefore, if policy coordination is to be ‘effective,’ there is a need for visibility, awareness and clarity, and ownership of participation of among all three levels.

7.3 THE MOTIVATION BEHIND CULTURAL POLICY COORDINATION

Before detailing the roles of the Member States, it is necessary to first ask some basic questions about *why* states participate in a policy coordination exercise in the first place. This discussion builds on section 2.5 in chapter 2, which looked at the development of the culture OMC in 2007/2008. We know how the culture OMC was created, but this section concerns how and why Member States take part in it. Although the OMC “is designed to help Member States progressively develop their own policies” (Regent 2003, p.210), it is not always self-evident why states participate in this voluntary process. This is particularly important given that the balance of power in cultural policy matters still rests with the Member States. In addition, it is a voluntary process, so what are the potential advantages and disadvantages of participating?

As previously discussed, the European Commission was instrumental in initiating the OMC in this field. As one Commission policy officer describes,

“... there was some reluctance to establish an OMC in culture. Some Member States didn’t want that. Now they are happy with it, but they are always very ... attentive ... to what we are doing and why, and any formulation that could give the impression that we’re trying to take the lead or do something is immediately raised and erased. Because of the subsidiarity principle” (Corrine, interview, April 2014).

Though the OMC is coordinated and managed by the Commission, the benefits of coordination should be clear to Member States; it is, after all, a *Member State process*. The policy priorities have been approved in the Council and therefore in theory at least, have some political weight behind them. Corrine’s comments regarding subsidiarity also reinforce this assumption: Member States retain control over their own cultural policies and are particularly attentive to any attempt to further cooperation.

Participation in OMC groups is voluntary – Member States decide themselves whether they want to join. The Commission does not have the authority to command or force states to participate. This is also the case with the OMC in other fields; it is a process “respecting legitimate national diversity...without seeking to homogenize [Member States’] inherited policy regimes and institutional arrangements” (Zeitlin 2005c, p.218). However, the participation rate in the first two cycles of the culture OMC (2008-2010 and 2011-2014) has been relatively high, with 20-25 Member States participating regularly (McDonald et al. 2013a). There are many reasons that states and experts choose to take part in the OMC. Analytically it is difficult to separate these two because, when interviewed, experts tended to speak of why they personally, in a professional capacity, participated, or why they thought their state would. In other words, experts did *not* say “[my country] participates because...” – they generally did not authoritatively speak for their Member State in this manner, reflecting that most experts are not high-ranking public employees with a lot of responsibility for decision-making.

Motivations and reasons for participation typically are around awareness, learning, and curiosity. Some responses include:

- “*You get an organised sharing of expertise and knowledge between different EU countries*” (Hanna, interview, May 2014).
- “*It’s ... interesting because you can see a [policy] panorama of Europe*” (Julita, interview, October 2014).
- “*I went because I was curious*” (Timo, interview, September 2014).
- “*[In participating] you can really understand well how systems work in other countries*” (Ulla, interview, October 2014).
- “*I only went because I was asked by the ministry. Somehow they found my name. They thought probably [name of museum] is the biggest cultural institution in [country], let’s have them say something*” (Zafar, interview, November 2014).
- “*I had high hopes of bringing something back to [country], to [my arts organisation]*” (Wasil, interview, October 2014).

Darya, a representative of a Member State who sat in the Council’s Cultural Affairs Committee, summarised the unknown and experimental nature of the OMCs:

“I think we, from a Member State [perspective], we see it as give-and-take; sometimes the OMCs are worth the investment and others are, in the end, less interesting. They might be interesting in [as] a networking ... opportunity. They do give people some feedback on at least how they are doing in their field” (interview, April 2014).

Interestingly, when the Commission asked Member States to reflect on the ‘added value’ of the OMC in social protection,

“...respondent states and stakeholders gave rather general accounts, tending to emphasize more the manner in which the process had placed social issues on the European agenda than in explaining the value of then co-ordinating such issues, with few direct references to the impact on domestic policy development” (Armstrong 2008, p.421).

This is also the case for the culture OMC: no Member State representative that I spoke to expressed an interest in attending in order to change or influence policy at the domestic level. Reasons tended to be more experimental and while quite a few were related to personal professional development, none linked to substantive policy development in the Member State.

On the other hand, why might states choose *not* to participate? This is an under-explored issue within the study of the OMC, as, practically, this is a much harder group to reach. However, some tentative responses can be gleaned from participants who knew why their Member State did not participate in previous OMC groups, or simply ‘imagining’ why they would not participate. Commission officials also had some insight. The first reason was a pragmatic one, a lack of funding. The Commission funds the transport and accommodation for experts to travel to meetings, usually held in Brussels, but this means that the expert is taking time off his or her own ‘normal’ work which may not be feasible, either financially or otherwise. The second reason is policy cycles. The policy theme in question may either not be on the radar in some Member States, it may be already well-developed in that particular country, or it may not be politically salient at the time. A final reason that states may choose not to take part in an OMC is to do with election/government cycles: some experts mentioned that they knew of their state not sending people in previous times as there was about to be a change of government or there had recently been one, and political priorities were in flux or had not yet been set. These issues will also be addressed in more detail in chapter 8 in the context of policy learning.

7.4 THE ROLE OF THE MEMBER STATES – BEFORE AND DURING THE OMC

With motivations of participation outlined above, this section tackles the day-to-day roles and responsibilities of the Member States before and during the OMC. This discussion keeps in mind the multi-level and fragmented nature of Member State participation highlighted above. It is broken down into three parts – the national ministries of culture (7.4.1), the individual appointed experts (7.4.2),¹²⁴ and how these comes together in the meetings (7.4.3). To my knowledge, this breakdown is novel in the study of the OMC but is important because it highlights the diversity of and incongruence between these levels of participation.

7.4.1 National ministries of culture

The first stage of Member State involvement, after the Council of Ministers, is the national ministries of culture (EU-28). It is the job of the cultural ministries, in cooperation with the Council's Cultural Affairs Committee, to coordinate the appointment of an expert. The CAC representative is responsible for contacting the national ministry of culture and outlining the theme of the OMC group. He or she may have an expert already in mind, or they may leave it to the ministry to decide. How this is organised and carried out differs from Member State to Member State and will be determined by institutional structures within the ministries. For example, some Member States' culture ministries have a designated individual responsible for European cultural affairs and in others expert appointments are much more random.¹²⁵

At this stage, ideally, the benefits of OMC participation should be clear to the ministry, and the CAC representative and ministry representative should work together to find the most appropriate expert. However, what often happens in practice is that there is confusion somewhere along the way: some experts reported that they were not sure why they had been chosen and many did not know the purpose of the OMC. Communication of the aims and overall goals of the OMC is poor in general. However, it is difficult to

¹²⁴ The role of the Council, as the 'voice of the Member States,' having been discussed in the previous chapter.

¹²⁵ In general, not much is known about how European participation is structured within the EU-28 ministries of culture. This is an interesting area for future research.

determine why exactly this is the case: is the CAC representative not clear in outlining what the OMC is or what its benefits might be to the ministry, or is something lost in the communication between the ministry and the expert?

As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, visibility and awareness of the OMC at the national level are very important, but results of this study show that in many states – although not all – this tends to be concentrated among a small group of individuals. Caroline de la Porte (2010, p.10-11) has developed an OMC visibility and awareness scale to measure engagement at the national level, that is, within public institutions such as the cultural ministries. High institutional visibility is defined as “heard of the OMC and aware of how it can be used” and no institutional visibility/awareness is “never heard of the OMC” (low and medium are in between). In general, (national) institutional visibility and awareness of the OMC, along with public/media visibility and awareness (which will be discussed more in chapter 8) is poor. For example, in Frazer and Marlier’s 2008 study of the OMC in social inclusion, they conclude that the OMC is known nationally among only a small group of actors. Similarly, Idema and Kelemen (2006, p.114) found that “OMC networks do not extend deep into national bureaucracies. Only a small fraction of any Member States’ policy makers actually participates in the OMC.” The picture regarding the culture OMC is very similar. Many experts told me that within their ministries, in general not much is known about what the OMC is or even indeed what the EU does in the cultural field. Many also said that they found it difficult to get others interested in the work because their day-to-day work concerns domestic cultural activities, not what is happening at the EU.

Levels of OMC engagement at the national ministry level were therefore generally considered to be low. If the OMC is generally not considered a priority, this means that there is often not a cohesive and purposeful justification for participation. The expert therefore ‘goes along’ with it, but there is rarely a wider strategic element of attending (although, the individual expert may have personal goals for attending that have nothing to do with advancing cultural policy in their Member State). What this means is that experts sometimes do not understand why they are participating in an EU-wide policy coordination process. In theory, national ministries should specify to their experts exactly what they want out of the OMC and why the state is participating. In practice, this does not always happen. This means that not only can the experts be unclear about why they

are being sent, it can also lead to a lack of post-OMC follow-up, which is dependent on linking OMC work with national policy (see more on this in section 7.5 below).

7.4.2 The experts

The next step in analysing the role of the Member States is looking at the individuals who participate in OMC meetings.¹²⁶ Who are these experts? What kind of background do they have and what motivates them to participate? The micro-level issue of actors and participants has not received much attention in the wider OMC literature. This omission is surprising because non-hierarchical modes of governance place “high demands” on their participants: they rely “on the voluntary provision of meaningful information, voluntary adjustment as well as the presence of (outcome-) directing standards” (Lodge 2007, p.359). It is the individual experts that are responsible for defining and providing information and meaning: “cooperative and participative interactions” (Kröger 2004) define the nature of the process, and the experts themselves are the participants in these interactions. There has been little probing into the notion of expertise in the OMC literature, surprising because “despite their non-binding nature, alternatives to the classic Community Method entail a process of choice, selection and interpretation of specific norms and values” (Borrás and Radaelli 2010, p.43). It is the experts themselves, along with the Commission, that are involved in determining these norms and values. It is therefore surprising that individual participants have not been studied in more detail. While a couple of studies have looked at the democratic and participative legitimacy of the OMC (see chapter 3), the role of the experts and how their actions may impact the overall effectiveness or outcomes of the OMC has been under-studied.

Each individual that participates in the OMC comes with their own particular experiences and economic, social, political, and cultural positionings (Bourdieu 1992, as cited in Kröger 2004). However, the OMC is also a particular institutional setting, with many formal and informal rules of behaviour in operation. There is therefore an unspoken, implicit understanding of appropriate behaviour within this institutional setting: “[t]o act appropriately is to proceed according to the institutionalized practices of a collectivity, based on mutual, and often tacit understandings of what is true, reasonable, natural, right, and good” (March and Olsen 2009, p.4). Information gathered from the different sources

¹²⁶ Please see a full list of experts and civil society platforms in appendix 6.

in this project supports the proposition that there is a strong notion of adherence to behavioural norms within the highly formal institutional setting of the OMC. These norms help to “set actors’ common frame of reference and help shape not only actors’ perceptions and preferences, but also their modes of interaction” (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004a, p.197). As we know from the previous chapter, the Commission has a great deal of influence in shaping these ‘rules of the game.’

Who are the experts?

In the Work Plan, it is stated that members of national administrations are the preference for experts (Council of the European Union 2010, p.9). However, there is only minimum guidance on who should be selected; it is specified that the individual should have (a) practical experience and (b) effective communication capabilities with decision-making national authorities (*Ibid.*). Expanding on this rationale, Fatima, a policy officer in the Commission explained that,

“[the Commission] has recommended ... that the participants belong to public administrations, or at least they have a ‘channel’ to administrations and decision makers because it’s important that the output of their work...is being reported and disseminated to the right people – the decision-makers and policy-makers, and the appropriate stakeholders” (interview, May 2014).

Similarly, Quentin, a ministry representative and participating expert, explained the thinking in sending experts from public authorities, and linked it directly to enacting change:

“... we choose to send people from the national authorities so that we have the ability to implement certain recommendations in the law. If we sent experts from other institutions, it’s more difficult to do this” (interview, July 2014).

The norm for the OMC is that there is one expert appointed per Member State, and this individual is expected to attend all meetings of that particular working group for continuity. However, sometimes states send more than one expert, or a colleague may fill in for someone who cannot make a meeting. The main responsibilities of the experts are to participate in discussions and, along with the rest of the group, to help produce the final report. Typically, participating experts are either direct employees of the Ministry of Culture, or employees of arm’s length/affiliated agencies or publically-funded arts

institutions such as museums.¹²⁷ The names of all Member State experts participating in Priority A working groups, with affiliation information where available, can be found in appendix 6.

Usually, the expert is previously known to the permanent representative in the Cultural Affairs Committee, and usually, although not always, has some experience in the policy area (either policy experience or practical, ‘on the ground’ experience). There is in general an absence of elite policy actors in the OMC (Kröger 2009, Dawson 2009, McDonald et al. 2013a); those that come from public authorities are usually low- to mid-level civil servants.

What does an ‘ideal’ OMC expert look like? There is little information provided by the Commission and no critical reflection of how *expertise* might be defined in this situation. However, some characteristics emerged over the course of my interviews: he or she is experienced in the field, not only in terms of knowledge of policy history and context but also practical experience; has some degree of influence in national cultural policy-making; comes to the meetings ready to learn and share and open to new ideas; and shares and disseminates the findings widely.

When experts were asked about how and why they were appointed, responses varied:

“...the [country’s] ministry knew that I’d been active in these platforms before, so when I changed my job to [a non-profit], they asked me to be a national expert, to be part of the OMC, which is more government-driven” (Markus, interview, June 2014).

“We are cooperating [sic] mostly in the region, but I’m involved in a cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, and they asked me to be their representative. That’s how it happened” (Nils, interview, June 2014).

“... at the end of 2012, or autumn, the ministry of culture from [country] called me and nominated me – proposed to me the possibility of taking part in the OMC group. And I confirmed.... I’ve been in touch with the Minister of Culture for 6-7 years because I am the Artistic Director of [organisation]...” (Salma, interview, July 2014).

¹²⁷ Not that it also occasionally happens, depending on the theme of the OMC group, that experts come from other ministries such as Education or Industry. This was especially true for Group 3 of Priority A where there was some crossover with education ministries. Please see appendix 6 for a full list of participating experts.

“[The CAC representative] put forward names to our Ministry of Culture. ... He gave the reason why – it would be very cost-effective, and a good chance for us to contribute as part of the European Union. He identified all of the [OMC] groups, and that’s how I came up, because I’d met him in 2008, and because I’m head of education at an organisation that primarily works with diverse communities in [country]” (Paulina, interview, June 2014).

“I was chosen to participate because my field of work is related to the topic of the working group. ... And also speaking English was one of the factors that contributed to me being chosen. ... In the third group, it was because of the experience I had with the other working groups and again because part of the topic was related to cultural institutions, and I work for a museum” (Quentin, interview, July 2014).

“Ok, well, I work in the museum of [X]. ... The museum belongs to the [country’s] Ministry of Culture. We are directly managed by the ministry. That’s how I got to participate in the OMC group: the Ministry of Culture always represents [country] in the OMC groups, and last year they asked me if I’d like to represent [country] ... They knew of my work here in the museum, specifically some things related to the programme that was going to be developed by the [OMC] group” (Julita, interview, October 2014).

These responses showcase a range of different approaches. Some ministries are much more purposeful about who they are selecting, reflecting more ‘ownership’ of and purpose behind participating in the OMC, and some are much more random.

What were the characteristics of the experts?

Though one would assume from the Work Plan that the experts mostly come from public authorities and have similar professional backgrounds and knowledge, in practice, the experts in the OMC groups surveyed were much more diverse. Some came directly from ministries of culture, some from public cultural/arts institutions or arms-length agencies, and others from more varied places such as embassies, other state ministries, or were independent experts known to their national ministries. Three key areas of difference among the experts emerged: they differed in their experience and expertise on the subject(s); their connections, particularly to national decision-makers; and their degrees of socialisation towards European-level coordination, the EU, and the OMC itself.¹²⁸ These factors were found to be significant with regards to the way experts participated and what they got out of the process. They are discussed in turn below.

¹²⁸ Work done by Horvath (2009) in the context of the Social Protection OMC shows, similarly, that experts differed in terms of their experience, expertise, seniority, available resources, and administrative capacities.

1. Expertise and knowledge

The experts interviewed for this research, despite being named as experts by their Member State, varied considerably in terms of their experience and knowledge. For the purposes of the OMC, there are two types of expertise that is pertinent. The first is policy expertise or knowledge of the state of current policy priorities in the Member State. The second, because the themes have a practical application to arts and cultural sectors, is whether the individual has any experience working in the field. The levels of experience among those surveyed was far-ranging. For example, some participants had never worked in an arts or cultural organisation. Others were not familiar with how policy is made in their state or what current policy priorities are. This wide range of backgrounds and professional experience had ramifications for the meetings, in particular with “conceptual confusion” (Oskar, expert, interview, June 2014). Groups at times spoke at cross-purposes and discussions lack direction because of the heterogeneous nature of participants, which limited the depth of discussion as experts were not always able to relate to each other or understand certain concepts (see more on this in chapter 8). This raises important questions about how ‘expertise’ is defined and applied in the case of the OMC (and, more broadly, in cultural policy more generally [Schlesinger 2013]).

For example, Nils, who works for a regional cultural development agency, considered himself very experienced, but found that he could not participate effectively with regards to policy matters:

“I couldn’t use my experience in the work for OMC. ... [M]aybe it would be better if someone from the Ministry of Culture participates in the group. ...I wasn’t prepared for being aware of everything that was going on in the Ministry of Culture, and what are their main problems” (interview, June 2014).

The quote highlights the difficulties he faced because Nils did not have the knowledge required to fully participate in discussions.

2. Connections to (national) decision-makers

Another area that participant experts differ in is in their connections to decision-makers. One of the main reasons that the Commission is keen for representatives from state administrations to participate is that these people in theory have a clear channel to decision-making. If they are not responsible for making decisions *themselves*, they know who to contact. One can easily understand the Commission’s thinking here, but in practice

it is more complicated. For example, some individuals who are outside official channels may well have an informal direct link to them, and those that are a representative of a ministry of culture may go home and not share the work that has been done. The notion of sharing through networks is an important one in the OMC; networks “are a central notion upon which the participation ideal of the OMC is based” (Borrás and Radaelli 2010, p.44). Through dissemination, the assumption is that policy learning, and possibly change, will occur as a result of Member States’ participation in the OMCs. At the very least, reading the reports represents a communication of ideas. However, not surprisingly, experts varied in terms of their professional connections and in their degree of responsibility with regards to policy-making at the national level; some had decision-making powers themselves. Some had one-degree of separation from an actor with considerable power, such as a minister of culture. Others felt comparatively powerless to amend policy, transpose and communicate ideas, or effect change.

3. *Degrees of socialisation*

Another key variance that emerged from interviews was the degree of *institutional socialisation* that experts had to the OMC. As detailed above, the institutional setting of the OMC is highly contextual, bureaucratic, and specific: the process has its own norms and expectations of behaviour (*institutions*, in institutional theory language). For those that are at an OMC meeting for the first time, this can take some getting used to, particularly as it is a very formal setting.

What emerged from the interviews and participant observation is that there are different ‘degrees’ of socialisation to European-level cultural initiatives and to the OMC itself. Based on this I have come up with a categorisation based on a spectrum of socialisation: previous participation in other OMC groups indicated a high degree of socialisation; previous participation in other EU-wide meetings and schemes (outside of the OMC) or previous participation in other pan-European cultural initiatives (outside of the EU) indicated a medium level; and for those participating in the OMC for the first time who had not previously taken part in any European-wide cultural policy platforms, there is a low degree of socialisation.

Table 7.1: OMC and expert socialisation

Level of socialisation	Indicator
Low	First time participation in the OMC and no previous experience in European-wide cultural platforms
Medium	Previous participation in other EU meetings (outside of the OMC) or previous participation in other pan-European cultural initiatives (outside of the EU)
High	Previous participation in other OMC groups

This spectrum means a wide range of knowledge about the way the OMC works. Those with a high or medium level of socialisation had a much better idea of what to expect in terms of the formal way the meetings would be run and were more comfortable with the formality of the process. Some respondents who fit into the low category expressed intimidation by the ‘official’ nature and confused about the goals of the working groups.¹²⁹ This also has important ramifications for the outcomes of the groups: those with a higher level of socialisation have a better idea of what (if anything) is expected of them post-OMC, and, if they have participated before, may have set established networks that they disseminate the information to.

Reflections on the heterogeneous nature of experts

The experts participating in OMC working groups are therefore a heterogeneous group who differ in (1) their policy and practical expertise, (2) their connections to national decision-makers, and (3) their socialisation to European policy coordination. The discussion above naturally leads to the issue of *the effects of mixing policy makers and practitioners* in the OMC working groups. The variance of participants is identified by the experts themselves as both a strength and a weakness, while in the Ecorys survey, 37.1% indicated that the expertise of participants was satisfactory “to a large extent” and 52.9% “to some extent” (McDonald et al. 2013, p.29).

¹²⁹ Confusion about the aims and purpose of the Open Method of Coordination will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

When discussing this issue in interviews, experts often prefaced their responses by saying that a mixture in *theory* is preferable, but in practice it has mixed effects. For example, expert Luise summarised both sides of this debate as such:

“...sometimes I can see that the experts that have been sent by the Member States are not homogenous – coming from different fields. So it’s sometimes difficult to speak in one language and to understand each other. ... Sometimes coming from a ministry and sitting in the working groups does not mean they have the possibility to [sic] really spread the word within the Ministry, or to their superiors, so it depends really on the people sitting in the group. I think on the one hand it’s really good that the Member States decide who they want to send and who they consider the experts for the group, but on the other this makes the group very inharmonious” (interview, June 2014).

Another expert, Nils, felt strongly that the group he participated in was too heterogeneous to achieve truly useful dialogue:

“... this is the main problem, I think – delegates didn’t really have any common denominator. We were representatives of very different agencies, organisations. Some of us were practitioners. Others were just clerks. Others were people from ministries of culture. Some of them were more aware of global policy, some more in their own problems and contexts. We didn’t really extend it. Because then creating a common ‘answer’ to problems, in my opinion, wasn’t possible. [...] Finding common ground was very, very difficult. [...] Probably, we should work in groups of people who have more in common” (interview, June 2014).

Georg, a policy advisor and participating expert, agreed with Nils’ point of view, and felt that all participants should be policy-makers because there are already other pan-European platforms to communicate with people from cultural organisations (interview, May 2014). Markus, another expert, called on the Commission to be clearer on who they would like to see as experts:

“... the composition of the group is somehow problematic in the sense that the Commission has not been very clear about what kind of people they would like to see. So it was a very mixed group in terms of either governmental representative that usually don’t really tend to be very much into content issues, and experts. So I think it needs to be more decided on what the Commission really wants – if it’s going to be only experts or only governmental people. Because if you put them both together there might not be the same depth of discussion, and also the outcome might not always be as clear as you’d want” (interview, June 2014).

Markus’ comment is an interesting one because the Commission, at least in the Work Plan and relevant policy documents, is clear on who it would like to see: representatives from national ministries. It is not evident whether the mixed nature of the groups is due to the Commission not being clear enough about who it expects, or whether the Member States take liberty with their choice of expert.

In sum, there is clearly a debate to be had on the balance between participants who are well-informed on policy issues and are, in theory at least, able to effect change through proper channels, and a more diverse group of experience including representatives from other cultural bodies, who have more ‘on the ground’ practical knowledge. This issue is something that many experts felt strongly about, as evidenced by comments such as Nils’ above. In its ideal form the OMC “was designed to be an open, participatory and network-based procedure aiming to be socially responsive” (Borrás and Radaelli 2010, p.42). However, many of these expectations are ideals only and have not been met in practice (Kröger 2007). The groups instead operate with a diverse range of participants which has a wide range of effects on the outcomes of the groups – there is great diversity in the way that the work of the OMC groups is ‘used’ at the national level. The expert’s position, networks, socialisation level, and level of expertise are all important factors in determining how the exchange of views will happen and whether learning will take place. Of course, ideally, the national ministry must also be clear on expectations and appoint a qualified expert.

7.4.3 The meetings

This subsection describes the operation of the meetings themselves. This is important because the format and organisation of the meetings is important to their effectiveness and to the eventual outcomes of the OMC round. Each round of the OMC typically has five to six meetings. Most of these are held in Brussels over a period of 18 months to two years. Meetings are typically held once every 3-4 months and take place over two days (week days). Experts must therefore take time out of their ‘day jobs’ to attend them. As previously mentioned, the Commission funds travel and accommodation for attending experts. Time and logistics permitting, there is also effort made to have one ‘study trip’ to a different Member State per OMC group. On the study trips, the schedule differs slightly as it often includes excursions to local arts and cultural organisations.

The styles of leadership and the format of meetings vary depending on the group and more importantly the chair. Typically, they take on different formats throughout the day depending on the task at hand. In general, the style of meetings is formal and structured. There are both lecture-style presentations from invited guests (with opportunity for questions and answers), as well as discussions, some of which are done as a whole group,

and some in the format of small group discussions.¹³⁰ These are led and guided by the chair and the Commission-appointed independent facilitator (see chapter 6). An important factor in the format of meetings is what stage the group is in the timeline. For example, meeting 4 of 6 will typically have more concrete dialogue and more opportunities for discussion than meeting 2 of 6, when it is very likely that definitions and basic reference points are discussed.

In the first meeting, a chair is elected for each OMC group, by the group members themselves, and he or she is crucial to the effectiveness of the meetings. Jette, a Commission official, explains the process behind choosing chairs:

“The way it works is that when we invite Member States to send experts, we also invite them to say whether someone wants to be the chair or not, and then those candidacies are put forward to the group at the first meeting. I mean, I’ve been here three years, so I’ve seen most of the implementation of the second Work Plan, and [the selection of the chair has] always been easy” (interview, May 2014).

The chair works together with the appointed external facilitator and performs a key leadership role throughout. The chair also does a lot of work in between meetings in order that there is a semblance of coherent thought and ideas for the group to discuss when it comes together – with months between meetings, this is crucial. In general, the more organised and focused the chair, the more effective the meetings will be, an observation mentioned by both participating experts and EU officials. As discussed in chapter 6, a stronger chair means that the Commission is able to take more of a ‘back seat’ role:

“... some chairs are extremely clear in [what they want to do and the direction they want to take]... and some are happy to have a bit of assistance in that respect. We will draft the agenda, for example, and send it to the chairs, that kind of thing” (Jette, interview, May 2014).¹³¹

This quote from Salma, an expert, describes some elements of what makes a good chair:

“Our chair [name] was great, in my opinion. She always tried to make the aim very concrete ... and also she differentiated between policy-makers and directors from arts institutions, for example. This was very important in our topic, always to ask ourselves who it’s for” (interview, July 2014).

¹³⁰ As whole-group discussions with upwards of 35-40 people are challenging, ‘discussion’ is sometimes facilitated through the chair posing a question such as “does anyone disagree with [this point of view]?”

¹³¹ Jette’s comment once again reinforces the key role that the Commission policy officer can play.

The purpose of the meetings is to work together as a group to produce the eventual output, the best practice report. In this respect, while a lot of discussion takes place, most of it is directed in a specific way, that is, *with the purpose of creating the manual*. It is less for advancing individuals' own thoughts, improving their own practices or policies, or engaging in any type of larger narrative beyond the manual (although, this of course does to varying extents happen): one participant likened the meetings to a school setting whereby the teacher sets the students a diligent task to be completed. This is not to say that ideas were not generated from discussion, but the purpose of the group was *not* a platform for policy innovation or creative discussion – it was to create the manual. This will be discussed in more detail in the context of the OMC's outcomes in chapter 8.

Now that the role of the Member States before and during the OMC has been discussed, I turn to what happens once a group's cycle has finished.

7.5 THE ROLE OF THE MEMBER STATES POST-OMC

In its ideal-form, the role of national governments does not end at the conclusion of the last meeting of that particular OMC group. This section addresses the role of the Member State post-OMC. The idea is that, having sent an expert, there are benefits accrued from participating in such an exchange and that these benefits will continue after the group has finished. In this respect, national ministries act as gatekeepers in that it is largely down to domestic institutional arrangements as to what, if anything, will be done in terms of policy learning and change post-OMC (Kröger 2009). The main tasks for Member States to perform after the OMC group has finished are the dissemination of the best practice report, integration of the results into national conversations about programmes and policy-making, and medium- and long-term follow-up. These three tasks are discussed in turn below.

7.5.1 Dissemination of output

In a process such as the OMC, one of the most basic questions to emerge among those who are not familiar with the process is *what is the end result?* This is an important question. In the OMC literature, 'output' is rarely discussed in such micro-level terms; it

is rather treated much more generally as the effectiveness of the particular OMC group.¹³² In the case of the culture OMC, without the benchmarks and targets of EU policy coordination in other sectors, the ‘output’ of the OMC is conceived in rather narrow terms: it is a policy report, usually in the form of best practices, produced at the end of each round of meetings. The reports are 100-plus-page documents composed of best practice examples and some analysis, with questions and talking points for consideration sprinkled throughout. There is also a section at the end of the reports devoted to recommendations (in group A, there is one set of recommendations; for group B, the list has been separated into recommendations for cultural institutions and those for policy makers).

The policy report and any learning or change that occurs are of course linked: if the report is sub-par or ineffective, it is much less likely that it will be shared and/or result in any impacts or changes. The issue of the reports was a divisive and popular discussion point throughout the fieldwork for this project. Indeed, the concept of “best practices” raises a number of questions: who decides what a best practice is? And what criteria is it judged on? Should best practices be geographically representative?¹³³ How is consensus achieved in identifying them and in writing the report? If these issues are not addressed, questions of relevance and legitimacy begin to be raised.

As discussed above, findings indicate that there is a strong link between the expert, the report (and the expert’s opinion of the report), and its dissemination. Dissemination refers to the spreading and circulation of the report and thus the ideas and solutions it propagates. Ideally, it should be read by as many different stakeholders as possible, not just those that participated in the group. The OMC is set up this way. But how far does the groups’ work actually ‘travel’? Do experts share the report, and if so who else is it read by? Are there institutionalised systems within Member States to ensure this, or is it done on an *ad hoc* basis? Importantly, the Work Plan does not specify how the work of the OMC is meant to be disseminated to a wider audience, only that the attending expert should have means to do so (Council of the European Union 2010, p.9). It is worth noting that in the Ecorys evaluation, the system of dissemination and a goal for concrete and

¹³² ‘Effectiveness’ or ‘success’ of the Open Method of Coordination is very difficult to conceptualise; this will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

¹³³ In the first round of OMCs (2008-2010), this was the case.

useable results was improved for the 2011-2014 Work Plan after the 2008-2010 one was criticised as too vague (McDonald et al. 2013a).

The subject of dissemination was one that proved to be one of the most reflective topics throughout discussions with OMC actors. Many experts expressed they could have done more.¹³⁴ Corinne, a policy officer in the Commission, explained that,

“I think this is one element that is ‘less’ achieved is that we would hope that the results of the OMC discussions are really impacted at national level and they may not always be” (interview, April 2014).

In general, methods of dissemination and post-OMC action among Member States varied considerably. They range on a scale from no action taken (i.e. the expert does not share the report with anyone) to multi-day conferences organised around the publication of the report in the Member State, and many more varied methods in between. A couple of participating states also had extensive dissemination plans for the periods in between meetings, before the working group came to an end. The most common mode of dissemination is the e-mail circulation of a link to the final report to colleagues (ministry or arts organisation) with some also holding internal meetings on the report.

Throughout my fieldwork an important link between the expert, the report, and the report’s circulation began to emerge. This connection is raised by Corrine, a policy officer at the Commission:

“...sometimes the Member State sends someone from the Ministry, and sometimes they send an expert from [other public or private organisations]. So, the discussions can be very professional and advanced, but when they come back, sometimes [the latter type of experts] miss the link with policy-making representatives. Of course, you can also work in the Ministry, come back, and not communicate with your colleagues. That’s another problem” (interview, April 2014).

Corrine’s comments make logical sense, but the real imperativeness of this linkage is evidenced by comments such as Nils’:

“I personally wasn’t interested in sharing the document with, for example, people from my region. Because I couldn’t tell them ‘look this is a fantastic document and it will be really helpful for you.’ It wasn’t like that” (expert, interview, June 2014).

¹³⁴ It is difficult to say whether the experts believed this or whether this was a result of reflecting on what they had done after being asked by a researcher, sometimes over a year since the report had been released. One reason suggested for not disseminating more extensively was, in the case of one group studied, the length of time between the last meeting and the publishing of the report, which was close to a year.

Quite simply, if the expert does not believe that the report is of good quality (and thus has less inclination to share it), it is much more likely that the report will ‘sit on the shelf’ and not be used by anyone. The expert is a *key variable in the dissemination of the report*. Experts must take ownership of the findings and perceive them to be appropriate and legitimate in order for the ideas to travel. If this does not happen, as in Nils’ situation above, the report will simply not be shared.

However, as briefly discussed above, variables also go deeper than the expert themselves; institutional norms of Member States and national ministries are also important. If a Member State has a history of participating in OMC groups and has implemented measures to keep regularly engaged with the work of the EU in the field, there is a higher chance that the report will be disseminated widely due to greater commitment. Importantly, because the OMC is a voluntary process (and until recently, there has been no formalised follow-up; see below), it is easy for national governments to ignore the report, as Trubek and Trubek (2005, p.359) explain in the case of the OMC in employment policy:

“[g]overnments may treat the [National Action Plans] as a routine administrative burden, not an opportunity for real debate and deliberation; peer reviews and benchmarking may be paper exercises; social partners may be unwilling to participate actively; some countries may resist change because they think the [European Employment Strategy] model does not fit their labour markets; other may feel they need not change because they have largely met EES goals.”

This quote shows once again the importance of the positioning of the OMC at the national level, and shows the crucial role of national ministries of culture before and after participating the working groups. An important factor in the relative ‘action’ taken at the national level thus depends on rules and norms within that particular national ministry.

For example, one expert, Viktoria, expressed frustration that she wanted to do much more with the report’s findings but that she was in opposition with more senior colleagues in her ministry, as there had recently been a new government come to power:

“I know that it’s quite different in some Member States – some ‘finish’ their work by publishing the report on the internet, but some of them are very active and work together with the civil society, also something I wanted to do but I was not able to, I have to admit” (interview, October 2014).

Similar frustrations were echoed by Wasil, an expert from a different Member State:

“[For] the previous report we didn’t really put a lot of effort into dissemination. We said at the beginning that depending on the quality of the report, we will disseminate it. When it came, my idea was that we could definitely arrange events on the report. In itself, it has qualities, and it’s a good starting point for discussions to show that these are important issues. However... I am having a struggle at [my place of employment], getting my superiors interested in these issues. [...] We could quite easily find a way to disseminate this in a structured manner. From our perspective I think it’s a matter of will” (interview, October 2014).

Wasil’s comments demonstrate that national ministries really do act as ‘gatekeepers’ (Kröger 2009) and that ultimately it is the down to the senior members of public authorities, the decision-makers, that decide what happens with the OMC’s findings.

Ultimately, dissemination therefore depends on two key factors. The first is whether the participating expert is able to ‘get behind’ the results – i.e. the expert finds the results credible and appropriate and is therefore disposed to sharing them widely. In instances when this is *not* the case, such as Nils’ above, it is unlikely that the report’s findings will travel far. The second factor regards the ministry of culture itself. If little or nothing is expected from participation in the OMC group, the expert will have to work harder to ‘push’ for any change (this is assuming he/she finds the recommendations credible). If an expert has been sent but not given any direction, it is less likely that participation will lead to outcomes unless the expert ‘pushes’ hard for them to be taken into consideration. In addition, the predisposition for wide dissemination also occurs if the Member State has an institutionalised history of being open and receptive to the idea of policy coordination and cooperation at the EU level – of incorporating European policy themes into national frameworks. In these states, the value of participation in the OMC is higher and the dissemination plan tends to be more robust and institutionalised.

In its current form, dissemination is therefore a weak spot in the OMC’s institutional design. There is the sense that the OMC is a rather closed process that is not easily penetrated at the national level. The weaknesses of dissemination is an issue that the Commission knows could be improved, as demonstrated from this quote by Commission official Jette:

“...in terms of the output, certainly the dissemination at the national level has to be improved. Sometimes you’ve got the impression that the reports end up on the shelves and aren’t used anymore” (Jette, Commission, interview, May 2014).

Julita, an expert, suggested a more institutionalised system of dissemination at the EU level:

“I think maybe it’s better to develop some strategies in Europe – in the Council, Parliament, wherever – to disseminate even more the results of the work of these groups. If we only trust the members [of the group], you can’t achieve as much as if they could do something [there was a coordinated effort] from Brussels” (interview, October 2014).

Julita’s comment is an interesting one but problematic from the point of view of subsidiarity. The OMC is a process for the Member States, and the Commission cannot and does not ‘force’ the use of any recommendations. This is perhaps why they have not recommended more robust modes of dissemination. The OMC is a ‘soft’ tool, designed as a flexible system that allows Member States to give and take as little or as much as they want from participation. It exists “not to constrict actors within a prescriptive framework” (Regent 2003, p.198), but to allow each state to adapt as it sees fit: it is “open as regards state actions, the policy outcomes or the degree of states’ involvement that could be considered as an involvement *a la carte*” (*Ibid.*, p.210).

7.5.2 Medium and long-term follow-up

Policy learning will be discussed in much more detail in the next chapter, however, within the context of the Member States’ roles, medium and long-term follow-up is an important issue to address now. In the spirit of subsidiarity, there is considerable leeway for states to interpret and implement change as they see fit – or not. One of the criticisms of the OMC, mentioned by several experts, is that until recently there was little formal centralised post-OMC follow-up. After the disbanding of the group in the final meeting, that was it; the group did not meet again or discuss later down the line whether any learning and change took place. This was an issue of concern in the 2013 Ecorys evaluation – they concluded that a lack of benchmarking “may not be conducive to strong follow-up actions, including dissemination of results” [McDonald et al. 2013a, p.26) – and was also mentioned by several actors in interviews, both EU officials and experts. Many experts felt that it was a shame that they never came back together as a group, either in person or via electronic communication, after the cycle had ended.

However, this has recently changed. Group 2, which released its report in early 2014, held a one-off follow-up session in Brussels in January 2015. Experts were invited to Brussels and also to complete an online evaluation on topics such as the content of the report, its

dissemination, implementation of the report's recommendations, and on their opinion of the OMC process more generally. As the institutionalisation of follow-up is only in its infancy, dissemination and follow-up remain two critical issues going forward.

7.6 CONCLUSION: SYNTHESISING THE ROLE OF THE MEMBER STATES IN THE OMC

This chapter has examined the Open Method of Coordination from the point of view of the Member States. Taken together, chapters 6 and 7 examine the process of organising, managing, and running the OMC. This chapter has highlighted the varying dimensions of Member State participation in the OMC, which has too frequently been characterised in the literature as a single unit of analysis. This assumption has been challenged: acknowledging that the true picture is more complex and fragmented is necessary in order to avoid (at best) an overly-simplistic and (at worst) an incorrect and misleading conceptualisation of the Member States' position. The participation of Member States was therefore split into three different spheres: the Council (discussed in chapter 6), the ministry level, and the expert level. The chapter has argued that it is crucial to understand the fragmentation among these different levels in terms of understanding of the OMC, the visibility of the OMC, and what is expected from participation.

The chapter has highlighted the roles of the national ministries of culture and discussed the individual experts appointed by Member States. The experts were shown to be a heterogeneous group who differ in three key ways: in their policy and practical expertise, raising important questions about the notion of expertise in the OMC; in their connections to national decision-makers; and in their socialisation to European policy coordination. The heterogeneous nature of the group was found to be preferred in theory but very complex in practice, making finding common reference points difficult. On the other hand, the role of national cultural ministries was found to be imperative in the operation of the OMC: *national ministries must take ownership of their participation in policy coordination:*

“...EU policy-making is becoming sectorally significant, more politically salient, and more complex, and has set up convergent pressures for greater and more effective coordination. However, these convergent pressures *continue to be mediated by national* needs, ambitions, and capacities which are, in turn, shaped by domestic political and

administrative opportunity structures” (Kassim, Peters, and Wright 2000, p.18; emphasis added).

The mediation role played by domestic institutions is crucial. Overall, the chapter demonstrated that in practice there is wide variation in the way that Member States approach the OMC. They differ in terms of the experts appointed, the expectations of participation, and what is done with the OMC work after the group has come to a close. Some states take it very seriously, with an institutionalised history or path dependence of European culture cooperation. Others participate on a more *ad hoc* basis and the logic of participation might not be known to anyone. The chapter also demonstrated how experts and states rarely enter the OMC with the goal of changing national policy. This happens by accident, if at all (see chapter 8), even with the states that are purposeful about their participation.

Now that the processes of operating the Open Method of Coordination have been illuminated, chapter 8 tackles the *outcomes* of cultural policy coordination.

CHAPTER 8: PRIORITY A AND THE OUTCOMES OF POLICY COORDINATION: LINKING PROCESS AND CONTENT IN THE DESIGN OF POLICY COORDINATION

“The OMC should be rescued from its supporters as well as from its enemies.”
Susanna Borrás and Claudio Radaelli (2010, p.52)

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter, the third of three analysis chapters, evaluates and discusses the outcomes of European Union cultural policy coordination. This is a departure from the focus of the previous two findings chapters which focused on the process and specifically the roles of the key actors in the culture OMC. This chapter brings together the empirical material gathered and explained in these two chapters and, referring back to the overall research questions in chapter one regarding the results of coordination, addresses the OMC’s outcomes. The chapter therefore builds on the previous two and links findings on the *process* of the culture Open Method of Coordination with *outcomes*. It asks whether the OMC has resulted in any furthering of dialogue or progress in these policy areas.

The link between working methods and outcomes is a theme that has run through this entire thesis. It is a dialectic relationship: structure influences outcomes, but the aims of coordination will in large part determine the way that coordination is structured (Harcourt 2013). The *design of policy coordination* is thus a central theme of this chapter. As explained in chapter 1, interview subjects had much more to say on the process of participating in the working groups than on their thematic content, even when the subjects were quite controversial, and even if they had an intense personal interest in them. The policy themes were tangential and secondary; the process of participating in the OMC

was paramount to the policy content. Despite this, it is still necessary to determine whether the OMC in its current setup encourages mutual learning and exchange and indeed whether any furthering of dialogue has occurred in these policy areas.

Since the emphasis of the culture OMC is on the exchange of best practice and mutual learning, not policy harmonisation, the chapter focuses on assessing these, in the context of Priority A of the 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture. Has the OMC resulted in any furthering of dialogue or progress in these policy areas? How are the ideas and norms created in the context of the OMC being used by national actors? Are they altering national discourses? Overall, the chapter demonstrates that while little ‘observable’ policy change has occurred as a result of coordination, there is a complex set of other outcomes, including the building of networks, different usages of the policy reports, concept usage, and heuristic learning. It also shows that the outcomes of the culture OMC are more complex than what might be expected, and that it suffers from basic conceptual design problems.

The chapter is organised as follows. Section 8.2 addresses the importance of discourse and its development in a supranational policy coordination exercise such as the OMC. Section 8.3 examines the prickly concept of ‘success’ in relation to the culture OMC. In section 8.4, the outcomes of the OMC are discussed, in three main subsections: the good practice report; networking and socialisation; and national-level policy learning. Section 8.5 then looks at the culture OMC in its broader context of European Union agendas and also situates it within broader dialogue on cultural policy. Finally, section 8.6 evaluates the design of the culture OMC. Information for this chapter comes from a combination of desk research and fieldwork, and, where possible and applicable, findings have also been corroborated with the Ecorys survey, as well as literature on the OMC from different fields.

8.2 DEVELOPING CULTURAL POLICY DISCOURSE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Before the outcomes of policy coordination are discussed, this section addresses the important role that discourse plays in policy coordination as well as, building on part of

the discussion in chapter 2, the logic of supranational policy coordination specifically regarding Priority A's themes.

8.2.1 The importance of discourse

Even among a diverse literature, often highly motivated by normative statements about whether it is 'good' or 'bad,' one thing that scholars of the OMC tend to agree on is the OMC's 'soft power' potential to shift discourses (see Schmidt and Radaelli 2004a, 2004b; Vanhercke 2009). Discourse in this case is conceptualised, as in Schmidt and Radaelli (2004a), in terms of both *content* (policy ideas, language, and values) and in terms of *use*; it therefore has both an ideational and an interactive dimension (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004b). Why does discourse matter? Quite simply, the OMC "seeks to influence, through mutual learning processes and thus in a discursive manner, the development first of ideas, then of ... policies in member states" (Kröger 2008, p.63). The OMC thus "may serve to reconceptualise interests, chart new institutional paths and reframe cultural norms" (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004a, p.206). Discourse is the central factor in all three of these; it frames a debate and topic, and can include or exclude certain ideas, making something visible or not. Discourse therefore matters not only because of its potential to change the course of the discussion, but also because of the power of those that are able to set the terms of reference, as discussed more in chapter 6.

In theory, one of the major advantages of the OMC is that it is a system that allows for development of ideas while respecting each state's individual circumstances. However, each Member State is at a different stage of development with regards to the concepts and values articulated in these policy themes.¹³⁵ At the beginning of an OMC group there is thus a division between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'—insiders know the meaning of certain vocabularies (in many ways a vocabulary of European integration), and outsiders do not. Through processes such as the OMC a particular 'EU'-specific language is developing: there is an "expansion of a unique vocabulary into increasingly common knowledge" (Christiansen, Jørgensen, and Wiener 2001, p.15). After all, concepts such as intercultural dialogue, cultural expression and awareness, and cultural diversity are contested ideas with multiple meanings. Recognising the importance of discourse helps to bridge the gap between the 'power of ideas' and national-level learning and change.

¹³⁵ There are numerous web-based resources for cross-national cultural policy comparisons. See, for example, <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/>

8.2.2 A supranational conversation

Aside from the importance of discourse, it is also worthwhile to reflect on the thematic content of Priority A. The themes were outlined in chapter 2, but this subsection considers their thematic relevance as topics for supranational policy coordination. Does it make sense to talk about “Cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and accessible and inclusive culture” in an intergovernmental setting?

Participating experts, unsurprisingly, were in favour of these policy areas being addressed by the European Union. Markus, one expert, said they are “*absolutely critical...these are absolutely the things we should be talking about, much more than we are doing right now*” (interview, June 2014). Salma, another expert, said that they are “*highly important ... because intercultural dialogue also means peace*” (interview, July 2014). And an invited guest expert, Frederick, thought that “*collaboration [on these issues] is indispensable*” (interview, December 2014). Meanwhile, in the Ecorys survey, 31.7% surveyed believed that the thematic area of cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, and an inclusive Europe was relevant “to a great extent” and 43.6% “to a modest extent.”

These themes are even more relevant in a post-financial crisis Europe where migration and austerity are key political issues and right-wing populism/nationalism is increasing in many EU states. This was made explicit by several participants (without prompting), with one going so far as to say that the EU needs to address these themes as “a counterforce” to the rise of nationalism (Oskar, expert, interview, June 2014). Therefore, despite conceptual difficulties in talking about these sensitive subjects, and their subjectivity, it was still agreed that these are important priorities:

“It’s a ‘soft’ subject, if you want to say, but it’s hard-hitting as well. The other priorities really do tie in more with the EU 2020 plan. I call priority A the softer subjects, but once you start looking at it more closely, it has as much priority as any of the other groups” (Paulina, expert, interview, June 2014).

“...it’s now very important to speak about public art institutions because everyone is paying taxes, but society has totally changed, in all European countries. It can’t be that large cultural institutions like the Tate Modern don’t speak about intercultural dialogue – they have to” (Salma, expert, interview, July 2014).

“Europe has no idea how to deal with this topic now. It’s only a very small percentage of the people [of the world] are in Europe and we have so many conflicts and so many people trying to reach Europe. [Intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity] are huge challenges for our societies, we have to learn how to speak about these topics and solve these problems” (Ibid.).

In discussing these policy issues, there is a crucial added factor that needs to be taken into account, which is – with experts agreeing on the importance of the issues *generally* – *is it appropriate to be tackling them as an EU coordination exercise?* This is an important point because of the principle of subsidiarity. To borrow phrasing from Armstrong (2010, p.1), it is “less than self-evident that tackling this issue ought to be a core mission of the EU rather than a fundamental responsibility of its constituent Member States.” Armstrong is talking about social inclusion and welfare policy here, but his statement applies to culture too. It is in fact *not obvious* that the EU, built on the principles of economic integration, should tackle social and cultural issues.

While all actors believed that the policy themes were appropriate ones, they differed on whether the present *structure* of the OMC was optimal for debate, and here is where, in many interviews, the *content* of OMC discussions began to be completely sidelined. This reflects concerns about the conceptual design of the OMC, tying in strongly to the finding presented throughout this thesis that process dominates content. In addition, the resilience of the nation-state (and the principle of subsidiarity) emerged strongly throughout discussions. Experts viewed European Union involvement as *supplementary*, and it was overwhelmingly felt that while action at the European level was important, cultural policy (and particularly that to do with cultural identity and diversity) was still very much a competence of the nation-state, despite the relevant actors acting and having a stake in supranational coordination:

“Identity can be multi-dimensional. So it’s ok that there is a part [that is European], and it’s very good that intercultural dialogue is promoted, but we shouldn’t be one-dimensional with the identity part. It’s too much to over-accentuate European identity, I guess” (Darya, Member State representative, interview, April 2014).

Georg, another expert, thought that the Priority A’s themes stood out as ones that demanded a European or even global solution, arguing that the other priorities are more technical (interview, May 2014). Many experts also believed that the challenges of these topics are truly global. For example, expert Salma said that,

“... when I was sitting in Brussels, I was thinking worldwide. In my work, I always think worldwide, but I act locally. In Brussels, I occasionally felt unsatisfied that we only spoke about Europe, but the topic is an international one. [...] Brussels is not enough” (interview, July 2014).

In sum, everyone interviewed for this project felt that Priority A’s themes were important and worthwhile ones to be tackling at the supranational level, as an ‘added-on’ supplement to Member States’ efforts. This shows both the political saliency of the themes as well as the continued importance of subsidiarity, with EU/OMC involvement adding value to Member States’ individual policies and programmes, not replacing them. However, it also begins to raise questions about the effectiveness of the OMC, and its connection to the rest of the wider ‘European project.’ I therefore now move on to how we can conceptualise success and evaluate the OMC’s effectiveness.

8.3 IDENTIFYING THE GOALS AND EVALUATING THE ‘SUCCESS’ OF THE OMC

This section addresses the tricky concept of ‘success’ and how it applies to the culture Open Method of Coordination. It presents a number of conceptual and methodological challenges (see also chapter 5). This is one of the main issues in the study of the OMC: how do those studying it recognise and evaluate success? What does success look like in OMC terms? ‘Success’ is a contested concept, and often, especially in the case of the OMC, discussed in normative terms. As Borrás and Radaelli (2010, p.54) so simply put it, “[t]he literature is polarised between those who think that using the OMC is a good thing and those who do not.” There is also no agreement on the analytical tools to analyse the effectiveness of the OMC (Hamel and Vanhercke 2009). Another crucial factor to take into consideration is time: learning and change do not happen quickly, particularly in politics, and therefore effects of participating in an OMC might be felt only years later.

Evaluating success, of course, depends on what one is looking for and by what criteria an OMC is considered successful. But in order to determine effects, one needs a starting point. This is not self-evident in the study of the OMC, but logically it makes sense to first ask *what the culture Open Method of Coordination sets out to achieve*. This is a deceptively tricky question because one must dig deep to find an articulation of the culture

OMC's aims and goals. As explained in chapter 2, the aims are not clearly articulated in the Agenda for Culture or Work Plans for Culture. Rather, they appear in the commissioning document that the Commission signed with Ecorys in 2012:

- Foster exchange of best practice between Member States with a view to improve policymaking;
- Structure cooperation around the strategic objectives of the European Agenda for Culture, as defined in the Council Work Plans for Culture 2008-2010 and 2011-2014;
- Generate policy recommendations to feed EU and national policy-making.

Additional insight can also be gained from Commission officials:

“... the interest is clear for [Member States]. They have to exchange good practice, experiences, and so on. They should come back home with more knowledge about what is done in certain fields, what can be done and what should be done and maybe impact it on national level” (Corrine, interview, April 2014).

The culture OMC therefore emphasises fostering exchange, structuring cooperation, and generating policy recommendations. The discussion of outcomes and ‘success’ will therefore focus on these elements. However, identifying the goals does not make evaluation any easier because it is never articulated what a successful OMC might look like; there is no obvious ‘yardstick.’ Does success mean the production of a good best practice manual? (And what would this look like?) Is a group successful if the experts themselves are happy with the outcome of the group? Or should the focus be the national level – has policy learning occurred? But, since not all states participate, is a simple majority who ‘do’ something with the report enough to deem it successful? What is ‘doing something’? One can easily see the challenges of this prickly concept.

Because of the fundamental conceptual challenges of determining success in such a soft process, this study focuses on identifying outcomes of the OMC and exploring the factors that contributed to these outcomes. Simply asking whether an OMC group has been successful is not helpful due to the challenges highlighted above. While a parsimonious yes/no answer might appeal to some, the picture of the culture OMC is too complex to reduce it to such rationality. Instead, how might we think about the outcomes? While the evaluation of the OMC in other fields often has an explicit focus on policy change, this is not a yardstick that is appropriate in the case of culture. This is because change has been

typically narrowly defined as an observable change in law or programme (Zeitlin 2011). This is limiting and does not accurately reflect the weak nature of the culture OMC to produce significant convergence or change, largely due to the absence of indicators and targets (Laffan and Shaw 2005). The second reason is that nowhere in official documents relating to the culture OMC is policy change or convergence mentioned. The purpose of the OMC is to provide a platform for exchange and learning, not to make or change policy; solutions to policy problems are sought “either in their domestic systems or by learning from the experience of others” (Armstrong 2010, p.9). Finally, the consensus among Commission and Member State representatives is that the culture OMC is still too much in its infancy to be at the stage where substantive change is a realistic expectation; this was suggested by Commission officials as something that would likely not happen now but is an ‘ideal’ aim for the future. With this in mind, I now turn to a discussion of the outcomes of coordination; these were not determined *ex ante* but rather emerged over the course of my fieldwork.

8.4 THE PRODUCTS AND OUTCOMES OF POLICY COORDINATION

This section addresses in some ways the true crux of this research project: *well, what happened?* Or, to put it differently, does the design of the culture OMC facilitate mutual learning and exchange? This section identifies the outcomes of Priority A’s working groups. After all, “...it is not just the capacity of the OMC to develop genuine policy debate which is important, but equally, the capacity of the policy debate to lead to concrete outcomes (solutions to issues of conflict)” (de la Porte 2010, p.20-1). This section therefore looks at what has occurred – the ‘products’ of learning and exchange – and links them with processes and roles as described in the two previous chapters.

Table 8.1: Excerpt from Ecorys survey on usefulness of outputs

To what extent do you find the outputs useful?

	To a large extent	To some extent	Not at all	Don't know	N/A
To showcase good practice from your country	22.2%	66.7%	8.9%	1.1%	1.1%
To learn about good practice	56.7%	41.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0.0%
To inform national policy-making	41.1%	52.2%	5.6%	1.1%	0.0%
To contribute to policy-making at EU level	36.7%	51.1%	8.9%	3.3%	0.0%

Source: Ecorys survey, n=90

Source: McDonald et al. (2013a, p.32)

Table 8.1, taken from Ecorys' survey, sheds some light on how experts viewed the overall usefulness of the OMC. It shows that "to learn about good practice" is the most valued, with "to inform national policy-making" second. Ultimately, in the OMC groups studied, the level of direct, substantive policy change occurring in Member States was low. *However*, to those that know the OMC well, this is not surprising, nor is it to suggest that no learning or other outcomes took place. Findings indicate some multi-level learning and exchange. I will discuss these in three separate categories: the good practice policy report (section 8.4.1) and national-level policy learning and change (8.4.2).

8.4.1 Good practice policy report

The first 'product' of EU cultural policy coordination, conceptualised in the narrowest sense, the formal output of Priority A's groups, is the policy report produced at the end of each group's cycle – three in total for Priority A. The reports represent a useable, tangible record of what has been achieved during the course of the OMC discussions:

"[t]here is a specific mandate, concrete outputs – there is a result in the end – and this is very useful" (Fatima, Commission, interview, May 2014).

The reports are collections of good/best practices. They are meant to communicate what the group has agreed on over the course of their discussions and also to recommend particular courses of action based on the identified practices. As the report is made public and experts are encouraged to disseminate within their Member State and personal networks, in theory the report is useable to a much wider audience than those who took part in the OMC (Luise, expert, interview, June 2014). The target audience for the reports is not clear; Group 1 and 3's reports have one set of recommendations (the latter also

including action points), while; Group 2's has two sets, one for policy-makers and one for practitioners.

I asked all experts what they thought of the report, who they shared it with, and how they used it. These questions provoked a great deal of discussion and reflection, with interviewees divided on how effective they found the reports to be. Overall the consensus was that while they were useful in some cases, the reports suffered from some conceptual problems. Some experts gave me examples of how they were using them in their own practices. For example, Salma, a director of a cultural institution, said that her organisation was in the process of writing a handbook on their own practices and that she was using and referring to the OMC report as it was being written (interview, July 2014). Others said that although the reports might not have much impact in the immediate aftermath of the groups, one could see a trend that more and more of the OMC reports are being referred to in other cultural policy documents.

However, many experts were also critical of the report. These criticisms were wide-ranging, from micro-level aspects of the report to major conceptual problems – a few believed it was an inappropriate ‘output’ for an exercise such as the OMC. Specifically, there were concerns with the report’s purpose, target group(s), and its quality. These are discussed in turn below.

Target audiences

First of all, it is not clear who the reports’ target audiences are. Since the Commission has specified that it prefers representatives of public authorities as experts, it is logical to assume that the report is targeted at policy-makers. However, this is not the case, because they also target cultural practitioners. The good practices are wide-ranging: some are from arts and cultural institutions, some are Member State-wide policies, and some in between. Although the information from the Commission indicates policies *and* good practices, it is not clear how this division is meant to work in practice. Several experts raised this point during interviews and highlighted various challenges for a ‘one size fits all’ approach: “*it’s a very hard task to address both [policy makers and cultural practitioners] equally*” (Luise, expert, interview, June 2014).

The two groups have very different, although often overlapping, challenges. For the report to be of use to policy-makers (whether national or sub-national), it needs to go beyond examples of good practice from cultural institutions and look as, as one expert said, “*which policies were the base [of the good practices]*” (Wasil, interview, October 2014). On the other hand, as many of the practices are examples of *cultural institutions’* practices, these may be more easily transferrable for some organisations as they are often on a more micro scale. Despite this, the reports’ focus is not how to *implement* (and ideally evaluate) policies or programmes or on how specifically lessons are drawn across Member States and institutions. This means that the reports contain “*very few examples of coherent policy frameworks at the national level*” (Camilla, invited guest expert, interview, October 2014). They lack pragmatic details on implementation, particularly to do with the financial costs associated with various programmes.

Nils, one expert, summarised many of these problems when he asked,

“... how can we make good practices useful for other people? How should we describe them in a way that’s not about a ‘situation’ but about [policy] mechanisms? We aren’t aware enough to analyse what is going on, and then take a situation [in another country] and adapt it as our own. [...] Just describing is not enough” (interview, June 2014).

To maximise policy transfer possibility across jurisdictions, there needs to be more emphasis on institutional arrangements and specific instructions for policy implementation (Radaelli 2003), not descriptions. This is especially true given the heterogeneity of cultural policy in the EU Member States (Pratt 2009b). A strategic, practical guide on how to connect policies with programmes and performance (Kröger 2009) is missing from the reports: “best practice exchange is not enough in itself” (McDonald et al 2013a, p.48).

Good practices

A second critical issue with the report is the concept of ‘good practices,’ which raises a number of questions. Who determines what is ‘good’, and how is this done? What criteria are used to determine these practices, and how is success of policies and programs measured? Bartek, a guest expert, captured many of these tensions in his thoughts on the misconceptualisation of best practices:

“...sharing best practices and discussing: it’s important. But you do not demonstrate the importance of your activity with best practices. [...] Good practices, I often say, that in their best dimension, it is testimony; in their worst dimension, it’s just publicity. [...] We

have too many best practices reports. I think the cultural field in Europe, post-crisis, will die with their best practices!” (interview, November 2014).

Choosing best practices is a political decision (Kerber and Eckardt 2007), and it raises important questions regarding who sets the parameters, frameworks, and terms of reference. We know from the discussion of the roles of the EU institutions in chapter 6 that this is largely done by the Commission and to varying extents the groups’ chair(s), which affords them a lot of say and input in the overall product.

In the culture OMC’s first generation (2008-2010), the groups tried to make the examples geographically representative. This presented challenges of equitability and comparability and so was done away with for the second generation.¹³⁶ The challenge of good practices among 25 or more Member States with vastly differing political systems, cultural policy models, policy priorities, and funding structures is exacerbated by the constraints of the operational design of the OMC. The OMC is meant to be a collective group view, but, quite simply, there are practical constraints when the groups are usually minimum of 25 people, and time is very limited. Nearly all experts believed the timescale was too short and did not allow enough time for adequate discussion, meaning that decisions are made rather quickly without sufficient time for debate about the examples.¹³⁷ Given the groups’ heterogeneity (see chapter 7), there are also difficulties in agreeing on norms and terms of reference.

Ultimately, the good practices are self-selected among the group. They are not tested, debated extensively, or measured against each other for style or type. For example, in the introduction to a section on best practices “from audience to actors” (how to encourage more people to participate in the creation of arts and cultural practices), Group 1’s report says “Below are a few examples of initiatives that were indicated by the members as interesting” (p.93). This shows the randomness of the choice – is being *interesting* a good enough criteria to be included in an EU-wide report on good practices? For Group 3, in order to compile a compendium, the chair asked everyone to bring two examples to the next meeting, one on awareness and expression in a cultural example and one in an

¹³⁶ The differences in geographical representation are in fact stark. In Group 1’s report, for example, 15 examples came from Germany, eight from Italy, and none from Cyprus, Estonia, Lithuania, or Malta, despite experts from these countries having participated in the group.

¹³⁷ Once again, the chair is crucial on this point – a well-organised chair can better facilitate discussion.

education example. While many experts consult other relevant actors in their individual Member State, the examples are limited to what that expert, as a ‘bounded’ actor, is aware of. The overall report, then, is self-selected, with very strong ‘curational’ input by the chair, sub-group, Commission policy officer, and/or an external guiding expert. Oftentimes, the final selection for inclusion in the report is done behind the scenes. What this means is that while the reports are a novel and in some cases useful collection of good practices, they suffer from a lack of practical information to transfer policies and practices between countries or institutions, and the selection of these practices is rather random and does not adhere to any particular criteria.

Quality of reports

A final issue with the reports concerns their quality, in particular their ‘obviousness’, length (too long), and lack of critical analysis. As explained in the previous chapter, the quality of the report directly impinges on its dissemination, as evidenced by this quote from expert Markus:

“... the report is as it is, I would immediately hesitate to send it around the world as a kind of important outcome of this group, because it’s not the kind of quality I would like to have to show the experts in the field” (interview, June 2014).

Markus’ comment highlights the importance, discussed already in chapter 7, of the expert finding the report to be appropriate and thus taking ownership of it. Because he does not ‘stand behind it,’ there is much less chance that Markus will disseminate this report widely. Similarly, another expert, Georg, said that he was not inclined to show the report to his boss because it did not contain anything new (interview, May 2014). This corresponds to what Miriam Hartlapp, in an analysis of the European Employment Strategy OMC, found that guidelines and recommendations did not encourage learning because they “seldom alter the information pool” (Hartlapp 2009, p.11). This was also found to be the case in culture.

Other concerns voiced regarded the lack of critical analysis in the report:

“I was left with the sense that it was more about logistics – making paths for certain kinds of knowledge to circulate, but not criticising that knowledge. Like constructing a pipeline of knowledge that goes from one place to another, but not about critiquing it” (Timo, expert, interview, September 2014).

“I think that all of these OMC groups should have a little bit of budget so that some people could be hired to collect data, and make the outcomes a bit more substantial.

Because the outcomes of my group in the end were okay, but I don't know if they had that much impact because they were not really based on much substantial research” (Markus, expert, interview, June 2014).

Timo's and Markus' comments directly concern a fundamental feature of the culture OMC's design: the lack of emphasis on problem-solving. The reports represent a collation of ideas, but they lack critical analysis and moreover because they are not based on solving a clearly defined problem, the practices are simply too random, vague, and disjointed to be useful for a wide target group. This finding corresponds with Ecorys', who found that one “potential weakness” in the culture OMC is outputs that are too generalised (McDonald et al. 2013a, p.ii). The same report also found that while one third of respondents categorised the reports as being high quality, two-thirds rated it ‘reasonable’ (p.32).¹³⁸ In invited expert Bartek's opinion,

“[I]t's a pity that there is no ... that those [groups] do not consider having systematically one academic working with them. Someone specialised in the question, who could give orientations, share academic results, help them to build the final report. It's not [the chair's] job – they're not specialists in writing. They're not professional about writing in that way. They try to do what they can within a very very limited time” (interview, November 2014).

Overall, then, the good/best practice reports represent, in theory, a tangible and useful guiding manual that has the potential to be widely disseminated to ministries and arts and cultural organisations across the EU. Many experts in fact do use them this way. However, the reports also highlight conceptual difficulties with good practices in that the randomness of the practices selected risk a haphazard, self-selected list with little analysis. With most of the reports' word counts devoted to examples rather than analysis, and even the policies vague on details, there is a debate to be had on whether this is the best option to showcase the groups' work. Because of these qualities, the reports seem to be more useful in Member States where discourse and policy development of the particular theme is lagging behind the majority of Member States. In these states where there is considerable room for development, the basic recommendations in the reports may be more useful.

How can we explain these findings on the good practice report?

¹³⁸ These findings were for *all* OMC groups, not just those in Priority A.

What explains the findings about the good practice report discussed above? Below I tackle some of the main reasons. The factors identified are the timescale and structure of meetings; difficulties with language, definitions, and meaning; and the vagueness of discussions and absence of dialogue. While they are discussed one-by-one, they compound and work together to highlight the broader more general misconceptualisation of the good practice report and loose guidelines and recommendations.

a) Timescale and structure of meetings

A common proclamation by several experts was that there is not enough time for real debate within the way that the OMC is organised. The ultimate functioning of the OMC is based on *task completion* – the report must be completed eventually. These difficulties are in part highlighted by the group on access to culture (Group 1). In the introduction of their report, the group explains how difficult their task was:

“Even though the Work Plan for culture asked the group to produce a ‘manual’, both the time made available for this work and the scope and heterogeneity of challenges for culture across Europe would have made it difficult to produce a document providing guidelines that would prove valid across Europe. Therefore this document is *not a manual*, but rather a *structured set of deliberations...*” (European Union 2012, p.6; emphasis added).

This extract confirms that in many ways the scale and scope of the task set for them was too much; this group chose a less-authoritative-sounding, more exploratory ‘set of deliberations’ as opposed to a manual. The difficulties are in part due to the short timescale, which leads to focused sessions that do not allow for enough debate. The meetings are not open-ended discussions but rather have a very focused purpose – to create the manual.¹³⁹ A related issue is that as every participating expert has a ‘day job’, the work done in the OMC often falls to the bottom of the priority list. This led Georg, one expert, to express doubts about whether the OMC was the best method or tool for discussion and dialogue – according to him, there were not enough opportunities for meaningful discussion in the working groups. This is a finding that has been found in other analyses of OMCs in other fields as well (see for example Kröger 2009).

b) Difficulties with language, definitions, and meaning

¹³⁹ The external appointed expert of Group 3 several times had to remind the group that “we are here to create a manual.”

The discussion earlier in this chapter highlighted the importance of discourse and the meanings of ideas and terminology. Agreement on definitions presents numerous challenges in a context with 25 or more Member States. The difficulties are both language barriers in terms of the pragmatic challenge of understanding each other (Kröger 2009, Armstrong 2010), but also in terms of the translation of ideas and discourses. These challenges have both narrow and wide consequences. In a narrow sense, the clarification of definitions took up a lot of time and was a source of frustration for some participants (McDonald et al. 2013a, p.22). This quote from expert Timo, recounting his group's discussion of the meaning of cultural diversity, highlights some of the difficulties:

"...racism, immigration, this discourse is very Nordic. Others ... were explaining their definitions of diversity, which has more to do with internal inclusion, marginal groups in a local context. Their history of diversity is different. This was really obvious and important. I thought 'ok, I don't know how this will go,' because it's such a multitude. It was too wide a subject" (interview, October 2014).¹⁴⁰

Nils' comments reinforce this:

"[The diversity of the group] could be a very valuable thing – but then the aim of the group should be created in another way. Because if we should create a manual, then we need a common denominator" (interview, June 2014).

In a wider sense, it is an indication of what Armstrong (2010, p.24) refers to as "the slow and painful process of giving the EU a social identity." Given the lack of treaty bases for cultural (and social) issues, as well as the conceptual difficulties in establishing basic normative frames for discussion, the role of language cannot be underestimated:

"... rules and situations are related by criteria of similarity or difference through reasoning by analogy and metaphor. The process is mediated by language, by the ways in which participants come to be able to talk about one situation as similar to or different from another; and assign situations to rules. The process maintains consistency in action primarily through the creation of typologies of similarity, rather than through a derivation of action from stable interests or wants" (March and Olsen 2009, p.9).

These 'typologies of similarity' are exactly what is lacking in the case of culture. As a result, there is a great deal of divergence on definitions and ideas, which means that a lot of time is spent discussing meaning.

¹⁴⁰ Interestingly, this is not particular to the cultural sector; evidence from, for example, de la Porte (2010)'s findings on the discussion of 'homelessness' in the social protection OMC indicates that it is an issue in other OMCs as well.

c) Vagueness of discussions and absence of dialogue

Finally, many experts believed that the groups' discussions and final reports were imprecise. This has been a known problem since the first generation of culture OMCs: the 2010 report on the implementation of the Agenda for Culture noted that "...the process of agreeing more specific fields proved challenging for the groups and, in some cases, delayed the effective start of their activities" (CEC 2010a, as cited in McDonald et al. 2013a). In an attempt to rectify this, in the second Work Plan (2011-2014), the subthemes were much more concrete. However, vagueness and ambiguity are still problematic. This issue was also highlighted in the Ecorys survey as well: "Imposing clearer targets and benchmarks would strengthen the process, but a balance would need to be struck to avoid reduced participation" (McDonald et al. 2013a, p.26). This suggests that Member States in the Council would not accept more specific themes.

Policy development on Priority A's themes is at various stages in the EU-28, and participants come from very different approaches, creating challenges for achieving quick consensus on such broad and sensitive topics. This links in with the discussion of discourse above:

"...it is a sensitive area and you don't have a long tradition. [...] There's still a lot of work to do. I think it should be more focused though, on specific issues, because otherwise one ends up collecting too much general information (Quentin, expert, interview, July 2014).

This was echoed by an invited expert, Frederick, who thought that there was not enough emphasis put on the thematic content of cultural policy:

"But the content is what should be emphasised. [...] There is a gravitation without a serious push or pull. Not even by the Commission. [...] It was a diligent task – the teacher gives a task to a group and solves it" (interview, December 2014).

The exchange of ideas is sometimes difficult in this setting, largely because of the practical issues outlined above, but also because of the lack of time devoted to getting to know one another:

"We did not start work as an engaged group of people who knew each other. It takes time, two or three meetings – only after the third or fourth meeting did we know people, and then it's a real working atmosphere. [...] This was – especially for this topic, intercultural dialogue – not very clever!" (Salma, interview, July 2014).

When asked whether he kept in touch with anyone from his group, Nils replied,

“No. Because since the meetings were mostly in Brussels, they were very official. There is emotion in culture – [...] spending time together, it is important. But we were present only during roundtables, which were mostly presentations of invited guests. Meetings weren’t formed for us to create links [with each other]. We were an audience, invited guests, who gave some inspiration. But if we want to create links and reasons to be in touch afterwards, there should be opportunities to know each other!” (interview, June 2014).

Timo, meanwhile, went further to describe the way that experts are supposed to be ‘the voice’ of their Member State:

“... the structure of the room, the tables, microphones – all of that increases the pressure as well, to be more and more conscientious about what you’re saying. ... There is this aesthetic of sovereign states inside this room. You represent a sovereign state – you speak into a microphone, as a representative of a structure. It puts a lot of pressure on you. It’s not about dialogue really; it’s about representation” (Timo, expert, interview, October 2014).

As Timo indicates, the basic issue of the meeting room layout does not optimise dialogue. This is compounded by the aforementioned constraints of the formal and bureaucratic nature of the process which lead to a task-based system and fewer opportunities for exchange. The task-based approach encourages the gathering of practices, but not substantive discussion on the broader policy issues, leaving some to comment that there was simply too much consensus:

“There is a certain risk, although, that the real political debate on these issues does not take place in this process. Because there is maybe too much agreement on these issues – if you don’t watch you can create a ‘false reality’ that misses the discussions about populism and nationalism, because these populist and nationalistic voices aren’t present [in OMC groups]. I think that is the weak spot” (Oskar, expert, interview, June 2014).

“OMC working groups’ final reports run the risk of becoming rather bland documents. The first imperative seems to be that no one takes offense and that everyone agrees” (Elin, invited guest expert, interview, November 2014).

Borrás and Radaelli (2010) argue that ambiguity and broad-brush goals to achieve maximum political agreement are built into the institutional design of the OMC. This is certainly the case in the cultural field and has been identified as an issue in many others as well. The exchange of views and ideas is identified as a goal of coordination, however this is constrained due the task-based approach. In addition, there is no real ‘problem-solving’ involved. To use an example from Group 1, rather than a solution-finding

discussion on how to get under-represented groups to visit more art galleries and museums, discussion is about what has already been done, in vastly differing circumstances and scenarios: the ‘problem’ is de-emphasised.¹⁴¹ As a result, discussions can become vague, unfocused, and lose their practicality.

8.4.2 Policy learning and change

The second category of policy coordination outcomes concerns policy leaning and change in the Member States, relevant at both the national and subnational levels. As previously explained, this is the ‘outcome’ that has received the most attention in the OMC literature in other fields. It is a crucial one to study since it directly concerns why the OMC was created in the first place – in order to effect change without legislative or hard law procedure (a “risk-free method of path finding” [Laffan and Shaw 2005, p.19]). However, the common research design of assessing policy convergence and/or direct transfer between Member States is not an appropriate yardstick for the culture OMC. Learning and change are therefore discussed below according to Zeitlin’s (2011) categorisations (see chapter 4), which is a wide and comprehensive approach that takes into account many different types of learning. This section shows once again how the importance of the Member States’ cultural ministries in determining what, if anything, will be ‘done’ with the OMC.

In the Ecorys survey, mutual learning was found to be one of the main benefits of the culture OMC: 76.3% of respondents indicated that one of the key reasons for their Member State to participate was that they were “interested in improving national policy-making through exchanges of good practice with other countries” (p.23). 50% said they wanted to learn from others, and 59.2% said they were interested in sharing national good practice (p.23). However, the picture of learning *when connected to outcomes* does not quite match up: 56% of respondents indicated that the OMC had some influence on national policy-making and 22% said no influence.¹⁴² 25.3% also said that the OMC had

¹⁴¹ The OMCs in other fields suffer from this problem as well. However, there are usually more statistics available allowing the research at least to start with a ‘problem.’ For example, Kenneth Armstrong’s 2010 book on the social policy OMCs starts with a clear statistic: in 1997, 18% of the EU population lived below the poverty line.

¹⁴² 56% indicating ‘some’ influence is a number that seems high in the context of this project’s findings. However, this percentage is across all nine OMCs in 2011-2014. Additionally, it is imprecise as ‘some influence’ is a normative distinction.

no influence on structured debate on national policy priorities. However, one of the main findings of the evaluation was that,

“The European added value of the Culture OMC lies primarily in *providing opportunities* for mutual learning on issues of common interest, which would not otherwise be available to participants. It *allows knowledge to be made available* at the national level more effectively than would be the case through other channels, and helps to link a wider cohort of governmental representatives to the EU policy-making level” (McDonald et al. 2013a, p.28; emphasis my own).

This suggests that while the OMC may be successful at creating opportunities for exchange, this does not always translate into outcomes.

Learning is difficult to identify, much less ‘measure.’ As previously mentioned, there has been little substantive policy change as a result of the OMC groups in Priority A: policy convergence and transfer are the exceptions rather than the rule.¹⁴³ This finding is consistent with findings from other OMCs and reflects the critical lens of much of the research; there is a “highly limited role for the EU common objectives, acting as a general normative context generating little adaptation pressures” (Armstrong 2010, p.186). Indeed, given the loose design of coordination in the cultural field, it is not designed to do so.

Political shifts

There was one example of a *political shift*, a change which place new issues on the domestic agenda (Zeitlin 2011): Lithuania launched a cultural diversity policy in 2015. The policy comprised a Strategy for Development of National Minorities and an Action Plan for Integration aimed at ‘increasing public tolerance through intercultural dialogue’ (Ministry of Culture of Lithuania, 2015). This was an extension of the previous national strategy (2012-2014) and focused on the integration of the Roma population into Lithuanian society. The policy encompasses a broad range of areas including education, health, labour market participation, and cultural measures. It is in the latter section where the OMC’s influence can be seen.

As a part of the launch of the new policy, the country hosted a national conference on diversity and intercultural dialogue, to which several members of the OMC group on

¹⁴³ A couple of interviewees mentioned that other culture OMC groups – those outside of Priority A – had resulted in policy change, often specific and technical, but this was rare.

that subject contributed: the chair of the OMC group on that topic, from Slovenia, delivered a presentation on the group's report, and two other members presented examples of 'policy in practice' initiatives from their Member States (Paulina, expert, interview, June 2016). This same foursome also went on to present

Although it is impossible to isolate the OMC's impact among a large range of potential influences (including other EU influences such as the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 [Council of the European Union 2011b]), experts indicated that participation in the OMC group played a part with regards to the section of the policy on intercultural dialogue (Paulina, expert, interview, June 2016; Viktoria, expert, interview, October 2014).¹⁴⁴

Increased vertical coordination

Zeitlin's second major category of change is procedural shifts in governance and policy-making. This category is not as relevant in the case of culture as the shifts often have to do with increased horizontal and vertical capacity building and coordination, due to reporting statistics and gathering information, which the culture OMC does not demand. However, there was one example of *enhanced vertical coordination* in a country that hosted a study trip. Activities organised during the study trip meant that people who worked for the national ministry of culture met employees from regional authorities and arts organisations. These people were brought together for the first time because of the OMC and subsequently began to cooperate on other initiatives because of it. Due to new connections made over the course of the study trip, there is now more formal and informal coordination between that national and regional government.

Socialisation and the emergence of new networks

The second identified outcome of the culture OMC is socialisation and the emergence of new networks. Several experts reported that the best thing about taking part in the OMC was meeting new like-minded people and expanding their personal and professional

¹⁴⁴ Influence is very complex to determine. For example, in a recent article on the integration of the 'access to culture' discourse into Croatian national cultural policy (a country that did not participate in the OMC in this topic), Primorac et al. (2015) conclude that while recent national strategic cultural plans have implicitly incorporated this discourse, it is impossible to determine whether this is from EU influence and even if so it is impossible to isolate the OMC's influence among a range of other processes such as ascension pressures, cultural funding, and competition from the ECoC programme.

networks. The Ecorys survey found that 51.4% of surveyed group reported that developing new networks was relevant “to a great extent” and 42.9% “to some extent” (p.39). However, interestingly, this occurred mainly in an informal fashion, as many experts criticised the formal OMC process for what they saw as too little focus on getting to know one another. A social programme is not automatically built into the meetings (with the exception of the study visits),¹⁴⁵ but those who made an effort to for example go out for a meal or connect afterwards experienced benefits. One expert, Timo, describes how he had a few hours before he boarded his flight, and so he and a few other participants visited a local arts institution:

“And the chance to spend some free time with some colleagues – we had a few hours before the flight ... it was a good chance to talk. It was useful. [In the meetings themselves], it was impossible to achieve this level of interaction” (interview, October 2014).

The extent to which these partnerships and friendship continued on past the OMC groups varied considerably, as one might expect. However, there is no doubt that many experts find this the most satisfying part of the entire OMC process. This was especially true for people who are not involved in any other European cultural networks and may not have much interaction with cultural professionals from other Member States. In this respect the OMC represents a unique meeting place for like-minded individuals.

In addition to increased socialisation and networking, there were also examples of new networks created as a result of OMC connections. These occurred in both cross-national and sub-national contexts and in both formal and informal ways. In one example, an expert who was in the process of establishing a pan-European cultural network invited new members who she met through the OMC to participate in the project. Similarly, it also inspired at least one expert, in a Nordic country, to operate an OMC-type exchange *within* their Member State, among regional arts organisations

Networking with people who shared the same professional values and norms was thus considered a very positive and desirable added outcome of the process:

¹⁴⁵ Several experts believed the discussions to be much more fruitful during the study visit, when the atmosphere was more relaxed and site visits to local cultural institutions allowed for more specific discussion and application of ideas. There is also an evening social programme organised on the study visits where the experts are able to relax and socialise together.

“But for myself it was very interesting to come in contact with all of these people, especially now as I’ve been invited [by them] to all of these conferences” (Salma, expert, interview, July 2014).

“[T]hrough these working groups we’ve gotten to know each other quite well and gotten to know their work. So there’s a behind the scenes dialogue taking place within these groups” (Paulina, expert, interview, June 2014).

Paulina’s use of “behind the scenes” reinforces the unintended nature of this outcome. The goal of the OMC is not to create networks, yet they are being created. Paulina went on to say that collaborations that come out of the OMC groups are the “hidden” part of the OMC. The joining-up and “matching of identities” in group settings may have to do with experience, (shared) expert knowledge, or intuition (March and Olsen 2009, p.4). This is more likely to be the case among those experts who feel that they fit in well with the ‘identity’ of and familiarity with the group.

These findings demonstrate just how important professional development and network and community expansion was to many people. It was also a finding in the Ecorys survey: “[c]ommunities of practice, interest and knowledge networks are also developing as a result of the OMC process” (McDonald et al. 2013a, p.28). This is personal and varied immensely among the experts I spoke to; some did not create partnerships at all and did not engage whatsoever in the continuing of the group when it was finished, as evidenced by Salma: *“[T]he engagement was very diverse. In our case there was a highly engaged inner group within the group. These people are still in contact”* (interview, July 2014).

Heuristic learning and concept usage

Most commonly, the culture OMC has been shown to lead to what Zeitlin calls *heuristic learning* – an increase in awareness of policies and programs in other Member States and the EU, as evidenced from these comments from experts:

“No. I can’t see that policy has changed much, but actually – it’s a big but – the OMC consultations, meaning all the various groups and their outcomes – have really contributed to raising awareness, both within the administration in [country] and also outside in the field” (Luise, interview, June 2014)

“What you learn in the working groups are not about big developments, but how you do it in little steps, and about learning what ideas are out there” (Ruth, interview, July 2014).

“I gained knowledge on networks in Europe that have been helpful for me when I’m looking at grant applications. There have been applications for European projects that involve parties that I’ve come to know through the OMC work” (Wasil, expert, interview, October 2014).

“... because I don’t work for the Ministry of Culture, I don’t know whether these reports will feed back into the overall workings of the ministry – I’m not too sure. I haven’t seen any results yet. But there was a press release last week for a new national cultural policy towards 2025. I get a sense that aspects of [the OMC report] will feed back into the national cultural policy” (Paulina, interview, June 2014).

Darya, a member of a national government, spoke more generally and said that,

“We had some examples of OMCs that saved us a lot of work. [...] [One in particular]¹⁴⁶ was for [the policy officer] a fast-forward trip, and very useful. So that was absolutely worth the investment and even paid back more than it cost. But that might be the exception. Mostly it’s a lot of uninteresting ‘blah blah blah’ and then maybe a few sparks of inspiration” (Darya, interview, April 2014).

Heuristic learning means that even if policies or programmes do not change, there is an increased awareness of what prospective changes might look like, even if they “remain subject to controversy and debate” (Zeitlin 2009, p.229). In addition, increased awareness as a result of OMC participation may also lead to seeking information from other sources such as other EU venues, platforms, or NGOs. One of the main advantages of the OMCs is that recommendations coming from the EU often lend credibility to discourses that may not be well-established in a domestic context. This is known as the *leverage effect*, whereby EU discourse is used “as a tool to advance their own domestic political agenda, promote desired reforms, and overcome entrenched veto positions” (Zeitlin 2005b, p.480). This allows experts, as change agents, to promote ideas with more political weight behind them. This reflects the most common use of the culture OMC, the “strategic use by national and subnational actors as resource for their own purposes” (Zeitlin 2005b, p.480).

This, of course, can only happen if, as detailed in the previous chapter, the expert perceives the recommendations or ideas to have a high degree of legitimacy. No matter what job or connections the expert holds, if he or she does not find the findings appropriate and take ownership of them, there is much less of a chance that they will

¹⁴⁶ This OMC group Darya is referring to is *not* in Priority A.

travel far within national networks. There is no impact of the OMC without usage by domestic actors (Zeitlin 2009). Expert Wasil remarked on this in his case:

“One good thing from this OMC work was that I came home with arguments that I could use when it I try to get our agency to work more with [statistics]. The report is pretty clear that this is a leadership issue, that you really need to engage, to realise that it takes time, etc. These are arguments that I’ve taken home” (interview, October 2014).

In Wasil’s case, he clearly finds the arguments persuasive. This does not necessarily mean that he will be successful in pursuing change, but it does increase credibility, particularly in cases where a particular discourse may not be particularly well-developed in a national context. “...a discourse, however ‘good’ or compelling in its arguments...can nevertheless fail if certain policy actors with veto power remain unconvinced” (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004b, p.370). This is because action relies on senior officials. Since most experts are not senior members of national cultural administrations, very rarely do they have the ‘final say’ on policy priorities or programmes.

In general, Member State takeup of the ideas and recommendations in the OMC report is likely to be higher the more appropriate and legitimate the recommendations are perceived to be. This is dependent on the expert and also on the norms within domestic institutional settings: “[t]he story the discourse tells and the information it provides must also appear sound, the actions it recommends doable, the solutions to the problems it identifies workable, and the overall outcomes appropriate” (Schmidt and Radaelli 2004a, p.201). The OMC’s findings are the most likely to travel and be implemented if,

“the discourse ... contains cognitive arguments that demonstrate the policy programme’s relevance, applicability and coherence; and normative arguments that resonate with long-standing or newly-emerging values, and that complement rather than contract the cognitive arguments” (*Ibid.*).

The more appropriate ideas are perceived to be – institutionally, administratively (Harmsen 1999), and politically – in relation to current cultural policy goals and priorities, the more likely that ideas in the reports are going to be used. Writing of the OMCs in social policy, Zeitlin (2005b) identified “the perceived legitimacy of the recommendations, national sensitivity to criticism from the EU, and the domestic visibility of the process, including media coverage” (p.477) as important factors influencing outcomes. ‘National sensitivity to criticism from the EU’ is not a factor with respect to the culture OMC, since there is no bench-marking or target-setting. However,

the other three, in particular the perceived legitimacy of the recommendations and domestic visibility, are relevant.

National ministries thus become ‘gatekeepers’ and determine what, if anything, will happen with the findings post-OMC. Nearly every expert mentioned the importance of this and said that changes in government and national politics more generally influenced what they could do as follow-up. Issue attention and electoral cycles (Downs 1972 in Egan 2009) are crucial in this respect. For example, Hanna, a policy advisor in a regional government, said that in the first of three OMCs she had participated in, there was more domestic interest one in particular as of the theme was “*very much in accordance with what we were doing at the time*” (interview, May 2014). Therefore, if the policy theme is in harmony with current policy priorities (or impending changes in them), and if political circumstances are optimal (for example that there is not an election going at the time), there is a higher chance that a) the ministry will read the report and b) it will have an effect. This also reflects the cyclical nature of the OMC work and policy lags in that it takes time for things to change: Jette, of the Commission, also pointed to policy cycles as a barrier to simultaneous change:

“you’d never manage to do it [policy change] at the same time, because all policy cycles are different. But I do believe that [we’re] building a body of experience” (interview, May 2014).

Given the long-term and complicated nature of policy learning and change, it is impossible to come to a definitive answer regarding these processes with regards to the culture OMC. The OMC can certainly be considered successful in heuristically increasing awareness of policy and institutional contexts in some states. However, by and large, there have not been significant policy developments in the Member States. This is not the case when the micro-scale of the individual experts is considered though, because many of them do use and share the report and incorporate what they have learned into their own practices. This is done to varying scales. These conclusions are similar to those found by Sandra Kröger in the evaluation of the OMCs in social policy: “the OMC inclusion can hardly be said to have been integrated in a meaningful way in the existing policy-making cycles, but instead remained a stranger only known to a few insiders” (Kröger 2008, p.135). These insiders, however, have demonstrated a wide range of usages and show that while the culture OMC has not led to major policy learning or change, there is a complex set of ‘appropriation’ by domestic actors. Therefore, “by embracing OMC concepts,

categories, and metrics ... domestic actors at a minimum acknowledge and reinforce the discursive legitimacy of common European objectives and policy approaches” (Zeitlin 2009, p.233).

8.5 THE CULTURE OMC IN BROADER CONTEXTS

At this point in the discussion, the Open Method of Coordination has been referred to in relative isolation without a proper grounding as to where it ‘fits’ within other European Union processes and policy fields and European and global cultural policy debates. The purpose of this section is thus to flesh out these connections and examine the culture OMC in wider contexts. This is multi-faceted as it requires looking at the relationship between the OMC and broader EU agendas and at the OMC’s relevance among other international, national, regional, and local levels that encompass non-governmental organisations and other platforms.

The OMC’s wider connections are important to address as the OMC has been criticised for its low visibility and awareness among not only among members of the public (even among the ‘initiated’) but national-level authorities, as demonstrated in earlier sections of this chapter. For example, Frazer and Marlier (2008) found “virtually no media or public awareness” of the social OMCs. This is all the more important given that the incorporation of civil society into decision-making was one of the key aims of the OMC in the first place (European Council 2000, CEC 2001). The overall consensus in the literature is that the OMC is rarely mentioned in the media and due to its poor incorporation into national processes, is often not even known about among domestic policy-makers (Kröger 2009). This was also the finding for the cultural case; in general, the OMC is poorly integrated into wider contexts, including even other culture OMC groups from other priority areas.

8.5.1 The culture OMC and broader EU agendas

The first category to tackle is the culture OMC’s place within the broader ‘European Union’ agenda. This is a vital question in terms of European integration although the question is much bigger than the Open Method of Coordination and extends to questions about where all supporting competences fit within European governance. It is even more

important given that all culture OMC groups are linked to a specific broader goals within both the Agenda for Culture and Europe 2020.

Most experts interviewed for this project did not have much of an idea of how the OMC ties into (or does not tie into) the bigger picture. In fact, many experts actually asked *me* this, reflecting that setting the OMC in its wider context is not being made clear to the experts who participate in the meetings:

“I remember back then I was very confused – I couldn’t see the bigger picture. I come from a really local structure into something bigger than I realised but it’s just the same mess – no one has strategies, we are pushed to do ‘logistics’ – building this pipeline” (Timo, expert, interview, October 2014).

“What is the strategic value of this whole OMC process? [...] It shouldn’t just be about the Work Plan, it should be more about why at this moment do we have these groups, and what connections does the work of this group have to the broader EU agenda?” (Oskar, expert, interview, June 2014).

Even experts who have participated in an OMC group beforehand are not clear on why it was formed in the first place: the logic of policy coordination is not made clear to the participants (and, following on from this, dissemination and use of the reports and embedding of the OMC work into national policy is more challenging). Given the key role of the expert, it is vital for them to have a better sense of how their work ties into the broader picture:

“[w]hat is more important is to link with the priorities of the presidency, to link with the political priorities... It’s important that the work that’s been done is endorsed at the political level” (Ulla, expert, interview, October 2014).

The failure to make explicit and deeper connections to wider contexts is in part contributing to the depoliticisation and ultimate effectiveness of the groups, particularly in connecting the OMC to national-level policies and programmes.

There is also a wider concern regarding the culture OMC’s place within the ‘European project.’ The OMC grew out of the ideology associated with the Lisbon Strategy, and the OMC in culture is linked to the Europe 2020 strategy, an economic strategy that also has embedded within it social and cultural goals (Dawson 2011). In the Council’s conclusions on culture’s contributions to Europe 2020, it states that “culture can make a significant and multidimensional contribution to the measures proposed by the Europe 2020

integrated guidelines and flagship initiatives aiming at turning the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy” (Council of the European Union 2011a, p.2). In particular, Priority A can contribute to *inclusive* growth,

“through promoting intercultural dialogue in full respect for cultural diversity. Cultural activities and programmes can strengthen social cohesion and community development as well as enable individuals or a community to fully engage in the social, cultural and economic life” (*Ibid.*, p.3).

This articulation may appear in official documentation but this is not being transferred to the experts representing Member States. Not only are the goals of the OMC unclear to many participants, they also do not understand more broadly where cultural cooperation fits within the European project, nor in how the OMC links with other OMC groups, the Creative Europe programme, or other EU cultural actions. This highlights what is a deeper problem of under-conceptualisation of the OMC and indeed a broader issue of a lack of articulation of why Member States cooperate on cultural matters. Where does culture fit in terms of “the realization of shared social values, common social objectives and the protection of fundamental social rights”? (Armstrong 2010, p.294). There is a fundamental paradox in that even though states are participating in a policy coordination exercise, this cooperation is piecemeal and fragmented. There is thus not a true sense of creating an overall European cultural project because power still remains with the nation-state.

8.5.2 The culture OMC and broader conversations about cultural policy

Alongside situating the OMC within the European context, there is also the question of where it fits within broader discussions on cultural policy, be these global, European, national, or subnational. Given the complexity of these conversations, this is difficult to truly determine. However, a few basic points can be made.

The first is that there has been an effort made at integrating ‘external’ voices to the OMC groups – all three Priority A groups had a fairly broad spectrum of participation in the form of other cultural platforms, societies, and individual invited experts (please see full lists in appendix 6). The participation of civil society was outlined specifically in the conclusions of the March 2000 Lisbon Summit (European Council 2000), and is typically discussed in the literature in terms of participation, deliberation, and representation (Kröger 2009, Harcourt 2013). However, the Commission, at the centre of the OMC, acts

as facilitator and thus gatekeeper to this process. In opening up to new sources, the OMC is ‘re-bound’ by these same sources (Armstrong 2010). The effects of external participation are “a controversial point in the literature” (Harcourt 2013, p.669), since many have found that the system is actually a *closed* method of coordination (Kröger 2009, Armstrong 2010). In addition, the format of the meetings means that instead of dialogue with invited experts, their contribution usually takes place as a presentation-style, with not as much opportunity for discussion. There is room for more work on examining with more nuance the type of contribution civil society platforms lead to.

It therefore seems that while many of the Member States experts personally made an effort to share the report within their professional networks, the culture OMC is a rather closed process. Camilla, an invited expert, summed it up when she said that “*what happened inside the room was barely known to the other people in the building!*” (interview, November 2014).

A second issue is to what extent conversations that happen in the context of the OMC are translatable and relatable to wider cultural policy debates. Dissemination, already discussed extensively, is key here. Results from the Ecorys survey found that, for the 2011-2014 Work Plan, 65.7% of participants surveyed disseminated results to cultural organisations at the national and regional level and 76.7% disseminated to decision-makers at national level. While both numbers are more than half, there is still room for improvement. Effort has to be made to avoid what Juliet Johnson (2006) calls ‘wormhole effects’ whereby specific national policy actors are linked in a transnational network but do not engage with other domestic actors, meaning that findings do not travel. There is also a great deal of complexity with regard to what extent subnational actors have a say and/or have the opportunity to participate in the OMC (López-Santana 2009). Because of the wide variety of jurisdictions and cross-cutting nature of cultural policy, this is different in every case. For example, Belgium typically sends an expert from both the Flemish- and French-speaking communities. German participation in one group had a representative from one of the *Länder*, and good practice examples came from both the *Land* and the central government.¹⁴⁷ However, given that the system is designed so that

¹⁴⁷ Note that this information about Belgium and Germany is publically-available. Other countries’ strategies regarding subnational participation are not, and thus I will not discuss them here in order to protect anonymity.

only one (or in some cases two) individuals participate in the group, true ‘representation’ from that Member State ideally requires much dialogue between national and subnational governments. In practice this only happens in a minority of cases.

The overall impression is that the OMC makes a low impact on broader cultural policy conversations. There is not much emphasis placed on connecting the work of OMC groups to wider discussions going on in the cultural policy world, including to previous OMC groups. Many experts believed that it should be the Commission officials themselves who should put more effort into disseminating and promoting the OMC groups’ work more prominently. This makes sense, in that they have the easiest access to both the Council and the Parliament, but it raises questions concerning subsidiarity.

8.6 THE INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN OF THE CULTURE OMC

This section addresses the *institutional design* of the OMC, bringing together information from chapters 6 and 7 on process as well as this chapter’s discussions on the outcomes of coordination. The design of policy coordination has been a theme running throughout these chapter but has not been explicitly addressed until now. It is important because “legitimacy has come to depend on *how* things are done, not solely on substantive performance” (March and Olsen 2009, p.6). The culture OMC, like findings from studies on the OMC in other fields, faces complex issues of “institutional coherence and institutional design” (Armstrong 2010, p.287). Ultimately, as in Casey and Gold writing in the case of OMCs in employment, “whilst a learning process has been established, its impact has been limited” (Casey and Gold 2004, n.p, as quoted in Nedergaard 2005, p.15). In order to evaluate the institutional design of the culture OMC, a deliberative, non-hierarchical, and consensus-oriented mode of governance, I draw on Martin Lodge’s (2007) three components of non-hierarchical coordination.

Lodge’s first component is *standard-setting*, which he says requires “clear direction of normative intent” and “agreement on the purpose of objectives” (p.348). This requires “clear knowledge as to what preferred state of the world one seeks to achieve or maintain – and what sort of processes need to occur in order to attain such an outcome.” The responsibility for these two areas lies largely with the European Commission. However,

national ministries must also be clear on why they choose to send delegates and they hope to achieve with policy coordination, making a link between coordination at the EU level and policies and programmes at the national or regional level. In doing so they must take the OMC ‘seriously’:

“[i]t’s up to the ministry to take advantage, be clear on what is expected, and use the expertise gained” (Ulla, expert, interview, October 2014).

However, as demonstrated with the findings in this project, effective standard-setting is not taking place. There is a great deal of conceptual confusion as to what the purpose and normative intent of the OMC is, as confirmed from this exchange:

Kate (interviewer): *“Do you think that the aim and the purpose was clear from the beginning?”*

Salma (expert): *“No. It was absolutely not clear. There was a short introduction from the Commission and from our chair, “what is the aim of an OMC?” It was a powerpoint and I was very ‘awake’ but it wasn’t possible to grasp what our role, our challenge, was.”*

This lack of articulation means that the OMC is not focused on problem-solving, because there is never a problem clearly defined. Nils, another expert, lamented this when he said

“...whose need[s] are we answering? Begin with that. Not just ‘people don’t participate in culture as much as we’d like them to participate.’ [...] at the beginning we should extract a few key points to work on – to see what the problem is and what tools we have. The general topics don’t work – I can’t understand it, and can’t have it clearly in my mind. And if I can’t, other participants may have the same problems” (interview, June 2014).

Because they lack clear definition of a problem to be set, the time the group is together is both (paradoxically) more loose/exploratory (in the sense of there is not a clear and/or obvious direction that the conversation will go in), but also task-based. There is not enough time for discussion, but that which does take place is based on working towards what is actually a rather abstract task due to a loose and vague articulations of the policy theme to be worked on and thus a lack of ‘problem’ to be solved. However, in many ways this is the design of the OMC: it is designed with “sufficiently vague” (Lodge 2007, p.350) objectives to allow for maximum Member State agency. There is very little pressure to adapt, and in the case of culture there is none. However, it also means that ultimately, “[t]he absence of commonly agreed indicators in key policy fields means that meaningful exchange is limited” (Laffan and Shaw 2005, p.31) because the group is working on such an abstract task.

The second element of non-hierarchical governance is *information-gathering*, or receiving information regarding the state of the world, which Lodge says relies on the voluntary provision of information from Member States. The situation in the culture OMC is slightly different, since there is no benchmarking, and states are not directly comparing themselves in the traditional ‘naming and shaming’ manner. I thus interpret information-gathering to mean two separate activities in the case of culture. The first is the supplementary and background information on the topics at hand that is provided to the groups by the Commission. This includes reports, studies, and statistics that are relevant to the themes. The second part of information-gathering refers to the information about good practices that the experts bring to the meetings; these examples then form the base for the standard of good practices that ultimately end up in the report.

On the first aspect, opinions were divided as to whether the Commission provided sufficient information. Some felt that this was done well, and others commented that there was not enough information provided and that which was was of poor quality. Ultimately, once again, this is not a neutral activity because it refers to ways in which systems and individuals “generate their knowledge about the current state of the world” (Lodge 2007, p.354), which is filtered via the Commission. In terms of the information provided by Member States, the objective is not to evaluate it in terms of *quality* (which is beyond the scope of this particular project) but rather to understand the process by which this is done. As mentioned above, this is filtered by the expert representing the Member States and ultimate inclusion in the report is self-selected, often with very strong input by the chair, external facilitator, and/or Commission policy officer (see chapter 6).¹⁴⁸ The examples are *not representative* because there simply is not enough time to discuss how they might be. In addition, because the word count for the examples is short, they do not go into detail on how to *implement* programmes or strategies.¹⁴⁹

Lodge’s final component is *behaviour modification*. Once again, the interpretation of this component must be altered in order to take account of the extraordinarily ‘soft’ nature of

¹⁴⁸ For the group I observed, this was done in mini-groups in a rather structured manner: the whole group was split into five groups, each of which had 5-6 people. Each group shared and then discussed/evaluated the good practices in turn, according to a set of criteria that had been prepared by the chair and the facilitator, with a goal of starting to evaluate which ones would good for inclusion in the final manual.

¹⁴⁹ In one of the mini-groups I observed, one example was rejected as it was “too complex,” meaning, in other words, that there was too little background information about the policy context.

the culture OMC. Lodge uses it in the sense that in most cases Member States are compelled to change behaviour in order to ‘close the gap’ between expectations and reality. He writes that peer pressure and learning “encourage voluntary adjustment rather than coerced” (p.348). However, he says that for this type of internal pressure to succeed, “a certain amount of interaction intensity is require to develop among participants” (*Ibid.*). Lodge and indeed many others are critical when it comes to evaluating the OMC’s overall capacity to produce impacts. In the pensions and information society OMCs that he evaluated, he determines there has been “no noticeable impact.” Meanwhile, Zeitlin (2005b, p.460) calls the OMC a “narrow, opaque, and technocratic process” involving Commission and national officials in a closed policy network. In the cultural case, this was also found to be true and is in large part due to the poor visibility of the OMC among top cultural policy officers in the Member States as well as a lack of bottom-up pressure for learning or change. Interestingly, Sandra Kröger suggests that “...politicians might have been attracted to it because the OMC clearly focuses on processes instead of outcomes (thereby leaving future possible negative outcomes to future governments” (2004, n.p.). With the design of the culture OMC as it stands, most attention is placed on the process rather than achieving any substantial outcomes.

8.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to examine the outcomes of policy coordination. It has linked findings on the *process* with the *products and outcomes* of the culture Open Method of Coordination’s Priority A groups. It has found that while there is very little observable policy change that has occurred as a result of the OMC, nor has there been much progress on intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity, and access to culture policies, the culture OMC has produced other outcomes that are invisible to evaluation by the yardstick of looking only at observable change in policies or programmes. These include network building, concept usage and heuristic learning at the national level, and limited examples of political shift and enhanced vertical coordination. On an individual level, and by far the most common outcome of coordination, is personal usage of the policy reports and ideas, which may translate into small-scale impacts within specific local contexts. Overall, then, the culture OMC was found to have a low impact on cultural policy in the

EU-28, raising important questions about the effectiveness of its institutional architecture.¹⁵⁰

The discussion throughout has shown the difficulties in how themes such as cultural diversity and access to and participation in culture are approached, defined, and discussed in a highly structured, formal framework such as the OMC. The discussion confirms that the *manner* in which these issues are talked about – the setting of the discussion – matters. The range of outcomes as well as the nature of the policy lag means that labelling these findings as ‘successes’ or ‘failures’ is not terribly useful; rather, they should be understood in a more contextualised manner in terms of the logic and design of policy coordination. After all, “learning is not deduction, but the outcome of a process of communication, persuasion and invention” (Dunlop and Radaelli 2013, p.9-10). Understanding this process is crucial to any evaluation of the Open Method of Coordination.

To a scholar of other fields of the OMC, the findings in this chapter will likely not be surprising. The discussion highlighted concerns about the design of policy coordination and issues such as under-conceptualisation and de-politicisation are ‘OMC-wide’ critiques and known problems. The finding that the OMC is not very visible in the national arena – particularly at the ‘high politics’-level of the Council – and that it “lacks the strength to provide a stimulus for domestic reform” (Vanhercke 2009, n.p.) is one of the more common criticisms of the OMC. Keeping in mind that the yardstick for the culture OMC is not to change policy but rather to provide a platform for learning and exchange, a more positive outlook might say that the OMC has eventual potential to evolve into something more concrete and output-oriented, whereas a more negative one would say that the culture OMC will never live up to its ‘ideal-type’ due to several fundamental conceptual problems. However, ultimately, for the case of culture,

“given the ongoing variations in national interpretation and implementation of European concepts and policy approaches, OMC processes [...] should be viewed less as mechanisms for producing ‘cognitive harmonisation’ [...] than for the creation of a *common language and categorical framework* to discuss and evaluate different solutions to similar problems.” (Zeitlin 2005b, p.457; emphasis added).

¹⁵⁰ Another point to consider is the cost effectiveness of the OMC. This is something that I did not explore in much detail, but would be an alternative if crude approach to examining the value of the culture OMC.

Zeitlin's argument highlights one of the advantages of the OMC and the most common outcome in the case of culture. By heuristically raising awareness and also starting to create a common framework of discourse, there is a potential not that it will lead to changes in national strategies or programmes but rather that a more implicit shift in discourse may take place over several years.

What does it mean for cultural policy? Ultimately, the chapter has shown the resilience of the nation-state in terms of cultural policy. As a voluntary process, learning and change via the OMC happens on an *ad hoc* basis. However, the findings clearly show a disconnect between the EU and Member State levels: communication about the OMC between the EU and Member States levels is not always clear, and Member States do not necessarily ascribe as much importance to the OMC as documentation would leave one to believe. In addition, while Priority A's subject matter is highly political – issues that are appearing in the media, subjects that national elections are being decided on, the discussions within the OMC are depoliticised:

“[W]e have a compendium, Council of Europe, on the practices and legislation in Member States. But we don't have political vision of ministers of culture published: where do they see the role of culture in the European Union? ... [It shouldn't be] that when the president of the Commission doesn't know what to say [about culture] that he says 'culture is the heart of Europe' – we'd really like to see concrete actions in the field” (Viktoria, expert, interview, October 2014).

There is also a fundamental tension between the overall goals of injecting politics into the problem-solving and creating space for ideology, versus a milder depoliticised version:

“...there was the potential to say something very political in this venue, ... push for a certain agenda. Others didn't see this potential, saw it more as learning from others” (Timo, expert, interview, October 2014).

In sum then, is the culture OMC more than a “bureaucratic nightmare merely involving experts and technocrats” (Vanhercke 2009)? Let us revisit the Commission's aims with the OMC. The first is to “foster exchange of best practice between Member States with a view to improve policymaking.” While exchange certainly does take place, it is constrained due to the short time-span of the meetings as well as the task-based approach of the groups. As the groups lack a clear articulation of a problem to be solved, discussions are often imprecise and make translation of ideas into national policy-making more challenging. There are also concerns with best practices, which, while a unique and

sometimes useful compilation, run the risk of decontextualisation due to a lack of analysis and precise target group.

The second aim is to “structure cooperation around the strategic objectives of the European Agenda for Culture.” This one is a bit more difficult to evaluate because of the difficulties in determining quality in structured cooperation. The OMC is certainly a structured system with opportunity for exchange, but without an overarching explicit narrative about the contribution of the Work Plan to larger goals, both at the domestic and EU levels, the potential for true dialogue and exchange is limited.

The third goal is to “generate policy recommendations to feed EU and national policy-making.” Again, the evaluation here is mixed because of the large variety of ways that the OMC is used. Certainly there is some evidence, as this chapter has shown, to suggest that there has been some policy learning and change, but this is haphazard and the exception rather than the rule. The contribution of the OMC to EU policy is also not clear. The OMC reports are occasionally referred to in other DG-EAC policy documentation, but there is no one source addressing specifically and definitively how the OMC impacts other work in the DG, nor is there much continuation of dialogue once a report is released.

Despite these conceptual problems, the Commission is keen to stress that the OMC is still rather in its infancy:

“Change, best practice, and so on – it starts in the OMC groups. [...] Of course, changes do not always happen from one moment to the next, it may be a year or two years later, but how much this collective work, experts, has fed into national and regional policies, to what extent, that is something to see in the future” (Fatima, Commission, interview, May 2014).

There is a sense that communities of practice are being created and that ‘influence’ may appear in different forums in the future. However, with the OMC in its current form, this is much more likely to be on an individual, localised scale rather than Member State-wide learning or change.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

“The challenge for Europe is not culture but politics.”
Gerard Delanty and Chris Rumford (2005, p.66)

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis has investigated cultural policy coordination in the European Union. This is a subject that is marginalised within cultural policy research, the study of EU policy coordination, and indeed the study of EU cultural policy itself. Guided by the theoretical frameworks of sociological institutionalism, multi-level governance, and policy learning, the thesis generated findings on both the processes and outcomes of coordination. The purpose of this final chapter is to bring together this research contribution, summarise its main findings, and outline its contributions to academic literature. The chapter also discusses the policy implications of the thesis’ findings as well as directions for future research.

9.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This section both summarises the main findings of the thesis as well as offers its contributions to what this means for various conversations in academic research. The first part of the section directly summarises the answers to the two main research questions. This is followed by a breakdown of subsections addressing specific contributions this study makes to literatures: contributions to the study of cultural policy, to the study of EU cultural policy, to the study of the Open Method of Coordination, to the study of EU governance and integration, and finally to the study of policy learning.

This thesis’ main research question was *how is cultural policy coordinated in the European Union and what are the outcomes of EU cultural policy coordination?*

Findings were split into three different chapters; chapters 6 and 7 addressed part one, and chapter 8 part two. Findings on process were split into two chapters in order to focus on the OMC from both the point of view of EU institutions and the Member States. Below, I provide a summary of my findings pertaining to each part of these research questions.

How is cultural policy coordinated in the European Union?

EU policy coordination in the field of culture is programmed through triennial Work Plans for Culture, which are agreed on in the Council of Ministers. The Work Plans outline policy priority areas as well as more concrete sub-priorities within each priority. Each sub-priority is assigned a 'jurisdiction' and is either in the domain of the Commission, the Member States, or both. The Open Method of Coordination is the main working method for those in the Member State jurisdiction.

Each OMC group consists of experts appointed within the Member States. There is typically one expert per Member State, but sometimes two, depending on the Member State and theme of the group. Each group meets approximately six times over the course of approximately 18 months. The meetings are usually held in Brussels although there is typically one 'study trip' per group which takes place in a Member State. The operation of the OMC relies heavily on its central coordinator, the European Commission. The Commission was found to be a key player, rather than a facilitator: it created the culture OMC and plays a key role in monitoring and evaluating the progress of the Work Plan, although not always the reports of the groups themselves. Here, the role of chair of the group was found to be crucial: the chair was shown to be instrumental in the groups' efficiency and a stronger chair meant that there was less involvement from the Commission policy officer in both the operation of the meetings and the writing of the final report. Conversely, findings show that the Council of Ministers plays a less prominent role than what one might expect. The Council has final approval on the Work Plan and thus approves the policy priorities, so does have final power, but the Commission, as the 'ghost writers' of the Work Plan, retains a great deal of influence over the culture OMC.

On the side of the Member States, one of the key contributions was to unpack the various levels of Member State participation, which has too frequently been characterised as a single unit of analysis. Separating this into three spheres (the Council, the ministry level,

and the expert level) allowed for a more comprehensive and nuanced representation of the reality of Member State involvement in the OMC, and showed the tensions and differences that exist between these levels. Results show that there is considerable heterogeneity in how Member States ‘approach’ participation in the OMC. As a voluntary process some Member States are closely involved with participation, others are much more ‘hands off’ and the expert has a great deal of flexibility, making it much more of an individual professional endeavour. Some states take participation seriously, with an institutionalised history or path dependence of European cultural cooperation in EU platforms and outside of the EU. Others participate on a more *ad hoc* basis and the logic of participation might not be known to anyone. The experts were also shown to be a very diverse group, contrary to what the Work Plan suggests, who differ in three key ways: in their policy and practical expertise, in their connections to national decision-makers, and in their socialisation to European policy coordination. While a heterogeneous group was found to be preferred *in theory*, it was found to be less than ideal *in practice*, due to difficulties in finding common reference points in discussions.

One of the strongest findings to emerge was that *process* dominated content for all interviewees, despite the sensitive nature of Priority A’s themes. Why this was so is because many participants were of the opinion that the ‘end product’ – the best practice report – was not as useful as it could be, which raises several fundamental questions about the task-based nature of the OMC and the type of outcomes. The best practice reports raise important questions around representation and usefulness as the best practices are bounded by experts’ own networks and experience and their selection for inclusion into the final manual is haphazard.

Ultimately, the OMC was found to be a largely bureaucratic exercise with little opportunity for true dialogue. This is for two reasons. First of all, the nature of the OMC is task-based: at the end of the cycle, the groups *must* produce a best practice report – that is their task, and the meetings are structured in a way that works towards that goal. This means that there is little room for policy innovation or free idea generation, although some of that does take place. Secondly, there is a huge constraint of time and to some extent resources for topics that are very broad. Experts have full-time jobs elsewhere and rarely does the OMC take ‘top bill’ in their professional life. Additionally, there is a lack of problem solving; the OMC was set up to deal with “‘tricky’ policy domains that require

European-wide approaches, but not uniform policy responses (given legitimacy and national diversity concerns)” (Lodge 2007, p.344). However, at least with Priority A, the policy ‘problems’ are de-emphasised; there is no specific question to be answered or problem to be ‘solved’, rather the groups work on a generic theme. Discussions are much more exploratory and therefore paradoxically task-based but vague.

This links strongly with another finding, which is the depoliticisation of the culture OMC. The ‘messy’ world of politics is not visible throughout this process; it seems to exist in isolation, outside of present-day ‘real’ happenings in the world and wider contexts. There is, in fact, a lack of political support among ‘high-level’ politics, i.e. the EU-28 Cultural Ministers, as most likely they are unaware of the content of discussions taking place within the OMC groups. Finally, the vagueness of the policy themes was also identified as a concern throughout. This illuminates another paradox: the Work Plan’s priorities are loosely-defined in order to garner maximum support in the Council, as any further attempts at coordination or convergence would not be accepted by Member States. However, the ‘one size fits all’ best practice manuals have unclear target audiences, which means that they have varying levels of usage for the EU, Member States’ cultural ministries, and arts institutions – it is difficult to be relevant to everyone, particularly with such broad themes.

What are the outcomes of EU cultural policy coordination?

The main finding with regards to the second research question is that the products or outcomes of coordination are limited. There were very few examples of ‘direct’ change (political or programmatic shifts), however findings did indicate examples of multi-level learning and exchange, including increased vertical coordination, socialisation and networking, and heuristic learning and concept usage. These findings demonstrate the need to have an expansive view of learning outcomes and influences and not simply only examine changes that can be observable such as a change in law. The OMC’s main potential at this stage is that it is enabling a particular ‘EU’-specific language to develop (alongside the EU’s other cultural activities) (Christiansen, Jørgensen, and Wiener 2001). Ultimately, the low level of policy learning and change is due to the OMC’s institutional architecture, explored in detail in chapter 8. The thesis has raised critical questions about the effectiveness of the OMC and, due to the way it is set up, whether it is realistic to expect much concrete policy learning and change to come from it. This is reflected in

comments from various members of the Commission interviewed throughout the project saying that follow-up

The roles of both the appointed expert and national cultural ministries were found to be key in the link to post-OMC outcomes. First of all, experts must find the report's recommendations legitimate and appropriate. If this is not the case, they will be much less likely to disseminate it. If they do find the report legitimate, as 'change agents,' they are able to promote ideas with more political weight behind them. However, national ministries play the most important role: if they do not take ownership of their participation in policy coordination, very little will likely happen within the Member States. This is because experts that take part in the OMC are rarely in a position to implement any changes themselves, and the OMC is rarely a priority for most ministries: Member States and experts rarely enter the OMC with the goal of changing national policy. This happens by accident, if at all, even in the case of states that are more purposeful about their participation.

There is a weak connection between OMC work and national and subnational politics. This corroborates with findings in other fields as well; two of the most common criticisms of the OMC are its weak integration into national policy-making and a closed, bureaucratic structure of operation (Zeitlin 2011). There are a few reasons for this. First of all, there tends to be a weak linkage between OMC experts and national decision-makers, as discussed above. The second reason is that somewhere along the way, the purpose and aims of the OMC are 'lost' to the Member States. Few experts attending an OMC meeting for the first time know what to expect, and the OMC has low visibility in domestic institutions. Thirdly, there is also no domestic adaptation pressure. This is to some extent reflective of the culture OMC's 'softness' ("softest of the soft") but also a problem with the OMC as a policy coordination tool in general.¹⁵¹ The OMC is in fact designed so that Member States are able to do exactly what they want – and this includes nothing.¹⁵² This means that there is a "highly limited role for the EU common objectives;"

¹⁵¹ While OMCs in other fields have more reporting responsibilities and methods of measurement, this does not (necessarily) translate into adaptation pressure.

¹⁵² The Ecorys survey found that only 12.1% of respondents believed that the OMC contributed to structured debate on key policy priorities at national level to a large extent while 50% believe to some extent (McDonald et al. 2013a).

instead they act “as a general normative context generating little adaptation pressures” (Armstrong 2010, p.186).

In general, findings indicated that the more appropriate the ideas contained in the OMC reports were perceived to be – institutionally, administratively, and politically – in relation to current cultural policy goals and priorities, the more likely that they would be noticed and used. This was also a finding of Idema and Kelemen (2006)’s study of the employment and social inclusion OMCs in Italy; they reported that that “the OMC is used in areas where it is in harmony with domestic policy priorities (employment), but practically ignored in areas where it conflicts with these priorities (social inclusion)” (*Ibid.*, p.110). Another important factor in determining the nature of outcomes was electoral and issue attention cycles: many experts said that changes in government and national politics more generally influenced what they could do as follow-up. If a policy theme is in harmony with current policy priorities (or impending changes in them), and if political circumstances are optimal (for example that there is not an election going at the time), there is a higher chance that the ministry will take note of the report. Overall, Member States taking *ownership* help to ensure the OMC’s relevance for policy-makers and cultural institutions.

Consider this finding: “Opponents of a powerful ‘social Europe’” have not been willing to allow any EU competence in this arena; they have, however “been willing to allow the operation of the OMC in this field, as they see the OMC as a rather innocuous exercise that entails no binding commitments” (Idema and Kelemen 2006, p.117). Is this also what we see in the case of culture? A convincing ‘yes’ argument can be made. Subsidiarity is a key concern, with the consensus being that a firmer style of coordination would not be accepted by the Member States in the Council. However, while problems of underconceptualisation remain, it is also important to remember that the culture OMC is still relatively young, and that the Commission is constantly learning and adapting to try to improve it. There is a sense that it may be the *beginning* of something – communities of practice are being created, and an EU-wide discourse forming. Learning and change do not happen quickly, and therefore effects of participating in an OMC might be felt only years later. However, in its current form, learning and change resulting from the OMC are much more likely to happen on an individual, localised scale rather than Member State-wide.

9.2.1 Contributions to the study of cultural policy

As articulated several times throughout this thesis, cultural policy is most commonly studied at the national or sub-national level. Despite the increasing importance of institutions such as the EU, Council of Europe, and UNESCO, findings from this research indicate that while the European Union has become an important actor in cultural policy, the nation-state still matters greatly when it comes to culture. What William Wallace wrote in 1999 still holds true:

“The central paradox of the European political system in the 1990s is that governance is becoming increasingly a multi-level, intricately institutionalized activity, while representation, loyalty and identity remain stubbornly rooted in the tradition institutions of the nation state” (Wallace 1999, p.521).

The principle of subsidiarity is as important in the OMC as it is in other facets of EU cultural policy (Littoz-Monnet 2007). Despite a place in the treaty, cultural action is subject to restraints and contradictions, making a robust programme at the European level difficult to achieve. Harmonisation is explicitly prohibited and there is no indication that this will change.

However, given that international organisations such as UNESCO and the EU are increasingly setting international standards for directions of cultural policy, it is sensible to continue to investigate the impact of intergovernmental cooperation, both the effects this has supranationally and at the domestic level. This is particularly true when it comes to the discursive potential of the OMC and other types of intergovernmental coordination, in that this type of cooperation can “advance[e] a particular vision of what appropriate policy is about” (Kröger 2009, p.12). In short, discourses, in the form of policy priorities and recommendations (in the case of the OMC) convey meaning and representations, which can “bring about changes in our knowledge...our beliefs, our attitudes, values and so forth” (Fairclough 2003, p.8).

The thesis has also demonstrated that more generally, more attention needs to be paid to the *processes* of cultural policy-making, rather than just the ideas and ideologies contained in policies’ content or evaluating policies’ effects. Despite the nuances and particularities of the sector, cultural policy faces the same fundamental issues as other sectors. As such an under-researched sector and one that is rarely considered important

(see Gray and Wingfield 2011), cultural policy should much more often become a ‘test case’ to examine the politics of present-day policy-making, in the EU and elsewhere.

9.2.2 Contributions to the study of EU cultural policy¹⁵³

Policy coordination in the form of the OMC is only one part of the EU’s activities in the field of culture, and the findings of this thesis cannot be generalised to EU cultural policy in general due to its fragmented nature. Indeed, policy coordination seems to sit in relative isolation to other EU cultural policy activity. However, some basic comments can be made about what this research adds to the literature on EU cultural policy.

It is first of all part of the small body of work that focuses not on narratives of EU cultural policy or European identity, but how policy-making actually works. This is an area that needs to be developed further (see more below). The inter-institutional dynamics that I have identified in this research lend support for the need to more deeply understand the dynamics of inter-institutional relations and agenda-setting in the field, and indeed this is a fruitful direction for future research. Focusing on how programmes and actions operate not only reveals more about the EU’s priorities, specifically relating to cultural value, but, by tracing their genesis, also about the development of the competence and how particular agendas are advanced within the EU.¹⁵⁴

Conclusions can also be drawn about the heuristic potential of the OMC to contribute to the development of cultural policy discourse more generally. The very existence of an OMC involves ‘uploading’ concepts to the EU level via the definition of common goals (Borrás and Radaelli 2010). Thus, despite the fact that the OMC is a voluntary process, there is some sense that concepts such as intercultural dialogue and access to culture are gaining ground within Member States, as they have been key themes in EU cultural policy since 2007, and intergovernmental cooperation in the field has only increased since then. This is evidenced by several experts who mentioned that the OMC, alongside work done by, for example, the Council of Europe, has contributed to awareness-raising of these concepts. The Agenda for Culture is now almost a decade old and it will soon be time for

¹⁵³ Part of this section draws on Mattocks (2017).

¹⁵⁴ On cultural value and economic framing, see Littoz-Monnet (2015), who argues that culture has been positioned in line with broader EU-wide frames of economic competitiveness, growth, and skills of Europe 2020.

reflection on what has been achieved. Its first of three priorities is cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue: “cultural diversity needs to be nurtured in a context of openness and exchanges between different cultures” (CEC 2007, p.8). Indeed, in the Commission’s report on the implementation of the 2011-2014 Work Plan, the first line reads that “[c]ulture and the diversity of cultural expression are among Europe’s greatest strengths” (CEC 2014, p.2). It will be interesting to see the evaluation on these themes, since coordination at least through the OMC has not shown any major results. This is even more important to consider moving forward as intercultural dialogue only appears in the 2015-2018 Work Plan as a ‘stock-taking meeting’ and report, and this falls to the responsibility of the European Commission, not the Member States.

Another contribution focuses on the multi-level nature of cultural governance, which is perhaps an obvious confirmation and contribution, but warrants direct acknowledgement because of a tendency in the cultural policy literature to study ‘levels’ of governance in isolation. Culture confirms, to varying degrees, to Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks’ (2001) three conditions of multi-level governance. First of all, findings certainly indicate that supranational institutions such as the European Commission exert their own influence. This, along with evidence from previous studies, confirms the Commission’s key position in EU cultural policy since Maastricht; the Commission’s policy officers do what they can within the legal limitations of the competence. Although the Council is still an important institution, the system still results in a loss of control for individual Member State governments, the second premise of MLG, because they must compromise to achieve agreement. Finally, MLG also means that there is a plethora of actors who operate in interconnected relationships involving local, regional, national, and supranational levels of government. This is very obvious in the OMC – experts participate in coordination with two hats on, as do the members of the Council and to some extent the Commission’s civil servants as well. Complex and interconnected domestic relationships also extend to the supranational level, meaning that there are always questions regarding the exact nature of cultural policy, about its jurisdiction (particularly in those Member States where culture is a regional competence), and the extent to which the EU should be involved in it.

Findings from this project also lend support to the argument that EU cultural policy is complex and fragmented. There is no one place to turn to for an overall picture of what

the EU does in this field, nor the impacts it has.¹⁵⁵ Programmes are piecemeal and fragmented, having been developed at different times throughout history, reflecting bargaining and consensus-seeking, various justifications for EU interventions, and different goals. Indeed, this fragmentation is in large part due to the sensitive nature of culture as an EU competence. As Patel (2013a) outlines, there is a paradox at play: cultural cooperation is desired in order to further European integration and unity, but its development is constrained by subsidiarity and Member States' wishes to keep culture a national competence. Part of the reason that it is so fragmented is because of the complexity of EU governance and the number of actors involved in decision-making and their competing positions.

Despite the assertion that “culture is an indispensable feature to achieve the EU’s strategic objectives of prosperity, solidarity and security” (CEC 2007, p.3), there is a lack of understanding of how exactly this works in practice, both in general and when considering specific actions such as the OMC. One of the problems is the vague language that is used throughout the treaty and in many policy documents. Writing of article 151 (now 167), Craufurd Smith (2004b, p.53) argues that “even a cursory examination reveals that many of the terms are vague or open-ended.” We see this in the Work Plans as well as the Agenda for Culture. As Staiger (2009, p.12) argues, the “presumption of congruence between territory, culture and polity” as well as the instrumentalisation of culture for integration, have meant that some of the EU’s most “fundamental political challenges...are...displaced onto the cultural realm.” And yet, this highlights another fundamental paradox in that there is a gap between what culture can achieve, articulated on paper and in speeches by elites, but in practice there is a lack of political will to come together.

9.2.3 Contributions to the study of the Open Method of Coordination

One aim of this research was to contribute to the literature on the Open Method of Coordination by exploring it in a different policy sector and thus adding another empirical case study. I have aimed to contextualise the OMC via the collection of first-hand data, as per Dawson’s (2011) call for a ‘third wave’ of OMC literature that is rigorous and empirically-based. This has meant an analysis that focuses on micro-level details about

¹⁵⁵ This role is not even fulfilled by DG-EAC’s website, which is confusing and not well-designed.

process and outcomes. This attention to detail has meant that power dynamics between EU institutions and between the EU and Member States have come to the forefront, and the Commission has been identified as the institution responsible for driving deeper integration in the cultural field.

The three-level model that I have developed to analyse Member State participation is an example of this attention to detail; it has shown that conceptualising the (or a) Member State(s) as a single unit is misleading. This acknowledgement of complexity moves away from the presumption of rational choice models that the Member States and Commission are unitary actors (Borrás and Radaelli 2010). It would be interesting to see how this compares in other policy sectors and is something to focus on in future research. In terms of outcomes of coordination, findings from the culture OMC reveal that ‘observable’ changes in policies or programmes in the Member States are in the minority. However, this is not to deem the OMC a ‘failure’ or unsuccessful. As I have argued throughout the thesis, we need to understand the OMC’s outcomes in a much more holistic and comprehensive way.

While European Commission officials were quick to point out the ‘special qualities’ of culture, the remarkable finding is that many problems are shared across the OMC, ultimately demonstrating issues in its conceptualisation as a method of coordination. To borrow from Sandra Kröger (2009), it is underconceptualised, depoliticised, and overdetermined. It contains fundamental paradoxes in its logic: “on the one hand contains incentives towards participation and deliberation, and on the other tries to push actors towards compliance and convergence” (Borrás and Radaelli 2010, p.47). These are not new findings, but lend support to existing ones about the design of policy coordination in the EU.

Ultimately, “in the absence of a single European public space, there are myriads of European niches, each providing a distinct meeting place for participants from all member states with shared interests” (de Swaan 2007, p.137). The OMC is one such niche. However, while a community of practice is emerging, this community is not necessarily being replicated at the domestic level (or if it is, there is only a small number of actors involved) – thus it truly *is* a niche, and there is a “de-coupling between the EU networks operating in the OMC processes and the domestic networks that decide on policy reforms”

(Borrás and Radaelli 2010, p.46-7). The OMC's impact on domestic cultural policy is uneven and localised (sometimes only individual) rather than on a grand scale.

The OMC remains an 'unidentified political object.' Ultimately, 'policy coordination' has different meanings in different variations of the OMC. We are still no closer to delineating exactly what the OMC is and its aims. Is the goal mutual learning and inspiration or convergence? (Borrás and Radaelli 2010). The OMC rather remains not a "fixed recipe that can be applied to whichever issue" but "a kind of cookbook that contains various recipes, lighter and heavier ones" (Vandenbroucke 2001, as quoted in Twena 2012, p.28). Here, distinguishing between convergent and cooperative coordination (Biagi 1998, Armstrong 2010) is a useful dividing point, and makes clearer for researchers and practitioners alike and thus explicit identification of an OMC as one or the other is encouraged.

A final comment on contributions to the OMC literature concerns theory and methodology. A sociological institutionalism framework reveals insights about process and practice that other approaches do not; more specifically, this approach allowed for an analysis that focuses on the EU's political and legal character and the embedding of structures within an overarching structure (Bulmer 1998). Institutions cannot be thought of as neutral arenas. The focus on actors as change agents has meant that we are wiser about the motivations for participating in transnational policy coordination as well as how learning in this collective setting translates into outcomes, thus achieving a deeper understanding of the interplay between structure and agency.

Methodologically, the thesis has been made richer by incorporating observational methods into the data collection. Generally, ethnographic methods are, within "the established toolkit of political science ... [considered] unconventional and odd" (Rhodes, 't Hart, and Noordegraaf 2007c, p.207). However, the benefits associated with this method are numerous, and it is genuinely surprising that it has not been used much in the study of the OMC. Access as well as resources are crucial issues, but if negotiated properly the advantages of using this method mean an added layer of richness to findings. In my case, attending a meeting more deeply confirmed what I had found throughout my interviews. It specifically allowed me to observe how crucial the group's chair was in operating the meetings and also how difficult it is for the groups to come to agreement on

such broad topics. Given that I am interested in the interplay between formal and informal institutions, and that this requires knowing a political system intimately, being there in person ultimately added much to my understanding of how the OMC operated; it opened up a previously closed world.

9.2.4 Contributions to the study of EU governance and integration

The complexity of EU policy-making means that in no way can this thesis' findings be generalisable to policy-making on a wider scale. However they do lend support and make an empirical contribution to findings on policy-making in sectors where the EU has a supporting competence and engages in policy coordination (such as health, education, and research and development). Here, the key focus I have drawn out is the differences in procedures and process between the Community method and soft coordination such as the OMC. An institutional focus has drawn attention to complexity that moves away from the parsimony of rational choice approaches. It provides a connection between studying institutions and how they operate but also to “develop a more systemic link between the insights of policy analysis and integration theory” (Christiansen 1997, p.74). It has also demonstrated the continued need to look at both formal and informal behaviour and more importantly the *interplay* between them and what this means for EU governance (Kleine 2014).

The thesis has produced findings on the nature of policy coordination in the field of culture and has shown that the boundaries between technocratic, decision-making based on expertise, and political coordination, based on values (Radaelli 1999), are increasingly blurred.¹⁵⁶ Indicators, as a basis for coordination, are often presented in a neutral, administrative-focused fashion. However, my findings show that they are anything but. As Hooghe and Marks (1997, n.p.) comment,

“EU decision making has become less technocratic and more contentious. Fewer decisions are resolved by rational-scientific methods, [...] while more decisions involve political contention concerning fundamental goals of European integration.”

Thus, guidelines on the policy themes “appeared technocratic, but were highly political” (Lodge 2007, p.353), and, in the OMC, “examples of hidden political contestation and conflict abound” (Dawson 2011, p.14). The “neutral language of procedure, soft law and

¹⁵⁶ See also Fouilleux, de Maillard, and Smith (2005) on technocratic versus political decision-making in the Council of Ministers' working groups.

‘indicators’, has the capacity to hide conflicts between substantive visions” (*Ibid.*, p.15); the choice of policy themes and subthemes in fact reveals fundamental questions about the nature of European intervention into the cultural field, and policy coordination cannot be considered a merely administrative activity.

This thesis did not set out to explicitly achieve a deeper understanding of European integration. Indeed, a research design examining policy coordination in only one sector is poorly set up to comment on the general direction of European integration (Bickerton, Hodson, and Puetter 2015). However, because of the nature of the competence as well as the partial focus on agenda-setting, some general comments concerning integration can be made.¹⁵⁷ One of the most current (and yet ancient) debates in EU governance studies is the debate on supranationalism versus intergovernmentalism and to what extent the Member States ‘dominate’ EU institutions. This has been of particular interest since the 2008 financial crisis where the importance of the European Council has grown. Cultural policy is an altogether different beast, sitting on the sidelines of EU governance: it is not the stuff that heads of state debate long into the night about. However, this research has demonstrated the continued importance of the European Commission’s influence in agenda-setting in the cultural policy sector, which lends support to a supranational view of European integration. While one case cannot ‘prove’ anything, my findings speak more broadly to integration dynamics in policy sectors where the EU has a supporting competence.

On this subject, it is important to distinguish between *influence* and *power*. My findings indicate that the Commission is “a political organization at the international level in which decision-makers’ behaviour significantly transcends an intergovernmental logic” (Egeberg 2012, p.946, in Peterson 2015, p.207): in other words, the Commission has considerable influence in cultural policy coordination, but it does not have absolute power (Golub 1996) because of the Council.¹⁵⁸ Despite this, the ubiquity of the Commission cannot be denied: “[t]he Commission is simply not strong enough to lead the EU, regardless of who its president is. But the Commission remains the straw that stirs the

¹⁵⁷ Avoiding Sabine Saurugger’s criticism that “some constructivist public policy approaches are in danger of becoming so concentrated with small-scale case studies that they forget to be interested in the bigger picture of European integration” (Saurugger 2013, p.902).

¹⁵⁸ I have developed these thoughts on inter-institutional dynamics of the culture OMC further into a forthcoming journal article that is currently under review.

drink when it comes to advances in European policy cooperation” (Peterson 2015, p.206). Expanding on this, Peterson writes that: “It appears that the Commission mostly gets on with its work and that *most of it is focused on closer European policy coordination*” (*Ibid.*, p.207; emphasis added).

The autonomy of the Commission is not absolute, due to the presence of the Council, although a process such as the culture OMC *does* involve a loss of power for the Member States due to the amount of bargaining, compromise, and cooperation involved (Marks et al. 1996). The Commission has shown to be a powerful player in post-Maastricht EU cultural policy; this demonstrates that “incremental transfers of competencies have systemic implications for the structuration of authority” (Hooghe and Marks 1997, n.p.), in that the extension of a formal competence in this area has meant that the Commission has been able to increase its influence since 1992.

The bigger question of culture’s role in achieving an ‘ever-closer’ Europe is a difficult one. Culture is still emphasised a vehicle to forge popular support for European integration and to foster a sense of common European identity.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, cultural policies in the EU “cannot be understood outside of the wider context of the political project for European integration” (Shore 2001, p.107). However, there is a disconnect between what is presented in policy documents compared to what happens in practice. Culture has become “a multi-dimensional sector” that can be co-opted for a number of policy pursuits, be it employment, social cohesion, or urban regeneration (Barnett 2001, p.412). It is more difficult, if nigh on impossible, to operate a full EU cultural programme for *cultural* purposes due to a lack of political will: a “consensual approach to European culture...is simply unreachable” (Calligaro 2013, p.29). In addition, despite efforts that have taken place, “there has been no corresponding shift in popular sentiment or political loyalty” (Shore, 2000, p.18) in the EU.

Yet, it seems logical to suggest that if we want the cultural (and the social) to play a role, they need to be not only more robust but better articulated; former European Commissioner Viviane Reding said exactly this at the launch of a New Narrative for Europe in 2013: “If we want Europeans to truly identify with the European Union as a

¹⁵⁹ One recent example is the EU’s Culture Forum in April 2016. The first plenary session was “Can culture help to overcome the fragmentation of society?”

political entity, more is needed” (Reding 2013, p.32). There is thus a paradox that “culture is everywhere but nowhere in Europe” (Pratt 2015, personal communication). The OMC is a relatively unique way of coming together supranationally and discussing contemporary cultural policy issues. But “[t]he collective experience of successive cycles of policy co-ordination and the potential limits to the utility of co-ordination has not translated into a serious debate about extending EU competence” (Armstrong 2008, p.420). There is little sense, in the current political system, that policy coordination will transform into deeper cooperation on cultural matters – it has certainly not led to a ‘push’ from the Member State side, and whether it will result in a ‘pull’ from the Commission remains to be seen, but is unlikely. Due to the legal limitations of the treaty, the cultural field is restricted to negative integration, as opposed to positive measures to create harmonisation (Scharpf 1999).¹⁶⁰

Given the decoupling of the economic and the social in the European project (Scharpf 2002), difficult questions need to be asked about culture’s role, particularly given the many challenges the EU is currently facing. What the culture OMC – and EU cultural policy more broadly – is lacking is an *overarching narrative* about why Member States are coming together in the first place, and along with this, what the role of culture and cultural cooperation is in the future of the European Union. There is “...no coherent European narrative ... emerging” (Wallace 1999, p.521). Kröger (2009, p.6) has suggested that a lack of a “shared political vision of the ‘social’” has been a barrier to learning in this social policy OMCs. This can be extended to thinking about the culture OMC: not only is there great divergence among Member States when it comes to what culture’s ‘role’ should be in achieving various economic, social, and political goals, there is perhaps more fundamentally a lack of this shared political vision at the EU level as well. The narrative of culture’s ‘place’ in the European Union has been a subject of controversy from the beginning and remains so. The reality of European cultural policy is still rather at odds with the view that Europe needs a robust, imaginative cultural programme in order to tackle the current and future challenges facing the continent.

¹⁶⁰ Thank you to Dr Amandine Crespy who probed me on this point at our panel in the 2015 Political Studies Association conference.

9.2.5 Contributions to the study of policy learning

This thesis has sought to put policy learning at the forefront of the analysis of the outcomes of coordination, trying to open up the *processes* of learning, an aspect of policy literature that is often mentioned in passing but rarely studied in great detail (Dunlop and Radaelli 2016b). Policy learning is a key element of the OMC: it is “a forum of information exchange, and therefore those involved will learn from each other” (Idema and Kelemen 2006, p.114). But the exact relationship between exchange and learning (and then possibly change) – the causal logics of learning – still remains an issue in the literature (Dunlop and Radaelli 2016b).

A sociological institutionalism approach to policy learning has allowed me to expose how and when policy learning and change are most likely, adding to what we know on policy learning in the context of the OMC and how and if that translates to domestic-level impacts. My approach was based on the argument that “scholars can achieve greater analytic leverage by beginning with institutions rather than with individuals” (Peters 2012, p.174), and that learning is a socially constructed, emergent, and ongoing process.

The first finding related to policy learning is that within the culture OMC it is not clear exactly what is meant to be learned and how. Because the experts taking part in the meeting are typically not highly-ranked officials with the capacity to make key decisions, they typically rely on instructions ‘from above’ as to the nature of their OMC participation. However, in general there is little pressure to learn and ‘bring back’ lessons. This means that where learning occurs it is most often on an individualised basis which does often not translate into broader influences within the Member States. The OMC’s overall impact on learning, then, is low. As discussed above, the vague policy themes coupled with a task-based approach means that there is very little room for policy innovation or creative thinking. In addition, the reports do not have a clear target audience, so this is further diminishes the potential for learning.

The second finding is that ultimately, in the OMC there is a tension between bottom-up and top-down learning. The former is often cited as an *ideal-type*, but, without the Commission’s central coordination, an exercise such as the OMC would not exist. Therefore, “learning as exploration, experimentation and innovation has been hindered

by target, prescriptions, and attempts to monitor from the top” (Borrás and Radaelli 2010, p.46). I discuss this further in the section below on policy implications.

9.3 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

One important concern for policy scholars is the degree to which political science and public policy engage with ‘good’ ways of doing politics. Stoker and Marsh (2010, p.6) advocate that “[p]olitical science should not interested not only in understanding ‘what is’, it should also be concerned with the normative issues of ‘what should be.’” The thesis has revealed a great deal regarding the design of EU cultural policy coordination and, despite challenges of the tensions between being both an ‘insider’ and ‘critic’ (Schlesinger 2013), it feels only right to offer some normative comments on the OMC as a method of coordination.

Many of the fundamental tensions with the culture OMC were discussed in section 8.6, which looked specifically at the design of policy coordination. I have also shown that the OMC has mixed results in terms of achieving its own self-determined objectives. Many of these issues stem from vague aims of the culture OMC. However, the likelihood of the culture OMC adopting a ‘stricter’ approach is low, due to a lack of political will; further guidelines, targets, and peer review or benchmarking are likely to be refused by the Member States in the Council. There are also questions about the groups’ outputs, the reports. There is a debate to be had on the extent to which ‘best practices’ are useful. Certainly, findings from this research indicated very mixed views.

Effectiveness of the OMC is very difficult to measure, and depends to a great extent on the value placed on the exchange of ideas which may not lead to concrete outcomes. If this exchange is not valued the temptation to abolish the OMC may be strong. However, there no signs that the culture OMC will stop. To most effectively remodel it, the best practice reports should either be done away with or become much more focused and concentrated, towards more of a policy focus, targeting policy-makers who are able to implement change. In the case of the former, notes from meetings could still be disseminated to wider audiences, but they would be of an exploratory rather than prescriptive nature.

Related to this, there is also a real need for more ownership at the ministry level. This, however, is politically tricky, since it cannot be mandated by the Commission, which can only *recommend* a particular category of expert or dissemination plan. However, a frank conversation within the ministry about what exactly it wants to achieve out of participating in the OMC would seem to be the exception rather than the rule. If Member States decide to send an expert, this is an indication of a minimum ‘commitment’ (Meyer, Linsenmann and Wessels 2007b), however their post-OMC behaviour suggests a diminished ‘implementation’ – implementation here interpreted more broadly than implementing recommendations but engaging stakeholders and having conversations about the reports’ recommendations.

Borrás and Radaelli’s (2010) recommendation of incentivising participation through mobilising of (domestic) stakeholder networks seems reasonable in this case. If there is greater visibility of the OMC at domestic level, there is more likelihood that it will have an impact:

“[s]olid networks of stakeholders press for more incisive implementation of OMC measures, raise the awareness of professional communities, and aid institutionalisation of new modes of governance beyond the layers of civil servants involved in Brussels and national capitals” (*Ibid.*, p.65).

Improving the OMC’s visibility involves, as Mark Dawson (2011) argues, the further opening-up of the OMC, expanding the potential for further bottom-up intervention. This can only come about through deeper engagement between national and subnational stakeholders, which requires more clarity and consistency from Member States’ national cultural ministries as to the nature and structure of participation in the OMC.

Ultimately, the OMC should play to its strengths: the most unique and positive aspect of the culture OMC is that it is a transnational collective of similarly-minded individuals. In order to improve its effectiveness, the OMC should be both looser (as in *less task-based*) to allow room for true policy innovation and dialogue, and simultaneously more focused to be useful to policy-makers. In general it would benefit from a redefinition of aims to ensure a stronger connection to the Member State level, as well as a redefinition of how the OMC – and the EU’s broader cultural activities – fits in with the bigger ‘European project.’

9.4 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Because it is so under-researched, EU cultural policy leaves a lot of scope for future development. This is true for both the culture OMC as well as EU cultural policy more generally. There is certainly space to take the study of the culture OMC in this field in other directions. One possibility is to look at impacts in the Member States in-depth to understand more about domestic processes and the way European participation is structured within domestic systems.¹⁶¹ This research design would involve looking systemically at process tracing within certain case study countries (including sub-nationally) to see what had happened as a result of the OMC. This design would add depth while sacrificing breadth, while I have adopted the opposite approach in that while I have not found out *in detail* what has gone on in Member States (I did not speak to enough Member State representatives in the ministries themselves, beyond the expert and CAC members), I have a good overview of what happens in a general context.

Another direction is to look at networks and the OMC, something that I only touched on tangentially but which are an important focus of the EU governance and multi-level governance literature. Governance networks “formed by active and dense interconnected social and public partners are a central notion upon which the participation ideal of the OMC is based” (Borrás and Radaelli 2010, p.44). Indeed, networks are key to understanding how the OMC results travel and are important to understand, particularly in the cultural field given links between the sector and government and the ‘multipositionality’ of key actors in the field based on prestige (Marx 2016). Future research could look at networks and endeavour to understand their role in dissemination in the OMC but also more generally within the multi-level governance of EU cultural policy.

Within EU cultural policy, there is a lot of room for the development of research that looks at how exactly programmes operate and their impact, moving away from a focus on European identity. With the exception of the European Capital of Culture programme,

¹⁶¹ There is also scope to do comparative work between different OMCs, focusing particularly on how European participation is structured at the national level.

we have little knowledge on how other parts of EU cultural policy work. This includes decision-making, implementation, and evaluations of other programmes such as the EU's arts and cultural prizes, its heritage label, Structured Dialogue with the sector, biennial Culture Forum, and its funding programme Creative Europe.¹⁶² Similarly, cultural mainstreaming, in the context of European integration, is also an area about which more could be discovered (although see Psychogiopoulou 2006).

Likewise, while we know quite a bit about the role of the European Commission,¹⁶³ the role of the EU's other institutions in cultural policy-making is still rather a mystery; there is thus considerable scope, despite challenges in access, to examine the institutional practices of the Parliament, Council of Ministers, Committee of the Regions,¹⁶⁴ as well as to understand in more detail the role of civil society groups such as Culture Action Europe.¹⁶⁵ A related topic is the notion of *expertise* and how exactly the Commission makes use of its Experts Network (see Patel 2013b)). Given findings in chapter 7 on expertise and the OMC, there seems to be room to expand this line of research. Another fruitful area of research is to examine the relationships between the European Union and *regional and local cultural policy* – the multi-level governance of culture. The MLG thesis has mostly been applied to regional and cohesion policy but there is scope to develop it further sectorally. I have tangentially referred to the participation of subnational actors in the OMC, but this could be developed much more concretely in more depth as well as looking more comprehensively at the EU's other cultural programmes.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² One particular focus is the emphasis that the EU has put on the economic potential of the cultural and creative industries, which has over the past five or so years taken centre stage in discussions surrounding cultural policy (see Littoz-Monnet 2015).

¹⁶³ Although, while we know a lot about the Commission, I would argue that dynamics *within* the Commission are still under-researched. For example, when I say that “the Commission” has advanced an agenda, I am not clear on *who* exactly in the Commission this was. My findings do not concentrate on bargaining at a micro-level (this was not terribly important for what I wanted to find out). This could be interesting for future research agendas.

¹⁶⁴ Recent research by Hönnige and Panke (2016) finds that while the CoR and European Economic and Social Committee are consulted, the Parliament and Council do not always read their opinions. Visibility and effectiveness of these bodies moving forward is crucial. As a supporting competence, culture could prove an interesting test case to examine these dynamics further.

¹⁶⁵ On lobbying more generally, see a recent special issue in the *Journal of European Public Policy* (Klüver, Braun, and Beyers 2015).

¹⁶⁶ This is even more important in a post-financial crisis arts and cultural funding world, where support from national governments has decreased and the sector has been looking to EU funds to make up the difference.

In general for cultural policy research, research designs that make use of speaking to policy-makers are important to deepen our understanding of ‘how cultural policy works.’ It is only by *moving beyond policy documentation* that the impacts of formal and informal institutions can be seen. There is also the need to adopt greater methodological and theoretical pluralism from a variety of ontological perspectives. This research highlighted only one such example with the use of sociological new institutionalism. However, it is only by combining approaches that we can achieve a greater understanding of culture as a sector of public policy as well as the dialectic between structure and agency.

In terms of future research on the Open Method of Coordination, it could be argued that the ‘heyday’ of the OMC has past; a 2012 article asked “Why and how (still) study the Open Method of Co-ordination?” (de la Porte and Pochet 2012), and indeed most research on the OMC is now over a decade old. Despite this, there is still room for development of studies on policy coordination in the EU, particularly those that respond to Dawson’s (2011) call for deep contextualisation. There is a role for longer term studies looking particularly at the development (or not) of particular EU discourses. Here, an approach such as Vivien Schmidt’s discursive institutionalism could be useful to interpret “meaning-based frameworks of communication” within which agents and structures are located (Schmidt 2011, p.107). Some fields have operated with OMCs for 10-15 years, and so there is an opportunity for a longitudinal lens, looking at the development of discourse not only via the OMC but also in fields where there is a parallel Community method. Related to this, there is also the need to continually probe ‘the’ OMC by comparing OMCs in different fields, in particular in light of the decoupling of social and economic policy in the EU. The OMC and other policy coordination processes also represent an opportunity to study agenda-setting dynamics (particularly between the Council and the Commission) in the cases where the EU holds only a supporting competence, often considered controversial due to issues of subsidiarity.

Finally, more generally, there is also room for a lot more dialogue, both ways, between the disciplines of cultural policy and public policy. Cultural policy deserves more attention within the general body of work on public policy, both in the EU and elsewhere, but also, cultural policy can learn a great deal from the established theoretical frameworks of public policy. Yes, cultural policy often sits uncomfortably within public policy frameworks (Hesmondhalgh 2005; Hesmondhalgh and Pratt 2005; Pratt 2005, 2012).

Yes, 'culture' will always remain tricky to define and its various definitions open to critique (Gallie 1956, Dubois 1999). But, like social policy, cultural policy is "an ethical and political project" (Bell and Oakley 2015, p.7) in that deciding its 'remit' remains a difficult task for policy-maker and researcher alike (*Ibid.*), and here is where the richness lies in studying it. It is a sector that offers almost endless possibilities for those interested in institutions, governance, identity, and values. This thesis has illuminated how these interact in the case of one particular policy coordination process, but there remain many more 'corners' of cultural policy, in different geographical scales and contexts, as well as many more general public policy questions to be answered using cultural policy case studies, to be discovered.

Appendix 1

Article 167, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

Article 167

(ex. Article 151 TEC)

1. The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore.
2. Action by the Union shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action in the following areas:
 - improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples,
 - conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance,
 - non-commercial cultural exchanges,
 - artistic and literary creation, including in the audiovisual sector.
3. The Union and the Member States shall foster cooperation with third countries and the competent international organisations in the sphere of culture, in particular the Council of Europe.
4. The Union shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of the Treaties, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures.
5. In order to contribute to the achievement of the objectives referred to in this Article:
 - the European Parliament and the Council acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and after consulting the Committee of the Regions, shall adopt incentive measures, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States,
 - the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt recommendations.

Appendix 2

Council of the European Union Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014

IV

(Notices)

NOTICES FROM EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS, BODIES, OFFICES AND AGENCIES

COUNCIL

Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on the Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014

(2010/C 325/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

1. Recalling the objectives assigned to the European Union in the field of culture by Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
2. Recalling the Resolution of the Council of 16 November 2007 on a European Agenda for Culture⁽¹⁾ and its strategic objectives, namely the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, the promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity in the framework of the Lisbon strategy for growth, employment, innovation and competitiveness, and the promotion of culture as a vital element in the Union's international relations;
3. Having regard to the Commission Report of 19 July 2010 on the implementation of the European Agenda for Culture⁽²⁾ and the accompanying Staff Working Document⁽³⁾;
4. Convinced that culture can contribute to the achievement of the objectives of Europe 2020, a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth⁽⁴⁾;
5. Considering that the Council Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010, in particular through its use of the open method of coordination (OMC), constituted a new and important stage in the development of Member State cooperation on culture, improving the coherence and visibility of European action in this field, while underlining the horizontal role of culture;
6. Taking note of the results of the work carried out in the framework of the Council Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010

and notably the identification and sharing of good practices by the working groups established by the Member States as well as the recommendations of these groups;

7. Sharing the view that the work plan in Annex I should draw on this work and the resulting recommendations and cover a period of four years, allowing for a mid-term review,

AGREE:

- To adopt, with due regard for the principle of subsidiarity, the Work Plan 2011-2014 as set out in Annex I as well as the principles relating to the setting up and functioning of the working groups established by the Member States as set out in Annex II,
- To establish working groups composed of experts nominated by the Member States on the basis of the principles and mandates defined in Annexes I and II and to follow their work,
- To pursue the priority areas of the Work Plan as set out in Annex I:
 - Priority area A: Cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and accessible and inclusive culture;
 - Priority area B: Cultural and Creative Industries;
 - Priority area C: Skills and mobility;
 - Priority area D: Cultural heritage, including mobility of collections;
 - Priority area E: Culture in External Relations;
 - Priority area F: Culture Statistics.

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 287, 29.11.2007, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ COM(2010) 390 final.

⁽³⁾ SEC(2010) 904.

⁽⁴⁾ European Council Conclusions, 17 June 2010 (EUCO 13/1/10 REV 1).

These priority areas will focus on the achievement of concrete and useable results, in particular as regards the working groups.

INVITE THE COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES TO:

- regularly consult and inform the stakeholders on the progress of the Work Plan, the results achieved and the implementation of the recommendations of the working groups in order to ensure the relevance and visibility of the activities,
- undertake a mid-term review of the implementation of the Work Plan with a view to possible adaptations or reorientation in the light of results achieved and policy developments at EU level,

INVITE THE COMMISSION AND THE PRESIDENCIES OF THE COUNCIL TO:

- update the Member States on initiatives in other policy areas of the Commission and/or the Council impacting on culture,

INVITE THE PRESIDENCIES OF THE COUNCIL TO:

- take into account, in the context of the trio Presidency, the Work Plan priorities when developing their programme, to report on the implementation of the Work Plan and to build upon the results achieved,
- in particular, organise, when appropriate:
 - a meeting of senior officials of Ministries of Culture with a view to discussing and taking up the results obtained in the Work Plan,

- a joint informal meeting of senior officials of Ministries of Culture and senior officials responsible for culture in Ministries of Foreign Affairs, with a view to developing a strategic approach to culture in external relations and enhancing cooperation in this field,

- consider organising, in the context of the implementation of the Work Plan, meetings of senior officials of Ministries of Culture and senior officials from other policy domains,

INVITE THE COMMISSION TO:

- regularly inform, on the one hand, the Member States of the work of the civil society structured dialogue platforms and, on the other, inform these platforms of the work carried out in the context of the Work Plan,
- organise an annual meeting with candidate countries, members of the European Free Trade Association and other countries participating in the Culture programme, in order to inform them of the work carried out in the context of the Work Plan and to allow a discussion with Member States, the chairs of the working groups and the Commission,
- adopt, before the end of the first half of 2014 and on the basis of voluntary contributions from Member States, a final report on the implementation and relevance of the Work Plan. This report will be the basis for the preparation of the next Work Plan during the second half of 2014,

WELCOME

The intention of the Commission to support Member States' actions in implementing the Work Plan as set out in Annex I.

ANNEX I

Priority Area A: Cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and accessible and inclusive culture

European Agenda for Culture — Promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue (strategic objective 1)
Europe 2020 — inclusive growth (priority 3)

Actions by	Topics	Instruments and working methods	Target outputs and indicative timeline
Member States	<p>Topic No 1: The role of public arts and cultural institutions in the promotion of:</p> <p>(i) better access to and wider participation in culture</p> <p>(ii) cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue</p>	<p>Working group of Member State experts (OMC) ⁽¹⁾.</p> <p>Experts will identify policies and good practices of public arts and cultural institutions to promote better access to and wider participation in culture, including by disadvantaged groups and groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion ⁽²⁾.</p> <p>Experts will identify policies and good practices in creating spaces in public arts and cultural institutions to facilitate exchanges among cultures and between social groups, in particular by highlighting the intercultural dimension of the heritage and by promoting artistic and cultural education and developing intercultural competences.</p>	<p>2011-2012 Identification of policies and good practice manual for public arts and cultural institutions.</p> <p>2012-2013 Identification of policies and good practice manual for public arts and cultural institutions.</p>
Member States	<p>Topic No 2: Development of the key competence 'Cultural awareness and expression' ⁽³⁾</p>	<p>Working group of Member State experts (OMC) ⁽¹⁾</p> <p>Experts ⁽⁴⁾ will identify good practices for the development of this key competence and its integration into education policies, on the basis of knowledge and attitudes identified in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning ⁽⁵⁾.</p>	<p>2013-2014 Good practice manual for culture and education authorities at national and European level.</p>
Commission	Promotion of culturally inclusive cities	The Commission will identify good practices and instruments to promote culturally inclusive cities, building on the results of projects co-funded by the EU on management of diversity in cities ⁽⁶⁾ .	2011 onwards. Identification of good practices.
Commission	Promotion of multilingualism	Study on the potential of subtitling to encourage foreign language learning: the study aims to assess the way(s) and degree to which the use of subtitles encourages and facilitates foreign language learning and contributes to the mastery of foreign languages, thereby leading to a more language-friendly environment, notably by highlighting the cultural dimension.	Final report expected during second quarter of 2011.

⁽¹⁾ The principles relating to the setting up and functioning of the working groups can be found in Annex II.

⁽²⁾ See also Council conclusions of 18 November 2010 on the role of culture in combating poverty and social exclusion (15448/10).

⁽³⁾ Building on the June 2010 recommendations of the OMC Working Group on developing synergies with education, especially arts education (Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010).

⁽⁴⁾ The composition of the group will be a key factor in ensuring that its results can be taken up in the context of a future work cycle under the ET 2020 (strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training); the participation of experts from ministries of education will therefore be recommended. The group will be supported by relevant Commission services.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

⁽⁶⁾ Including Intercultural Cities (co-funded by the Culture Programme), OPEN Cities (co-funded by Urbact II) and CLIP (Cities for Local Integration Policies — co-funded by Eurofound) network.

Priority Area B: Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs)

*European Agenda for Culture — Promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity (strategic objective 2)
Europe 2020 — smart and sustainable growth (priorities 1 and 2)*

Actions by	Topics	Instruments and working methods	Target outputs and indicative timeline
Member States	Topic No 1: Strategic use of EU support programmes, including structural funds, to foster the potential of culture for local and regional development and the spill-over effects of CCIs on the wider economy	Working group of Member State experts (OMC) ⁽¹⁾ . Experts will identify, compare and model good practices in this field for the attention of both managing authorities and cultural sector operators, including in particular CCIs, building on the Council conclusions of 10 May 2010 ⁽²⁾ and on the study on culture's contribution to regional and local development. Experts will also examine the spill-over effects of the CCIs on the wider economy, particularly in terms of innovation, and the potential for making better use of EU support programmes to foster these effects.	2011 Policy handbook. Reflection on a joint EU-wide awareness raising initiative by the Commission and Member States to promote the integration of culture in regional and local development policies and to support smart specialisation strategies.
Member States	Topic No 2: CCI export and internationalisation support strategies	Working group of Member State experts (OMC) ⁽¹⁾ . Experts will identify good practices on export and internationalisation support for CCIs.	2012-2013 Good practice manual.
Member States	Topic No 3: Good practices on financial engineering for SMEs in cultural and creative sector	Working group of Member State experts (OMC) ⁽¹⁾ . Experts will develop a manual for the attention of both CCIs funding providers and the users of funds, based on an analysis of existing funding mechanisms and tax measures prepared by two EC-commissioned studies ⁽³⁾ . This work will take into account other actions launched in this field at European level as announced in the Commission Green Paper 'Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries' ⁽⁴⁾ .	2013-2014 Good practice manual with case studies.
Commission	Follow-up to the Green Paper 'Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries'	The Commission will examine the results of the public consultation and will publish by the end of 2010 an analysis of the contributions received with a view to proposing during the first semester of 2011 an initiative on the promotion of, and support for, CCIs.	2011 onwards.
Commission	Establishment of the 'European Creative Industries Alliance'	The Commission will establish the 'European Creative Industries Alliance', based on close collaboration between its services, including Enterprise DG.	2011 onwards.
Commission	Promotion of cultural tourism as a driver for sustainable social and economic development	In the context of the Commission Communication on the new policy context for tourism in Europe ⁽⁵⁾ , the Commission will establish close collaboration between its services, including Enterprise DG, in order to promote the development of cultural tourism and related industries and to identify good practices in sustainable management of cultural tourism, including tangible and intangible heritage, in an integrated regional development strategy.	2011 onwards.

⁽¹⁾ The principles relating to the setting up and functioning of the working groups can be found in Annex II.

⁽²⁾ Council conclusions of 10 May 2010 on the contribution of culture to local and regional development (OJ C 135, 26.5.2010, p. 15).

⁽³⁾ 'The entrepreneurial dimension of the cultural and creative industries', Utrecht School of the Arts, October 2010, and 'Access to finance activities of the European Creative Industry Alliance', Jenny Tooth, January 2010.

⁽⁴⁾ COM(2010) 183 final.

⁽⁵⁾ COM(2010) 352 final.

Priority Area C: Skills and mobility

European Agenda for Culture — Promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue and promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity (strategic objectives 1 and 2)
Europe 2020 — smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (priorities 1, 2 and 3)

Actions by	Topics	Instruments and working methods	Target outputs and indicative timeline
Member States	Topic No 1: Mobility support programmes	Working group of Member State experts (OMC) ⁽¹⁾ . Experts will screen and assess mobility support programmes and schemes in order to identify barriers and problems faced in particular by small-scale culture operators and by young artists and culture professionals, building on the 2008 'Mobility Matters' study. Experts will also identify good practices to overcome these difficulties.	2011-2012 Screening results, identification of barriers and good practices.
Member States	Topic No 2: Promotion of creative partnerships ⁽²⁾	Working group of Member State experts (OMC) ⁽¹⁾ . Experts will identify and model the types of successful partnerships and practices, including their positive impacts.	2012-2013 Policy handbook. Reflection on a joint EU-wide initiative by the Commission and by national, regional and local partners in the Member States, to encourage creative partnerships.
Member States	Topic No 3: Artists' residencies	Working group of Member State experts (OMC) ⁽¹⁾ Experts will identify the success factors in preparing, carrying out and following up artists' residencies with a specific focus on building capacity and on the goal of reducing imbalances in incoming/outgoing residencies. The good practices identified should help build capacity both inside the EU and when developing residencies in third countries, as well as facilitating networking at EU level.	2013-2014 Good practice manual on preparing, organising and following-up residencies, establishing networks and support mechanisms.
Commission	Identification and development of skills through culture sector councils ⁽³⁾	The Commission will explore, based on close collaboration between its services, including Employment and Social Affairs DG, the possibilities of establishing culture sector councils at EU-level. These councils will support development of policies in the sector concerned by providing analysis of likely developments on the sectoral labour market and by better meeting the skills needs of this sector.	2011 onwards. Exchange of information and good practices.
Commission	Promotion of media literacy	Study on media literacy: the study will test and refine criteria to assess media literacy levels in all Member States, in accordance with the requirement in the Audiovisual Media Services Directive ⁽⁴⁾ for the Commission to report on media literacy levels in Member States.	2010-2011
Commission	Further development of proposals for information standards in the field of mobility	A Commission-convened expert group will develop proposals for information standards on the basis of the recommendations produced in June 2010 by the OMC Working Group on mobility of culture professionals (Work Plan for Culture 2008-2010). The Commission will submit a proposal for a Council Recommendation on Mobility Information Services in 2011.	2011 Detailed proposal of information and advice service content and standards.

Actions by	Topics	Instruments and working methods	Target outputs and indicative timeline
Commission	Analysis of administrative practices on artists' mobility (including visa, tax, social security)	The Commission will organise thematic seminars bringing together Member States' authorities, Commission services and 'end users' and will facilitate exchange of information and of good practices.	2011-2014 Good practice manual for national authorities.

(¹) The principles relating to the setting up and functioning of the working groups can be found in Annex II.

(²) 'Creative partnerships' between culture and sectors such as education and training, business, research or the public sector, help transfer creative skills from culture into other sectors.

(³) Sector councils on employment and skills at EU-level are composed of key stakeholders of a particular economic sector including representatives from trade unions and employer organisations, members of education and training systems as well as other actors such as those involved in economic development.

(⁴) OJ L 95, 15.4.2010, p. 1.

Priority Area D: Cultural heritage including mobility of collections

European Agenda for Culture — Promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue (strategic objective 1)

Europe 2020 — sustainable and inclusive growth (priorities 2 and 3)

Actions by	Topics	Instruments and working methods	Target outputs and indicative timeline
Member States	Examination of ways and means to simplify the process of lending and borrowing	Working group of Member State experts (OMC) (¹). Experts will identify good practices on all relevant issues in the context of mobility of collections.	2011-2012 Toolkit (including good practice guidelines, templates and 'user guides') on state indemnity provision. Good practice manual for national authorities on other relevant issues.
Member States and Commission	Follow-up to the digitisation of cultural heritage, including film heritage	The Commission's Reflection Group (<i>comité des sages</i>) will by end 2010 present recommendations for the digitisation, online accessibility and preservation of Europe's cultural heritage in the digital age. Member States' Expert Group on Digitisation and Digital Preservation will continue its work on issues related to governance and financing of Europeana post-2013.	Report by end 2010, follow-up in 2011. 2011-2012
		The Commission will propose by 2012 a sustainable model for financing Europeana in accordance with the Digital Agenda for Europe (²) and its key action 15 and with the Council conclusions of 10 May 2010 on Europeana: next steps (³).	2012
		Cinema Experts Group (sub-group Film Heritage) will exchange best practices in relation to the follow-up to the Council conclusions of 18 November 2010 on European Film Heritage, including the challenges of the Digital Era (⁴).	2011 onwards.
Member States and Commission	Implementation of the European Heritage Label Decision (⁵)	The Commission will prepare the application form and guidelines to assist with the selection and monitoring procedures in close cooperation with the European panel.	2011-2012
		First selections of sites under the transitional procedure.	2013-2014

Actions by	Topics	Instruments and working methods	Target outputs and indicative timeline
Commission	Prevention of and fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods	Following the outcome of the ongoing study on prevention and fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods (report expected mid-2011), the Commission will intensify collaboration between its services. Commission-convened expert group(s) ⁽⁶⁾ , in cooperation with the Member States, may propose a toolkit including European good practice guidelines and a code of ethics on due diligence in the fight against illicit trafficking and theft, building upon existing documents and codes, and considering relevant EU instruments in this area.	2012-2013 Toolkit on fight against illicit trafficking and theft.
Commission	Analysis of systems for valuation of works of art	Comparative research on systems for valuation of works of art will be conducted for insurance, state indemnity and share liability purposes.	Report by 2012.

⁽¹⁾ The principles relating to the setting up and functioning of the working groups can be found in Annex II.

⁽²⁾ COM(2010) 245 final/2.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 137, 27.5.2010, p. 19.

⁽⁴⁾ 14711/10.

⁽⁵⁾ Subject to the adoption of the Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Union action for the European Heritage Label.

⁽⁶⁾ As a combination of expertise is essential in this field, the group will consist of experts from ministries of culture, museums, judicial authorities, customs authorities and law enforcement agencies.

Priority Area E: Culture in external relations

European Agenda for Culture — Promotion of culture as a vital element in the Union's international relations (strategic objective 3)

Europe 2020 — Deploying our external policy instruments

Actions by	Topics	Instruments and working methods	Target outputs and indicative timeline
Member States and Commission	Development of a strategic approach and cooperation	The Presidencies of the Council are invited to organise, when appropriate, a joint informal meeting between senior officials of Ministries of Culture and senior officials responsible for culture in Ministries of Foreign Affairs, with a view to developing a strategic approach to culture in external relations and enhancing cooperation in this field. The senior officials will themselves define the calendar of work, topics to explore and target outputs.	2011-2014
	Development of information sharing tools	Following the May 2010 Mallorca meeting of DGs for Culture in Ministries of Foreign Affairs, the Commission will provide a web space for information sharing, based on the agreed template. Member States and the Commission will keep their content regularly updated, so that this material can be a basis for practical cooperation and discussion.	Set-up information tool in 2011.
Member States and Commission	Promotion of ratification and implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the protection and the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions	Further promote the ratification of the Convention and of its objectives in relations with third countries. Continue implementing the Convention and include its objectives in relevant European and national policies.	Ongoing.

Actions by	Topics	Instruments and working methods	Target outputs and indicative timeline
Commission	Promotion of cultural relations with third countries	The Commission will convene expert groups, when necessary, to feed into work on a specific issue and to facilitate the definition of strategies regarding the cultural relations with third countries. These groups ⁽¹⁾ will be notably invited to address specific tasks on a regional basis, e.g. Culture in the Neighbourhood (Euromed, Eastern Partnership, Danube Region etc.), Culture in emerging economies, Culture and development.	From 2011 as necessary.

⁽¹⁾ As appropriate, other EC services will be closely associated with these tasks.

Priority Area F: Culture statistics

Actions by	Topics	Instruments and working methods	Target outputs and indicative timeline
Member States and Commission	Improvement of methodologies for culture statistics	The end 2011 report of the ESS-Net on cultural statistics will be the basis for discussion of take-up of recommendations, future priorities and working methods.	2012 onwards. Proposal for a methodological framework.
Commission	Improvement of information on culture statistics	New edition of Eurostat 'pocket book' on culture statistics.	Publication in 2011.
Commission	Improvement of mobility statistics	A Commission-convened expert group ⁽¹⁾ will propose a shared 'sampling' approach to collecting data on the mobility of artists and culture professionals.	2012-2013 Toolkit for culture administrations and institutions on how to 'sample' data on mobility.

⁽¹⁾ The group will include members of ESSnet and representatives of relevant pilot projects.

ANNEX II

Principles relating to the setting up and functioning of the working groups established by the Member States in the framework of the Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014

- The participation of Member States in the work of the groups is voluntary and Member States can join them at any time.
 - Each Member State interested in participating in the work of the groups will nominate an expert as a member of a working group. The Member State will ensure that the nominated expert has practical experience in the relevant field at national level and will ensure effective communication with competent national authorities. The Commission will coordinate the nomination exercise. In order to identify the most suitable expert profile for each theme, the Member States may nominate, if necessary, a different expert for each thematic area.
 - The groups are to address successively the objectives defined in the Work Plan, complying as far as possible with the timeline identified in Annex I.
 - The definition and timeline for the objectives may be revised during the mid-term review in the light of results achieved and policy developments at EU level.
 - Each working group will be responsible for appointing its chair or co-chairs for each thematic area among its priorities.
 - Each working group can decide to invite independent experts from other fields to contribute to the work of the group.
 - Each working group can decide to invite representatives of the civil society structured dialogue platforms to take part in its work on specific topics as needed.
 - The chairs of the working groups will report as necessary to the Cultural Affairs Committee on the progress of work in the respective working groups. The Cultural Affairs Committee will be given an opportunity to give guidance to the working groups in order to guarantee the desired outcome and the coordination of the groups' work.
 - For each objective mentioned in Annex I, the groups will submit a report on the work carried out, containing concrete and useable results. Depending on the objective, these results may take the form of a good practice manual, a policy handbook or recommendations for action. The reports may also recommend the development of any relevant instrument, in any appropriate form, which may be used by the Commission or by the Member States.
 - The meeting agendas and minutes of all groups will be available to all Member States, irrespective of their degree of participation in a given area. The reports of the groups will be published.
 - The Commission will provide logistical and secretarial support to the work of the groups. As far as possible, it will support the groups by other suitable means (including studies relevant to their field of work).
 - The above reports will feed into the final report by the Commission on the implementation of the Work Plan.
-

Appendix 3

List of interviews

Alfred	14.04.14	Council of the European Union official	In person, Brussels
Beatrice	14.04.14	Council of the European Union official	In person, Brussels
Corinne	15.04.14	European Commission official	In person, Brussels
Darya	22.04.14	Member State representative	In person, Brussels
Edward	24.04.14	European Commission official	In person, Brussels
Fatima	20.05.14	European Commission official	In person, Brussels
Georg	22.05.14	Member State expert	In person, Brussels
Hanna	22.05.14	Member State expert	In person, Brussels
Jette	23.05.14	European Commission	In person, Brussels
Luise	04.06.14	Member State expert	Telephone
Markus	16.06.14	Member State expert	Telephone
Nils	24.06.14	Member State expert	Telephone
Oskar	27.06.14	Member State expert	Telephone
Paulina	30.06.14	Member State expert	Skype
Quentin	11.07.14	Member State expert	Telephone
Ruth	14.07.14	Member State expert	Telephone
Salma	28.07.14	Member State expert	Telephone
Timo	18.09.14	Member State expert	Skype
Ulla	06.10.14	Member State expert	Telephone
Viktorija	13.10.14	Member State expert	Telephone
Wasil	17.10.14	Member State expert	Skype
Julita	17.10.14	Member State expert	Telephone
Yvette	05.11.14	Invited guest expert	Skype
Zafar	06.11.14	Invited guest expert	Skype
Alain	11.11.14	Invited guest expert	Telephone
Bartek	14.11.14	Invited guest expert	Telephone
Camilla	14.11.14	Invited guest expert	Skype
Delores	21.11.14	Invited guest expert	Telephone
Elin	Oct/Nov 2014	Invited guest expert	Email
Frederick	03.12.14	Invited guest expert	Telephone

Appendix 4

Interview schedules¹⁶⁷

Interview schedule (1): EU officials (Commission and Council of Ministers)

- What is your role here in [institution]?
- Could you tell me a bit about your responsibilities regarding the Open Method of Coordination and the 2011-2014 Work Plan?
- Could you tell me a little bit about how this document [Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014] was created?
- The divisions of power are split on the list between Member States and the Commission, and the priorities agreed on by the Council. How do these divisions work in practice?
- Who is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Work Plan's priorities are carried out?
- How exactly does OMC work? What role do you play in its operation?
- How much interaction do you have with the groups themselves?
- What types of outcomes does the OMC produce?
- Why isn't there any benchmarking in the cultural field?
- How successful do you think policy coordination via the OMC is?
- Is there anything else you can think of that might be relevant to understanding the way the OMC and the Work Plan is governed/administered?
- Is there anyone else you recommend I speak to regarding the OMC?

¹⁶⁷ Please note that these schedules acted as guides only. In most cases conversations developed on their own and I only needed to refer to these very minimally.

Interview schedule (2): Member State experts

- What is your everyday job and how did you become involved in the OMC group?
- What did you hope to get out of it/what were your motivations for participating?
- What do you think the purpose of the OMC is?
- Why might Member States want to collaborate in the field of culture?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of participating in the OMC? What about the fact that it is voluntary?
- Do you think it was successful, from your point of view of participation?
- Why do you think there isn't any benchmarking in the cultural field?
- What happened was the system of dissemination – what did you do with the output? (Best practice manual)
- Are there any specific examples of policy learning or change in your country?
- What role did the European Commission play?
- What do you think is the future of EU cultural policy and policy coordination?

Interview schedule (3): Invited external speakers

- How did you become involved in the working group(s) and in what way did you participate? (Give a talk, presentation, etc.)
- What do you think is the purpose of the OMC?
- Why might Member States want to collaborate/coordinate in the field of culture?
- What do you think is the added value of the participation of experts such as yourself?
- Did you have any specific motivations for participating?
- What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of the OMC, in your opinion?
- What role did the European Commission play in the OMC?
- Why do you think there isn't any benchmarking or target-setting in the culture OMCs (this differs, for example, from other fields such as social protection and employment)?

Appendix 5

Ethics application and letter of approval

**Senate Research Ethics Committee
Application for Approval of Research Involving Human Participants**

Please tick the box for which Committee you are submitting your application to

<input type="checkbox"/>	Senate Research Ethics Committee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cass Business School
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	School of Arts & School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
<input type="checkbox"/>	School of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee
<input type="checkbox"/>	School of Informatics
<input type="checkbox"/>	Learning Development Centre

For **Senate** applications: return one original and eight additional hardcopies of the completed form and any accompanying documents to Anna Ramberg, Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee, University Research Office, Northampton Square, London, EC1V 0HB. Please also email an electronic copy to Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk (indicating the names of those signing the hard copy).

For **School of Arts & School of Social Sciences** Research Ethics Committee submit a single copy of the application form and all supporting documentation to [Andrea Tinson](mailto:Andrea.Tinson@city.ac.uk) (Social Sciences) and [Gail Marsom](mailto:Gail.Marsom@city.ac.uk) (Arts) by email.

For **School of Health Sciences** applications: submit all forms (including the Research Registration form) electronically (in Word format in a single document) to A.Welton@city.ac.uk, followed up by a single hard copy with signatures.

For **School of Informatics** applications: a single copy of the application form and all supporting documents should be emailed to Stephanie Wilson S.M.Wilson@city.ac.uk

For **Learning Development Centre** a single copy of the application form and all the supporting documentations should be emailed to Pam Parker (P.M.Parker@city.ac.uk).

Refer to the separate guidelines while completing this form.

PLEASE NOTE

- Please determine whether an application is required by going through the checklist before filling out this form.
- Ethical approval **MUST** be obtained before any research involving human participants is undertaken. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary procedures being instigated, and you will not be covered by the University's indemnity if you do not have approval in place.
- You should have completed every section of the form
- The Signature Sections must be completed by the Principal Investigator (the supervisor and the student if it is a student project)

Project Title:
Informal institutions and their role in European Union cultural policy-making: a case study of the Council of the European Union's 2011-2014 Work Plan
Short Project Title (no more than 80 characters):
Informal institutions and their role in European Union cultural policy-making
Name of Principal Investigator(s) (all students are require to apply jointly with their supervisor and all correspondence will be with the supervisor):

Kate Mattocks
Post Held (including staff/student number):
Kate Mattocks – PhD student (130054359)
Department(s)/School(s) involved at City University London:
Dept. of Culture & Creative Industries/Schools of Arts & Social Sciences
If this is part of a degree please specify type of degree and year
MPhil/PhD, expected finish date late 2015/early 2016
Date of Submission of Application:
11 March 2014

1. Information for Non-Experts

Lay Title (no more than 80 characters)

The role of informal institutions in European Union cultural policy-making

Lay Summary / Plain Language Statement (no more than 400 words)

This research project investigates the processes of policy-making in the field of culture at the European Union (EU). Using the Council of the European Union's 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture as a case study, the project explores the significance of informal behaviour in the carrying out of the Work Plan's policy priorities. The goal is to explore the gap between formal organisational structure and the day-to-day decision making processes – the parts of policy-making that are not included in descriptions found in EU textbooks.

While the last twenty or so years have seen an increase in the study of the EU, cultural policy has largely been left out of what is still a growing body of work. One of the objectives of the study is thus to shed more light on an area of policy that has traditionally been an under-researched topic in policy and EU studies. The attraction of studying culture at the EU level is due to the complex intersection of territory, identity, and governance that results in the case of supranational cultural policy.

Informal institutions – repeat behaviours, rules, and norms that are not formally entrenched or implemented – have, over the past ten years, received an increasing amount of attention in the study of policy and institutions. In the case of the EU, the interest in informal institutions is motivated by the need to explore a complex multi-level and multi-layer system of governance. The theoretical base of the thesis is derived from insights from the new institutionalism and multi-level governance literatures. Primary data will be collected from interviews with actors in different stages of the policy process.

The project's thematic areas include how policy is made via a voluntary and coordinated mode of governance (the Open Method of Coordination); the division of powers between Member States and EU organisations; and the territorial "tensions" of governing what is normally considered to be a Member State policy area at the supranational level. On a wider scale, this paper is a part of the multifaceted subject of institutionalism and governance in the European Union as well as changing debates on what culture is and its role in the contemporary nation-state.

2. Applicant Details

This project involves:

(tick as many as apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff Research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Doctoral Student
<input type="checkbox"/>	Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/>	M-level Project
<input type="checkbox"/>	Externally funded	<input type="checkbox"/>	External investigators
<input type="checkbox"/>	Collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
Provide details of collaboration and/or other			

Address for correspondence (including email address and telephone number)

(Principal Investigator)

Kate Mattocks
 Dept. of Culture & Creative Industries
 School of Arts and Social Sciences
 City University London
 Email: kate.mattocks.1@city.ac.uk
 Mobile: 07449543993

Other staff members involved

<i>Title, Name & Staff Number</i>	<i>Post</i>	<i>Dept & School</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>
N/A				

All students involved in carrying out the investigation

<i>Name & Student Number</i>	<i>Course / Year</i>	<i>Dept & School</i>	<i>Email</i>
Kate Mattocks	MPhil/PhD, year 2	Culture & Creative Industries, School of Arts & Social Sciences	Kate.Mattocks.1@city.ac.uk

External co-investigators

<i>Title & Name</i>	<i>Post</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>
N/A				

Please describe the role(s) of all the investigators including all student(s)/external co-investigator(s) in the project, especially with regards to interaction with study participants.

All tasks of this research project, including the organising and conducting of interviews with study participants and the management and analysis of data, will be conducted by Kate Mattocks.

If external investigators are involved, please provide details of their indemnity cover.

N/A

Application Details

2.1 Is this application being submitted to another ethics committee, or has it been previously submitted to an ethics committee? *This includes an NHS local Research Ethics Committee or a City University London School Research Ethics Committee or any other institutional committee or collaborating partners or research site. (See the guidelines for more information on research involving NHS staff/patients/ premises.)*

YES NO

If yes, please provide details for the Secretary for the relevant authority/committee, as well as copies of any correspondence setting out conditions of approval.

2.2 If any part of the investigation will be carried out under the auspices of an outside organisation, e.g. a teaching hospital, please give details and address of organisation.

N/A

2.3 Other approvals required – has permission to conduct research in, at or through another institution or organisation been obtained?

YES NO

If yes, please provide details and include correspondence

2.4 Is any part of this research project being considered by another research ethics committee?

YES NO

If yes, please give details and justification for going to separate committees, and attach correspondence and outcome

2.5 Duration of Project

Start date: 1 April 2014

Estimated end date: 31 October 2014

Funding Details

2.6 Please provide details of the source of financial support (if any) for the proposed investigation.

N/A

2.6a Total amount of funding being sought:

2.6b Has funding been approved?

YES NO

If no, please provide details of when the outcome can be expected

2.6c Does the funding body have any requirements regarding retention, access and storage of the data?

YES NO

If yes, please provide details

International Research

2.7 Is any part of the research taking place outside of England/Wales? (if not go to section 3) YES NO

If yes, please provide details of where

Brussels, Belgium

2.7a Have you identified and complied with all local requirements concerning ethical approval & research governance*? YES NO

2.7b Please provide details of the local requirements, including contact information.

The research is taking place within a European university context and standard procedures will be followed.

2.7c Please give contact details of a local person identified to field initial complaints local so the participants can complain without having to write to or telephone the UK

Participants can email [REDACTED]

*Please note many countries require local ethical approval or registration of research projects, further some require specific research visas. If you do not abide by the local rules of the host country you will invalidate your ethical approval from City University London, and may run the risk of legal action within the host country.

3. Project Details

3.1 Provide the background, aim and explanation for the proposed research.

Background and explanation

The background for this research stems from a combined interest in the politics of cultural policy and in the mechanics of the daily governance of one of the most complex contemporary political institutions, the European Union (EU). The thesis explores the politics of cultural policy-making at the EU level, focusing specifically on the role of informal political institutions in the carrying out of policy priority A in the 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture. The emphasis is on informal institutions – a longstanding feature of any political system but until quite recently one neglected in the literature – to account for a fuller version of the processes by which policy is made.

Aims

The aims of the research include the following:

- To understand more about role of informal institutions in the policy-making process;
- To understand in more depth the relationships between EU organisations in the area of cultural policy;
- To explore a traditionally under-researched and neglected area of EU competence;
- To contribute to the debate concerning cultural policy's place in the field of political science and political approaches to the study of cultural policy.

3.2 Provide a summary and brief explanation of the design, methodology and plan for analysis that you propose to use.

Research design: The research design is centred on a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews (interview schedule attached). All responses will be anonymous.

Methodology: The research methodology consists of two parts – a review of relevant policy documents, followed by the second and main part of the methodology, semi-structured interviews to be conducted with key policy actors.

Plan for analysis: Once interviews are completed, they will be transcribed as quickly as possible. Transcriptions will also include notes on the time and location of the meeting, nonverbal indicators, and how I as a researcher felt before, during, and after the interview. During transcription the names of participants will be coded, anonymised, and a master list kept in a secure cabinet that only the researcher has access to. Audio files will be securely deleted after transcription. Interview data will then be analysed thematically and relevant conclusions drawn.

3.3 Please explain your plans for dissemination, including whether participants will be provided with any information on the findings or outcomes of the project.

On completion of the research, I will email a summary of the results to all participants.

3.4 What do you consider are the ethical issues associated with conducting this research and how do you propose to address them?

1. Confidentiality is a key issue. This will be dealt with by making all interviews anonymous. In addition, information will not be shared across interviews.
2. Consent: informed consent will be sought and participation will be voluntary.

3.5 How is the research intended to benefit the participants, third parties and/or local community?

This research is expected to have a number of benefits, although with regards to the research participants these will be indirect. First of all, the results of this project will be an academic analysis of EU cultural governance. This has important bearings for students of government and/or cultural policy but also for cultural and arts practitioners wishing to know more about the system and how to access it. Secondly, the research will lead to insights regarding the values and meanings associated with contemporary supranational public governance that are applicable to the wider society. The findings of the research project will be disseminated through accessible articles and publications.

3.6a Will invasive procedures (for example medical or surgical) be used?

YES NO

3.6b If yes, what precautions will you take to minimise any potential harm?

N/A

3.7a Will intrusive procedures (for example psychological or social) be used?

YES NO

3.7b If yes, what precautions will you take to minimise any potential harm?

N/A

3.8a In the course of the investigation might pain, discomfort (including psychological discomfort), inconvenience or danger be caused? YES NO

3.8b If yes, what precautions will you take to minimise any potential harm?

N/A

3.9 Please describe the nature, duration and frequency of the procedures?

N/A

4. Information on participants

4.1a How many participants will be involved?

30

4.1b What is the age group and gender of the participants?

Participants will be both male and female, and with an expected approximate age range to be between 30-60.

4.1c Explain how you will determine your sample size and the selection criteria you will be using. Specify inclusion and exclusion criteria. If exclusion of participants is made on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, race, disability, sexuality, religion or any other factor, please explain and justify why.

Sampling will be carried out on a theoretical basis. Participants will be chosen solely based on their occupation and role within the organisation. There will be no inclusion or exclusion based on the categories listed above.

4.2 How are the participants to be identified, approached and recruited, and by whom?

Participants will be identified based on their publicly-available job titles. They will be contacted initially via email, containing an outline of the research project and an invitation to participate. This will be carried out by Kate Mattocks.

4.3 Describe the procedure that will be used when seeking and obtaining consent, including when consent will be obtained. Include details of who will obtain the consent, how are you intending to arrange for a copy of the signed consent form for the participants, when will they receive it and how long the participants have between receiving information about the study and giving consent.

Potential participants will be contacted initially via email. This email will include a summary of the project and an invitation to participate. The consent form will be reviewed in detail and signed on the day of the interview. The time in between receiving information about the study and giving consent will vary but will be an appropriate length of time to allow for reflection and opportunity to ask questions.

4.4 How will the participant's physical and mental suitability for participation be assessed? Are there any issues related to the ability of participants to give informed consent themselves or are you relying on gatekeepers on their behalf?

No participant in this research is expected or predicted to suffer any physical or mental barrier that would prevent them from participating in this research. Regarding gatekeepers, senior line managers of key informants will be contacted initially to give their approval to interview staff. Informed consent will then be sought separately with each individual participant.

4.5 Are there any special pressures that might make it difficult to refuse to take part in the study? Are any of the potential participants in a dependent relationship with any of the investigators (for instance student, colleague or employee) particularly those involved in recruiting for or conducting the project?

No special pressures are foreseen that would result in anyone refusing or accepting to take part. All participation will be voluntary. No participant will be known to the researcher in advance.

4.6 Will the participant's doctor be notified? YES NO
(If so, provide a sample letter to the subject's GP.)

4.7 What procedures are in place for the appropriate referral of a study participant who discloses an emotional, psychological, health, education or other issue during the course of the research or is identified by the researcher to have such a need?

N/A

4.8 What steps will be taken to safeguard the participants from over-research? (I.e. to ensure that the participants are not being used in multiple research project.)

N/A

4.9 Where will the research take place?

Interviews will be carried out in the work space of the participant.

4.10 What health and safety issues, if any, are there to consider?

There are no health and safety issues.

4.11 How have you addressed the health and safety concerns of the participants, researchers and any other people impacted by this study? (This includes research involving going into participants' homes.)

Interviews will be carried out in the work space of the participant.

4.12 It is a University requirement that an at least an initial assessment of risk is undertaken for all research and if necessary a more detailed risk assessment be carried out. Has a risk assessment been undertaken?* YES NO

4.13 Are you offering any incentives or rewards for participating? YES NO
If yes please give details

*Note that it is the Committee's prerogative to ask to view risk assessments.

5. Vulnerable groups

5.1 Will persons from any of the following groups be participating in the study? (if not go to section 6)

Adults without capacity to consent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children under the age of 18	<input type="checkbox"/>
Those with learning disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prisoners	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vulnerable adults	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young offenders (16-21 years)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Those who would be considered to have a particular dependent relationship with the investigator (e.g. those in care homes, students, employees, colleagues)	<input type="checkbox"/>
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5.2 Will you be recruiting or have direct contact with any children under the age of 18?
YES NO

5.2a If yes, please give details of the child protection procedures you propose to adopt should there be any evidence of or suspicion of harm (physical, emotional or sexual) to a young person. Include a referral protocol identifying what to do and who should be contacted.

5.2b Please give details of how you propose to ensure the well-being of the young person, particularly with respect to ensuring that they do not feel pressured to take part in the research and that they are free to withdraw from the study without any prejudice to themselves at anytime.

5.3 Will you be recruiting or have direct contact with vulnerable adults? YES NO

5.3a If yes, please give details of the protection procedures you propose to adopt should there be any evidence of or suspicion of harm (physical, emotional or sexual) to a vulnerable adult. Include a referral protocol identifying what to do and who should be contacted.

5.3b Please give details of how you propose to ensure the well-being of the vulnerable adult, particularly with respect to ensuring that they do not feel pressured to take part in the research and that they are free to withdraw from the study without any prejudice to themselves at anytime. You should indicate how you intend to ascertain that person's views and wishes.

5.3c Please give details of any City staff or students who will have contact with vulnerable adults and/or will have contact with young people (under the age of 18) and details of current (within the last 3 years) enhanced City University London CRB clearance.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Dept & School</i>	<i>Student/Staff Number</i>	<i>Date of CRB disclosure</i>	<i>Type of disclosure</i>

5.3d Please give details of any non-City staff or students who will have contact with vulnerable adults and/or will have contact with young people (under the age of 18) and details of current (within the last 3 years) enhanced CRB clearance.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Address of</i>	<i>Date of CRB</i>	<i>Type of disclosure</i>
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		<i>organisation that requested the disclosure</i>	<i>disclosure</i>	

5.4 Will you be recruiting any participants who fall under the Mental Capacity Act 2005?
YES **NO**

If so you MUST get approval from an NHS NRES approved committee (see separate guidelines for more information).

6. Data Collection

6.1a Please indicate which of the following you will be using to collect your data
Please tick all that apply

Questionnaire	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interviews	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Participant observation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focus groups	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audio/digital-recording interviewees or events	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Video recording	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physiological measurements	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quantitative research (please provide details)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please give details	Interviews will be semi-structured and are expected to last on average 1 hour.

6.1b What steps, if any, will be taken to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants (including companies)?

All interview responses will be confidential and anonymous. No names will appear in the thesis or any related publication. This will be explained and understood by all participants as a part of giving their consent. All material will be coded and kept on a password-protected laptop. At transcription names will be anonymised and recordings deleted. A master list will be kept in a locked cabinet that only the researcher has access to.

6.1c If you are using interviews or focus groups, please provide a topic guide

Please see attached.

7. Confidentiality and Data Handling

7.1a Will the research involve:

• complete anonymity of participants (i.e. researchers will not meet, or know the identity of participants, as participants are a part of a random sample and are required to return responses with no form of personal identification)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
• anonymised sample or data (i.e. an <i>irreversible</i> process whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
• de-identified samples or data (i.e. a <i>reversible</i> process whereby identifiers are replaced by a code, to which the researcher retains the key, in a secure location)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

• subjects being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research?	<input type="checkbox"/>
• any other method of protecting the privacy of participants? (e.g. use of direct quotes with specific permission only; use of real name with specific, written permission only)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please give details of 'any other method of protecting the privacy of participants' is used	

7.1b Which of the following methods of assuring confidentiality of data will be implemented?

Please tick all that apply

• data to be kept in a locked filing cabinet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• data and identifiers to be kept in separate, locked filing cabinets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• access to computer files to be available by password only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• storage at City University London	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• stored at other site	<input type="checkbox"/>
If stored at another site, please give details	

7.1c Who will have access to the data?

Access by named researcher(s) only

YES NO

Access by people other than named researcher(s)

YES NO

If people other than the named researcher(s), please explain by whom and for what purpose

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7.2a Is the data intended for reuse or to be shared as part of longitudinal research?

YES NO

7.2b Is the data intended for reuse or to be shared as part of a different/wider research project now, or in the future?

YES NO

7.2c Does the funding body (e.g. ESRC) require that the data be stored and made available for reuse/sharing?

YES NO

7.2d If you have responded yes to any of the questions above, explain how you are intending to obtain explicit consent for the reuse and/or sharing of the data.

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7.3 Retention and Destruction of Data

7.3a Does the funding body or your professional organisation/affiliation place obligations or recommendations on the retention and destruction of research data?

YES NO

If yes, what are your affiliations/funding and what are the requirements? (If no, please refer to University guidelines on retention.)

City University – university requirements

7.3b How long are you intending to keep the data?

Data will be kept for 1 year after project completion.

7.3c How are you intending to destroy the data after this period?

All transcriptions will be securely deleted and the master list will be shredded.

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8. Curriculum Vitae

CV OF APPLICANTS (Please duplicate this page for each applicant, including external persons and students involved.)

NAME:	Kate Mattocks
CURRENT POST (from)	01/10/2012
Title of Post:	MPhil/PhD student
Department:	Culture & Creative Industries
Is your post funded for the duration of this proposal?	N/A
Funding source (if not City University London)	N/A
Please give a summary of your training/experience that is relevant to this research project	
I have theoretical knowledge and practical experience in undertaking qualitative research. I have completed extensive methods training, including ethics training, at both the Masters level and in the first year of my PhD study, particularly regarding interviewing techniques and elite interviewing specifically. I also have practical experience carrying out interviews as part of my Masters dissertation.	

8.1 Supervisor’s statement on the student’s skills and ability to carry out the proposed research, as well as the merits of the research topic (up to 500 words)

Please see attached.

Supervisor’s Signature	
Print Name	

9. Participant Information Sheet and 10. Consent Form

Please use the templates provided below for the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form. They should be used for all research projects and by both staff and students. Note that there are occasions when you will need to include additional information, or make slight changes to the standard text – more information can be found under the application guidelines.

11. Additional Information

N/A

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12. Declarations by Investigator(s)

- I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information given above, together with any accompanying information, is complete and correct.
- I have read the University's guidelines on human research ethics, and accept the responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application.
- I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting the project.
- I understand that **no** research work involving human participants or data can commence until **full** ethical approval has been given

	Print Name	Signature
Principal Investigator(s) (student and supervisor if student project)	Kate Mattocks	
Associate Dean for Research (or equivalent) or authorised signatory		
Date	11 March 2014	

Researcher’s checklist for compliance with the Data Protection Act, 1998

This checklist is for use alongside the *Guidance notes on Research and the Data Protection Act 1998*. Please refer to the notes for a full explanation of the requirements.

You may choose to keep this form with your research project documentation so that you can prove that you have taken into account the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

	REQUIREMENT	✓	
A	<i>Meeting the conditions for the research exemptions:</i>		
1	The information is being used <i>exclusively</i> for research purposes.	✓	Mandatory
2	You are not using the information to support measures or decisions relating to <i>any</i> identifiable living individual.	✓	Mandatory
3	You are not using the data in a way that will cause, or is likely to cause, substantial damage or substantial distress to any data subject.	✓	Mandatory
4	You will not make the result of your research, or any resulting statistics, available in a form that identifies the data subject.	✓	Mandatory
B	<i>Meeting the conditions of the First Data Protection Principle:</i>		
1	You have fulfilled one of the conditions for using personal data, e.g. you have obtained consent from the data subject. Indicate which condition you have fulfilled here: I have obtained consent from all research participants.	✓	Mandatory
2	If you will be using sensitive personal data you have fulfilled one of the conditions for using sensitive personal data, e.g. you have obtained explicit consent from the data subject. Indicate which condition you have fulfilled here: _____ _____	N/A	Mandatory if using sensitive data
3	You have informed data subjects of: i. What you are doing with the data; ii. Who will hold the data, usually City University London; iii. Who will have access to or receive copies of the data.	✓	Mandatory unless B4 applies
4	You are excused from fulfilling B3 only if all of the following conditions apply: i. The data has been obtained from a third party; ii. Provision of the information would involve disproportionate	N/A	Required only when claiming disproportionate effort

	<p>effort;</p> <p>iii. You record the reasons for believing that disproportionate effort applies, please also give brief details here:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>N.B. Please see the guidelines above when assessing disproportionate effort.</p>		
C	<i>Meeting the conditions of the Third Data Protection Principle:</i>		
1	You have designed the project to collect as much information as you need for your research but not more information than you need.	✓	Mandatory
D	<i>Meeting the conditions of the Fourth Data Protection Principle:</i>		
1	You will take reasonable measures to ensure that the information you collect is accurate.	✓	Mandatory
2	Where necessary you have put processes in place to keep the information up to date.	✓	Mandatory
E	<i>Meeting the conditions of the Sixth Data Protection Principle:</i>		
1	<p>You have made arrangements to comply with the rights of the data subject. In particular you have made arrangements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Inform the data subject that you are going to use their personal data. ii. Stop using an individual's data if it is likely to cause unwarranted substantial damage or substantial distress to the data subject or another. iii. Ensure that no decision, which significantly affects a data subject, is based solely on the automatic processing of their data. iv. Stop, rectify, erase or destroy the personal data of an individual, if necessary. <p>Please give brief details of the measures you intend to take here: I have complied with all of the above.</p>	✓	Mandatory



**School of Arts
and Social Sciences**
CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Andy C Pratt
Professor of Cultural Economy
City University London
Northampton Square
London EC1V 0HB

11/03/14

Research Ethics: Kate Mattocks

I am very happy to support this application for research ethics clearance for Kate's PhD thesis. I have discussed the research plan and methodology, and the ethical challenges, with her and I am confident that she understands, and has taken all necessary steps to be compliant.

The project is her PhD thesis, and is a well formulated to address a significant research gap. The thesis identifies conceptual, theoretical and empirical gaps in the research on cultural policy making processes under the aegis of the European Commission.

Kate has a well-formulated plan, has identified the appropriate topics for questions, and an appropriate sample to interview. The methodology selected is appropriate for the task, and is planned appropriately. The challenges associated with gaining access, and confidentiality in and across interviews is appreciated and dealt with appropriately. I have reviewed the questions, and the letter of consent, and all are in order.

Yours sincerely,



Andy C Pratt
Professor of Cultural Economy
Department of Culture and Creative Industries

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of study: Informal institutions and their role in European Union cultural policy-making: a case study of the Council of the European Union's 2011-2014 Work Plan.

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore in more detail the way cultural policy is made in the European Union. More specifically, it has the following aims:

- To understand more about role of informal institutions in policy-making processes;
- To understand in more depth the relationships between EU organisations in the area of cultural policy;
- To explore a traditionally under-researched area of EU policy;
- To contribute to the debate concerning cultural policy's place in the field of political science and political approaches to the study of cultural policy.

This study is being undertaken as part of a doctorate degree in Cultural Policy and Management. The data collection part of the study will take place between April and October 2014.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited because you were a participant in a Culture OMC consultation/a staff member of the EYC Configuration in the Council/a staff member in the Cultural Policy unit in DG-EAC. Approximately 30 other participants will be involved.

Do I have to take part?

Participation is strictly voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. You are also free to avoid answering questions which are felt to be too intrusive or confidential.

What will happen if I take part?

- Participants will be invited to participate in a one-off semi-structured interview between April and October 2014.
- The approximate length of the interview will be one hour but may be shorter or longer at the discretion of the participant.
- The interview will take place at location chosen by the participant, most commonly, a workplace.

What do I have to do?

Participants are invited to answer questions regarding their role and involvement in the carrying out of Priority A of the 2011-2014 Work Plan. This will relate to an OMC consultation / policy making [depending on the individual].

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no identifiable disadvantages or risks in taking part; all responses will be kept in strict confidence and will be anonymous.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The research is expected to have a number of benefits, although with regards to research participants these will be indirect. Participants will be contributing to an academic study regarding cultural governance in the EU, which has important bearings for students of government and/or cultural policy and also for cultural and arts practitioners wishing to know more about the system.

What will happen when the research study stops?

The data is being stored securely in accordance with the university's regulations. Data will be kept for 1 year after project completion at which point it will be securely destroyed.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

- Yes. Only the researcher will have access to the data.
- Information will under no circumstances be shared across interviews.
- At transcription names will be anonymised. A master list will be kept in a locked cabinet that only the researcher has access to.
- Copies of audio files will be destroyed as soon as they have been transcribed.
- Anonymous transcriptions will be kept on a password-protected computer accessible only by the researcher.
- Data will be kept for up to 1 year after the completion of the research project at which point the transcription files and master list will be securely deleted and shredded.

What will happen to results of the research study?

The information gathered during the research study will form part of an original contribution to knowledge as published in a PhD thesis. All interview responses will remain confidential and anonymous throughout. **No names** will appear in the thesis or any related publication. On completion of the project, participants will be emailed a copy of the final thesis summary.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

The participant is free to withdraw from the study without an explanation or penalty at any time.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any problems, concerns or questions about this study, you can speak to the researcher. Participants with any further issues may contact Andy Pratt ([REDACTED]).

If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University complaints procedure. To complain about the study, you need to phone

+44 (0)20 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: *Informal institutions and their role in European Union cultural policy-making: a case study of the Council of the European Union's 2011-2014 Work Plan*.

You could also write to the Secretary at:

Anna Ramberg
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee
Research Office, E214
City University London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB
Email: [REDACTED]

City University London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you feel you have been harmed or injured by taking part in this study you may be eligible to claim compensation. This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for legal action.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been approved by City University London School of Arts & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Further information and contact details

Andy Pratt, Professor of Cultural Economy

Address:
AG15B, College Building
City University London
Northampton Square
London, UK
EC1V 0HB

Phone: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Informal institutions and their role in European Union cultural policy-making: a case study of the Council of the European Union's 2011-2014 Work Plan

Please initial box

1.	<p>I agree to take part in the above City University London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the participant information sheet, which I may keep for my records.</p> <p>I understand this will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being interviewed by the researcher • and allowing the interview to be audiotaped 	
2.	<p>This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand more about role of informal institutions in the policy-making process; • To understand in more depth the relationships between EU organisations in the area of cultural policy; • To explore a traditionally under-researched area of EU policy; • To contribute to the debate concerning cultural policy's place in the field of political science and political approaches to the study of cultural policy. <p>This study is being undertaken as part of a doctorate degree in Cultural Policy and Management.</p> <p>I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party. No identifiable personal data will be published. The identifiable data will not be shared with any other organisation.</p>	
3.	<p>I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.</p>	
4.	<p>I agree to City University London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.</p>	
5.	<p>I agree to take part in the above study.</p>	

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher file.

Project title: Informal institutions and their role in European Union cultural policy-making: a case study of the Council of the European Union's 2011-2014 Work Plan

Interview schedule (1): Commission officials (DG-EAC)

Pre-interview

- Explain project again briefly (~1 minute) and ensure that responses will remain confidential and anonymous.
- Recording: state that the interview is being recorded and obtain consent to do so.
- Review and sign consent form.

Introductory question

Could you tell me a bit about your responsibilities regarding the Work Plan/Priority A and what typical tasks carrying it out entails?

Main questions

- {subsidiarity} The divisions of power are split on the list between Member States & the Commission. How does this work in practice?
- {OMC} How exactly does OMC work? Is there any formal monitoring/liaison that takes place between the Commission and the groups?
- {cooperation} I'm interested in learning more about what kind of cooperation takes place between the Commission and the Council. How are the roles split in practice?
- One of the things I am interested in is the way decisions are made informally. Could you give me an example of this in X instance? (*refer specifically to decision made*)
- Who do you think is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Work Plan's priorities are carried out?

Final questions

- Is there anything else you can think of that might be relevant to understanding the way Priority A/the Work Plan is governed/administered?
- Is there anyone else you recommend I speak to regarding Priority A?

Project title: Informal institutions and their role in European Union cultural policy-making: a case study of the Council of the European Union's 2011-2014 Work Plan

Interview schedule (2): Council officials (EYC Configuration)

Pre-interview

- Explain project again briefly (~1 minute) and ensure that responses will remain confidential and anonymous.
- Recording: state that the interview is being recorded and obtain consent to do so.
- Review and sign consent form.

Introductory question

Could you tell me a bit about your responsibilities regarding the Work Plan/Priority A and what typical tasks carrying it out entails.

Main questions

- Could you tell me a little bit about how the document and policy priorities were created?
- {subsidiarity} The divisions of power are split on the list between Member States & the Commission, and the priorities agreed on by the Council. Could you tell me a bit more about how these responsibilities are divided? How does the cooperation work in practice?
- {OMC} How exactly does OMC work? Do you or any of your colleagues have interaction with the groups or influence in the outcome(s)?
- One of the things I am interested in is the way decisions are made informally. Could you give me an example of this in X instance? (*refer specifically to decision made*)
- Who do you think is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Work Plan's priorities are carried out?

Final questions:

- Is there anything else you can think of that might be relevant to understanding the way the Priority A is governed/administered?
- Is there anyone else you recommend I speak to regarding the Priority A?

Project title: Informal institutions and their role in European Union cultural policy-making: a case study of the Council of the European Union's 2011-2014 Work Plan.

Interview schedule (3): OMC participants

Pre-interview

- Explain project again briefly (~1 minute) and ensure that responses will remain confidential and anonymous.
- Recording: state that the interview is being recorded and obtain consent to do so.
- Review and sign consent form.

Introductory question

How did you come to be involved in this OMC consultation?

Main questions

- {subsidiarity} The divisions of power are split on the list between Member States & the Commission. How does this work in practice and where does your role fit in?
- {OMC} How does OMC work operate in this policy area? Is there any formal monitoring that takes place? How freely were you able to operate?
- Do OMC members disagree on many elements of discussion? How is consensus achieved?
- One of the things I am interested in is the way decisions are made informally and how consensus is achieved. Could you give me an example of this in X instance? (*refer specifically to decision made*)
- Who do you think is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the Work Plan's priorities are carried out?

Final questions:

- Is there anything else you can think of that might be relevant to understanding the way Priority A/the Work Plan is governed/administered?
- Is there anyone else you recommend I speak to regarding culture OMC?

Date 27 May 2016

To whom it may concern:

Principal Investigator: Kate Mattocks
Project Title: Informal institutions and their role in European Union cultural policy-making: a case study of the Council of the European Union's 2011-2014 Work Plan
Supervisors: Andy Pratt
Degree: PhD
Start Date: 1 April 2014
End Date: 31 October 2014
Approval Date: 13 March 2014

This is to confirm that the research proposal detailed above was granted formal approval by the MCCI Committee. CCI projects now fall under the remit of the Sociology Research Ethics Committee. Please note the following:

Project amendments

You will need to submit an Amendments Form to the Deputy Chair (diana.yeh@city.ac.uk) if you wish to make any of the following changes to your research:

- (a) recruit a new category of participants;
- (b) change, or add to, the research method employed;
- (c) collect additional types of data;
- (d) change the researchers involved in the project.

Adverse events

You will need to submit an Adverse Events Form to the Deputy Chair of the Committee (diana.yeh@city.ac.uk), copied to the Secretary of Senate Research Ethics Committee (Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk), in the event of any of the following:

- (a) adverse events;
- (b) breaches of confidentiality;
- (c) safeguarding issues relating to children and vulnerable adults;
- (d) incidents that affect the personal safety of a participant or researcher.

Issues (a) and (b) should be reported as soon as possible and no later than 5 days after the event. Issues (c) and (d) should be reported immediately. Where appropriate, the researcher should also report adverse events to other relevant institutions, such as the police or social services.

Should you have any further queries relating to this matter, then please do not hesitate to contact me. On behalf of the Sociology Research Ethics Committee, I hope that the project meets with success.

Kind regards



Dr Diana Yeh
Lecturer in Sociology, Culture and the Creative Industries
Deputy Chair of the Sociology Research Ethics Subcommittee
Department of Sociology
Rhind Building
City University London
Northampton Square
London, EC1V 0HB
Email: 



Senate Research Ethics Committee

**Project Amendments/Modifications
Request for Extension**

For use in the case of all research previously approved by City University London Senate Research Ethics Committee.

Completed forms should be returned to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee, Anna Ramberg, Research Office, Drysdale E214 (one hard copy with signatures plus one sent as an email attachment: please also enter the names of those signing the hard copy on the electronic version).

Note that you only have to respond to the sections relevant to you.

Details of Principal Investigator and Study

Name	Kate Mattocks
Address	Dept. of Culture & Creative Industries School of Arts and Social Sciences City University London
Telephone	[REDACTED]
Email	Email: [REDACTED]
Title of study	Intergovernmental cultural policy coordination in the European Union: the Open Method of Coordination and the 2011-2014 Work Plan for Culture (previous title: Informal institutions and their role in European Union cultural policy-making: a case study of the Council of the European Union's 2011-2014 Work Plan)
SREC reference number	N/A

Study Duration

Start Date	1 April 2014
End Date	30 March 2015

Project Amendments / Modifications

Type of modification/s (tick as appropriate)

Research procedure/protocol (including research instruments)	√
Participation group	
Information Sheet/s	
Consent form/s	
Other recruitment documents	
Sponsorship/collaborations	
Principal investigator/supervisor	
Extension to approval needed (extensions are given for one year)	√
Other	

Details of modification (give details of each of the amendments requested, state where the changes have been made and attach all amended and new documentation)

During my interviews with key actors in the EU's Open Method of Coordination, I met and spoke with several policy officers in the European Commission. During one of my interviews a policy officer suggested that it might be possible to observe a meeting of the Open Method of Coordination (this was only a suggestion at that time).

After my interviews finished, I began to explore this option in more detail. Observation was attractive to me in order to observe first-hand what goes on 'behind the scenes.' It also served to triangulate information with other sources (both policy documentation and interviews). In general, observation adds depth and provides deeper contextualization, thus improving reliability of data.

There was one OMC group in operation at the time. I know the name of the coordinating policy officer in charge (this was not the same officer who had suggested it before) and I explained to her what I was interested in doing. She was very encouraging and helpful and agreed that it would be possible if and only if all experts consented. She also provided me with a list of remaining meeting dates. Only one worked within my personal schedule and the timeline of this research (March 2015).

In order to get the approval of the group, I prepared a short description of who I was, what I was studying, and what I wanted to do. The policy officer distributed this message to all of the participating experts in order to obtain their consent. Everyone consented, and one week later I was given approval to attend (see attached email). From that point on I was also included in all of the group's emails.

Before I attended the meeting, I made a list of practical and ethical concerns and also discussed these with my supervisor, Andy Pratt. Because I had interviewed (over the phone) a few participants of this group, I was concerned with protecting the anonymity of those I had already spoken to (i.e. I did not want it to be obvious to the whole group who I had interviewed and who I hadn't, in order to make sure that no one could identify them in the final thesis). I did end up speaking to a few people that I had interviewed, but we spoke very generally and did not discuss the previous interview. Moreover, since I am using pseudonyms throughout the thesis, and have removed any identifying features in quotes and job descriptions, it is not possible to identify anyone in the final thesis or its associated publications.

I was also concerned about the blurring of boundaries between being a silent observer and what I knew will be inevitable that people would be naturally curious and ask questions about my research. I prepared in my mind a generic but not unhelpful answer to satisfy participations' curiosity, one that did not give too much away.

I was introduced to the group by the chair at the start of the day. For most of the time I simply sat in a corner of the room and observed unobtrusively. When the larger group split into smaller groups, I moved around and sat with each group for a short period of time. I did not participate at any stage of the discussions.

Over the day and a half of meetings, I took notes which included both procedural elements, i.e. what the group was doing, what type of discussions were taking place, how long each activity lasted, as well as my reflections and thoughts during this time. At the end of the second day I typed up my notes from these sessions. About a week after this I arranged my thoughts thematically based on the top 'observations' and how I thought this material worked with my previous findings from my interviews. As the observation took place over three months after I had done my final interview, a considerable amount of reflection and analysis had been done by that time.

At minimum, participant observation corroborated the material I already had. However, it also deepened and extended my understanding of the OMC considerably and therefore was an extremely valuable exercise.

Justify why the amendment/extension is needed (including the period of extension being requested)

The opportunity to observe a group in action arose after my interviews were completed; hence I did not include this in the original ethics application.

Period of extension requested

5 months – This particular meeting was in March 2015 (meaning that the total period of data gathering for my project is 12 months instead of 8).

Other information (provide any other information which you believe should be taken into account during ethical review of the proposed changes)

N/A

Change in the study team (if there is a new PI, please include a CV for the new PI)

Staff member

<i>Title, Name & Staff Number</i>	<i>Post</i>	<i>Dept & School</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>	<i>Date and type of CRB disclosure*</i>

Student

<i>Name & Student Number</i>	<i>Course / Year</i>	<i>Dept & School</i>	<i>Date and type of CRB disclosure*</i>
Kate Mattocks 130054359	PhD, 3 rd year	Culture & Creative Industries, School of Arts & Social Sciences	N/A

External co-investigator/s

<i>Title & Name</i>	<i>Post</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>	<i>Date and type of CRB disclosure*</i>

Declaration (to be signed by the Principal Investigator)

- I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information given above, together with any accompanying information, is complete and correct and I take full responsibility for it.

	Kate Mattocks	Andy C. Pratt
Principal Investigator(s) (student and supervisor if student project)		
Date	6 June 2016	

Date 7 June 2016

To whom it may concern:

Principal Investigator: Kate Mattocks
Project Title: Informal institutions and their role in European Union cultural policy-making: a case study of the Council of the European Union's 2011-2014 Work Plan
Supervisors: Andy Pratt
Degree: PhD

Ethics Approval for Project Amendment/Extension

Submitted: 6 June 2016
Approval Date: 7 June 2016

This is to confirm that the amendment/extension detailed above has been granted formal approval by the Sociology Research Ethics Committee. Please note the following:

Project amendments

You will need to submit an Amendments Form to the Chair ([REDACTED]) or Deputy Chair ([REDACTED]) if you wish to make any of the following changes to your research:

- (a) recruit a new category of participants;
- (b) change, or add to, the research method employed;
- (c) collect additional types of data;
- (d) change the researchers involved in the project.

Adverse events

You will need to submit an Adverse Events Form to the the Chair ([REDACTED]) or Deputy Chair of the Committee ([REDACTED]), copied to the Secretary of Senate Research Ethics Committee ([REDACTED]), in the event of any of the following:

- (a) adverse events;
- (b) breaches of confidentiality;
- (c) safeguarding issues relating to children and vulnerable adults;
- (d) incidents that affect the personal safety of a participant or researcher.

Issues (a) and (b) should be reported as soon as possible and no later than 5 days after the event. Issues (c) and (d) should be reported immediately. Where appropriate, the researcher should also report adverse events to other relevant institutions, such as the police or social services.

Should you have any further queries relating to this matter, then please do not hesitate to contact me. On behalf of the Sociology Research Ethics Committee, I hope that the project meets with success.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Dr Diana Yeh
Lecturer in Sociology, Culture and the Creative Industries
Deputy Chair of the Sociology Research Ethics Subcommittee
Department of Sociology
Rhind Building
City University London
Northampton Square
London, EC1V 0HB
Email: [REDACTED]

Appendix 6

Lists of OMC participants¹⁶⁸

Group 1

Experts

Country	Name
Austria	Barbara Neundlinger
Belgium	Elien Gillaerts
Belgium	France Lebon
Bulgaria	S. Hacheryan
Czech Republic	Barbora Novotna Katerina Dolezalova
Cyprus	C. Giangkou
Germany	Gabriele Pfenning Annette Schwandner Meike Ziegenmeier
Denmark	Thyge Moos
Estonia	Asta Trummel Tonu Lensment
Spain	Pilar Barraca de Ramos Carmen Zamora del Castillo
Finland	Lea Halttunen
Greece	Stella Chryssoulaki
Hungary	Ivan Ronai Gyorgy Erdős Gabor Balogh A. Balasz
Ireland	Jenny Siung
Italy	Erminia Sciacchitano
Lithuania	P. Ramune V. Grazieme
Malta	C. Serracino
Netherlands	Jan Jaap Knol Martin Prchal
Poland	Joanna Orlik
Portugal	Manuel Rocha
Sweden	Anna Sellvag
Slovenia	Nataša Bucik

Invited representatives from civil society platforms

- Platform Access to Culture: Miguel Angel Martin Ramos, Eva Nunes, Giannalia Cogliandro, Katherine Heid, Luca Bergamo
- Platform Intercultural Europe: Sabine Frank.

Invited guests

¹⁶⁸ Please note: all of this information is public and is copied from the three OMC reports themselves.

- Anne Bamford
- Anne Krebs, Musee du Louvre
- Mireille Guerre, Theatre des Bernardines, France
- Monika Jeschko, Wiener Konzerthaus
- Caroline Rota, SUPERAR, Austria
- Cristina da Milano, ECCOM
- Birgitta Englin, Riksteatern, Sweden
- Vanessa Rawlings-Jackson, Cultivate, UK
- Sari Salovaara, Culture for all, Finland
- Anne Godenir and Catherine Stercq, Lire et ecrire, Belgium
- Jesus Maria Carrillo Castillo, Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid
- Anja van Keulen, Amsterdam Concertbouw
- Teunis Ijdens, the Netherlands
- Ulrike Giesner-Bogner, Kultur-kontakt, Austria
- Peter Inkei, Budapest Observatory
- Laura Lugg, AHRC, UK

Group 2

Experts

Country	Name	Organisation	Function
Austria	Monika KALISTA	Regional Government of Salzburg	Head of Unit Culture, Society, Generations
Austria	Heidemarie MEISSNITZER	Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU	Counsellor for Cultural Affairs
Austria	Anne WIEDERHOLD	Brunnenpassage	Artistic Director
Belgium	Sabine DE VILLE	ASBL Culture et Democratie et Consultante en Mediation culturelle	Presidente
Belgium	Andre SOMMERLATTE	Abteilung für kulturelle und soziale Angelegenheiten (Medien) – Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft	Media Officer
Belgium	Pascal VERSCHUERE	Department for Culture, Youth, Sports & Media (Flemish Government)	Policy Officer
Bulgaria	Silva HACHERIAN	Ministry of Culture	Head of Unit Regional Activities, Cultural Policy Directorate
Germany	Gabriele PFENNINGS	Federal Government of Germany	Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media
Denmark	Annette KORNERUP	Danish Ministry of Culture	Head of Section
Estonia	Airiin LEHTMETS	Estonian Ministry of Culture	-
Estonia	Jevgeni ŽURJARI-OSSIPOV	Estonian Ministry of Culture	Senior Specialist of Cultural Diversity Department
Spain	Guillermo KURZ	Regional Government of Extremadura	Director, Museo Arqueologico Provincial de Badajoz.
Spain	Pilar FATAS	Spanish Ministry of Culture	Deputy Director, Museo de Altamira
Spain	Ana AZOR LACASTA	Spanish Ministry of Culture	Counsellor. Directorate General for Fine Arts

			and Cultural Assets
Finland	Ahmed AL-NAWAS	Culture For All – Service	Cultural Diversity Advisor
France	Helene HATZFELD	Ministry of Culture and Communication	Policy Officer, General Secretary, Research, Higher Education and Technology Board
Greece	Maria FAKIOLA	Ministry of Culture & Sports (Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage Department of Intercultural Issues)	Expert
Croatia	Deborah HUSTIC	Ministry of Culture	Senior adviser, Head of Department for Cultural Policy Coordination
Hungary	Veronika TOTH	Ministry of Human Resources	Chief Counsellor
Ireland	Derval O'CARROLL	Chester Beatty Library	Head of Operations
Ireland	Jenny SIUNG	Chester Beatty Library	Head of Education Services
Italy	Emilio CABASINO	Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism	Government Official, General Secretariat, National Contact Point for 2005 Unesco Convention
Lithuania	Birute KAZLAUSKIENE	Ministry of Culture	Chief Specialist, National Minorities Affairs Division
Latvia	Dagnija BALTINA	Latvia National Commission for UNESCO	Secretary General
Netherlands	Femie WILLEMS	Cultural Participation Fund	Programme Coordinator
Netherlands	Mirjam SHATANAWI	Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam	Curator
Poland	Hanna JEĐRAS	Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, International Cooperation Department	Head Expert
Poland	Marcin KOMOSA	Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, State Patronage Department	Head Expert
Portugal	Lurdes CAMACHO	Ministry of Culture	Head of Department

Romania	Andrei DIACONESCUANDREI	Ministry of Culture and National Heritage	Public Manager
Romania	Raluca CAPOTA	Ministry of Culture and National Heritage	Expert
Sweden	Marten LEMPERT	Swedish Arts Council	Administrative Officer
Slovenia	Sonja KRALJ BERVAR ¹⁶⁹	Ministry of Culture	Secretary
Slovenia	Lydia SUCHOVA	Ministry of Culture	Expert
United Kingdom	Hillary BAUER	Former Head of Cultural Property and International, UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport	Cultural Expert

Independent expert

Chris TORCH, Intercult

Guest experts

- Nick LIVINGSTON (IE) Director of Strategic Development, Arts Council of Northern Ireland
- Roisin MCDONOUGH (IE) [*sic*] Chief Executive, Arts Council of Northern Ireland
- Krzysztof CZYŻEWSKI (PL) The Borderland Centre
- Simona BODO (IT) Independent researcher and advisor Creator and editor of ‘Patrimonio e Intercultura’
- Regis COCHEFERT (UK) The Paul Hamlyn Institute, Roundhouse Studios
- Antonis PANAYIOTOU (UK) The UK Arts Council – Decibel Performing Arts Showcase
- Sophie ALEXANDRE (BE) Manager/coordinator of the *Reseau des Arts a Bruxelles*
- Danny OP DE BEECK (BE) KVS
- Willy THOMAS (BE) TokTockKnock
- Alexandre CAPUTO (BE) Theatre National
- Marc TRULLEMANS (BE) Actiris
- Nasseem KHAN (UK) Independent expert
- Leen DE SPIEGELARE (BE) Manager/coordinator of Brussels Kunstenoverleg
- Marta STRAHINIČ (SI) Metlika Library

¹⁶⁹ Group chair

Group 3

Experts

Country	Name	Organisation
Austria	Barbara Neundlinger	KulturKontakt Austria
Austria	Heidi Meissnitzer	Standige Vertretung Osterreichs bei der EU Permanent Representation of Austria to the European Union
Belgium - Flanders	Christine Debaene	Department of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media
Belgium - Flanders	Brecht Demeulenaere ¹⁷⁰	Flemish Ministry of Education and Training
Belgium - Flanders	Wouter Van den Driessche	Department of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media
Belgium - Flanders	Marijke Verdoodt	Department of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media
Belgium - French	Isabelle Letawe	Ministere de la Communaute francaise
Belgium - French	Nicolas Van De Velde	Ministere de la Communaute francaise, cellule Culture-Enseignement
Cyprus	Andri Hadjigeorgiou	Ministry of Education and Culture
Cyprus	Chrystalla Petridou	Counsellor for Education, Youth, Culture, Sports and audiovisual, PR of Cyprus to the EU
Czech Republic	Michaela Přilepkova	National Information and Consulting Centre for Culture
Czech Republic	Kristyna Žůrkova	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
Germany	Angela Murr	Centre for Art and Intermedia Design in Schools Baden-Wuerttemberg (ZKIS)
Germany	Gabriele Pfennings	Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung fur Kultur und Medien
Germany	Matthias Wolf	Ministerium fur Kultur, Jugend und Sport
Denmark	Ole Winther	Danish Agency for Culture
Estonia	Asta Trummel	Estonian Ministry of Culture
Greece	Stella Chryssoulaki	26th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities/Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports
Spain	Maria Angeles Gil Blanco	Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport
Finland	Mikko Hartikainen	Finnish National Board of Education
Finland	Elisse Heinimaa	Aalto University of Helsinki
France	Elizabeth Ladrat	Ministry of Culture and Communication
France	Francois Marie	Ministry of Culture and Communication

¹⁷⁰ Co-chair.

Croatia	Deborah Hustić	Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia
Croatia	Maja Zrnčić	Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia
Hungary	Edina Elter	Permanent Representation of Hungary
Hungary	Zoltan Pompor	Hungarian Institute of Educational Research and Development
Hungary	Borbala Pribay	Ministry of Human Capacities, Department for Cultural Relations
Ireland	Jenny Siung	Chester Beatty Library, Dublin
Italy	Giuliana De Francesco	Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism
Lithuania	Vaiva Lankelienė	Ministry of Culture
Lithuania	Dalia Šiaulytienė	Ministry of Education and Science
Latvia	Jolanta Klišāne	Latvian National Centre for Culture
Latvia	Baiba Moļņika	Latvian National Commission for UNESCO
Malta	John Attard	Department of Curriculum Management, Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education, Ministry for Education and Employment
Netherlands	Jan Jaap Knol ¹⁷¹	Netherlands Fund for Cultural Participation
Netherlands	Ronald Kox	National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts (LKCA)
Netherlands	Ocker Van Munster	National Centre of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts (LKCA)
Poland	Magdalena Ozimek	Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
Poland	Danuta Pusek	Ministry of National Education
Portugal	Elisa Marques	Arts Education Team of the Directorate General of Education, Ministry of Education and Science
Portgual	Maria de Assis Swinnerton	Gulbenkian Foundation
Romania	Rodica Diana Cherciu	Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, Department of Preuniversity Education
Romania	Marlena Minea	Ministry of Culture of Romania, Directorate for Cultural Heritage
Sweden	Anna Dammert	Swedish Ministry of Education and Research
Sweden	Carin Khakee	Swedish Ministry of Culture
Sweden	Margareta Wiman	Swedish Ministry of Education and Research
Slovenia	Nataša Bucik	Ministry of Culture, Creativity Directorate
Slovenia	Nada Požar Matijašič	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

¹⁷¹ Co-chair

Slovenia	Barbara Rogelj	Cankarjev dom, Culture and Congress Centre
Slovakia	Zuzana Komarova	Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic
Slovakia	Jaroslava Markofova	National Curriculum Board, National Pedagogic Institute
Slovakia	Kalman Petocz	National Institute for Education

External experts who have supported the work of the group throughout the whole cycle

- Mr Ernst Wagner, Coordinator of the UNESCO Chair in Arts and Culture in Education at the Friedrich-Alexander-University of Erlangen-Nuremberg
- Mr Lode Vermeersch, Senior Researcher, HIVA – Research Institute for Work and Society (University of Leuven), Department of Educational Sciences (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Other experts who have been invited to meetings on an *ad hoc* basis

- Ms Anne Bamford, Director, Engine Room and Professor at the University of the Arts, London
- Ms Annemies Broekgaarden, Head of Public and Education, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam and President of the International Association for Children in Museums
- Mr Jonzi D., Artistic Director, Breakin' Convention, London
- Mr Pedro De Bruyckere, Educational Scientist, Teacher and Researcher
- Ms Caroline Kearney, Education Research Analyst, European Schoolnet
- Ms Joan Parr, Chair, ACEnet network
- Mr Henry Thomas, Head of World Arts and Cultures (1997-2012), United World College of the Adriatic
- Mr Barend van Heusden, Professor and Researcher, University of Groningen
- Mr Michael Wimmer, General Manager, EDUCULT

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