Administrative Rivalry in the Council's Infrastructure: Diagnosing the Methods of Community in EU Decision-Making

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Introduction

The Council of Ministers is the EU institution exhibiting the most direct expression of national interests and power. But the image of the Council as a hard bargaining, intergovernmental forum can be seriously misleading. This is because the Council is also a collective decision-making system with its own rules, norms, and organizational culture (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997; Wessels 1991). As I have shown in a detailed survey of the Council's Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper) -- the cadre of diplomats with *de facto* decision-making authority spread across the spectrum of EU affairs -- there is an identifiable nucleus of community within the Council system where a particular style of making decisions has evolved (Lewis 1998a).[1] This decision-making style is characterized by five main features: diffuse reciprocity, thick trust, mutual responsiveness, a consensus-reflex, and a culture of compromise. Taken together, these features, or "methods of community," endow the EU bargaining context with a rich normative environment that cannot be explained away as epiphenomenal or a mere lubricant to intergovernmental negotiation. These methods of community suggest a need to reevaluate our theories of EU decision-making and to develop more nuanced models which can take into account the sociality and normative environment in which interests are defined and defended. But to what extent are these general methods of bargaining and negotiation in the Council? Do different levels of the Council's internal "hierarchy" and different preparatory committees reveal systematic variation on these attributes? Are the methods of community found in Coreper 'localized' phenomena, unique attributes held by a few key personalities, or a 'thick' case of more general theories of international negotiation and cooperation?

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[1] Based on 82 interviews, conducted primarily at the permanent representations in Brussels during 1996 and 1997. Interviews were conducted at 11 of the 15 permanent representations; Italy, Ireland, Finland and Greece were the only delegations not included due to time constraints.

To address this puzzle, I have organized this paper into two main sections. In the first, I will summarize the main empirical findings from a research project on Coreper's role in EU decision-making. Drawing from a series of empirical case studies, I present evidence which supports the existence of a distinct bargaining style in Coreper.[2] In the second, I will extend these findings to a more tentative set of comparisons with the other preparatory bodies within the Council's infrastructure. This comparison will reveal that the Council's administrative infrastructure contains a fairly robust level of intra- and interadministrative rivalry -- and that of the other EU committees, only the Economic and Finance Committee (formerly the Monetary Committee) approximates the dense norms of interaction, thick trust, and culture of compromise found in Coreper. In a nutshell, this paper is designed to extend a series of findings on Coreper to broader generalizations about decision-making styles in the Council and how different preparatory bodies cooperate and compete in this system.

I. Coreper and EU Decision-Making

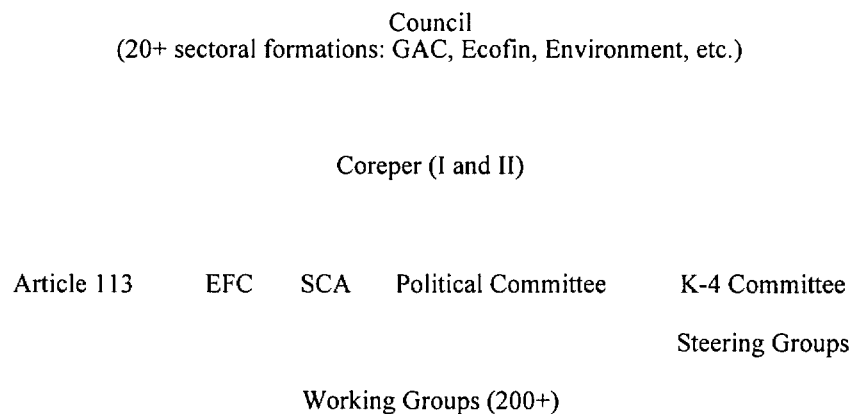*A. What is Coreper? Some Basic Mechanics*

The Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper) is the main preparatory body for the EU Council of Ministers, meeting weekly in Brussels to discuss the agendas of upcoming ministerial meetings.[3] As Wessels (1991: 134) has pointed out, the Council is a "legal fiction" in the sense that there is not one Council, but a large number of functionally organized Councils based on their own composition of national ministers, agendas, work schedules, and even "idiosyncratic working practices" (Westlake 1995:

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[2] The four case studies include: the 1994 local elections directive, the 1996 EU countermeasures to the US Helms-Burton Act, post-1989 health and safety legislation, and the 1993 working time directive. Summaries of the cases can be found in Lewis (1998a: chapter 1).

[3] Since ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and the creation of the European Union, the Council of Ministers has officially been renamed the Council of the European Union. To avoid confusion with the European Council system of biannual summits, I refer to the old usage of the Council of Ministers throughout.

xxiii). Thus the Council of Ministers is actually composed of over twenty different sectoral formations. While the "ministerial meetings are at the apex of the Council machinery" (Nugent 1991: 103), this is only the tip of the iceberg of a much deeper and more extensive structure of national officials and administrations. In terms of structural placement, Coreper occupies a central position in the decision-making system of the EU. In effect, the permanent representatives form a collective bottle-neck through which work of the Council flows.

Figure 1: Levels in the Council Hierarchy

Council
(20+ sectoral formations: GAC, Ecofin, Environment, etc.)

Coreper (I and II)

Article 113   EFC   SCA   Political Committee   K-4 Committee

Steering Groups

Working Groups (200+)

Taken together, this is a highly complex system involving thousands of national officials, hundreds of decisions, and spread across a wide-range of issue-areas and policy-sectors. Enter the permanent representatives committee. The most basic function of Coreper is to serve as a process-manager in this decision-making system. The result is a unique institutional vantage point in the Council hierarchy. Vertically located between the experts and the ministers, the permanent representatives are *also* horizontally placed to work across different policy sectors (even pillars) in order to prepare each agenda item for each of the twenty-plus sectoral formations of the Council.[4]

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[4] The major exception to this is agriculture, which has its own preparatory body, the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) (for more on the SCA, see below).

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In January 1962, Coreper was divided into parts I and II.[5] Four years after the creation of a permanent Brussels-based preparatory body, the ambassadors had already reached their capacity to handle the workload and growing number of technical issues on the Council's agenda. As a result, the Permanent Representatives Committee was divided into the ambassadors (often referred to as the permanent representatives) (Coreper II) and the deputy permanent representatives (Coreper I).[6] A further division of labor had already taken place in July 1960 with the creation of the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA). The SCA was created to oversee the implementation and administration of the Common Agricultural Policy, which involved far more technical and specialized issues than the ambassadors felt willing to handle.

The distinction between Coreper I and II was not intended as a hierarchical division; instead, it was meant to correspond with the division of the Council's agenda: Part I of the Council agenda contained the more technical issues, and Part II tended to include the more sensitive "political" issues. Over the years, this functional division of labor has worked quite successfully. The two formations of Coreper now work essentially independently of each other, reporting directly to the ministerial formations of the Council which they are responsible for. There is a slight distinction of prestige between the ambassadors and deputies, with the ambassadors generally holding "greater political weight" (Hayes-Renshaw 1990: 127). The important point here is that stable functional lines of responsibility between the two formations of Coreper were well established as early as the mid-1960s and this bifurcation contributes to the efficiency of managing the twenty-odd sectoral formations of the Council.

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[5] Based on a proposal from French Ambassador Jean-Marc Boegner.

[6] My own references to the "permanent representatives" refer to both the ambassadors and deputies, unless noted otherwise.

For the permanent representatives, negotiation is a way of life. "Committee members eat, drink, and breathe EU issues seven days a week," as Lionel Barber (1995) has put it. Concurrent negotiations, high issue density, and cross-sectoral issue aggregation are the hallmarks of this diplomatic forum. Consider the following features:

- Weekly Coreper agendas can cover as many as six upcoming Councils.

- Agendas may include upwards of 50 individual items.[7] Specific issues or dossiers for negotiation and discussion range between 8 and 20 (i.e. part II of the agenda), and toward the end of a presidency the number of active files requiring attention can be significantly higher.

- Negotiating sessions take place at a high level of (cross-sectoral) issue aggregation. A typical agenda for Coreper II may range from the discussion of countervailing duties on Bulgarian coal imports to foreign policy in Bosnia in a single morning.[8] Or the deputies may go from discussing EU energy efficiency requirements for household refrigerators to a Community strategy on climate change.[9]

- Although they never formally "vote," the permanent representatives take decisions all the time. Hard to quantify, voting in Coreper on issues which are passed to the ministers as 'A points' has become a critical part of the EU's performance.[10] To understand the speed and efficiency with which the 1992 Project came to life, namely the adoption of 282 directives identified in the 1985 White Paper, one has to understand the accretion of *de facto* legislative competencies which Coreper I assumed in their preparations for Internal Market Councils during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Likewise, in Coreper II, the ambassadors have acquired a reputation for handling issues 'too hot' for the ministers to handle, from extradition to CFSP financing to voting rights for EU citizens.

- Between Coreper meetings and the various Council sessions they attend with their ministers, permanent representatives spend well over a hundred days out of the year together. This is pronounced toward the end of a presidency, when, as one participant put it, "we see more of each other than our spouses and families."[11] This leads to a

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[7] Of course, this includes a number of routine and procedural items (under part I of the agenda) such as the adoption of draft minutes of Council minutes, Council replies to written questions from the EP, the appointment of members to advisory committees and other staff to EU institutions, and the formal adoption of legislation in the official languages of the EU following translation and approval by the legal services. Understanding the substantive and qualitative value-added of Coreper deliberations requires more than looking at quantitative estimates of their workload, although this does provide a rough empirical indicator of the scope of Coreper's responsibilities.

[8] Interview, Brussels, March 1996.

[9] Example taken from the provisional agenda of the 1679th meeting of Coreper (part I) on Tuesday and Wednesday, December 12-13, 1995.

[10] A-points are "Agreed Points" adopted by the Council *en bloc* and without discussion. The portion of the ministers' agenda (Part B) which does include items for discussion are called B-points. Article 2(6) of the Council's Rules of Procedure states, "the provisional agenda shall be divided into Part A and Part B. Items for which approval of the Council is possible without discussion shall be included in Part A."

[11] Interview, Brussels, May 1996.

self-characterization by Committee members of Coreper as "club-like" or a "family club."[12] In short, they know each other extremely well, and this often leads to a mutual respect because of the workload, time pressures, and decisional demands which they must live with.

These are some of the more basic qualities of Coreper's weekly routine. How is Coreper organized? One of the most surprising initial observations of Coreper from an 'outsider', academic perspective is that Coreper purposely tries to lead a very quiet life. The operative slogans of the EU's post-Maastricht era - transparency, openness, oversight - sound foreign and out-of-place when describing the permanent representatives committee. As others have noted, Coreper is more like an "exclusive male club"[13] with an "accent on classical diplomacy" (Barber 1995: I). Committee meetings are not public and negotiations are confidential.[14] The primary record of meetings are the reports on each dossier by the Council General Secretariat and sent up to the ministers in Council. Attendance is restricted.[15] Discussions are conducted in either French, English, or German, which helps to create a more cohesive negotiating atmosphere than what is generally found at the level of the ministers.[16] For example, new participants in Coreper are often surprised at the collegiality of this *corps diplomatique*, struck perhaps by the German ambassador telling a joke in French, the sense of humor involved when a

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[12] Interviews, Brussels, February and March 1996. See also, de Bassompierre (1988: 11).

[13] The only exception to date is Judith Gebethroithner, the current Austrian Deputy Permanent Representative.

[14] Representatives from the Council General Secretariat are responsible for transcribing minutes which must be approved by the Committee, but no verbatim report is made. The minutes are generally approved as Roman " I" points at the beginning of Coreper meetings, sometimes six months or even several years later, a reflection that they are generally regarded by delegations as an " unavoidable but unimportant formality" (Westlake 1995: 291).

[15] The Commission is represented in Coreper II by the Deputy Secretary-General and by the Director for the Directorate for Relations with the Council in Coreper I. The Council General Secretariat is represented by the Secretary-General in Coreper II and the relevant Director-General for the policy-area being discussed in Coreper I. Several members of the Council Legal Service are also always present to answer procedural and legal questions when they arise.

[16] This norm dates back to the Spaak Committee and the Val Duchesse negotiations, where only French and German was used (de Zwaan 1995: 148, fn. 288).

delegation's position becomes isolated, or the frankness of discussion even on issues which deal with national political sensitivities.[17]

Upon closer inspection then, there is a rationality behind this desire for Coreper to lead a quiet life. The reason for this aversion to the flashbulbs and fanfare which are found at the other sites of EU decision-making (e.g. the Council of Ministers or the high-profile European Council summits) is that Coreper, according to one ambassador, "works because there are no spotlights on it."[18] How this insulation and embedded autonomy came to be is a complicated and long story, but for the present purposes what is crucially important is that by default or design, Coreper's institutional form and organizational purpose is based on a shared responsibility to find solutions and make a success out of the Council as a whole. To put it differently, Coreper's role in maintaining the Community and Union's single institutional framework is deeply ingrained in the contemporary EU's decision-making machinery and interinstitutional balance. Because the permanent representatives are above all *de facto* decision-makers - defusing or solving problems, adopting agreements, reaching compromises - which are then routinely endorsed by the ministers as A-points.

B. Intergovernmental and Sociological Institutionalist Images of Decision-Making

In the prevalent intergovernmental image of EU decision-making, outcomes are determined by relative power, the formal decision-rule, utilitarian interest calculations, and strategic rationality. Also common to this image, research in this vein is premised on an ontology of exogenously given identities and interests. The result is a unidirectional causal chain beginning with the preferences of societal actors and powerful domestic

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[17] Examples taken from various interviews, Brussels, February and March 1996.

[18] Interview, Brussels, July 1996.

constituencies and translated through the state to the national interests and positions which are then represented in Brussels negotiations.[19] My argument is that this image is incomplete. In particular, I have advanced an alternative image of EU decision-making, one where sociality and the density of the normative environments affects bargaining outcomes by constructing interests and identities in the first place. Borrowing from other IR theorists working in this tradition, such as Peter Katzenstein and Martha Finnemore, I refer to this as the sociological institutionalist image. Where the intergovernmental image emphasizes individual, strategic rationality and the asymmetrical advantages of relative power, the sociological institutionalist image stresses collective, communicative rationality and a culture of compromise where the reflex to behave consensually has become more instinct than ideal. Where the former explains behavior by the logic of consequentiality, the latter finds the logic of appropriateness and norms of obligatory action equally, if not more important. While the sociological image does not ignore the importance of relative power and materialist conceptions of interests, the power of good arguments and the normative processes of persuasion are seen as a great equalizer which can be wielded by tiny Luxembourg to equal effect as Germany, France, or Britain. In sum, a sociological image of the Council can explain practices, decisional sequences, and interinstitutional relationships which remain blindspots or anomalies in the intergovernmental image.

There are important precursors of the sociological institutionalist image of EU decision-making. The pioneers are the neofunctionalist researchers of the 1960s and 1970s who scoped out the emergence of EC/EU as a collective decision-making system with its own bargaining and decision-making norms and "rules of the game." This body of research produced important insights regarding the capacity of national actors participating in this system to develop new perspectives, such as Lindberg's (1963: 286)

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[19] For a representative summary of this ontological position, see Moravcsik (1998) and Milner (1997: 60-65).

identification of a "Community-mindedness," and through a number of socializing mechanisms, "internalize" the habitus of cooperation accumulated at the European level. More contemporary strands of research also find support for a sociological image of EU decision-making. For example, in his classic survey of the Council, Wolfgang Wessels (1991: 149) argues, "Beyond the legal criteria, the horizontal and vertical differentiation as well as the dynamics of decisionmaking and the interaction style of the Council would make it more appropriate to characterize this evolution as an "amalgamation" of the national system into a new common system with its own competencies, institutions, and procedures." Based on extensive research, Fiona Hayes-Renshaw and Helen Wallace (1995, 1997) also present a more sociological image of the Council. In particular, they point out, "decision-makers in the Council...become locked into the collective process...this does not mean that the participants have transferred loyalties to the EU system, but it does mean that they acknowledge themselves in certain crucial ways as being part of a collective system of decision-making."[20]

Coreper does not fit into the typical intergovernmental-supranational dichotomy of integration theories. Likewise, it is difficult to type-cast the permanent representatives as either national or supranational actors -- they are neither and both at the same time.[21] There is a good reason for Coreper's chimerical and enigmatic appearance, because it operates at the nexus of the Community and national levels. As such, Coreper is a key site in the production and maintenance of a community-method, characterized by a dynamic process of *l'engrenage*, a shared mutual purpose to understand each others problems, and a context of interaction where compromise is part of the organizational culture and accommodation is an art form.

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[20] Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (1995: 564). For other assessments of the Council which support the sociological image, see Lequesne (1993); Sbragia (1993, 1994); Edwards (1996); Van Schendelen (1996).

[21] In earlier writings, I have pointed out the relevance of the "Janus face" metaphor, which some permanent representatives themselves use to describe their job functions. See Lewis (1998b).

C. The Institutionalization and Practices of a Community-Method

There are very few extended studies of what a community-method means in the context of EU decision-making.[22] This is somewhat odd given the multitude of references to a community-method interspersed throughout the literature on European integration. While some associate the idea of community-method narrowly with the neofunctionalist theory of integration, others seem to use it broadly as whatever is distinctive about the EU relative to other international organizations. The rotating EU presidency, for example, is often cited as a source of community-method or leadership. The Commission's right of initiative is another. Over time, the mileage of this term has tended to cancel out any real conceptual advances. Writing in 1977, Webb found that the concept of a community-method had "become the 'catch-all' for whatever is thought to constitute the European Communities' distinctiveness in international politics" (14).

But there is potential value-added to revisit the concept of a community-method as a distinct style of decision-making and quality of the negotiating context in the Council. While I have focused on the set of methods observed in Coreper, I do not deny the existence of other possible candidates. I would concede that multiple sources and types of a community-method or "spirit" can be identified, with Coreper only one of many possibilities. But in focusing on Coreper, I have documented that even here, in this seemingly intergovernmental bargaining forum, *par excellence*, we see a more complex and communitarian pattern. Before reviewing these findings in light of the case evidence, I offer a broader sampling of possible sources of a community-method. Figure 2 provides a set of examples categorized by the degree of institutionalization and the level of interaction.

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[22] Various references to a "community-method" can be found in Webb (1977: 13-15); Pentland (1973: 134). In the negotiation literature, there are also accounts of a "Community spirit" or *l'espirit communautaire*. See for example, Iklé (1964: 118-21).

Figure 2: Types/Sources of Community Method in the EU

density/degree of institutionalization	low	medium	high

level of interaction

	low	medium	high
bilateral	France-UK (annual summit)	Spain-Portugal	France-Germany (biannual summits, EMS, Genscher-Colombo initiative)
plurilateral	"Troika"[23] EU Christian Democratic forum (annual summits)[24]	Nordics (Nordic Union)[25]	Benelux as "guardians of the community spirit"[26]
EU-level	Council General-Secretariat most ad hoc working groups	EU presidency EFC/Monetary Committee certain working groups (e.g. wine, internal market for horizontal issues)	Coreper Antici and Mertens groups Commission (overall as guardian of the "community interest", with variation by DG and *Cabinet*)

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[23] In the early 1980s, the "troika" was established to provide more continuity in the rotation of the EU presidency, by holding meetings between the presidency-in-office with the preceding and succeeding presidencies (Article J.5(3) TEU). The troika can facilitate "evolving programs" such as the efforts by the German, French, Spanish, and Italian presidencies to develop a blueprint for the implementation of the single market. Following the most recent round of enlargement, the troika rotation was designed to always include at least one larger member-state. A newer development are the occasional meetings in "piatnika" form which encompasses five successive presidencies, giving rise to suggestions of further institutionalizing the idea of team presidencies. See for example, Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (1997: 296).

[24] This informal grouping of EU Christian Democratic leaders generally meets annually. Normally maintaining a low political profile, in March 1997, they created quite a stir when they "delivered an unequivocal rebuff to Turkey's renewed bid to join the EU" (Financial Times, March 5, 1997). At a Brussels summit which included the Heads of Government from Germany, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, and Spain, the group issued a statement that it was "not acceptable" for Turkey to become an EU member-state. The president of the European Union of Christian Democrats, Wim van Welzen, claimed the reason was because the EU had cultural, humanitarian, and Christian values which were different from Turkey (ibid.). This caused an angry reaction in Ankara, with the local media citing a "Christian alliance against Turkey" (Financial Times, March 25, 1997; International Herald Tribune, March 17, 1997).

[25] Good summaries of Nordic regionalism in relation to the EU can be found in Waever (1992); J. Laursen (1994).

[26] For a more detailed discussion, see de Schoutheete (1990).

This set of categories is not intended to be exhaustive, but suggestive of the different kinds of interaction contexts where methods of community are located. The intention is to provide a template of relationships and institutional settings which can be compared against the pattern found in Coreper.

D. Performance Norms and The Community-Method

The decision-making style found in Coreper is characterized by a dense normative environment and a set of obligatory norms which define the equivalent of what can be thought of as 'best practices' and degrees of 'appropriateness' in modal state behavior. I have called these "performance" norms because they explain features of Coreper's decision-making style which contribute to the maintenance of the output and performance of the Council as a whole. In causal language, the five performance norms have an independent effect on bargaining outcomes (see Figure 3). Briefly, I provide of a summary of each method.

Figure 3: Five "Performance" Norms in Coreper

diffuse reciprocity

thick trust

mutual responsiveness

consensus-reflex

culture of compromise

Diffuse Reciprocity. A norm of generalized reciprocity and a diffuse balancing of

concessions is the first performance variable found in Coreper.[27] Diffuse reciprocity is a

form of "social capital" which extends the shadow of the future and is reinforced weekly

by the horizontal nature of Coreper agendas. What one participant called the "reciprocal

scratching of backs" can take many forms: from concessions and derogations to a kind of

self-restraint which can facilitate bargains and help build credit for the future. The deputy

of one of the newest member-states told me, "There is now a [national] interest even on

things we are indifferent to. So we now say, 'what is our interest to support the Dutch

here'?"[28] In short, diffuse reciprocity and a long shadow of the future are staple features

in Coreper's decision-making style.[29] One ambassador acknowledged:

If you help someone they will remember. There is an institutional memory within the
possibilities available. For example, 'Of course the Spaniards argument on olive oil is
very convincing...' - these kinds of gestures, on where [sic] we may not have a strong
position, these gestures occur on a weekly basis.[30]

Likewise, a deputy noted:

The reciprocal scratching of backs is important...One week it is country "X" with bloody
silly instructions, and who needs a concession, and next week it is county "Y".[31]

It is here that the permanence and long-term relations of Committee members meeting

each week translate into an important processual mechanism in negotiations on specific

dossiers. Diffuse reciprocity at this level can translate into several different things from

concessions to derogations, or even a permanent representative "going out on a limb" to

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[27] Lewis (1998a: 174-76).

[28] Interview, Brussels, May 1996.

[29] Other research has recently started to pick up on the importance of this feature in Coreper. Héritier et al. (1996: 18) argues that Coreper "appears to have developed a peer-consciousness that is oriented on such ideas of fairness and keeps alive the memory of advance concessions." And Schmidt (1995: 4) points out that "with diffuse reciprocity...distributional issues receive less attention, facilitating negotiations." For a more theoretical conceptualization of diffuse reciprocity, see Keohane (1986); and Larson (1988); for an empirical application, see Goldstein and Pevehouse (1997).

[30] Interview, Brussels, May 1996.

[31] Interview, Brussels, March 1996.

recommend back to their capital for changes or persuading their minister to see the merits of a compromise proposal. The norm of diffuse reciprocity can also instill a sense of self-restraint in the kinds of demands and outcomes a delegation pushes for; abstentions, for example, rather than a veto, is one form of self-restraint which can facilitate bargains and help build "credit" for future negotiations where mutual accommodation is possible. Abstaining, rather than saying "no" with a veto, is a "political gesture" which the others will file away and may one day return in kind.[32] And unlike other preparatory organs such as the SCA which practices specific reciprocity, the balancing of concessions and the expectation that all will profit in the long-run is spread across a range of issue-areas and functional contexts. This diffuse form of reciprocity is reinforced weekly by the horizontal nature of Coreper agendas, and the commonly cited observation by participants that when dealing with this many subjects no one can expect to be a *demandeur* every time and still expect any kind of understanding that their needs are not being met.

Although some participants claimed reciprocal concessions are often traded, such as the ambassador who stated " We deal...by saying 'if you give me what I need on Article 3, we will drop our reserve on Article 5',"[33] direct evidence of this pattern is difficult to marshal. Individual case studies did reveal numerous indirect examples of diffuse reciprocity. Within the health and safety 'daughter' directives, we saw evidence of diffuse reciprocity in the young people case, where the British were granted a four year derogation despite being isolated under the shadow of the vote. We also saw a violation of this norm in the case of working time, where numerous concessions to Britain implicitly rested on their reciprocal acceptance of the 118a formulation; the decision to challenge the legality of working before the ECJ was seen as an act of 'bad faith' by several EU partners.

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[32] Interview, Brussels, April 1997.

[33] Interview, Brussels, July 1996.

Thick Trust. The operative language used by participants to describe relations in Coreper include: mutual respect, confidence, and close interpersonal relations. According to one Antici counsellor[34], "Trust and the ability to speak frankly...includes being able to ask Coreper for arguments to report back home."[35] The bonds of thick trust are built up and reinforced by the cycle of weekly meetings in Coreper and the Council, the biannual trips before European Council summits, and the more confidential restricted sessions (including lunches) where they are "free to say things they know won't come out."[36] Many of the participants interviewed for this study mentioned the importance of developing close interpersonal relations, even how a sense of humor and a number of running jokes can help lubricate the negotiating process.[37] This finding is reinforced by the observation that these relationships do not just spring up, but develop over time, since several permanent representatives mentioned that they initially viewed their counterparts as rivals when they began in Coreper. "I saw my colleagues as opponents at first," a deputy claimed.[38] A strong example of the thick trust found in Coreper was seen in the local elections case where the Belgian Ambassador presented his argument for a "limited" and "closed" derogation which would be used as sparingly as possible. As a signal of good faith and assurance, the Belgian delegation offered to read a statement to this effect into the Council minutes. The clearest violation of thick trust was seen with the

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[34] Antici counsellors prepare Coreper II meetings and act as advisors to the EU ambassadors. The group is named after the inaugural chair, Paolo Antici, from the Italian delegation who began this tradition in 1975. An analogous group was set up in 1993 for Coreper I, known as the Mertens counsellors (after Vincent Mertens of the Belgian delegation).

[35] Interview, Brussels, May 1996.

[36] Interview, Brussels, April 1996. See also Lewis (1998a: 176-78).

[37] A frequently cited example is the intellectual sparring and running jokes between former UK Ambassador John Kerr, French Ambassador Pierre de Bouissieu, and German Ambassador Dietrich Von Kyaw as a regular feature of Coreper during the early 1990s.

[38] Interview, Brussels, March 1996. This does not mean sour personal relations, grudges, and enmity are unimaginable in Coreper. Most often personality clashes take the form of "intellectual sparring" rather than "outright hostility." But Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (1997: 82) for example, note the "titanic personal rivalry" which existed between French Ambassador Luc de la Barre de Nanteuil and his British counterpart, Sir Michael Butler during the 1980s.

British decision to protest working time at the ECJ, after several member-states including Germany had held off a vote to try and accommodate British demands. Although it is debatable how to interpret whether this was a clear-cut transgression, since interviews at the British delegation presented conflicting evidence whether any link between the ECJ case and buying "extra time" existed. But several participants at other delegations supported this interpretation: extra time hinged on Britain accepting the principle of working time as a health and safety measure. What is key, is that this example shows how the internalization of EU norms is lumpy, not linear; while several delegations perceived an obligation on Britain's part to accept the directive after further concessions were granted, key participants in the British delegation did not feel bound by a similar obligation.

Mutual Responsiveness. There is a durable expectation for mutual responsiveness and understanding in Coreper.[39] Knowing and understanding each other is a qualitative feature of Coreper's decision-making style, similar to what negotiation theorists call "perspective-taking," and the capacity to "see the world through the other negotiator's eyes" (Mnookin et al. 1996: 219). In Coreper, "perspective-taking" can border on introspection, and responsiveness rests on a shared mutual purpose to understand each others problems. A deputy commented, "Because we work so closely we are obliged to have a fairly honest relationship with each other, and it is easy to signal that some points are really difficult."[40] "Even when someone has difficult instructions or must take a tough line," another deputy added, "odds are afterwards or over lunch he will tell you, 'I have these instructions...', to make themselves understood."[41] An ambassador discussing the general functions of Coreper makes this point clearly:

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[39] Lewis (1998a: 178-80).

[40] Interview, Brussels, March 1996.

[41] Interview, Brussels, April 1997.

Coreper has a key function. Besides defending national interests, there is a sense of understanding of the other delegations' interests. This requires a certain understanding of the others' positions, and why they hold the positions they do. This is a big part of the club atmosphere. It is an understanding and a knowledge of each others problems. Coreper is key here, because we have this knowledge over many different topics and we often find similar problems in quite different topics and issue-areas.[42]

It is worth noting that this point is quite different than the idea of inter-sectoral package deals (which are very uncommon or at least exceedingly difficult to find evidence of), but it is an example of what we can call intersectoral problem-solving. The capacity to draw lessons and linkages across policy-areas, to utilize previous compromise-enabling tactics, to draw on prior drafting tricks or slight alterations in the wording or legal basis of a proposal -- this is a particular type of horizontal, intersectoral problem-solving capacity which the permanent representatives often utilize. The key to this capacity is mutual responsiveness. In Coreper, mutual responsiveness operates on a very simple principle, but one which is extremely rare or transitory in multilateral negotiations (permanent or otherwise). "You must justify and explain your problems," an Antici explained, "When others' understand the nature of your problem, it is easier for them to take account of this, or to find a face-saving solution. But unlike the Council, in Coreper you can't state the problem, you must explain it."[43]

The norm of mutual responsiveness provides a source of meaning in the negotiation process, a type of communicative action and form of collective legitimation.[44] This was seen very clearly in the local elections case, where individual member-state arguments for "special consideration" were collectively legitimated (Belgium, France) or rejected (Denmark, Austria, Greece, France). More generally, the practice of mutual responsiveness in Coreper can become a tool for building consensual agreement. Or in

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[42] Interview, Brussels, March 1997.

[43] Interview, Brussels, May 1996.

[44] On this point, see Ruggie (1998a).

the language of negotiation theory, "perspective-taking" can facilitate value-creation "by enabling a negotiator to craft arguments, proposals, or trade-offs that reflect another's interests and that may create the basis for trade" (Mnookin et al. 1996: 219). As the deputy of one of the small Northern European member-states told me:

> When I am in a difficult position, with a difficult reserve, I could say 'ok, this is a fundamental [national] reserve, that's it, leave it for the Council'. I *never* do this. Instead, I look for the friendly ear of my colleagues.[45]

Mutual responsiveness is frequently seen in attempts at accommodation, which deeply penetrates the negotiating style practiced in Coreper. An ambassador reflected on the need for accommodation:

> A compromise can be as simple as allowing others to save face. Sometimes I make a compromise for others who cannot offer a compromise of their own because they will be seen as trying to take advantage or because their instructions say hold out.[46]

In the local elections negotiations, the introduction of a Commission review procedure was offered as an accommodation to the hypothetical future concerns raised by Athens. And again, working time stands out as a decisional sequence where this method failed; attempts to accommodate British demands did not in the end convince to British to drop their principled objections.

The Consensus-Reflex. The consensus-reflex is deeply etched into the ethos of Coreper.[47] "Coreper operates as a consensus-seeking system," an ambassador stated, "this penetrates, in my mind, everything we do."[48] In this system, "the instinctive recourse to behave consensually" is "as important as the formal availability of a decision-rule permitting qualified majority voting" (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1995:

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[45] Interview, Brussels, March 1996.

[46] Interview, Brussels, March 1996.

[47] Lewis (1998a: 180-181).

[48] Interview, Brussels, March 1997.

565). In fact, one ambassador pointed out, "QMV is the last resort we go to. This has a profound effect on how the various levels are working, which, by the way, is very different from most national systems of government which do not have this consensus assumption at all."[49] This helps explain the frequent pattern where the permanent representatives "go to great efforts to accommodate even the most awkward of positions" (Westlake 1995: 170). The concessions offered to the British on the working time file, where negotiations continued for nearly two years after a qualified majority existed in the Council is a striking illustration of this practice. The consensus-reflex not only prescribes norms of appropriate behavior for accommodation attempts (when a delegation is 'sending the right' signals and is willing to compromise) but also norms which make "pushing for a vote" inappropriate (for example, one ambassador who pushed Germany to a vote twice at the start of their presidency noted his colleagues surprised reaction: "they recoiled; I could see it on their faces, 'what's going on here'").[50]

The Culture of Compromise. The culture of compromise found in Coreper is rooted in a spirit of accommodation which is difficult to describe. There is a basic instinct to compromise and to accommodate divergent interests. New members to Coreper are socialized to this culture; recall the deputy from one of the newest member-states who prided the fact that "now we are known as a country others can turn to for a compromise."[51] In the normative structure and "levels of norms" found in Coreper's style of decision-making, the culture of compromise may have the deepest effects.[52] Many of the other performance norms listed above are directly tied this culture: the reflex to behave consensually; mutual responsiveness and accommodation attempts; thick trust

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[49] Interview, Brussels, March 1997.

[50] Interview, Brussels, June 1996.

[51] Interview, Brussels, March 1996.

[52] For an enlightening discussion of normative structures and "levels of norms," see Kowert and Legro (1996: 465-68).

and the ability to speak frankly, even "get close to abusive in order to get things done without insulting anyone"[53]; diffuse reciprocity and the balancing of concessions over an extended time horizon. The culture of compromise can also instill a kind of self-restraint in the calculations of interests. This is clearly seen in the local elections case where several member-state delegations quietly dropped their reserves after having failed to convince the others of their arguments (the French quota-system, Denmark's call for residency requirements).[54]

The culture of compromise is facilitated in part by the horizontal nature of Coreper agendas, and the potential for synergistic bargaining linkages. In health and safety legislation, there have been numerous proposals linked to the same legal basis and precedence of the 1989 framework directive which moved through the Council together, with parallel negotiations taking place in Coreper (e.g. carcinogens, personal protection equipment, work equipment). The horizontal character of Coreper's work resembles a "linked system" where the potential for "integrative bargaining" is enhanced by "bridging" techniques and other forms of nonspecific compensation which would not be possible if issues were handled separately (Gillespie and Bazerman 1997; Keeney and Riaffa 1991; Pruitt 1995, 1981). Overall, there is robust evidence of this culture where the permanent representatives "spend extra time" in order to "bring everyone on board." Even the accommodation attempts to make working time acceptable to the British, despite their at times recalcitrant bargaining position, shows how this culture is part of the ingrained work ethic found in Council behavior.

The performance norms found in Coreper are important components in the overall operation of the system. But these practices can also lead to a cumbersome decision-making and consensus-building process. The efficiency of the vote is often traded off

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[53] Interview, Brussels, March 1996.

[54] For a more detailed treatment of this case, see Lewis (1998b).

against the normative value of finding an agreement everyone can live with. As Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (1995: 569) put it, this is "gas-guzzling governance." But this trait also points to a more fundamental component of EU decision-making which ties our discussion back to the processes of national interest formation. That is, EU decision-making is more than simply "interest-based."[55] The ambassador who stated he has a global, unwritten instruction to 'find solutions', was describing how interests can become endogenous to the process of collectively defining problems and making decisions.[56] This resonates strongly with earlier neofunctionalist hypotheses regarding the emergent decision-making system in the late 1950s and 1960s. Writing in 1970, Lindberg and Scheingold perceptively note, Council negotiations may be time-consuming, "but its inefficiency in this regard should be balanced against its efficiency as a promoter of consensus by means of the gradual juxtaposition of national positions leading to the redefinition of individual national interests in terms of some notion of collective goal or benefit" (98). The consensus-reflex and culture of compromise do not operate by the incremental approximation of exogenously-given interests, but point to a decision-making style where interests are endogenous to interaction and can undergo evolution during the course of negotiations. A collective responsibility to finding solutions and a value in reaching agreement is a cognitive dimension of integration which is based on cathectic calculations (rather than instrumental ones).[57] Sometimes loosely articulated interests (e.g. instructions which claim "play this in the first instance," or cases where the capital has not made up their 'mind') only develop over the course of negotiations themselves, or congeal around a majority view which emerges from discussion.[58]

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[55] For an argument which supports this point, see Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (1995: 560).

[56] Interview, Brussels, June 1996.

[57] See Kratochwil (1989: 64) for the difference. See also Adler (1991).

[58] This occurs more frequently with smaller member-states although the overall effect on the interaction context is one where communicative norms, the processes persuasion, and selling good arguments matter. As one deputy of a large member-state claimed, "group discussion is key because smaller member-states

Perhaps the most important general finding of a community-method in Coreper is how its practices can facilitate and help manage efforts at combining the Janus-like responsibilities of delivering the goods at home and collectively. Here, negotiation theory offers several important insights we can draw from. Delivering the goods at home and collectively is an endemic feature of negotiations which Lax and Sebenius (1986) have called the tension between "claiming value" and "creating value." The originality of their thesis is to attempt and develop a general model of bargaining which all negotiators - from labor union representatives to statesmen - typically must face. In their own words, "negotiators must manage the inescapable tension between cooperative moves to create value and competitive moves to claim value for each" (ibid.: 6). They go on to add:

> A deeper and more useful approach to negotiation is needed. It must encompass more than parties formally exchanging offers to fashion a quid pro quo. It must allow for the subtlety of interests in shared purposes and intense concern with process as well as more tangible stakes. It must incorporate a shifting mix of cooperative and competitive elements. It must admit moves to change the "game" itself (ibid.: 25).

A general application of this negotiation model to the context of Council bargaining is what Lax and Sebenius call an "expansive conception of a negotiator's interests" (ibid.: 64-74). This can help us get a better handle on the normative context of EU decision-making, and its constitutive link to national preference formation. They point out, for example, how the "totality" of an actor's interests not only includes material factors but also such things as fairness, self-esteem, reputation, precedent, even the "well-being of his counterparts," and "the collegiality of the process." (ibid.: 64-65). More specifically, they identify three types of interests which the rationalist, materialist conception of interests tends to overlook.

1. *"Process" interests*. The first are "process" interests, defined as "intrinsic interests in the character of the negotiation process itself" (ibid.: 72). The "performance"

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will not have an interest yet on many issues. They will define their interest according to the discussion and the general line of interest which emerges" (Interview, Brussels, March 1996).

norms found in Coreper are an outgrowth of process interests, which can be seen as an epistemic or cognitive value in the collective decision-making process. Process interests also reinforce what Lax and Sebenius call the "instrumental interests in building trust and confidence" (ibid.), seen above in the mutually reinforcing norms of diffuse reciprocity and mutual responsiveness. As negotiation theory tells us, we would expect such process interests and their attendant effects to be particularly strong in a linked system of on-going negotiation across a wide range of issues with differential preference values, which is of course a hallmark of Coreper's work.

2. *"Relationship" interests.* Second, there are "relationship" interests which derive from negotiators' value in the relationship itself and can develop into "an almost transcendent status" to maintain or extend this relationship over time. We found evidence of relationship interests in Coreper as well, such as the ambassador who claimed to have two set of instructions for every item on the agenda: one set for the substantive issue, and another instruction to "find solutions" which is unwritten and permanent.[59] In health and safety, we found several examples of this, such as the young people directive, where a derogation was offered to the British in order to make the deal "a bit more palatable" and in light of the shadow of the future. We also found competing evidence of the strength of relationship interests in the working time case, where the British abandoned broader 'relationship' concerns by challenging the directive's legal basis at the ECJ. Although even within the working time sequence, one could interpret the efforts by the other delegations to accommodate British demands as a broader type of relationship interest, especially in the context of the Maastricht ratification crisis and the wake of the British opt-out from the Social Chapter.

3. *"Principled" interests.* Third, there are interests in "principles." Principled interests revolve around norms of fairness, "equal division," or mutually shared

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[59] Interview, Brussels, June 1996.

standards of proportionality. Here again, numerous examples from the interview data and case studies stand out, such as the accumulation of social capital, the principle of abstaining rather than wielding the veto, the saving up of "credit" for some future date, and the diffuse sense of reciprocity and its converse, namely that no one can delegation can be a *demandeur* too often. A strong example from the cases includes the local elections directive where the ambassadors endorsed a principled commitment to nondiscrimination and equal treatment between national and non-national EU citizens. This included a shared understanding that minimum residency requirements were unjustified, despite a number of member-states (Denmark, Sweden, Netherlands) who had such requirements built into their existing national electoral laws.

In summary, the normative effects of a community-method are causally important to bargaining outcomes, though they are also circumscribed. Trust and a long shadow of the future do not create an idyllic political community where distributional issues and material conceptions of interests disappear. A principled commitment to the collective decision-making process does not eliminate efforts to "claim value" (Lax and Sebenius 1986). Sometimes, as in the case on working time, domestic politics trump consensual decision-making and the habitus of obligatory action which are found in Coreper. Because the methods of community are embedded in a "soft institutional environment," this creates a "bargaining process that simply forbids a straightforward imposition of European norms on member states strongly opposed to specific standards or collective modes of operation" (Katzenstein 1997: 264). Socialized, trustworthy, responsive actors with extended time horizons, a diffuse expectation they will benefit in the future, and an instinct for compromise will still at time have very rigid instructions to defend. The methods of community do not obviate divergent interests even given highly interdependent utility functions. But as I have shown, the methods and practices of community found in Coreper can avert many of the "traps" which frustrate collective decision-making according to the hard bargaining, intergovernmentalist image. I have

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also shown that how the permanent representatives defend interests and how Coreper attempts to accommodate these differences is often quite contrary to the hard bargaining image of the Council. This is also a key to understanding why the frustration of many EU delegations with Britain's at times dogmatic stance on social policy issues, as we clearly observed in the working time case, does not leach into other policy realms or isolate the British position on other issues.[60]

In short, detailed investigation of the EU permanent representatives shows that socialization to the Brussels political game does not lead to the wholesale redefinition of national identities and interests. I found no hard evidence of a transfer of loyalties or the emergence of a 'European' identity, although there is an identifiable secondary allegiance among the permanent representatives to the collective arena. To their job requirement of "delivering the goods" at home is added a diffuse responsibility to deliver collectively as well. My findings complement Katzenstein's (1997: 271) study of Germany in the EU, and his conclusion that the effects of Brussels do not "force a full convergence of national practices." Nor does practicing the community-method create a bunch of "good" European member-states. We have instead found evidence in support of a "soft institutional environment" which "leaves considerable leeway for distinct national choices within a broadly converging European pattern" (ibid.). This also meshes with the finding by Goetz (1995: 93) that, "Europeanization of national governance is compatible with the maintenance of very distinct national institutional arrangements." Furthermore, in the EU system, there are natural leaders and laggards who vary by issue-area, and there is a wide variability in role conceptions and policy styles (Spence 1995; Hanf and

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[60] On the other hand, the 1996 British policy of "non-cooperation" in response to the EU ban on beef imports may have more deleterious long-term effects on their reputation and stock of social capital. Tony Blair's recent call for a policy review of the UK's approach to EU clearly has the objective of reversing this trend. Britain's "EU campaign" will include efforts to increase the visibility of formal bilateral summits with other EU member-states, especially Germany, France, Spain, and Italy. Also being considered are efforts at "modeling intergovernmental contacts on the Elysée Treaty underpinning Franco-German relations, so that all UK ministers would develop ties with their French and German counterparts" (Financial Times, June 2, 1998). Officials in the Foreign Office claimed relief that the Prime Minster "belatedly recognised that it would take a decade for the UK to successfully woo its EU partners" (ibid.).

Soetendorp 1998; Héritier 1995). Despite this variation, these shared practices, or methods of community, have become routinized and they do instantiate a particular brand of decision-making, where socialization and learning effects can lead to the development of "like-minded" actors who have a stake in the success of the system and a commitment to finding solutions. Most importantly, the community-method practiced in Coreper signifies a collective redefinition of the ethos and rationality of individual, statal autonomy. As Weiler (1991: 2479) puts it, the notion of community in the EU "breaks the exclusivist ethos of statal autonomy." These findings on Coreper also support social constructivist claims such as Alexander Wendt's (1996: 53-54) argument that collective action does not just change "the price of cooperation for self-interested actors," but can lead to "creating new definitions of self."

We turn now to extend these observations to the other EU preparatory committees. What are the main similarities and differences between them? Is Coreper a unique diplomatic forum or are their comparable patterns of cooperation and interstate interaction within other parts of the Council's infrastructure?

II. Administrative Rivals: Comparing Coreper With the Other EU Preparatory Bodies
A. Competition Versus a Division of Labor?

The relationship between Coreper as the senior preparatory formation of the Council, and the other EU preparatory bodies is not easily summarized.[61] For starters, there are very different views among the practitioners themselves as to the extent of competition between committees as well as the nature of the underlying structural position of different preparatory groups in the EU system. Where you stand does indeed depend on where you sit. To say that there is no agreement on the scope or nature of the

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[61] For a more detailed treatment of these preparatory bodies, see the excellent summaries contained in Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (1997: 84-97); and de Zwaan (1995: 153-87).

administrative rivalry between preparatory committees is an understatement. The continuum of views ranges from: this a healthy, natural division of authority based on a functional division of labor between committees; to views which see an increasingly chaotic, divisive set of interadministrative cleavages which impedes the performance of EU decision-making. So, for example, according to one Coreper participant, "The rivalry between PoCo and Coreper II is largely the hobby horse of a few in Coreper. There is no real substance to this rivalry. It has its irritation value, that's all." [62] But, on the other hand, a former ambassador reflecting on the same issue perceives a more deleterious situation:

Many Councils have developed their own preparatory committee, which is eroding Coreper's role. The [Article] 113 Committee: it was meant to be an expert committee and deal with technical issues, but it has turned into a kind of committee that sabotages the work of Coreper II. The SCA is composed of people from the ministries of agriculture who consider Coreper people as removed from their special area...This is a weakness in the system...The PoCo is now in the Treaty itself; this conflicts with Coreper's job to prepare the GAC and their role in arranging things so the Council has the acceptable solutions.

How can we square these contending perspectives? Can generalizations be made about the structural relations between preparatory groups in the Council? Are the methods of community identified in the context of Coreper also present in these other groupings? A Commission participant in Coreper likened the comparison between preparatory bodies as follows:

Coreper is a permanent structure where members are living together. There is a common political will to reach progress. It is not so strong in every matter but still overall this statement is true. Pillars two and three, on the other hand, are a structure of blockage, not of progress. PoCo, the K-4, all those 'steering' groups. This is a heavy structure and there is no permanent presence. [63]

The creation of pillars two and three under the Maastricht Treaty created new possibilities for administrative tensions between EU preparatory bodies. What is particularly

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[62] Interview, Brussels, May 1996.

[63] Interview, Brussels, March 1996.

interesting is that the institutional lines of authority and competence were purposely left ambiguous. According to Heukels and de Zwaan (1994: 213-14):

...the relationship between the Coreper and the Political Committee or the Committee of Senior Officials [K-4] is phrased in a somewhat ambiguous fashion. The use of the words "without prejudice to" and "contribute" in Articles J.8(5) and K.4(1) TEU indicates, however, that the activities of the latter two committees cannot undermine the Coreper's general and final responsibility with regard to the preparation of the Council's work. The fact that both committees...can deliver opinions directly to the Council does not alter this fact...It appears therefore likely that the Coreper is a higher ranking committee.

However in the realm of politics and the post-Maastricht positionings by competing preparatory committees for competencies under pillars two and three -- this is not such a settled matter. We can now examine the preparatory roles of the other EU committees in greater detail, with an emphasis on the nature of their administrative relationship with Coreper.

1. The SCA

The Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) was created in 1960, making it one of the oldest preparatory group in the EU. The creation of the SCA even predates the bifurcation of Coreper into parts I and II. The SCA is made up of senior officials from the ministries of agriculture who either travel from the capital to Brussels or are posted at the permanent representation (e.g. Britain, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, and Greece). The SCA is also attended by the Commission. Meetings take place each week (usually over two days), except for the week each month when the Agriculture Council is in session. During certain times of year, especially during the annual price-fixing negotiations, the workload can become quite intense, although the marathon, "four-clean-shirt-council" sessions which were infamous in the early decades of the CAP occur less frequently.

Over the years, the SCA and Coreper have developed very stable lines of functional authority, with certain issues being directed to Coreper for consideration.

Agricultural topics which are covered by Coreper include financial arrangements, the budget, agricultural trade issues with third countries, and animal and plant health matters (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997: 84).[64] The most important feature of the SCA which differs from Coreper is the segmented nature of their preparatory responsibility. Because they are strictly concerned with matters related to the CAP and the preparation of Agricultural Councils, there is a very different negotiating context and habitus of cooperation. The "segmented character of agricultural policy-making" (Rieger 1996: 121, fn. 15) precludes the emergence of a horizontal *vue d'ensemble* and the associated methods of community (diffuse reciprocity, culture of compromise, etc.). One SCA representative drew the comparison with Coreper as follows:

> The SCA, compared to Coreper, is more of an expert group...Coreper is seeking and is being driven by the need to reach agreement. The SCA is driven by the need to protect national interests and for most countries, the need to protect very specific national concerns. Coreper is more susceptible to take into account a more horizontal perspective.[65]

Another drew the contrast even more sharply:

> My Deputy to Coreper makes references to 'my mates', 'my friends', 'we find a way through the barriers to reach agreement'. This may exist at the level of the SCA but it is different because the SCA is engaged in very specifically balancing very specific interests...Agricultural ministers feel they need to leave the Council feeling they have won concessions, its a crude process. So, characteristically, the SCA spokesmen don't get flexibility in the interest of getting something settled before Council, this is a big difference with my colleagues in Coreper.[66]

It is also worth considering why administrative rivalries are low between Coreper and the SCA. The low degree of overlap between responsibilities relative to Coreper's relations with other preparatory bodies, where these functional lines are more blurred, is one important explanation. As one ambassador stated, "95 percent of agricultural issues I

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[64] In these cases, the SCA will 'route' files through Coreper for consideration and discussion prior to a meeting of the Agricultural Council. I found no evidence of deviations from this norm, which suggest the relations between the SCA and Coreper are stable.

[65] Interview, Brussels, March 1997.

[66] Interview, Brussels, March 1997.

don't care about, but something comes up every so often we will have to take a look at. Mad cows for instance."[67]

2.The Article 113 Committee

The Article 113 Committee was designed to oversee the EU's Common Commercial Policy (CCP), including all external trade and tariff negotiations. Although the Committee was created in 1970, earlier Council groupings designed to deal with external trade date back to 1959 (de Zwaan 1995: 161). The key function of the Article 113 Committee is to monitor and consult with the Commission over the mandate granted by the Council to conduct international trade negotiations. The Committee is designed to "confirm modifications to negotiating mandates on issues considered to be of a technical or minor nature" (Woolcock and Hodges 1996: 305). On issues which are "politically sensitive" or require changes in the Council's mandate, the procedure is to refer proposals to Coreper II and the General Affairs Council (ibid.). The Committee meets on two levels: the full members who are senior civil servants from the trade and foreign affairs ministries[68], and who are entrusted to deal with general aspects of commercial policy; and the deputies who are responsible for monitoring the more technical details. The deputies meet, on average, three times a month; the full members generally meet once a month.

With the Article 113 Committee, the key jurisdictional turf battles are not with Coreper, but the Commission. Specifically, "the Council views the Committee as a

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[67] Interview, Brussels, July 1996.

[68] As Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (1997: 90) point out: "The full members of the Article 113 Committee tend to be of a similar rank in their ministries to that of the permanent representatives in the foreign ministries; this could cause problems if it was felt that the ambassadors were throwing their weight around."

watchdog over the Commission in its negotiations with third countries, and wishes to interpret Article 113 as restrictively as possible, in order to reduce the influence of the Commission in this area" (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997: 87). And while the Commission can go against the advice of the Article 113 members in ongoing consultation over a negotiating mandate, it rarely does so because the Committee's members "reflect the wishes of the ministers who ultimately have the power to refuse to conclude the agreement negotiated by the Commission." (ibid). Coreper's relations with the Article 113 Committee tends to be relatively stable, because the ambassadors "rank" over the Article 113 officials is based on their senior standing in preparations of the General Affairs Council. But the potential for boundary disputes over external trade responsibilities does exist.

3. The Budget Committee

The Budget Committee was designed to service the Budget Council, along functional lines similar to the SCA and the Agricultural Council. But unlike the SCA, the Budget Committee does not report directly to the Council. Given Coreper's preeminent role in discussing the EU's financial instruments, the Budget Committee is considered a subordinate grouping which handles the more day-to-day issues of administering the annual budgetary cycle (including the supplemental budgets which are worked on throughout the year).[69] The Budget Committee is composed of officials from the finance ministries and they are usually posted to the permanent representations, meeting several times a month on average. There are indicators that tensions between Coreper and the Budget Committee are on the rise over control of the EU's budgetary process.[70] As Sir

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[69] For a more detailed account of the Budget Committee's role, see Laffan (1997: 74-78).

[70] Several permanent representative I spoke with mentioned having generally difficult relations with their finance ministries.

William Nicoll (a former British Deputy) points out, "In practice...from about 1987...the Coreper I workload from the 1992 programme was so onerous that it largely entrusted preparation of the [Budget] Council to the lower-powered Budget Committee" (1995: 181). As a result there may a shift occurring in some budgetary authority and responsibilities from Coreper to the Budget Committee.

4. The Economic and Finance Committee

The Monetary Committee was created in 1958, about the same time that the Cocor was transformed into a permanent Brussels-based body.[71] On January 1, 1999, with the launch of the third stage of EMU, the Monetary Committee dissolved into a new formation, the Economic and Financial Committee (EFC). The primary role of the EFC, like the Monetary Committee before it, is preparing monthly Ecofin Councils (Economic and Financial Affairs) and the multilateral surveillance of macroeconomic policies. The change in name on January 1 was in many ways merely symbolic since its role in monitoring the 'Euro-Zone' is similar and its membership carried over to many of the same individuals.[72] The Committee is made up of two officials from each member-state, which is generally one senior official from the finance ministry and one from the central bank. The Commission also sends two officials from DG-II (Economic and Financial Affairs).

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[71] The Monetary Committee is based on Article 109c (TEU) which holds: " In order to promote coordination of the policies of the Member States to the full extent needed for the functioning of the internal market, a Monetary Committee with advisory status is hereby set up." Article 109 lists four tasks: to keep the monetary and financial situation of the Member States under review, to deliver opinions to the Council or Commission, to contribute to the preparation of the work of the Council without prejudice to Article 151 [i.e. Coreper], and to examine capital movements and the freedom of payments.

[72] The major difference of course is that the new EFC is also attended by the European Central Bank, who only obtained observer status on the Monetary Committee during its last six months of existence. ECB representatives at EFC meetings include Vice-President Christian Noyer and chief economist Otmar Issing.

The EFC generally meets each week. Unlike every other preparatory committee in the EU, the Chair is elected (by the Committee) for a two year period and hence, does not follow the regular rotation of the EU presidency.[73] This longer rotation of leadership tends to impart a greater perception of institutionalized memory and stability.

Of all the other EU preparatory groups, the EFC bears the closest resemblance to Coreper's working environment and practices. First, the EFC is highly secretive, and members go out of their way to avoid any press attention; they practice a level of confidentiality which even the permanent representatives might find envious.[74] Many of them do not even file written reports with their finance minister or central bank president.[75] Second, since the inception of the European Monetary System in 1979, their role and responsibilities in the EU system have expanded widely, taking on the task of monitoring the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) and preparing currency realignments. *De facto*, they can even act as substitutes for their finance ministers (who meet only once a month). As Westlake (1995: 260) points out, "This steady accrual of monetary managerial power has stemmed in large part from the Member States' desire, in the context of Economic and Monetary Union, to portray realignments as a purely 'technical' matter." Third, they practice a form of negotiation very similar to the type of consensus-reflex found in Coreper. In fact, they *never* vote. "In formal terms, the Committee may vote, but it never does. The Committee always seeks the broadest possible consensus" (ibid.: 261). Fourth, there is also some evidence of a similar negotiating environment, based on a culture of compromise and mixed with a kind of socialization process where Monetary Committee/EFC members develop a spirit of accommodation and high levels

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[73] The current Chair, Jean Lemierre, is director of the French Treasury and Finance Minister Strauss-Kahn's most senior finance official. He was appointed Chair at the inaugural meeting of the EFC in January 1999. His predecessor was the venerable Sir Nigel Wicks (former advisor to Margaret Thatcher) who held the Monetary Committee Chair since 1993.

[74] According to Westlake (1995: 260), members practice a "form of 'collective *omerta*'."

[75] European Voice, 19-25 October 1995: 16-17.

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of mutual trust and regard. According to Westlake (1995: 264), "The Monetary Committee is one of the few forums that mixes central bankers and finance ministries, and it has played an important part in 'socializing' the European monetary community." In sum, within their specific realm of competence, the Monetary Committee/EFC may hold a similar shared responsibility for the performance and output of the Ecofin Council and macroeconomic policy management in the EU as I have found in the case of Coreper across a wider spectrum of the Council's activities.

Relations between Coreper and the Monetary Committee had been stabilized by the mid-1990s, but for many years they were strained, even competitive. The main turf battle over the competence to prepare Ecofin meetings has largely been conceded to the EFC/Monetary Committee. In 1996, the ambassador held a restricted lunch with Sir Nigel Wicks, the Monetary Committee's Chair at the time.[76] Watson (1996: 18), cites a Coreper official who summed up the ambassadors' message to Wicks: "You can discuss monetary matters, but some of the issues have institutional implications and we know better than you how to handle institutional matters." It remains to be seen what new institutionalized relations and division of labor will ultimately develop between Coreper II and the EFC.[77]

5. The Political Committee and the K-4

The Political Committee (PoCo) was established in the 1970s to monitor the system of European Political Cooperation (EPC) from the national capitals.[78] The Committee is composed of the political directors who are senior officials from the foreign

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[76] Reports suggest that the ambassadors met privately for approximately 90 minutes prior to this lunch, in order to coordinate a common position (Watson 1995: 18).

[77] This is also contingent on what role the Euro-11 Committee will come to play, adding another dimension of complexity to the preparation of Ecofin meetings.

[78] Before the creation of the CFSP pillar under the Maastricht Treaty (pillar two), the EPC machinery was an extra-treaty form of cooperation which fell outside the Community's remit. For a good history, see Smith (1996, 1998).

ministries. The Commission also attends PoCo meetings. Over time, the pace of meetings was extended from around four per year to approximately once each month. The political directors now travel to Brussels for meetings, but until the early 1990s, the Committee met in a capital of the member-state holding the presidency "as a further indication of its aloofness from the Community system" (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace 1997: 92). The PoCo is assisted by a group of European Correspondents set up in each foreign ministry, whose primary task is to maintain contacts between the capitals and to monitor the work of a number of Council working groups. This task was facilitated by the creation of the *Correspondant Europeène* telex network (know as COREU) in 1973. The PoCo has established a distinct *esprit de corps* among the political directors (and, in turn, the foreign ministries), and there is some evidence suggesting that a cumulative set of obligatory norms of consultation and coordination have evolved within this framework (Smith 1996). However, the institutional form and operational practices of Coreper are quite distinct from the PoCo. In particular, the political directors do not have a similar "obligation of result" or shared sense of responsibility over the Council's performance. As one former ambassador summarized:

The rivalry between the PoCo and Coreper is real; other rivalries have existed for years, but this is more recent and growing...[The political directors] tend to feel that Coreper's role is an intrusion into their accustomed role in life, which goes back to the early EPC days. But there is an important difference between CFSP and EPC which was reactive by nature. CFSP is supposed to take common action and that requires very effective preparation. And the kind of preparation that only Coreper can do and has the experience in doing. Thus, while it is fairly easy to short-circuit Coreper, it has its cost [on the decision-making process].

The K-4 Committee is the newest and most heavy-handed preparatory structure in the EU system. Designed to coordinate the work of the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council under the third pillar following the Maastricht Treaty, the K-4 deals with issues such as cross-border crime, drugs, money laundering, visas, immigration, and asylum. The Committee is composed of K-4 directors, who are senior civil servants from the justice and interior ministries. The Commission has observer status only. Meetings take

place approximately once a month, with the directors traveling from the national capitals to Brussels. The third pillar under the K-4 Committee also has an additional layer of decisional machinery than the other structures of the Council system. Namely, in addition to the working group level, there is a set of three permanent "steering groups" (immigration/asylum, police/customs cooperation[79], and judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters) designed to package the working group reports for the K-4 directors. In principle, the K-4 does not report directly to the JHA Council, but sends files through Coreper II. Although in practice the overlap in competencies between preparatory groups frequently creates a duplication of work (Westlake 1995: 239). Finally, there is marked difference in approach and working methods between the K-4 and Coreper. An Antici claimed, "The K-4 is a different culture altogether. Its more of a Council of Europe working method."[80]

Few topics resulted in a greater divergence of viewpoint than the relationship between Coreper and the Political Committee (under pillar two) and Coreper and the K-4 Committee (under pillar 3). Consider the following range of responses[81]:

- The situation with the PoCo and the K-4 is presented as a fight of influence. But Coreper is the only body with a common consciousness that the Council should be a success. They are also the only body with a horizontal view of the different sectors...The PoCo and K-4 cannot take account of problems they do not know, namely, the linkages between areas and the institutional issues which are often involved.

- There is competition between the political directors and the ambassadors, but this is part of life, no?

- The political directors feel that the CFSP should be run from the national capitals; they are close to the ministers, geared to the press, the parliament, and so on. But the ambassadors have the exclusive role in preparing the Council and organizing the life of the ministers in Brussels. So they feel that the political directors are a rogue element in an otherwise smooth system.

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[79] Formerly the Trevi Group, established in 1975. For more on this history, see Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (1995: 94-7).

[80] Interview, Brussels, March 1996.

[81] Interviews, Brussels and Bonn, March-June 1996, February-April 1997.

•. This is a game and a permanent struggle with the political directors over pillar two. They are jockeying for power positions...The ambassadors are from the foreign offices and would find this work exciting naturally.

The main difference between Coreper's relations with the Political Committee and the K-4 Committee is that the former represents an intraministerial rivalry (within foreign affairs), whereas the latter is an interministerial turf battle (between foreign affairs and justice and home affairs). As a result, the rivalry with the Political Committee may be the most difficult to find an amicable division of labor; as one Commission official put it, "Coreper still prepares the agenda, but foreign affairs is a very vague area. It involves amorphous power - but it is diplomatic work *par excellence*, this is where the real rivalry lies."[82] This also helps explain the recent practice where the Political Directors schedule a meeting of the PoCo on the morning of a General Affairs Council -- attempting to literally 'short-circuit' the ability of the ambassadors to prepare for meetings of the foreign ministers.

B. Summary

Will a stable division of labor emerge between these rivals? "There is currently no division of labor with the PoCo," an ambassador offered, "but time will tell. We used to have enormous problems with the Monetary Committee. Now this is settled by a division of labor, but it took us some time to work out."[83] Early indicators point to a rough division of labor between types of CFSP responsibilities: Coreper has a natural advantage in anything related to Community instruments or finances. And the Political Committee has strengths in drafting common positions; "the PoCo practices good declaratory diplomacy," one participant said.[84] But the long-run advantage for Coreper

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[82] Interview, Brussels, May 1996.

[83] Interview, Brussels, July 1996.

[84] Interview, Brussels, March 1997.

(even though the political directors may be closer to the foreign minister) is, as one external relations counsellor put it, that "the permanent representatives are in a better position in this debate because they know the Treaty. What goes to the ministers is Treaty-proof and Coreper has the reputation of getting things right the first time and making an agreement stick."[85]

In summary, the specialized preparatory bodies like the Budget Committee, the SCA's administration of the CAP, or the Article 113 Committee's role in external commercial negotiations lack the horizontal perspective and cross-sectoral aggregation functions found in either Coreper I or II. The EFC/Monetary Committee and their preparation of Ecofin Councils may be a partial exception to this claim. And while the Political Committee and K-4 Committee have acquired general competencies in matters pertaining to Common Foreign and Security Policy (pillar two) and Justice and Home Affairs (pillar three), respectively, they are not "results-oriented" in the same way. Neither share a similar collective responsibility to maintain the overall coherence and performance of the Council.

III. Conclusion

In this essay, I have argued that the concept of a community-method, which includes a distinct value in the collective decision-making process itself, accurately explains the style of decision-making found in Coreper. The elementary components of the methods of community -- diffuse reciprocity, thick trust, mutual responsiveness, a consensus-reflex, and a culture of compromise -- are qualitative features of Coreper's interaction context which causally contribute to the negotiating environment just as the more commonly observed factors such as the decision-rule. In short, the EU permanent

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[85] Interview, Brussels, March 1997.

representatives are agents committed to making the system work, maintaining the output and performance of the Council across its twenty-odd sectoral formations. This includes, for example, a responsiveness to each others' domestic political needs and constraints, a willingness to accommodate (e.g. persuading the authorities back home to grant a derogation or exemption for a member-state with a convincing argument for special consideration), and an instinct to "bring everyone on board" regardless of the formal decision-rule at hand. The use of the abstention rather than the "no" vote, the art of derogation, and the constant subtle reminders of the long shadow of the future, including the capacity to accumulate diffuse, fungible "credit" and social capital, are all empirical indicators of the diplomatic craft found in Coreper.

The EU permanent representatives show that a value in collective decision-making creates a stake in the operation of the system and a responsibility to make the system work. Few agents in the EU system are "results-oriented" in the same way. This is the subtle, but fundamental difference between Coreper and other EU preparatory bodies such as the Political Committee or K-4 Committee. The major exception is the EFC which has developed a similar decision-making style based on the same performance norms found in Coreper (especially thick trust, consensus-reflex, and a culture of compromise). Tentative findings suggest that EFC members may develop a similar sense of responsibility in preparing and administering the workload of the Ecofin Council.[86] This in turn suggests that the decision-making style found in Coreper is not a *sui generis* phenomena, but can be explained using general theories of international relations.

Finally, this examination of preparatory groups also detects the persistence, or even intensification, of administrative rivalries within the Council over time. The turf

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[86] It is still worth noting that even in cases of specific preparatory groups such as the EFC, the SCA, the Article 113 Committee, etc. who all may wish to see "their" Council work, none acquire the horizontal viewpoint found in Coreper which is defined by a high level of cross-sectoral issue aggregation.

battles between Coreper, the K-4 Committee, and the PoCo over the competencies of

pillars two and three signal a potentially deleterious threat to the overall concordance of

the EU's single institutional framework. Whether the second and third pillars turn out to

be evolutive structures may depend on whether these dossiers are channeled through or

shielded from Coreper (by routing the files through the PoCo and K-4 Committee).[87]

Efforts to recast the accretion of horizontal functions and *de facto* decision-making which

Coreper has acquired in maintaining coherence and continuity in the Council's workload

could have adverse, unintended consequences on the effectiveness of decision-making,

perhaps even short-circuiting the *engrenage* of the system itself. The fragmentation of

"preparatory" authority could alter Coreper's institutionalized bottle-necking

mechanism, which is closely linked to the permanent representatives' development of a

horizontal viewpoint and the comprehensive reflexive capacity to monitor and participate

in how interests are articulated into policy outcomes. And one should not forget that this

bottle-necking effect has become increasingly important in maintaining the output and

performance of the Council, seen most symbolically in the decline of the General Affairs

Council, described by many insiders as "laughable" or "clearly at the end of its

capacity" as ministers are uninterested in details, unversed in the legal intricacies of

Treaty articles, and disposed to reading from set speeches.

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[87] At least one ambassador who participated in the Maastricht IGC recalled that the view at the time of negotiations was that in the long-run Coreper could provide the institutional means to "Communitarize" the second and third pillars (Interview, Brussels, July 1996). And the future relationship between Coreper and the other preparatory bodies was literally the first topic discussed following Maastricht. On February 18, 1992, the personal representatives (the majority of whom were the EU ambassadors) met at the Val Duchesse estate in Brussels to prepare the implementation of the Treaty on European Union. As Agence Europe notes, "the personal representatives' first working meeting was a "super-restricted" session, only the heads of delegation taking part. The Portuguese presidency had drafted a single-item agenda, i.e. the relationships to be established with the Political Committee, the Monetary Committee, and the Coordination Committee" (Agence Europe, no. 5672, February 20, 1992).

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