

Natura 2000 as a discursive strategy: interpretations, power dynamics and (dis)empowerment of actors

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To Mirko and Adriana

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes one of the emblems of contemporary European nature conservation policy, the Natura 2000 network. The study applies a discourse analysis approach to the Natura 2000 context. Natura 2000 is treated like a strategy of the EU to counteract biodiversity loss, and is perceived as being shaped by five main discourses diffused in the international and European nature conservation arenas: Technocracy, Europeanization, Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism. These discourses are believed to shape actors' perspectives in the Natura 2000 context, the interactions of actors in policy processes related to the network, and the outcomes of these processes in terms of actors' (dis)empowerment. The thesis explores how the five discourses construct Natura 2000, its realization and the implications for the actors involved in and affected by the implementation process. The thesis concludes that different discourses shape the Natura 2000 context in conjunction with other discourses rather than in isolation. Discourses develop dynamics which link themes shared by the discourses involved, or relate bridging factors among discourses. These discursive dynamics shape the Natura 2000 context through elements proper of the discourses involved, and work to mutually reinforce and/ or limit the influence of specific discourses on the Natura 2000 strategy. The influence of the dynamics linking different discourses on the implementation of Natura 2000 changed during the history of the network, mirroring international and European discursive trends. For example the discursive dynamics dominating the legal text of the Habitats Directive, European directive underpinning the creation of the network, are not the same dynamics which dominated the last ten years of the Natura 2000 history. These results suggest that the formal texts alone are not sufficient to understand the meaning of a complex policy like Natura 2000. In order to reach a deep insight in important policy changes occurred during the implementation of N2000 it is necessary to explore the changes of the discursive construction of Natura 2000 along the years of its implementation, and study these in relation to broader international and European discursive trends. This type of discourse analysis allows reaching a better understanding of the consequences of policy changes for the affected actors, their interactions and their (dis)empowerment.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the thesis subject

1.1 GENERAL BACKGROUND

The Natura 2000 network (N2000) is the ecological network of protected areas established in the European territory under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (HD). It represents the response of the European Union (EU) to the loss of biodiversity taking place in its territory. The goal of N2000 is to assure the long term survival of the most threatened habitats and species affected by degradation, fragmentation, isolation and extinction (EC, 2009b). The strategy undertaken by the EU is the creation of a coherent network of sites protected on the basis of the presence of species and habitat types important for European biodiversity (European Council Directive 92/43/EEC). N2000 represents an innovative strategy toward nature conservation which overcomes traditional top-down, nation-state centered conservation systems focused on species' protection, and based on vast isolated protected areas (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; Primack and Carotenuto, 2003). This innovative character of N2000 is based on two ideological clusters: I) N2000 integrates scientific, economic and societal criteria and II) N2000 recognizes the transboundary character of biodiversity loss (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; EC, 2002; EC, 2005; EC, 2009b).

These two ideological clusters represent turning points in the nature conservation strategies of many EU Member States (MSs), which used to only draw upon ecologic criteria and were aimed at protecting natural elements at a national scale (Primack and Carotenuto, 2003). The innovative features of N2000 make it an appealing issue to study in order to understand recent changes in the European nature conservation arena. Moreover, my interest for N2000 is justified by the important difficulties in the implementation of the network in many MSs (Verschuuren, 2004; Rosa and Marques da Silva, 2005; Beunen, 2006) and by several legal disputes caused by the network's realization in EU environmental legislation (EC, 2006b). Components of this dispute are: a) juridical interventions initiated by the European Commission (EC) against several MSs (EC, 1998c; Paavola, 2004; EC, 2006b); b) lawsuits undertaken at the national level by environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) against the developers of activities potentially affecting habitats and species (Julien *et al.*, 2000). The legal controversies around N2000 are exacerbated by conflicts over the legitimacy of meanings and interpretations among the actors involved in the management of the European natural environment (Beunen *et al.*, 2009; Beunen and Duinveld, 2010). The importance of meanings and interpretations in the framework established by N2000 also accounts for my interest in the network.

Species and habitat types protected within N2000 sites are listed in the annexes of two EU directives, the above mentioned HD and the Birds Directive 79/409/EEC (BD) (European Council Directive 79/409/EEC), which represent the legal basis for the network's realization. The presence of these species and habitat types justifies the inclusion of areas in the network. Each MS has to select the most important sites for the mentioned habitats and species. The selection occurs with different procedures for the two EU directives and results in two types of protected areas: the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the HD, and the Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the BD. For the HD, the MSs submit a list of proposed Sites of Community Importance (pSCIs) to the EC, which evaluates the list and eventually modifies it in discussion with the MSs. The sites are finalized in a list of Sites of Community Importance (SCIs), which the MSs have to designate and manage as SACs. For the BD, the process of inclusion of sites in N2000 is simpler: the MSs select SPAs which automatically become N2000 sites and have to be managed as such (EC, 2002). Despite the differences in the selection process for SACs and SPAs, the scientific approach is dominant in both procedures. The SACs' selection is conceived as an "exclusively scientific exercise undertaken using standard selection criteria" (EC, 2002. p.8). The selection

of SPAs must be “entirely based on scientific criteria” (EC, 2002. p.8). The strictly scientific character of the selection process has been recognized in the literature on N2000 (Paavola, 2004; Julien *et al.*, 2000). However, in contrast with many of the other conservation systems implemented in MSs, N2000 allows for the identification of other types of criteria than the scientific ones underpinning its realization.

The first ideological cluster of the European strategy for biodiversity conservation is the integration of scientific, economic and societal criteria in the management of the natural environment (European Council Directive 92/43/EEC). According to the HD, biodiversity conservation must take into account “economic, social, cultural and regional requirements” (European Council Directive 92/43/EEC). Humans are recognized as integral parts of nature rather than as external factors (EC, 2009b). N2000 aims at moving the concept of nature conservation away from strictly protected natural reserves where human activities are systematically banned. Indeed, many of the habitat types and species protected by N2000 recur in semi-natural territories such as farmlands, forests and grasslands which are managed in traditional and sustainable ways (EC, 2005). Traditional land management activities, and low impact activities such as some forms of recreation and tourism, are allowed and sometimes encouraged in N2000 sites to avoid the abandonment of territories and maintain the associated habitats and species (EC, 2009b). The N2000 network includes therefore different types of territories, from naturalized to more anthropogenic areas (EC, 2005). Because man and anthropic territories are part of N2000, no human activities are systematically excluded from N2000 areas, provided that these activities do not negatively affect protected habitat and species. This description shows the relevance of socio-economic issues in the implementation of N2000.

However, these socio-economic issues are assessed in scientific terms within the framework established by N2000. For the management of N2000 sites, the criterion is the conservation status of habitat types and species for which a site has been designated (Mehtälä and Vuorisalo, 2007). This status is measured and monitored in ecological terms like the size of the area of a population, or the persistence of long-term structures within a habitat (European Council Directive 92/43/EEC). According to the precautionary principle (EC, 2002), activities to be carried out within and around N2000 sites must be assessed in advance to verify if these negatively affect the status of protected habitats and species. However, next to this technical-scientific procedure called “assessment of implications (AI) of an activity on a site”, the restrictions imposed by N2000 to human activities provide for some dispensations. Activities which are assessed to negatively affect the status of habitats and species can be carried out in case of imperative reasons of overriding public interest concerning by example human health or public safety (Diaz, 2001). This description makes clear the interlacing of scientific and socio-economic elements.

The integration of scientific criteria with a socio-economic approach in a new conservation strategy (Palerm, 2006), where nature conservation aims at not representing an obstacle but rather an opportunity for human activities (EC, 2003; EC, 2005), is an intriguing characteristic of the N2000 strategy. In the perspective of “conservation but flexibility” (EC, 2002. p.3), this integration represents an attempt of the EU to apply the Sustainable Development principle (EC, 2009b). The implementation of a balance between ecology, economy and society in a single strategy called N2000 has turned out to be a difficult task and has not always been accomplished at the European level (Alphandery and Fortier, 2001; Hiedanpää, 2002; Verschuuren, 2004; Palerm, 2006; Apostolopoulou and Pantis, 2010). For example, the HD has often been criticized for putting too much emphasis on scientific aspects, especially in the sites’ selection procedure (Paavola, 2004; Julien *et al.*, 2000).

The second ideological cluster of the N2000 strategy is that the biodiversity loss problem is perceived to be transnational, i.e. to have no political boundaries (EC, 2002; Mickwitz, 2003). Accordingly, the EU elaborated a coherent strategy to blend the efforts of the single MSs to reach a European-wide goal: the long term survival of biodiversity on the European territory (EC, 2009b). In order to achieve this goal with a coordinated action (EC, 2009b), the EU emanated the BD in 1979 and the HD in 1992. These two directives assign the tasks of identifying, designating, managing and monitoring SPAs and SACs to the MSs (Diaz, 2001). EU directives are emanated to harmonize and coordinate MSs' action to reach a common objective, and establish a common identity (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2008). However, their function is also the one of providing MSs with the discretionary freedom necessary to implement the requirements according to national and regional conditions (Beunen, 2006). This is a basic concept in the Europeanization trend (Olsen, 2002; Radaelli, 2006) and is reflected in the aim of the HD to adapt European biodiversity conservation to "regional and local characteristics". This aim is pursued through the integration of biodiversity conservation and "economic, social, cultural and regional requirements" (European Council Directive 92/43/EEC). MSs often delegate some of the conservation tasks to local authorities (EC, 2002; van Apeldoorn *et al.*, 2010; Kruk *et al.*, 2010) in order to better adapt N2000 sites' conservation to local characteristics.

However, MSs remain legally responsible in front of the EU for the national nature conservation performance (EC, 2002). The EC guarantees for the network's ecological coherence by approving the sites' inclusion, and periodically monitoring N2000's overall functioning (EC, 2002; EC, 2009b). The European Court of Justice (ECJ) has the power to legally force MSs to comply with the HD's and BD's requirements. This distribution of roles in the management of the natural environment is an application of the Subsidiarity Principle, another important element of the Europeanization trend (During, 2010). This principle is also the element of the HD, and of European directives in general, which binds MSs to comply with the European paradigm, and which is often perceived as a constraint at the national and more local levels (Aalberts, 2005; Beunen, 2006). In the case of the HD, these constraints are represented by conditions imposed to human activities like farming, hunting, fishing and tourism. Often it is the local governments who actually implement N2000, and have to deal with the contrasting interests of farmers, nature conservationists, tourism enterprises, hunters, port operators, foresters, and other interest groups. When a site is inserted in N2000, the stakeholders' interests over the area and its natural resources interweave, and the actors become interdependent in the establishment and management of the SAC or SPA (EC, 2005; van Apeldoorn *et al.*, 2010).

In the course of the implementation of N2000, the EU has started to recognize the need to blend the efforts of diverse actors at different governmental and non-governmental levels to protect European biodiversity (Beunen and Duinveld, 2010). The EC recurs to the support of ENGOs in the drafting and implementation of the N2000 strategy (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). Moreover, the involvement of landowners and users becomes essential for the N2000 sites' management (Paavola, 2004). This recognition translates in the attention of the EC toward the participation of local stakeholders in the European political processes related to N2000 (Keulartz, 2008; Rauschmayer *et al.*, 2009; Braat, 2010 pers. comm.). Stakeholders such as landowners, farmers, foresters, fishermen, hunters, and representatives from the tourism, business and industrial sectors are always more often involved in meetings, negotiations, consultations, working groups and workshops. The EC refers to the concept of "partnership" when describing the relation between governmental and non-governmental actors in the establishment of N2000 (El Teide Declaration, 2002; EC, 2005; Ladrech, 2005;). This concept assumes a strong role in the latest years of N2000 implementation, when the EC

focuses its biodiversity strategy on ecosystem services and investments in the network. Economic criteria and actors are increasingly entering the framework established by N2000 in a neoliberal climate and this is expected to influence N2000's implementation in future (Haslett *et al.*, 2010).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In this study, N2000 is not simply conceived as an ecological network of protected areas but as an innovative European strategy to counteract biodiversity loss. N2000 represents a framework in which the concept of biodiversity conservation takes a particular meaning reflecting the political space where the N2000 strategy is built. As explained in section 1.1, N2000 can be considered as based upon two ideological clusters: I) the integration of scientific, economic and societal criteria for the Network's realization and II) the recognition of the transboundary character of biodiversity loss (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; EC, 2002; EC, 2005; EC, 2009b). My analysis starts from the perspective that these two clusters and their underpinning ideas reflect the particularities of the time, context and place where they have developed. These underpinning ideas are influenced by principles and governance/political trends such as Sustainable Development, Europeanization, Technocracy, Participation and Neoliberalism, which contribute to construct the conceptual basis of the EU strategy to preserve biodiversity. These principles and trends influence the interpretations and meanings of N2000.

This study analyzes N2000 from a constructivist perspective and is rooted in the discourse theory (see section 2.1 of this report). Through these theoretical lenses I conceive N2000 as a discursive strategy. The two main clusters on which the network is built are considered as the discursive clusters of the N2000 discursive strategy. The principles and governance/political trends in which the clusters are rooted are considered as discursive components (Hajer, 1995). These discursive components are deeply embedded in the current European nature conservation arena, and represent the main principles and trends diffused in this field.

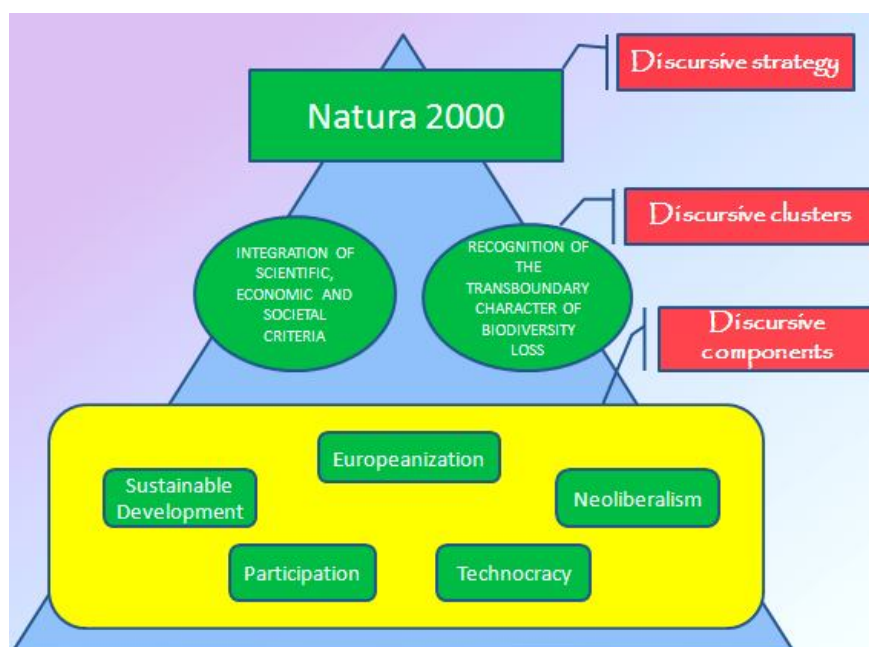


Figure 1: schematic representation of Natura 2000 from a discourse analysis perspective

The discursive components of Figure 1 interweave making of N2000 an innovative strategy characteristic of the current European nature conservation policy arena. I consider the European policy process related to N2000 as being not a simple follow-up of decision-making, but a continuous struggle over meanings and interpretations (Beunen *et al.*, 2009). This thesis applies constructivist theories and theories on discourses to the study of the N2000 strategy, in order to shed light over its discursive construction. It undertakes a discourse analysis of the legislative and policy texts underpinning N2000, as well as of the European process of design and implementation of N2000. The literature on N2000 rarely treats the role of meanings and interpretations in the N2000 process at the European level (see for example the policy evaluation approach of Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; Getzner and Jungmeier, 2002; Hiedanpää, 2002; Kruk *et al.*, 2010), aspects which instead assume a great importance in my thesis. With this approach, the thesis sheds light over the discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy and their dynamics in the history of the network. The dynamics of the discursive components during the N2000 process influence the roles of actors, their interactions and the power relations displayed. The thesis describes these dynamics at the European policy level and considers how these dynamics influence the power relations among actors and actors' (dis)empowerment. Understanding these processes of designing and implementing a polyvalent strategy like N2000 as well as how this process is influenced by the discursive construction of N2000, can give a new insight over delays and implementation problems of the network. My wish is that this thesis might contribute to help politicians and researchers reflecting over the causes of N2000 implementation problems and possibly looking for remedies to the obstacles which are affecting the Network's realization.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general research objective of this thesis is:

To gain insight into the discursive construction of the N2000 strategy, the dynamics taking place during N2000 implementation, and the consequences in terms of (dis)empowerment of actors

To address the general objective, I define the following three specific objectives:

1. *Analyzing the discursive construction of N2000 and identifying the role of the discursive components of the N2000 strategy.* This study brings to surface the specific characteristics of N2000 in terms of the principles and governance/political trends that underpin its design and implementation at the European level. This objective focuses on the formal and official interpretations of Natura 2000 provided by the EC in the legislative and policy documents produced on the network.
2. *Studying the dynamics of the discursive components in the developments of the N2000 discursive strategy during the European policy process related to the network.* This objective deals with the dynamics, debates and events that have taken place during crucial moments in the history of N2000 at the European level. The dynamics of the discursive components are used to explain the changing role of actors, the interactions among actors and the power relations displayed in the realization of N2000.
3. *Examining the implications of N2000, as experienced and operated by the actors involved in (and affected by) the network's implementation.* This objective deals with the influence of the discursive construction of the N2000 strategy, and the dynamics of the discursive components taking place during the history of the

network, on the (dis)empowerment of actors in the various phases of the realization of N2000.

CHAPTER 2

Theory, research questions and methods

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 Constructivism

This thesis is rooted in a constructivist epistemological approach (Bettencourt, 1993), which constitutes a “particular way of understanding the relation between what we call knowledge and what we experience as reality” (Herrnstein-Smith, 2005. p.2). Constructivism holds that the world cannot be thought as independent from our perceptions. The knowledge humans acquire about the world is not a completely truthful representation of reality, but is produced by human thought within a specific culture and can change in time and space (Fischer, 1998; van Assche, 2004; Herrnstein-Smith, 2005). Regardless of the issue whether reality in fact *has* an inherent structure, Constructivism holds that we as humans cannot entirely grasp this structure through rationality or senses (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005; Herrnstein-Smith, 2005). Knowledge is therefore socially constructed in the interplay between reality and the people who give meaning to this reality (Latour, 2004). Scientific knowledge is structured by the ideas and perceptions of the individuals and institutions carrying out the scientific process of research, theorization and application of findings (Herrnstein-Smith, 2005). Scientific theories come to be accepted not necessarily because of their truth-value but as the result of consensus among scientists (Fischer, 2000).

A research project rooted in Constructivism needs to concentrate on the different meanings attributed to reality (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005). Constructivism expresses a critique of rationalist theories which state that rigorous scientific methods can reach a veritable knowledge of the physical world. This wave of thought moreover disagrees with positivist technocratic theories which hold that science alone, perceived as speaking the truth, leads to progress of our society and therefore should regulate it. From a constructivist perspective, public policy should rely not only on scientific knowledge but also on other forms of knowledge such as local knowledge and expertise (Fischer, 1990; 2000).

Within this constructivist perspective, words and definitions are perceived to be entities in itself rather than corresponding to the object they want to describe (Hacking, 1999). Terms, concepts and language in general are subjected to different interpretations, none of which are necessarily right or wrong. Rather, the different interpretations concur to form an overall perception of reality that we as humans can access. Moreover, words and concepts do not have meaning individually, but operate as elements of networks of meanings. To describe this idea Cornwall and Brock (2005. p. 4) use the concept “chains of equivalence”, defined as words linked together to “evoke a particular set of meanings”.

2.1.2 Discourse theory

The main point of discourse theory is that ideas, concepts, definitions, principles and theories are like frames: they do not just describe reality but construct it. These frames arise from social interactions among the actors of the community where they developed, and are contingent on this context. When these frames expand and become accepted in society, institutionalized and transformed into practice (Hajer, 2006), they constitute a dominant *discourse*. According to Foucault, a *discourse* is “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about- a way of representing the knowledge about- a particular topic at a particular historical moment” (Foucault in Hall, 1992 p. 291). In Hajer’s words, a discourse is “a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorizations that are reproduced, produced and transformed in a particular set of practices through which meaning is given to [...] realities” (Hajer, 1995 p. 44).

Relying on these definitions, a research project applying a discourse analysis approach should focus on two important elements of discourses, in order to unveil the social construction of

the reality under study: language and context (Hajer, 1995; Dryzek, 1997; Gee, 1999; Fischer, 2003; Hajer and Versteeg, 2005; Hajer, 2006). In order to analyze N2000, this thesis applies an argumentative discourse analysis approach which relies on linguistic and contextual research methods (Foucault, 1971/1972; Gee, 1999). The linguistic methods study the use of language in the formulation and application of the N2000 discursive strategy, focusing on meanings of words and sentences in texts and oral communications. The contextual analysis deals with the way certain positions are argued and debated in the genesis and implementation of the N2000 discursive strategy (Runhaar *et al.*, 2006; Hajer, 2006). From this description it is clear the importance for this thesis of the different meanings attributed to reality.

To build the conceptual framework of this thesis I apply this ensemble of theoretical concepts to the European nature conservation policy, considering N2000 as a “discursive strategy” to counteract biodiversity loss, institutionalized through the legislations and policy documents published by the EC (Hall, 1993). As shown in Figure 1 of section 1.2, the N2000 discursive strategy is based on two “discursive clusters”: I) integration of scientific, economic and societal criteria and II) recognition of the transboundary character of biodiversity loss. I define these discursive clusters as complex conceptions built upon the combination of various “discursive components”. During the history of N2000, the various discursive components developed particular dynamics which influenced the N2000 discursive strategy, the policy process taking place during its implementation, the positions of involved actors and the results in terms of actors’ (dis)empowerment. Participation, Europeanization, Technocracy, Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism (the discursive components of Figure 1) are themselves labeled in literature as discourses, but in this thesis they play the role of elements of the broader N2000 discursive strategy. The meanings encompassed in the N2000 discursive strategy during its genesis and implementation are influenced by these discursive components and by their dynamics. These dynamics link different discursive components on the basis of shared elements or of factors representing a bridge among the different discourses. Moreover these dynamics represent the basis for the formation of ideological alliances, which developed among actors subscribing to the different discursive components, and which struggled during the history of the N2000 discursive strategy (Hajer, 1995; 2005). The theoretical concepts I use in the thesis are summarized in Box 1.

Box 1: theoretical concepts underpinning the thesis

- **Discursive components:** principles and governance/political trends embedded in the characteristics of the time, policy community and cultural context where they develop, and already institutionalized as discourses, accepted by society and transformed into practice.
- **Discursive clusters:** complex conceptions influenced by the dynamics combining various discursive components.
- **Discursive strategy:** policy strategy that has the properties of a discourse, insofar as its development is influenced by the dynamics combining different discourses (in this thesis labeled as discursive components) which are already institutionalized, accepted by society and transformed into practice.

Discourse theory often focuses on the concept of power and on its role in discourse generation, claiming that knowledge is power and power is knowledge (Foucault, 1994; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Fischer, 2000). According to Foucault (1980) knowledge, truths and rationalities are produced and used in certain power contexts, and are influenced by these contexts. In other words, they are socially constructed through discourses. In the discursive construction of truths and rationalities some kinds of knowledge prevail over others, which become subjugated (Foucault, 1971/1972). Indeed discourses are created through the

mechanism of exclusion, in which institutions determine which kinds of knowledge, actors and perspectives can or cannot enter the discourse (Hajer, 1995; Richardson, 2002). Or, as van Assche puts it (2004, p. 30): a discourse is “a set of ideas [...] concerning a part of reality” which “highlights certain aspects of it [...], forgetting about other ones”. This is particularly true for environmental problems, such as biodiversity loss, which involve a great number of actors and conflicting interests (Mickwitz, 2003; Dryzek, 1997). Such problems are consequently seen as socially constructed through a struggle among different sets of knowledge, of which at the end one or a few prevail (Hajer, 1995). The selection of one or a few types of knowledge for the genesis and application of a discourse reflects the hegemony of power in the arena where the discourse creates or applies (Flyvbjerg, 2002).

Power in this context is conceived not as a resource held by particular actors or institutions, but as an element which is enacted in the interactions among subjects during the development of a discourse. The hegemony of power is mirrored in the way a problem is defined, conceptual differences are played out and coalitions of actors emerge. The genesis and application of a discourse occur also through the development and transformation of ideological alliances among actors. These alliances are nourished not only by shared beliefs among actors but also by mechanisms of enrolment, persuasion, issue framing and lobbying (Hajer, 1995; Keeley and Scoones, 2003).

In order to answer the question “why a particular understanding of the environmental problem at some point gains dominance and is seen as authoritative” (Hajer, 1995 p.44), this thesis studies the process with which the N2000 discursive strategy develops, becomes hegemonic, and is maintained and transformed. In this thesis I apply the concepts of power, exclusion and hegemony to the analysis of the HD and to other important moments of the N2000 history. I start my study from the process of drafting of the HD, during which the dynamics connecting different discourses and influencing actors’ positions determine the legislative output and the outcomes of the directive. However, it is not only the text of a legislation (and the processes that took place to come to that text) that affects its implementation. Also the processes taking place during the implementation itself influence the outcomes of the process. Consequently these outcomes can be different from the ones foreseen by the legislative text (Beunen, 2010). For this reason, I study further moments of the N2000 policy process to see how the dynamics of the discursive components influence the relations among actors in different phases.

2.1.3 Empowerment theory

Because of the power dynamics involved, the establishment of a discourse always results in the empowerment of some actors and the disempowerment of others (Fischer, 2000; Keeley and Scoones, 2003). The same concept of “empowerment” has been linked in literature to the idea of “power” and its exercise by different actors, who attempt to shape the external world in order to reach their objectives. Empowerment has been defined as the degree of control that actors have over their lives and the environment surrounding them (Messinger, 1982). However, empowerment does not only refer to this idea of control, but also to the process through which actors obtain the “possibility” and the “ability” to influence the external world (Staples, 1990). Empowerment therefore is not only related to the success or failure of a struggle to exercise control, but also to the possibility that actors have to attempt the exercise of this control (McCauley, 2008b). Particularly interesting for my analysis is the definition of “political empowerment”, a process of change that enables actors to take part in the decision-making processes affecting their lives (Gruber and Trickett, 1987). Mirroring this definition, “political disempowerment” is a process of change that reduces the ability of actors to affect the decision-making conditioning their lives. These concepts can be linked to the

idea, expressed in section 2.1.2, that the outcomes of the implementation of a legislation are not only determined by the legislation itself but also by the dynamics taking place during the implementation process (Beunen, 2010). For example in the case of this thesis, it is not only the HD which determines actors' (dis)empowerment in the N2000 framework, but also the dynamics taking place in the design and implementation of N2000 have a role in influencing the process of actors' (dis)empowerment.

In psychological terms, the process of empowerment is an interaction between actors and the environment surrounding them: the actors acquire self consciousness, develop critical consciousness about the world and subsequently the ability of struggling to influence it (Kieffer, 1984). According to Parsons (1988), empowerment is an active process of internal and external change, which is shaped by circumstances, events and opportunities enabling empowerment (Sadan, 2004). In this last definition of empowerment the influence of the dynamics of the N2000 discursive strategy over actors' (dis)empowerment becomes clear. Discourse theories hold that a dialectical relation exists between discourses and actors: on the one hand discourses shape the actions of subjects and represent a constraint or an enablement for actors; on the other hand actors actively manipulate, apply and transform discourses (Hajer, 1995). In N2000, the discursive components and the dynamics linking them influence the roles of actors, their interactions and their level of (dis)empowerment in the different phases of the N2000 process. At the same time, the actors through their empowerment are able to influence the development of the N2000 discursive strategy. In this thesis, the interest is directed toward this particular discursive dimension of actors' (dis)empowerment, studied in relation to the discursive components' dynamics. The level of discursive (dis)empowerment of actors in N2000 changes during the policy process, according to the changing dynamics of the discursive components. When actors reach a high level of empowerment (situation which can be linked to the dominance of the discursive components to which they subscribe) they are able to influence the N2000 discursive strategy and ultimately the implementation of N2000 in practice. This may result in obtaining a higher level of control over their lives and the external environment, which will increase even more their level of empowerment in the framework established by N2000. On the contrary, actors who are disempowered do not have the ability to influence the N2000 discursive strategy, and eventually run the risk of losing control over the use of the natural environment.

The discursive dimension of actors' (dis)empowerment in N2000 can be grasped using criteria and theories reported in the literature on (dis)empowerment. This literature mostly focuses on the implications of institutions and decision-making on actors' (dis)empowerment. It identifies the factors which allow speaking of actual empowerment, and the ones which mask empowerment with elements of symbolic politics (Kieffer, 1984; Gruber and Trickett, 1987; Simon, 1990; Staples, 1990; Fung and Wright, 2003; Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Tranchant, 2007). For example the literature shows that the aggregation of individuals in groups can enhance the possibility of empowerment for these individuals (Crowfoot *et al.*, 1983; Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988). Organized groups can provide the proper climate, relations, resources and means that enable empowerment of actors (Simon, 1990). Empowerment is indeed facilitated by consciousness-raising, social skills development and problem solving exercises which are proper of organized groups (Sadan, 2004). According to Rubin and Rubin (1992), an important criterion determining the level of empowerment of communities is the inclusion of different actors in decision-making and implementation of decisions. Important questions to make in this respect are: "who determines the goals? Who acts to achievement of the goals? Who receives the actions? Who evaluates the actions?" (Rubin and Rubin, 1992 cited in Sadan, 2004). According to these authors, the inclusion of actors affected by decisions in the problem framing phase of policy processes is an essential

criteria of empowerment. Moreover, according to the literature on empowerment, the (lack of) budgets, personnel, cultural and moral resource base is important in determining actors' (dis)empowerment (Dalton *et al.*, 2003; McCauley, 2008b). This thesis considers the factors of actors' (dis)empowerment reported in literature (e.g. organization in interest groups, inclusion in decision-making processes, availability of financial resources) as influenced by the discursive components and their dynamics, rather than simply by institutions and policy-making. This approach allows me developing a methodology and detailed methods for studying the (dis)empowerment of actors in N2000 under a discursive light.

2.2 THEORETICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE DISCURSIVE COMPONENTS

As shown by Figure 1 of section 1.2, the starting point of my thesis is that the N2000 discursive strategy is based on two discursive clusters, on their turn rooted in several discursive components (Sustainable Development, Europeanization, Technocracy, Participation and Neoliberalism). These components are discourses already institutionalized and transformed into practice, around which various interpretations have been developed (Dryzek, 1997; Fischer, 2000; Connelly and Smith, 2003). The theoretical framework of the thesis is completed by the characterization of these discourses, built through an overview of the different interpretations they give rise to in literature. In this characterization I include the different meanings that the discourses take during their institutionalization, and during their transformation into practice. At the end of the discursive components' description, I present Figure 3 which displays the co-occurring themes among the discursive components. Some of these overlapping elements can represent the basis for dynamics linking the various discursive components.

2.2.1 Sustainable Development

The essence of this discourse is the attempt to combine issues usually treated in isolation—environmental protection, social justice and economic growth. These issues are moreover treated by the discourse with an attention to intergenerational equity and a long-term approach toward problem solving (Dryzek, 1997). The origins of the discourse can be traced back to the 1960s, when the concept of sustainability was elaborated in relation to developing countries and environmental issues (Chilla and Schulz, 2006). The idea of sustainability was opposed to capitalistic approaches within society and economy (Krueger and Agyeman, 2005). The diffusion and popularity of the Sustainable Development discourse in politics grew rapidly in the 1980s, especially after the publication of the Brundtland report (WCED, 1987).

The Brundtland report is considered as the manifest of Sustainable Development, and states: "Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable—to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland report, p. 8). The central point of this report is the combination of three competing realms: environment, economy and society. The seductive and reassuring interpretation of Sustainable Development provided in the Brundtland report affirms that these three elements can reach a consensus and mutually reinforce each other (Dryzek, 1997; WCED, 1987). Economic growth is essential to development and needs to be promoted, but "guided in ways that are both environmentally benign and socially just" in order to be sustainable (Dryzek, 1997, p. 153). This allows a prolonged form of development which involves the equal distribution of the benefits, and respects the limits imposed by natural resources.

Sustainable Development assumes that global natural and human systems are nested, entangled and interdependent networks of elements. With respect to social systems, this network metaphor translates in the need of shifting power in problem-solving among different levels. In order to apply the principle of Sustainable Development power should not be centralized at the nation-state level but distributed across the meshes of the network of actors involved in decision-making and implementation (Krueger and Agyeman, 2005). The success of Sustainable Development depends indeed on the "dissemination and acceptance of the discourse at various levels" (Dryzek, 1997. p. 160). It requires the involvement not only of national governmental bodies, but also of international governmental organizations (GOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), grassroots organizations, interest groups, citizens' organizations and business corporations. This element represents a similarity between Sustainable Development and two other discursive components of this thesis: Europeanization and Participation. Another assumption of the Sustainable Development discourse is that these stakeholders can act as "caring humans" who are committed to the protection of the environment and are willing to accept economic losses or give up some of their control over natural resources (Dryzek, 1997).

The quotation of the Brundtland report shows the anthropocentric viewpoint encompassed in the Sustainable Development discourse, which aims at satisfying human needs now and in the future (Dryzek, 1997). The discourse encompasses an "economistic" view of nature as a provider of resources and services for human use. Nature should be conserved to guarantee the sustainable delivery of these resources and services (Redclift, 1992). The concept of progress is very strong in the Sustainable Development discourse: technological and scientific advancements allow humans to "have it all: economic growth, environmental conservation, social justice" (Dryzek, 1997. P. 157). This focus on progress is common to Sustainable Development and to other two discursive components of this thesis: Neoliberalism and Technocracy.

Sustainable Development spread in the last decades within the practices of international institutions, national governments and business corporations (Krueger and Agyeman, 2005). Especially this last category strongly subscribed to the discourse (Dryzek, 2005), proclaiming a sustainable approach to economic growth sometimes in order to justify a market-liberalistic imprint (Connelly and Smith, 2003). The subscription of business corporations to Sustainable Development occurs because of bridges existing between this discourse and another discourse particularly influential for these actors, i.e. Neoliberalism. Soon enough in the history of the discourse however it appeared that the balance and consensus among environmental, social and economic interests are utopian ideas hardly translatable in practice. The attempts to implement Sustainable Development showed this reality quite clearly. An important example is the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, which endorsed the Agenda 21 program (Chilla and Schulz, 2006). The program contains practical indications for national and local governments for the application of Sustainable Development (Krueger and Agyeman, 2005). However in the context of the Agenda 21, as in other projects employing this discourse, Sustainable Development remained an abstract and vague concept which did not clearly result in balancing environmental, societal and economic interests (Chilla and Schulz, 2006). This situation can be explained with the fact that the discourse does not refer to practical indications on how to implement this balance, and how to deal with questions of prioritization such as: <what needs to be sustained with priority: the environment, the economy or society?> (Connelly and Smith, 2003).

Because of the vague and abstract character of Sustainable Development and especially of the interpretation used in the Brundtland report, the meaning of the discourse has been challenged, criticized and reframed (Chilla and Schulz, 2006). Many different interpretations of Sustainable Development arose during the institutionalization of the discourse and the attempts of transforming it into practice (Connelly and Smith, 2003). The various interpretations oscillate between two main poles: the strong and the weak interpretations of Sustainable Development (Connelly and Smith, 2003). The strong interpretation considers that some non-renewable resources cannot be substituted and therefore should be strictly conserved. Renewable resources should be used with a slower rate than the one with which they are renewed. In this set of ideas, all present activities should be subjected to scrutiny to avoid future negative environmental effects and respect environmental limits. In that way the strong interpretation of sustainable development presents similarities with the Technocracy discourse. The weak interpretation of Sustainable Development justifies every activity in the present as long as resources are left for future generations, or can be substituted over time. The limit is not strictly determined by natural resources but can be pushed forward by technological progress (Connelly and Smith, 2003; Krueger and Agyeman, 2005). These aspects, and the economic and anthropocentric views encompassed in Sustainable Development, are emphasized and taken to an extreme point in another important discourse of contemporary nature conservation arena, i.e. Ecological Modernization (Langhelle, 2000; Fisher and Freudenburg, 2001). I do not use this discourse in the framework of my thesis because of the conspicuous overlapping with Sustainable Development. The development of the Ecological Modernization discourse from this weak interpretation of Sustainable Development represents a linkage between Sustainable Development and the Neoliberalism discourse.

2.2.2 Europeanization

The EU is a political and economic project started in 1993. It stems from the European Community, international organization established in 1957, which regulated relations among several states of the European continent. The EU is based on the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital among the States which are Members of the Union (During, 2010). Its primary goal is to harmonize the legal, social and economic conditions among the MSs in order to facilitate and regulate this movement. Part of this objective is also the introduction of the common currency Euro (Treaty on European Union, 1992). The EU enlarged its borders during the years including today 27 MSs (see http://europa.eu/abc/european_countries/index_en.htm).

The EU has been defined as "one of the most significant of the new international regimes and organizations [...] established to manage areas of transnational activity" (Baker, 1996 p.215). According to Baker (1996) its main strength, compared to other international organizations, is the power of making laws which can be imposed to MSs and take precedence over national laws. This makes the EU a supranational organization: not only MSs are committed to work together, but they are also formally and legally obliged to satisfy the requirements of the EU (Connelly and Smith, 2003; Jensen and Richardson, 2004). The legislative interventions of the EU strongly influence political, economic, and social issues at the national governmental level, such as: justice, international affairs, trade, agriculture, fisheries, environment and regional development. Often tensions arise between EU policy objectives and national ones (Jensen and Richardson 2004). The EU has been very active in the environmental policy realm; for example the EU was the sole supranational organization fully embracing the idea of Sustainable Development with its presence at the Rio Earth Summit (Lenschow, 2002; Connelly and Smith, 2003).

The uniqueness and complexity of the EU project, and the continuous enlargement of the borders of the EU, gave the basis for the development of a discourse called Europeanization (Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003). Jensen and Richardson (2004, p. 179) state that Europeanization is at work “when a policy language is created, and it becomes institutionalized by the construction of frameworks and measures which spread and apply its core ideas”. This sentence describes the social construction of Europeanization and its institutionalization as a discourse. Different interpretations arise within the discourse in recent years, relating to the different aspects of the concept “Europe”, which can be defined along “territorial, cultural, symbolic, political and ethnic lines” (During, 2010. p. III). The basic idea of Europeanization reflects the process of becoming and being part of the EU, and conforming to its paradigms (Olsen, 2002).

The first factor of Europeanization I want to report on is the “Common Identity” concept, according to which the cultural heritage shared by the MSs belonging to the EU is recognized as a vehicle of cultural identity. The conservation of this Common Identity is the key to successfully implement the project of the EU (During, 2010). According to this line of thought, the European Common Identity concept implies and enforces the developing of shared interests and goals among the MSs (During, 2010). The EU applies this concept by establishing a “European paradigm” to which MSs have to conform (Olsen, 2002). This vision has been often challenged and criticized especially by the practical experiences of implementing Europeanization, where national interests conflict among each other and with the general interests of the EU (Jensen and Richardson 2004).

Jensen and Richardson (2004, p. 24) describe Europeanization as “the introduction of new institutional structures and processes that work at new scales and transgress national boundaries, creating new possibilities of action”. Europeanization is also related to the sets of relations among the different governmental and non-governmental actors of the EU. I display these relations in Figure 2. These relations include: I) mutual relations between EU and MSs; II) mutual relations among the MSs; III) mutual relations between MSs and local governments; IV) mutual relations among local governments; V) bottom-up relations between (on the one hand) local governments, international NGOs, local NGOs, and associations and (on the other hand) EU, national and local levels of decision-making VI) mutual relations between local and international NGOs (Kern and Bulkeley, 2009).

The complex system generated by the Europeanization trend has often been associated in literature to the concept of Multilevel Governance (Bache, 2005; Kern *et al.*, 2009). The Multilevel Governance discourse refers to the establishment of a worldwide governing system that is based on the principle of “governance beyond the nation-state” (Decker, 2002). It refers to the (partial) redistribution of power from the nation-states to governmental and non-governmental actors at the international, national and local levels (Kern *et al.*, 2009). The ideas encompassed in the Multilevel Governance discourse with respect to the relations among governmental and non-governmental actors are an important part of the Europeanization discourse, which suggests a complex network of actors and relations joined together in the implementation of the EU project. Figure 2 illustrates this network. It shows the top-down relations between EU and MSs, and between MSs and local governments. These relations are counterbalanced by bottom-up forces, displayed in the up-pointed part of the arrows between local governments, MSs, and EU. Moreover, other bottom-up forces are displayed in Figure 2 as well: for example the black and blue arrows show respectively the lobbying of NGOs at various governmental levels, and the exchange of data and information between local and international NGOs. The NGOs are considered as a bottom-up force in Figure 2 because the work of the international NGOs is based on the input of national and

local members which allow the lobbying activity to carry problematic and issues coming from the bottom (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). These bottom-up forces represent a co-occurring theme between Europeanization and other two discursive components of the thesis: Participation and Sustainable Development.

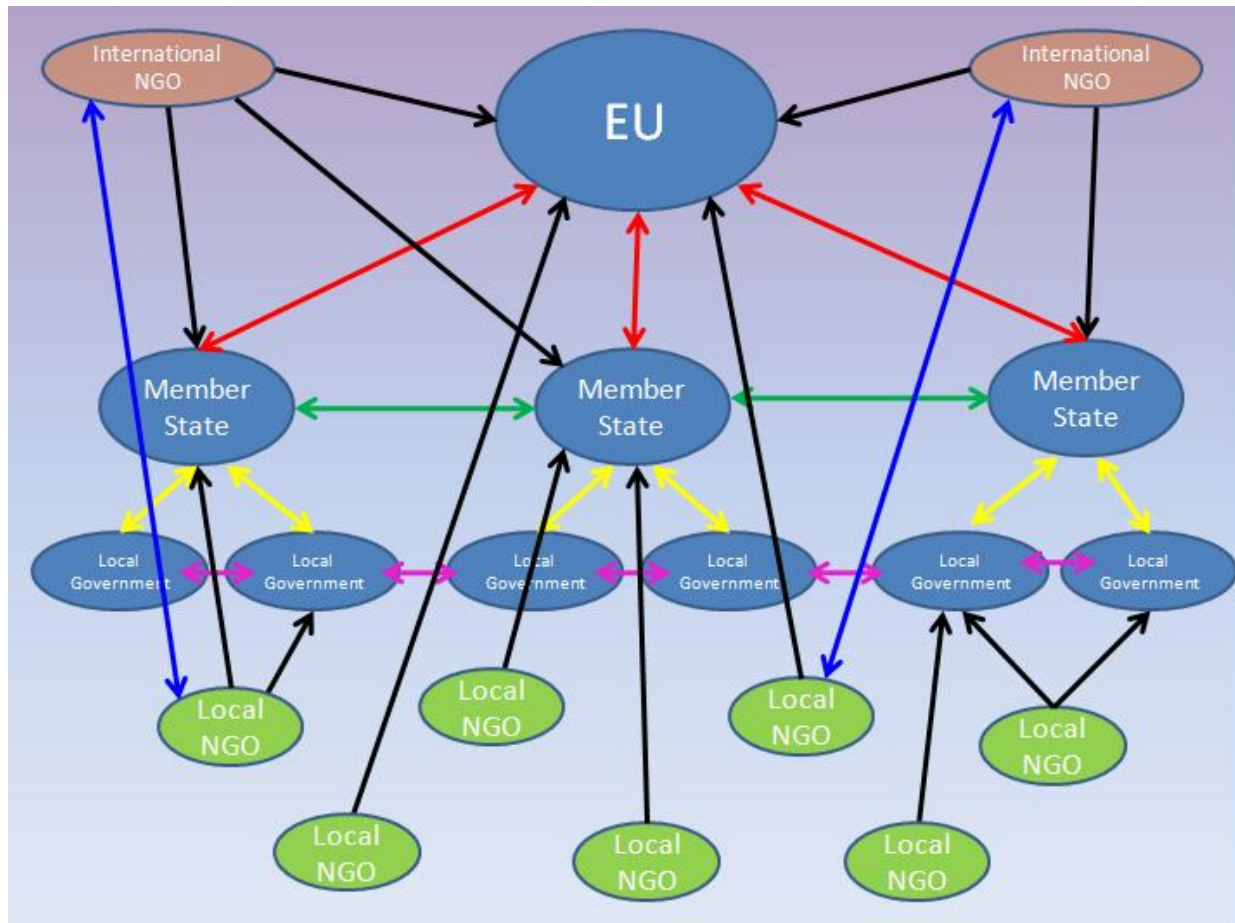


Figure 2: sets of relations among actors encompassed in the Europeanization discourse. The various sets of relations among actors are displayed with different colors. The red arrows show set I); the green arrows show set II); the yellow arrows show set III); the pink arrows show set IV); the black arrows show set V); the blue arrows show set VI).

The introduction of new frames which concur to construct the “European paradigm”, referred as one of the main characteristics of the discourse (Kern and Bulkeley, 2009), is carried out mainly through the legislative instruments of the EU: regulations, directives, decisions, recommendations and opinions. The directives are among the most important of these instruments since they are legally binding and require the MSs to reach the stated objectives. However, they do so without imposing obligations on the methods MSs can use to reach these objectives. This reflects the principle of Discretionary Freedom, which is a strong factor of Europeanization (Connelly and Smith, 2003; van Dijk and Beunen, 2009). In implementing a European directive, the MSs are required to transpose it into national law and to ensure and finance its implementation (Article 12 Working Group, s.d.; Connelly and Smith, 2003). MSs have freedom in choosing how to carry out these tasks provided that the EU objectives are reached. MSs often delegate responsibilities to local authorities. However, the MSs are legally responsible for the accomplishment of European goals and for correctly implementing the directives (Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003). These factors display the Subsidiarity Principle, other important factor of Europeanization (Wils, 1994; During, 2010). According to this principle, the EU has to legislate on issues which cannot be dealt with at the national level.

This principle has been expressed as “do less but do it better” (Connelly and Smith, 2003). This factor of Europeanization represents a link between this discourse and other two discursive components: Sustainable Development and Participation. This principle gives MSs the possibility to safeguard their national power on many policy aspects, but allows the EU to intervene in cases of international nature, and where she considers it appropriate (Scholl and Chilla, 2005). The “competency issue” represents a problem, since often the clash between the MSs’ leeway (encompassed in the Discretionary Freedom) and the authority of the EC to intervene (encompassed in the Subsidiarity Principle) raises the ambivalent question of “which level of governance has the power to exercise decisions” (Jensen and Richardson 2004, p. 145).

All the actions taken by the MSs to implement a directive have to be reported to the EC (Vaz *et al.*, 2001). This information is used by the EC to assess MSs’ compliance with the directive, and monitor the directive’s implementation (Connelly and Smith, 2003). The information reported by MSs to the EC represents a very important factor of Europeanization, which I call “Politics of Information”. This factor represents a co-occurring theme of Europeanization and of the Participation discourse. The EC has no independent method to verify and monitor a directive’s implementation, apart from the information provided by the States. Therefore the monitoring function for EU directives, which is kept by the EC, is based on the input coming from the nation States. The accuracy of this information is essential to the success of the implementation (Vaz *et al.*, 2001; EC, 2007). This procedure has been set by the EC with the idea that it could avoid unnecessary infringement procedures by the EU toward MSs. This because the MSs, while reporting, would have to reflect over the implementation measures taken, and would potentially realize their own failures. The monitoring procedure for EU directives, based on the Politics of Information factor, reduces the impact of the EU on the MSs internal policy, avoiding the EU to take the role of inspecting body, but rather the one of guarantor (Vaz *et al.*, 2001; Connelly and Smith, 2003).

The use of the Politics of Information in the European policy arena however gives rise to unexpected pitfalls. For example, those MSs which are more committed in reporting their implementation measures to the EU are also the ones who are more subject to scrutiny and eventually involved in lawsuits, as it happens for the UK with respect to environmental issues (Haigh and Lanigan, 1995). Moreover doubts have been raised on the actual necessity of the great amount of information required by the EC to the MSs (Vaz *et al.*, 2001; Torkler and Arroyo, 2008). Another aspect of the Politics of Information factor is that the EC commits to publish public reports based on the information sent by the MSs, which contain overviews on the progresses of implementation of the directives. These public reports are the basis for citizens and interest groups to investigate and challenge the national and European policy performances (Vaz *et al.*, 2001). In this order of ideas, the general public is considered as a resource, a spontaneous monitoring body, which can contribute to the fulfillment of environmental goals (Reed, 2008). This concept is highlighted in the Fifth Environmental Action Programme of the EU (Decision No 2179/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council) and in Council Directive 90/313. If considering this element, Europeanization presents further similarities with the Participation discourse. As the previous aspect of the Politics of Information, also this aspect has drawbacks: the numerous lawsuits initiated to respond to the complaints of the general public are extremely time consuming and often delay the implementation of EU directives (Connelly and Smith, 2003). However, Subsidiarity supported by deregulation and decentralization can be a good basis for the application of the idea of “appropriate action at the appropriate level” in the European context. This idea is at the core of Sustainable Development and of participatory approaches to decision-making (Corburn, 2005).

Another important factor of Europeanization is the Principle of Integration, which applied in environmental policy implies that environmental issues should be inserted in other sectoral policies which influence the environment (such as transportation, agriculture or business). In this way environmental problems can be internalized in other activities and included in the assessment of these activities from the start. This integration should occur both at the European level with the formulation of EU directives, and at the national and more local levels with the implementation of the directives. Integration of environmental issues in other sectors encompasses the shift away from an environmentally-centered perspective in environmental problem-solving, and the entrance of new actors and interests in the environmental arena (Connelly and Smith, 2003). The integration of environmental and socio-economic interests represents a common theme proper of Europeanization and Sustainable Development discourses.

2.2.3 Technocracy

Technocracy refers to the idea that the complexity and intricacy of modern problems can only be tackled through scientific and technical methods which help eliminating the uncertainties related to social, cultural and economic aspects of problems (Fischer, 2000). Within this discourse, science is perceived as “speaking truth to power” (Price, 1965), and scientists and experts build the knowledge-base upon which public policy is founded (Herrnstein-Smith, 2005). The focus on scientific and technical progress represents a linkage between this discourse and other two discursive components of the thesis: Neoliberalism and Sustainable Development. According to Fischer (2000), the origins of this discourse can be found in the 18th century Enlightenment which affirmed that the rational human mind can take control over the natural world. Origins of Technocracy can be also found in 19th century positivist theories, according to which science is the only valid approach to understand the intrinsic nature of physical and human processes (Fischer, 2000). These positivist claims influence contemporary neo-positivist thinkers who study human behavior and psychology through mathematical and statistical methods (Giddings, 1922).

In the 1970s and 1980s, technocratic approaches to decision-making conceiving science as unitary, rational, effective and truthful (van Bommel, 2008) entered national policies all over the world (Dryzek, 1997). Especially with respect to environmental problems, they gave rise to a form of “technocratic environmentalism”, term used by Fischer to emphasize the “science-based nature of environmental policy-making” (2000, p. 91). During these years a conspicuous number of environmental agencies have been instituted, which developed environmental standards, carried out quantitative risk assessment evaluations and created computer models to simulate environmental responses (Dryzek, 1997; Corburn, 2005). Technology and science are essential elements in the work of these agencies. If problems are conceptualized in technical-scientific terms, they are freed from the socio-cultural aspects which increase the uncertainties in decision-making (Dryzek, 1997). This vision encompasses a separation of facts and values, leaving facts to science and values to society (Latour, 2004). In this context, experts and scientists have the authority of generating facts to support decision-making, and scientific knowledge becomes a source of power. Society is hierarchically divided between those who do and do not hold scientific knowledge. In this setting, expertise is only justified by the conformation to scientific rules and standards (e.g. the Peer Review System for scientific publications). Because power is justified by expertise (van Bommel, 2009), Technocracy implies the exclusion of the public from decision-making processes. Public involvement is indeed perceived as a time-consuming and ineffective practice (Dryzek, 1997).

The need to identify risks in advance to prevent harms, and to take actions prior to the occurrence of a problem, is a factor of the Technocracy discourse encompassed in the Precautionary Principle, a political model developed to protect humans and the environment “against uncertain risks of human action” (COMEST, 2005. p. 7). If applied in environmental policy, it implies that action should be taken to prevent damage to humans or the environment when reasonable evidence of threat appears. This element shows a link between Technocracy and the strong interpretation of the Sustainable Development discourse. Even if there is no scientific consensus on the causal link between activity and harm, precautionary measures should be taken to avoid this harm. This principle has been criticized for not having a scientifically demonstrable and justifiable basis, but being a political approach toward environmental issues (Saunders and Ho, 2003). However, this principle has often been employed as a solid pillar of science-based decision-making (Saunders and Ho, 2003).

Technocracy as a discourse has undergone several critiques during its development, especially founded upon post-modernist and constructivist theories according to which (scientific) knowledge is not objective but a social interpretation of reality (Keeley and Scoones, 2003; Fischer, 2003; van Bommel, 2008). Criticisms of Technocracy claim that scientific rationality is only one of the approaches to problems and that other forms of rationality are also important (Fischer, 2000; Corburn, 2005). These critiques became strong with the occurrence of important historical events such as Hiroshima and Chernobyl, which reduced the trust of civil society in the truth celebrated by science (Fischer, 2000). Claims about the contingency and value laden character of science, and of the processes which generate scientific knowledge, were increasingly accepted as legitimate (van Bommel, 2008). During the 1990s this perspective resulted into a “crisis for the scientific community” (Fischer, 2000; p. 55): science alone was not anymore perceived as the solution of modern problems. Moreover there was increasing acceptance of the impossibility of separating facts and values, eliminating uncertainties and preventing all risks (Dryzek, 1999; Fischer, 2000). Instead a new scientific, ideological and political movement emerged which promoted the co-production of knowledge by experts and non-experts (Fischer, 2000; van Bommel, 2008), and forms of “street science” involving local knowledge and actors (Corburn, 2005).

2.2.4 Participation

Participation is a political discourse started during the 1970s in the colonial community development. It spread all over the world during the 1980s and reinforced itself during the 1990s, mainly in response to top-down technocratic models of policy-making and market-based instruments of governance (Fung and Wright, 2003; Cornwall and Brock, 2005; Corburn, 2005; Cornwall and Coelho, 2006). Fischer (2000, p. 32) defines participation as the possibility of deliberating on pressing issues of concern by “those affected by the decisions at issue”. The discourse has been embraced in scientific research, through methods of Participatory Action Research and Collaborative Research just to mention few (Corburn, 2005). Moreover, Participation entered the activities of governments and influent institutions such as the World Bank (World Bank, 1994).

The discourse asserts that actors which are directly affected by problems have the ability to understand these problems and find solutions. These actors know problems from a practical perspective because of their prolonged experience with issues and their consequences. Using a dynamic and integrated perspective, they are able to grasp the particular complexity of modern problems. The discourse claims the efficacy of this perspective compared to the approach of scientists and experts who tend to dissect problems in sectors and treat these sectors in isolation (Fischer, 2000). According to the Participation discourse, actors practically affected by problems often belong to local communities, and carry past experiences of these

communities which they combine with reasoning and sensorial interpretation in the assessment of reality. The "local knowledge" held by these actors is specific, dynamic, contextual and practical (Corburn, 2005). Participants are therefore important inputs for decision-making, and their involvement is essential for the success of policy-making especially in situations where uncertainty is high. The public's "cultural rationality" can lead to a policy outcome with a higher degree of acceptance by civil society than the one reached through a technocratic top-down approach. Participation moreover increases the level of public trust in the government (Keeley and Scoones, 2003).

Technocratic thinkers have criticized Participation describing it as a non-effective exercise for policy-making, since the public is perceived as ignorant and disinterested (Fischer, 2000; Keeley and Scoones, 2003). The myth of the "noble savage" has been unveiled and the public is seen as a non-unitary force ruled by hierarchical structures. A strong critique is made to the assumptions of Participation on the democratic commitment of the lay public in internalizing public interest (Dryzek, 1999). Supporters of Participation answer to these critiques by showing that the success of the discourse occurs only when the public is provided with the opportunity to express a meaningful opinion and is empowered (Corburn, 2005). Empowerment occurs when actors have the space as well as the means to participate. Their "language" and ideas have to be made understandable to policy makers, who can incorporate their input in decision-making process (Fung and Wright, 2003). Facilitators, reflexive experts who filtrate and interpret the participatory input, take an important role in this context (Fischer, 2000). Empowerment moreover occurs through the involvement of stakeholders affected by a problem in the definition of the problem. This involvement avoids a narrow technical-scientific framing of the problem and associated strategies for action. Participation in problem solving can be applied through participatory scientific research which values local knowledge in the scientific process (Corburn, 2005; Reed, 2008).

Fischer (2000), Fung and Wright (2003) and Corburn (2005) report several examples of successful application of the Participation discourse all over the world. The results of participatory methods and procedures in policy-making depend on the single case in which these methods and procedures have been applied, and it is hard to extrapolate. However, important lessons can be learned on the meaningful and successful application of the Participation discourse (De Rynk and Voets, 2006, Cornwall and Coelho, 2006; Reed, 2008): I) affected actors are involved in the problem definition phase; II) participants are empowered with respect to space, resources and means to participate; III) the participatory process is fair and inclusive; IV) information, education and training are important elements.

The literature on Participation reports different interpretations encompassed in the discourse. Different forms of Participation correspond for example to different levels of influence of participatory practices on decision-making processes. For example the outcomes of participatory processes can have advisory role, as in most consultation procedures inquiring the public opinion only after policy decisions have been made (Mayer *et al.*, 2005). In other occasions, such as in referenda, the public opinion has a determinant role in decision-making (Reed, 2008). Different forms of Participation also determine the format of participatory procedures embraced by governments or organizations (Reed, 2008). Some forms of public consultation labeled "lay citizen Participation" imply the early involvement of randomly selected actors in the policy processes, and their training and education on the subjects they deliberate upon (Fischer, 2000). The result is the meaningful opinion of informed and aware citizens, extremely useful in cases of complex social problems (Fischer, 2000). This opinion often serves as policy recommendation (Dryzek, 1997). In the so called "public inquiries" instead (Dryzek, 1997. p. 106), a more targeted form of Participation takes place:

proponents of plans and objectors can express their opinion on issues, strongly influencing decision-making processes.

Beside these forms of deliberative Participation, other participatory exercises are put into practice in contemporary policy-making (Reed, 2008). A less complex form of Participation is the diffusion of information by governments on policy issues. This practice is often strengthened by the enforcement of general laws on the freedom of information (Dryzek, 1997). The idea is that an informed and aware public is more interested in politics and more capable to express meaningful opinions- if asked (Kriesi, 2003). This factor represents a link between Participation and the Europeanization discourse. Participation takes the form of communication to stakeholders on decisions taken at other levels of decision-making. These standardized forms of Participation are often described as a façade, being “participation” just a buzzword behind which top-down forms of decision-making hide and gain legitimacy. Participation can become an element of symbolic politics (Cornwall and Brock, 2005).

A type of inclusion of actors in policy processes which I consider as a form of Participation, despite the critiques to this approach, is lobbying. Lobbying is the practice through which NGOs and associations of citizens can access decision-making with their requests and complaints, without going through the traditional channels of representative politics (Kern and Bulkeley, 2009). Lobbying has often been target of critiques for not being an inclusive form of Participation, since the actors involved are seen as powerful and resourceful groups of privates, associated to put their interests forward in politics (Fischer, 2000; Keeley and Scoones, 2003). However lobbying organizations and associations have been described as the only bottom-up force with a meaningful contribution to policy-making in an age of diffused apathy toward policy (Glynn, 1999). Moreover, other more institutionalized forms of Participation such as consultation also suffer from the disadvantage of not guaranteeing equity among participants, just as lobbying. In the case of consultation this is due for example to power relations among actors (e.g. clientelism, paternalism and racism), or to differences in argumentative skills (Fischer, 2000). Despite these debates, the lobbying practice diffused among GOs and NGOs is very influential especially at the international level (Cornwall and Coelho, 2006). The lobbying practice and its diffusion at the European level represent a manifestation of the existing linkages between the Participation and Europeanization discourses.

2.2.5 Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is considered as the most prominent discourse in the policy of 1870s, 1980s and 1990s (Dryzek, 1997). The discourse asserts that the intrinsic functioning of the market is rational and deploys intelligent mechanisms to achieve public ends. Economic rationalistic criteria should be the basis for decision-making (Dryzek, 1997). Neoliberalism originates from Liberalism, a line of thought developed in the 19th century and affirming the ideas of limited government intervention and freedom for individuals (Connelly and Smith, 2003). Another theory inspiring Neoliberalism is the “environmental economics” of the 1960s (Dryzek, 1997). Neoliberalism is a strong discourse in contemporary policy, and has been embraced by governments all over the world, especially since 1980s with respect to environmental issues. According to Dryzek (1997), the publication of the Brundtland report contributed to the diffusion of economic instruments in politics. The diffusion of Neoliberalism occurred despite the critiques to the discourse arisen during the last decades. The US and the EU subscribed to the discourse in environmental policy issues such as pollution and biodiversity, and through the work of the Environmental Protection Agency and the European Environmental Agency (Dryzek, 1997). Important European examples of neoliberal approaches are the Emission

Trading Scheme (Council Directive 2003/87/EC) and the new Biodiversity Strategy Post-2010 (CE, 2010).

According to Neoliberalism, the market can harness individual interests to the public good. With respect to environmental issues, a free market can neutralize free-riding behaviors and solve the "Tragedy of the Commons" (Hardin, 1968) representing a solution for environmental problems (Dryzek, 1997; Connelly and Smith, 2003). Therefore market instruments should be implied in policy to solve environmental problems (Connelly and Smith, 2003). These instruments internalize environmental costs in economic issues such as goods' prices. This concept is expressed in the Polluter Pays Principle, strong pillar of Neoliberalism and relevant element for my thesis. This principle asserts that if the costs for damaging the environment are high, polluters will be incentivized to reduce pollution. The idea is that economic instruments push polluters to pollute less and to improve the efficiency of activities limiting the environmental harm (Connelly and Smith, 2003; Schmidtchen *et al.* 2007). This occurs through strong investments in environmentally-friendly technologies, showing similarities between the Neoliberalism discourse and weak versions of Sustainable Development (Langhelle, 2000). The focus of Neoliberalism on technical progress represents also a common theme between this discourse and the Technocracy discourse.

Neoliberalism encompasses an anthropocentric vision in which nature has no intrinsic value but can represent a constraint for human activities (Dryzek, 1997). Only when it is priced on the market, nature is attributed an economic value and the right to be conserved (Buijs, 2009). This discourse assumes that consumers are willing to pay for environmental goods and services, and polluters are willing to reduce pollution. Moreover, Neoliberalism applies a simplification to social and natural worlds, perceived as machines which are rationally governable by the market (Jones *et al.* 2010; Connelly and Smith, 2003).

An important aspect of Neoliberalism is the inclusion of non-state actors with an economic potential in decision-making processes. These actors are an important input for policy-making, because they can establish partnerships with governmental levels of decision-making and contribute to policy implementation. These actors are more capable than governments of dealing with modern problems, because of their pragmatic and dynamic approach toward issues (Steger and Roy, 2010). This factor is also reflected in the Europeanization trend. The main difference between the two discourses is that within Europeanization the relations among state and non-state actors arise spontaneously and are based on informal cooperation, while within Neoliberalism these relations arise through formal agreements and contracts based on number outputs and principles of performance and conformance (Peters, 2002). Because of this difference, the involvement of non-state actors encompassed in Neoliberalism is rather linked to the weak interpretation of Sustainable Development, in which the actors involved are especially the actors with an economic potential, the ones able to foster development and invest in environmentally friendly techniques. The focus on numerical outputs represents an overlapping theme between Neoliberalism and Technocracy.

Different strands of Neoliberalism developed during the history of the discourse. More radical lines of thought believe that the government should have no interference with the market (Dryzek, 1997). Every good, including environmental goods such as land, water and air should be privatized and subjected to the laws of the market for their use and abuse. The solution to the Tragedy of the Commons is provided by property rights and free market. Doubts remain however on which body should enforce the property right and market systems if the government loses its role (Dryzek, 1997; Connelly and Smith, 2003). A weaker version of Neoliberalism affirms the fairness of market principles, but recognizes some limits of the

market action for example in regulating environmental goods and services. Governmental intervention in regulating the market is justified in some cases to assure fairness (Dryzek, 1997). This regulation can occur through tradable quotas or quasi-market incentives such as green taxes or eco-labeling (Connelly and Smith, 2003).

Several critiques have been expressed on the Neoliberalism discourse, generally regarding the fact that market is in practice not free and not rational. Economic actors do not have full control of market processes, and the fairness of a society regulated by economic instruments is not always guaranteed (Dryzek. 1997). A society based on market mechanisms is composed of consumers and producers rather than citizens, and this factor can undermine democracy (Connelly and Smith, 2003). By denying the intrinsic value of nature, Neoliberalism undermines principles of environmental conservation which are the basis of many international agreements (Connelly and Smith, 2003). Critiques have also been expressed on the Polluter Pays Principle, which is not easily applicable for environmental goods like water and air for which it is not possible to trace exact responsibilities (Dryzek, 1997; Connelly and Smith, 2003). Moreover this principle, as well as the economic instruments applying it (e.g. green taxes and tradable quota), allows pollution to occur if the responsible actors can afford to compensate for it (Dryzek 1997; Open Europe, 2007).

Below I report Figure 3 displaying the co-occurring themes among the discourses described above.

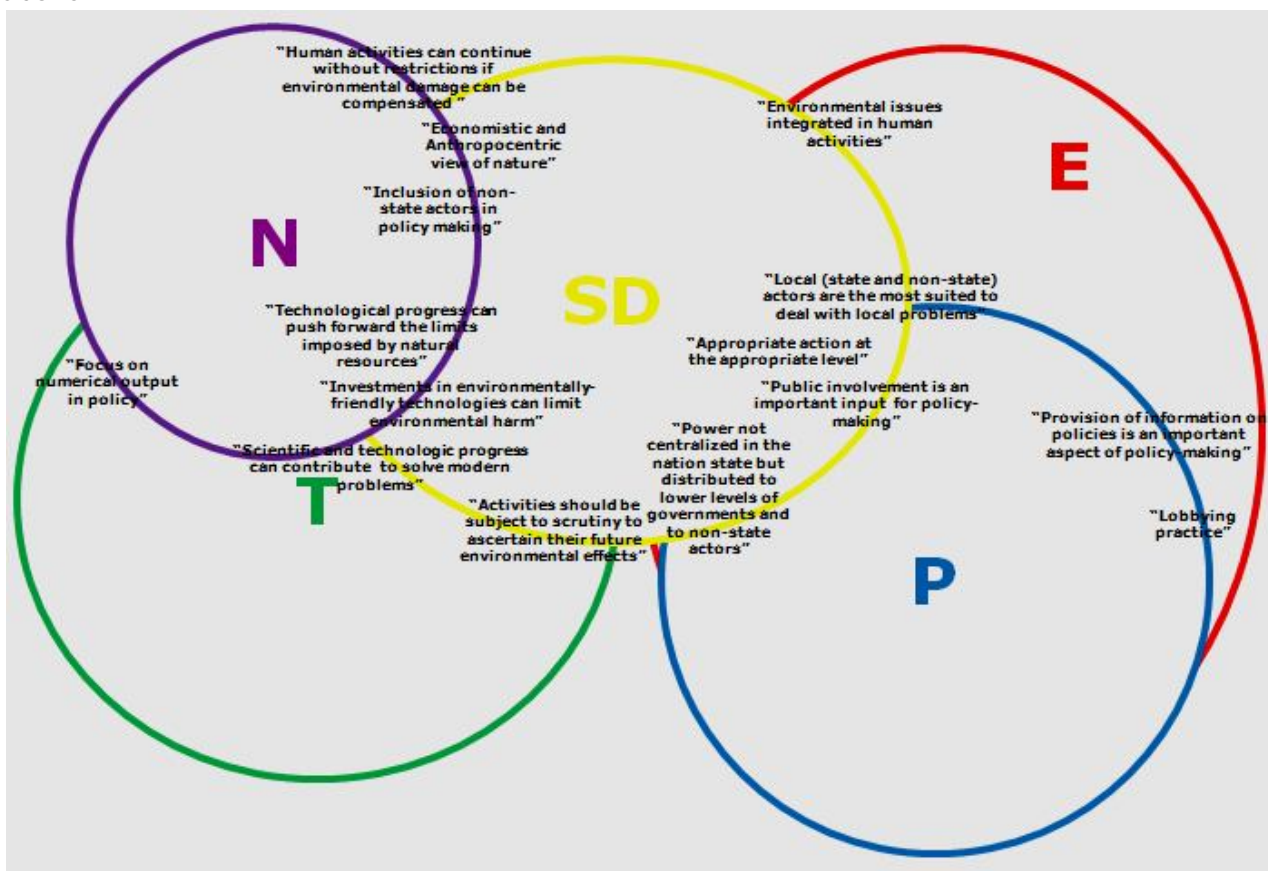


Figure 3: co-occurring themes among discourses. The discourses are represented by circles labeled with the initial(s) of the discourse's denomination: N stands for Neoliberalism; SD stands for Sustainable Development; E stands for Europeanization; P stands for Participation; T stands for Technocracy. The sentences in black font summarize the co-occurring themes among discursive components, and are placed in the overlapping portions of circles representing the involved discursive components

2.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions of my thesis derive from the research objectives exposed in section 1.3 and read as follows:

1. **What is the role of the discursive components in influencing the N2000 discursive strategy, and how do the discursive components integrate to create a European framework for nature conservation?** This question analyzes the framing of the biodiversity loss problem in the official interpretation of N2000 provided by the EC in legislative texts and policy documents. This framing occurs under the influence of the discursive components which combine in particular dynamics. I inquire which elements, types of knowledge and viewpoints prevail in the official image of N2000, and how these are influenced by the discursive components' and their dynamics.
2. **Which dynamics take place among the discursive components (and the actors who subscribe to the discursive components) during the history of the N2000 discursive strategy, and how do these dynamics influence the related policy processes?** This question analyzes the processes and debates that arose around N2000 at the European policy level, focusing on positions and strategies of actors in crucial moments of the N2000 discursive strategy. Special attention is put on the types of knowledge and arguments actors use to strengthen their own credibility and put their interests forward, and on the coalitions arisen among actors. The research question inquires how these policy processes, and the strategies of the involved actors, are influenced by the discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy and their dynamics.
3. **Which actors are (dis)empowered within the framework established by N2000, and how is their level of (dis)empowerment influenced by the dynamics of the discursive components?** This question assesses how the dynamics of the discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy influence the (dis)empowerment of actors in the framework established by the network. The thesis provides a general overview on the implications of N2000 for everyday practices of actors involved in (and affected by) the network's establishment. This research question is a corollary of the previous two, and is mainly informed by the data collected to answer the first and second research questions.

2.4 METHODOLOGY

According to the constructivist epistemology, my thesis is not normative or evaluative in aim, but aims at reaching a deeper understanding of the elements under study. I analyze N2000 not as the normative element of a European legislation but as a discursive strategy, based on discursive clusters and rooted in discursive components. A discourse analysis approach is able to unveil deep aspects of reality which are often neglected by normative and evaluative studies (Herrnstein-Smith, 2005). Examples are the power struggles in policy processes, and the role of interpretations and meanings in decision-making (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005). Box 2 summarizes the relevance of discourse analysis for the study of environmental policy issues (Dryzek, 1997; Hajer and Versteeg, 2005; Hajer, 2005; Runhaar *et al.*, 2006).

Box 2: relevance of discourse analysis methodologies for the study of environmental policy issues

- Recognition of the socially constructed character of Nature and its feature of contested notion.
- Recognition of the complexity of environmental issues and of the involvement of different actors with contrasting interests.
- Recognition of the value-laden character of knowledge, especially in environmental issues dominated by uncertainty.
- Recognition of the complexity of policy and refusal of the rational model of policy formulation.
- Analysis of the role of actors involved in environmental issues and their attempt to influence problems' definition.
- Detection of the role of language in politics. This is particularly important for environmental issues where language often has the function of materializing problems.
- Detection of the consequences of language in the practice.
- Unveiling of power dynamics and analysis of bias in policy.
- Consideration of different opinions, attitudes and value judgments belonging to the multitude of actors involved in environmental issues
- Provision of answers for "how questions" about complex policy processes

Below, I report on the approach used to answer the research questions of my thesis:

1. The first research question focuses on the influence of the discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy and their dynamics on the framing of the biodiversity loss problem within N2000. To carry out this analysis I selected as data sources the HD (European Council Directive 92/43/EEC), main legal text underpinning the creation of N2000, the BD and the EC's documents on the network (EC, 2000b; EC, 2001; EC, 2002; EC, 2004; EC, 2004b; EC, 2006; EC, 2007; EC, 2007b; EC, 2007c). These texts constitute the official interpretation of the N2000 discursive strategy, and its medium of institutionalization (Hall, 1993; Hajer, 1995; Dryzek, 1997). I deconstructed the N2000 discursive strategy as displayed in these texts, and detected the role of the discursive components and their dynamics in constructing the official image of the network. To these texts I applied linguistic and contextual discourse analysis methods (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos, 1997; Gee, 1999; Wetherell, 2001; Hoey, 2001; Hajer, 2005b; Hajer, 2006). I first focussed on linguistic aspects of the legislative text, following the perspective of Wetherell *et al.* who hold that "language [...] is the site where meanings are created and changed" (Wetherell *et al.*, 2001 p.6). I considered words and concepts not as neutral elements but as elements attributing meanings to the reality they construct. In the words and concepts constructing the official image of N2000 I detected regularities of argumentation, patterns and paradigms which show the influence of discursive components and their dynamics. Moreover, next to linguistic aspects, I focused on the contents of the official image of N2000 and on how these contents relate to the principles and governance/political trends which I identified as discursive components. I analyzed the "ways of thinking and arguing on specific [...] themes or issues" and the covered ideologies and meanings (Hajer 2005b, in Runhaar *et al.*, 2006), focusing on paradigms and "chains of equivalence" (Cornwall and Brock, 2005 p. 4) linked to the discursive components.
2. The second research question deals with the influence of the discursive components and their dynamics on the history of N2000. It analyzes actors' roles, interests and strategies in the European policy processes related to the network, and the way how these are influenced by the discursive components' dynamics. To answer this question I selected five milestones of the N2000 history and analyzed the occurring events by studying the literature produced on these particular phases. Moreover I carried out interviews with experts and participants of the N2000 milestones which have a deep knowledge of the European policy events involved. I also examined the European database CIRCA (<http://circa.europa.eu/>) in order to reach a deeper insight on the events at issue. In these

data sources I detected the influence of discursive components' dynamics on power relations among actors and on the development of social coalitions. During the history of N2000, actors subscribed to different discourses and established alliances based on the interlacing dynamics and co-occurring themes among these discourses. These alliances were aimed at putting particular interests forward in the N2000 discursive strategy by exploiting the common ground among actors' perspectives. I see the N2000 history as an argumentative struggle where actors try to make others see problems according to their ideas and values. This struggle can help explaining the prevalence of certain discursive constructions over others in the various stages of the N2000 history (Hajer, 1995).

3. The third research question analyzes the influence of the discursive components' dynamics on actors' (dis)empowerment. This research question is a corollary of the previous two questions, and is mainly informed by the data collected to assess the official image of N2000 and the European policy processes related to the network. I integrated these data with a limited literature review on conflicts and implementation problems related to N2000, and with interviews to target actors. In analyzing these data sources I applied a discourse analysis approach aimed at detecting the influence of discursive components' dynamics on those elements of the official image of N2000 and of the N2000 policy processes which affected actors' (dis)empowerment. These elements give an insight inot the influence of the actors on the N2000 policy processes, and to their level of control over the European natural environment.

2.5 DETAILED METHODS

The methods of my study vary according to the three research questions. By using different (primary and secondary) data sources and different methods I apply the principle of triangulation, a cross-examination technique which helps enhancing the credibility of qualitative analyses (Kumar, 2005). Here below I report the detailed methods for the three research questions.

2.5.1 Methods for the first research question

2.5.1.1 Linguistic methods of analysis for the text of the HD

To answer the first research question I started with a linguistic analysis of the text of the HD, the main legal basis of the N2000 discursive strategy. Mostly for reasons of time, I decided to analyze linguistically only the HD, and not the BD which is the other European directive underpinning the official image of N2000. Moreover I selected the HD because it has been often addressed as the main institutional tool of the network (Diaz, 2001; Coffey and Richartz, 2003), and it is the first legislation which refers to N2000. As last, I excluded the BD from the linguistic analysis because many similarities have been identified between the BD and the HD: I) the two directives have the same objectives; II) the structure of the two directives is very similar; III) the implementation schemes of the two directives have been fused since the SPAs become part of N2000; IV) article 6(2), (3) (4) of the HD, dedicated to conservation measures and the AI for plans and projects, are worth also for the SPAs (EC, 2000; EC, 2007).

For the linguistic analysis of the HD, I concentrated on the language of the directive examining words and paragraphs from a constructivist perspective, and identifying regularities of argumentation which show elements referable to the discursive components of Figure 1 (section 1.2). To carry out the linguistic analysis I used the program *Atlas Ti* which allows working with text files in a dynamic way. *Atlas Ti* provides the possibility of creating

quotations, coding them and studying the overlapping among codes (<http://www.atlasti.com/>). With the help of this program, I first assigned a code to each of the five discursive components of Figure 1. Secondly, I studied the text of the HD identifying regularities of argumentation and recurrent logics which show the influence of one or more discursive component(s). Lastly, I coded these elements under the discursive components influencing them.

The HD consists of a preamble, 7 sections including 23 articles, and 6 annexes. As main units of analysis for the linguistic study I chose the paragraphs composing the preamble and the articles of the HD. When a paragraph is divided in sub-points denominated by letters like a), b) and c), I consider these sub-points as units. When a sub-point is divided into sub-factors denominated by numbers like i), ii) and iii), I do not consider these as units, but as belonging to the bigger unit of the sub-point¹. I carried out the analysis as follows:

1. In the text I identified concepts and ideas showing the influence of principles and governance/political trends typical of the contemporary European nature conservation policy arena (the discursive components), and I quoted them basing on the bigger unit of analysis (e.g. the paragraph or the sub-point)
2. I coded each quotation under one (or more) discursive component(s).
3. Within each quotation I analyzed smaller units of analysis (e.g. sentences and words) and I coded these always focusing on the influence of discursive components as described in point 1.
4. I coded each of the quotations of point 3 under one (or more) discursive component(s).

With respect to the annexes of the HD, I used the same research strategy, but with a difference among the six annexes. For annexes I, II, IV and V which are mainly composed of lists of habitat types and species, I carried out a linguistic analysis only of the introductory text. The lists are assessed in the content analysis. For the text of annexes III and VI I carried out a complete linguistic discourse analysis.

With *Atlas Ti*, I analyzed particular features of the HD's text which reveal important information on the linguistic structure of the directive:

1. The frequency of the discursive components in the text, represented by the number of quotations coded under each discursive component. This feature gives an insight on the general weight of the discursive components in the text of the HD. The quotations based on bigger and smaller units of analysis (paragraphs, sentences or words) have the same weight for the determination of the frequency of the discursive components.
2. The keywords for each discursive component and their frequency in the text. I selected several (groups of) keywords for each discursive component, justifying why I chose it and why I attribute it to a particular discursive component. I report these keywords in Table 2 of section 3.2.2 using the format I used to study their frequency in *Atlas.ti*, i.e. making use of wildcarding (*) and quotations (""). The frequency is represented by the number of times the (groups of) keywords appear in the text². This type of information on the keywords allows unveiling some of the mechanisms of my discourse analysis, such as the reasoning behind the coding of concepts and ideas under specific discursive components. Moreover I analyze the frequency (number of appearances) of the keywords in the text of the HD. Some

¹ This organizational method does not apply for article 6, which is controversial because all the discursive components overlap continuously. A smaller unit of analysis is needed for this article. This unit is represented by words and groups of words included in the paragraphs of the HD.

² When specific keywords overlap with respect to one term with other keywords referring to different objects, I exclude the overlapping terms from the determination of the keywords' frequency. An example are the keywords "Economic and Social Committee" and "committee", the last one referring to the HC. When the term "committee" appears within the fragment "Economic and Social Committee", I exclude it from the determination of the frequency for the keyword "committee".

keywords can be attributed to one or more discursive components. These represent a bridge between the various discursive components, and provide insights into the possible development of dynamics linking discourses.

3. The relevance of the discursive components in the sections of the HD. I detected which discursive components are dominant in which sections to get an insight in the influence of discourses on the various aspects of the N2000 discursive strategy.

4. The relative position of the discursive components in the text. I detected which discursive components appear often one next to the other, or one within the other, and which ones rarely or never do so. This can provide information on the dynamics linking discursive components. The influence of these dynamics can be detected in standard patterns of discursive components' relative positions in the text of the HD.

2.5.1.2 Contextual methods of analysis for the official image of N2000

The linguistic analysis of the HD is complemented by a contextual analysis of this legislation and of the other legislative and policy documents together constructing the official image of N2000 (the BD and the interpretative and guidance manuals published by the EC on N2000). The contextual analysis considers the findings of the linguistic analysis in light of the meanings and interpretations attributed by the EC to N2000 in the BD and in the interpretative and guidance manuals. Especially the manuals aim to clarify the "significance" of particular terms or concepts within the HD (EC, 2000b p.5). In that way, they constitute a particular interpretation of the N2000 discursive strategy which I define as the "official image of N2000", and which provides an overview on the meanings attributed at the EU level to controversial and vague aspects of the HD (and in part to the BD). These manuals are particularly important because they helped the EC to specify the meanings of terms and sentences within the BD and HD avoiding the laborious process of changing the legal text of the directives. The interpretative and guidance manuals produced by the EC are not legally binding but they have been used as a reference by the ECJ during lawsuits concerning N2000 (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.). Through contextual methods of analysis I focused on the way the EC characterized and justified the attribution of certain meanings to specific words and concepts included in the legislation. I concentrated on explicit and implicit references made to principles and governance/political trends typical of the contemporary European nature conservation policy arena (the discursive components of Figure 1 of section 1.2). This analysis allowed me detecting the influence of the discursive components and their dynamics on the meanings and interpretations of the official image of N2000. I reported the results of the contextual analysis mirroring the structure of the linguistic analysis. Moreover, I added a section on the analysis of the contents of the HD's annexes, which I left out of the linguistic analysis but which proved to be interesting to study in a contextual light.

2.5.1.3 Interviews with experts of the HD and of the N2000 process

In order to make the linguistic and contextual analyses more complete, I integrated the data collected through the data sources and methods of analysis exposed in sections 2.5.1.1 and 2.5.1.2 with information retrieved during interviews with experts of the HD and BD, and of the European policy processes related to N2000. These are Rob Jongman, Leon Braat and Joop Schaminee, working at Wageningen University and at the Alterra Research Institute (Wageningen). Alterra is part of the PEER network (Partnership for European Environmental Research) and it often collaborates on a contract base with EC-DG Environment with the role of providing expert advice for policy-making. More information on the interviewees is included in annex 3 of this report. I contacted the interviewees by e-mail and set interview appointments in their offices. I carried out semi-structured, open-ended interviews of about one hour. I recorded the interviews, transcribed them and carried out a discourse analysis of the transcripts. This analysis included an assessment of the interviewees' perspectives on the

roles of the discursive components in the HD and N2000, and the meanings they attribute to the biodiversity loss problem as framed in the official image of N2000. In addition I used the ecological expertise of some of the interviewees to acquire knowledge on specific aspects of the N2000 discursive strategy such as the content of the BD's and HD's annexes.

2.5.2 Methods for the second research question

2.5.2.1 Construction of a timeline for the contemporary international and European nature conservation arenas

The first step for answering the second research question is the development of a timeline displaying important milestones in the contemporary international and European nature conservation arenas (see annex 4 of this report). I selected these milestones among the ones encountered in the analysis of the N2000 process, focusing on the most relevant ones for the discourse analysis of this same process. In annex 4 I inserted a brief description of the policy events of each milestone with an attention on the discourses influencing them. This timeline supports the analysis of the discursive components' dynamics in the history of N2000 and provides information on the dynamics of the same discourses at the international and European levels.

2.5.2.2 Analysis of crucial moments of the N2000 process

In order to apply a discourse analysis to the overall European policy process related to N2000, I analyzed the dynamics of the discursive components in crucial moments of this process:

- 1) The drafting of the HD (1988-1992). The HD is the key legislative text of N2000, which frames the biodiversity loss problem in a particular way.
- 2) The biogeographical seminars. These started in 1996; they have then been carried out with high frequency until the early 2000s and continued until 2008. They characterize the sites' selection phase of the N2000 process and put together a wide variety of stakeholders. The seminars are repeated with the same structure along the years and it is easy to identify recurring patterns.
- 3) The stakeholders' conference of Bath (1998). This conference assessed the implication of N2000 for stakeholders and their activities and elaborated recommendations for the upcoming management phase of the N2000 process. The conference allows analyzing the role of various actors in this phase of the N2000 process and the interpretations and meanings these actors attribute to the network.
- 4) The first wave of concern for financing N2000 (2001-2004). This milestone encompasses a number of important political events, such as the publication of a communication by the EC to the EP and the CE (EC, 2004), and a consultation conference joining different categories of stakeholders.
- 5) The second wave of concern for financing N2000 (2008-2010). This milestone characterizes the latest phase of the N2000 policy process. Similarities can be noticed with the first wave of concern of point 4), such as a consultation conference for different stakeholders. These similarities allow developing a comparative study.

I selected these particular milestones of the N2000 policy process because of different reasons. First of all, they are more or less evenly spread along the history of the process. Second, there is substantial information available about these milestones. Third, they denote important changes in the N2000 discursive strategy. I started by analyzing the negotiation processes taking place for the drafting of the HD. My study went further analyzing different moments of the N2000 process and verifying how the influence of the discursive components' dynamics changed in these occasions. I determined how these changes affected the positions

and roles of actors during the N2000 policy process. In the selected policy events I identified which discursive components are hegemonic and which combine indynamics linking them to other discursive components. Moreover I studied how the discursive components' dynamics affect the roles of actors in the N2000 process, their interests, and the strategies. I focused on the arguments drawn and styles of presentation used by the actors joining the negotiations for the HD's drafting, the biogeographical seminars, and occasions of interactions such as stakeholders' conferences. I analyzed power relations among actors, the development of coalitions, the struggles over meanings and interpretations, and the hegemony of some discursive constructions over others (corresponding to the dominance of some actors over others).

These analyses are complemented with and informed by the broad body of scientific literature on N2000, which however mostly focuses on the outcomes of policy process (see by example Diaz, 2001; Rosa and Marques da Silva, 2005; van Apeldoorn *et al.*, 2010). To retrieve this literature I assessed scientific databases such as Scirus, Scopus and Web of Science using the "advanced search option". For the search I used keywords related to N2000, to the various discursive components, and to the categories of actors involved in and affected by the implementation of the network. As sources of information for this analysis I also used the proceedings of conferences taking place in the history of N2000 (EC, 1998; IEEP, 2010). The last important source of data for this analysis is the European database CIRCA, (<http://circa.europa.eu>), which includes information on the composition and activity of the Working Groups (WGs) on N2000 established at the European level.

2.5.2.3 Interviews with participants to the N2000 policy process

I integrated the data collected through the data sources exposed in section 2.5.2.2 with information retrieved during interviews with actors who participated in the N2000 policy process. These actors work(ed) for the EC (Carl Stuffmann, Francois Kremer, Nicholas Hanley, Liam Cashman), or for important non-governmental organizations and institutes (Alberto Arroyo-Schnell, Lawrence Johnes-Walters). More information on the interviewees is included in annex 3. I contacted the interviewees by e-mail and phone to set an interview appointment. I visited some of the interviewees in their office in Brussels, while I contacted by phone interviewees in other locations. I carried out semi-structured, open-ended questions interviews of about one hour. I recorded the interviews, I transcribed them and analyzed them. In analyzing the interviews I focused on the positions, interests and strategies of the interviewees, of the institutions they represent, and of other actors in the crucial moments of the N2000 process. I detected the relations between the statements of the interviewees and the role of discursive components assessed with the methods of section 2.5.2.2. The information collected with the interviews mostly mirrors the data collected in the discourse analysis of literature, conferences' proceedings and the European database CIRCA. This factor increases the validity of my study.

2.5.3 Methods for the third research question

2.5.3.1 Assessment of the information retrieved for the first and second research questions, with a focus on actors' (dis)empowerment

The study for the third research question builds on the material collected and analyses provided for the first two research questions. According to the theory on actors' (dis)empowerment (section 2.1.3), I focused on elements of the N2000 process providing an insight in the:

- actors' ability of influencing the European policy process related to N2000
- level of control of the actors over the European natural environment

These two elements provide an insight into the actors' (dis)empowerment in the framework established by N2000. Because the thesis is focused on the discursive dimension of N2000, my interest lays in the discursive dimension of actors' (dis)empowerment and not in the (dis)empowerment of particular actors in particular cases of N2000 implementation. This discursive dimension is represented by the influence of discursive components' dynamics on the level of actors' (dis)empowerment during the European policy process related to N2000. In order to make the analysis simpler, and the results more explicit with respect to this discursive dimension of (dis)empowerment, I categorized the actors in nine categories. These categories are the ones identified in the laws and documents related to N2000, and which emerged during the N2000 policy process as the most prominent categories of stakeholders at the European level. I labeled these categories as "discursive categories" of actors, because the establishment of interest groups forming them has been strongly influenced by the dynamics of the various discursive components in the phases of the N2000 process. I divided the N2000 process in three main phases: I) HD's drafting; II) sites' selection; and III) designation and management. During these three phases, actors' roles, interest and strategies have been differently influenced by the dynamics of the discursive components. In the same way, the results in terms of actors' (dis)empowerment vary according to the phase of the N2000 process.

I assessed the information collected in answering the first and second research questions of the thesis focusing on opinions, positions and feelings expressed in statements, comments and critiques, which have been put forward by the representatives of the discursive categories of actors in the European policy process. In particular, I focused on detecting:

- the level of responsibility different categories of actors have in the phases of the N2000 process
- the inclusion of different categories of actors in the phases of the N2000 process
- the information these categories of actors have been provided with in the phases of the N2000 process
- the extent to which the knowledge of these categories of actors and their values have been incorporated in the framework established by N2000
- the conceptions the different categories of actors have of their own roles and those of others in the management of the natural environment
- the arguments used to defend the positions of the various categories of actors in the management of the natural environment
- the resources available or provided to the categories of actors for the management of the natural environment
- the degree of confidence the different categories of actors have in their own capacity to influence the European, national or local natural resource management
- the extent to which the livelihoods of the different categories of actors have changed as a result of the establishment of the N2000 network

Together, these aspects provide an overview on the discursive dimension of actors' (dis)empowerment because related to the perceptions of the implications of N2000 for important stakeholders of the network's realization.

2.5.3.2 Analysis of the literature on actors' (dis)empowerment in N2000

To get a better insight into the (dis)empowerment of the actors, I complemented the analysis with a review of scientific and professional publications related to I) the most important court cases generated by BD and HD; II) the aversion of stakeholders to the Network's realization; III) problems and conflicts related to N2000; IV) the solutions adopted to work out problems.

Moreover, I examine the official statements on N2000 expressed by various categories during the European policy process related to N2000 (FACE, 2006; ELO, 2006). I carried out a discourse analysis of these data sources using the same elements of actors' (dis)empowerment listed in section 2.5.3.1.

The scope of this analysis is limited. The literature and documents providing information on actors (dis)empowerment in N2000 focus mostly on the national, regional and more local levels of N2000 realization (Julien *et al.*, 2000; Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; Apostolopoulou and Pantis, 2010). Since they deal with concrete and specific cases in the implementation of N2000 they fall outside the scope of the thesis. They are sometimes included in the analysis insofar as they reveal interesting information on the (dis)empowerment of specific categories of actors not included the European literature on N2000.

2.5.3.3 Interviews with stakeholders' representatives

The analysis of (dis)empowerment is completed by the information retrieved in an interview with Valerie Vandenabeele. She works for two different stakeholders' organizations, representing landowners' and hunters' interests in a particular situation of N2000 implementation, the Flanders in Belgium. I carried out a face to face interview of one and a half hour in her office in Brussels. During this interview, I inquired the feelings, opinions, critiques that the stakeholders represented by Vandenabeele expressed with respect to N2000. I assessed the data collected in this interview and reported only on the information which can also be related to the categories of stakeholder in other locations and other implementation situations.

CHAPTER 3

Framing of the biodiversity loss problem in the Natura 2000 discursive strategy: the official image of Natura 2000

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The first research question of the thesis deals with the framing of the biodiversity loss problem in the official interpretation of N2000 provided by the EC and reads as follows:

What is the role of the discursive components in influencing the N2000 discursive strategy, and how do the discursive components integrate to create a European framework for nature conservation?

This chapter reports the results of the study I carried out on the legislative and interpretative documents constructing the “official image of N2000” provided by the EC. It focuses on viewpoints, ideas and perspectives encompassed in this image, and on how these are influenced by the discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy. The study reveals that none of the discursive components influences the official image of N2000 in isolation. The discursive components rather link among each other influencing in conjunction the official interpretation of N2000. This chapter identifies which dynamics linking discursive components are predominantly influencing this official interpretation. Section 3.2 presents the linguistic analysis of the HD. Section 3.3 complements this with a contextual analysis of the HD and other important documents related to N2000, including the BD and interpretative and guidance manuals published by the EC on N2000.

3.2 LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT OF THE HD

3.2.1 Frequency of the discursive components in the text of the HD

Thanks to the possibility in the program *Atlas.ti* of counting the quotations made under selected codes, I determined the frequency of the discursive components in the text of the HD, given by the number of quotations coded under each discursive component. This allows getting an insight on the weight of the discourses in the main legislation constructing the official image of N2000. Below I report Table 1 presenting the discursive components and their frequency in the text of the HD³.

DISCURSIVE COMPONENT	FREQUENCY OF THE DISCURSIVE COMPONENT IN THE TEXT
1. Europeanization	178
2. Technocracy	160
3. Sustainable Development	79
4. Participation	42
5. Neoliberalism	18

Table 1: frequency of the discursive components in the text of the HD

What is interesting about Table 1 is the proportion among the discursive components' frequencies. The Europeanization and Technocracy discursive components have a very high frequency compared to the other three. These two discourses are linguistically dominant in the HD's text. This dominance is strengthened by the fact that most of the quotations coded under Europeanization and Technocracy include whole paragraphs of text, while for example

³ Some of the frequencies can be considered slightly incorrect because of a small incongruence in the linguistic method I use. This incongruence is due to the impossibility with *Atlas.ti* to eliminate parts of the text from continuous quotations, resulting in some degree of overlap among quotations.

the quotations coded under Participation and Neoliberalism mostly include only words. This increases the relative weight of Europeanization and Technocracy in the text of the HD.

3.2.2 Analysis of keywords for each discursive component and of their frequency in the text of the HD

This section offers an analysis of the frequency of several keywords selected for each discursive component in the text of the HD. The keywords are chosen among the words composing the HD's text and they are represented by single words or groups of words reported in Table 2 together with their frequency in the text. The frequency is represented by the number of times the (groups of) keywords appear in the text. In Table 2 I also present for each (group of) keyword(s) a brief explanation of the reason why I selected it for a certain discursive component.

Table 2: keywords for each discursive component and their frequency in the text of the HD

Keywords for Europeanization	Description and justification	Frequency
"coheren*", "network"	They refer the territorial and political consistence of N2000	16
"Europe", "European", "Community", "Union"	They refer to the EU	40
"Commission"	It refers to the EC, one of the actors of Europeanization	31
"Council"	It refers to the Council of Europe (CE), one of the actors of Europeanization	16
"Economic and Social Committee"	It refers to the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), consultative body of the EU which includes civil society organizations from MSs	2
"committee"	It refers to the Habitats Committee (HC), statutory organ assisting the EC in the implementation of the HD and delivering opinions on the yearly distribution of LIFE funds	16
"Parliament"	It refers to the European Parliament (EP), one of the actors of Europeanization	3
"States"	It refers to the MSs of the EU, some of the most important actors of Europeanization	46
"Member States shall"	It belongs to the Subsidiarity Principle factor of the Europeanization discursive component, since it refers to the transfer of responsibility from the EU to MSs	20
"authorit*"	It refers to the national authorities responsible for implementing N2000	3
"local", " regional"	They refer to the lower levels of policy implementation within the EU	6
"economic", "social", "cultural"	They refer to the integration of environmental issues in other policy realms. They relate to the Principle of Integration factor of the Europeanization discursive component	11
"Community interest", "Community importance", "special area* of conservation", "special protection area*"	They refer to the value attributed in the European context to elements and sites protected in N2000. This value is assessed at the European level, and refers to the Common Identity factor of the Europeanization discursive component	36
"Directive"	One of the legal instruments of Europeanization	38
"Annex*",	They are lists of animals and plants, and criteria to protect them. They are constructed in the European context through a consultation with MSs, and are the basis for the nature conservation strategy of N2000	67
"responsibility"	It refers to the Subsidiarity Principle factor of the Europeanization discursive component	3
"transboundary", "biogeographical"	They refer to the biodiversity loss problem which is affecting all MSs. They are influenced by the Common Identity factor of the Europeanization discursive component	6
"select*", "designat*"	They refer to the process of formally including areas in	31

	N2000 which become part of a European system	
"measures"	They refer to the actions needed to manage N2000 sites. The management responsibilities are delegated by the EC to MSs, which on their turn assign them to local governments	36
"monitored", "report*", "communicate", "evaluation", "transmitted"	They refer to the reporting system influenced by the Politics of Information element of Europeanization and used by the EC to evaluate and monitor N2000.	18
"co-financ*"	It refers to the co-financing system established by the EU for N2000, based on the Principle of Integration factor of the Europeanization discursive component	9
"education", "inform*", "forward*"	They are influenced by the Politics of Information factor of the Europeanization discursive component	23
Keywords for Technocracy	Description and justification	Frequency
"conservation status"	Ecologic basis on which the protection of habitat types and species is founded within N2000	19
"favourable"	It refers to the habitats' and species' ecological status, which is the element of reference for the protection of natural elements	15
"Conservation objectives"	It is the element to which the N2000 management has to refer. It takes into account the conservation status of habitats and species	2
"Habitat*" "species", "plant*", "animal*", "fauna", "flora"	Natural elements protected under N2000 and defined with ecological terms	292
"Annex*"	Lists of animals and plants (and criteria to protect them) which at best represent the European endangered ecologic elements.	67
"wild", "natural", "ecologic",	They refer to the natural elements protected under N2000 and described with ecologic terms	108
"select*", "designat*"	They refer to actions necessary for establishing the protection system encompassed in N2000, which is founded on ecologic criteria	31
"*danger*", "threat*", "affect", deteriorate*"	They refer to the negative impact of human activities on the conservation status of habitats and species	14
"Community interest", "Community importance", "special area* of conservation", "special protection area*"	They refer to natural elements and sites protected under N2000 because of their ecologic value	36
"coheren*", "network"	They refer to the ecological functionality of N2000	16
"Priorit*"	It refers to the priority approach in biodiversity conservation applied by N2000, enforced by the list of species and habitat types included in the annexes	38
"transboundary", "biogeographical"	They relate to biodiversity loss and the organizational units through which the problem is approached. They refer to the ecologic aspects of the problem, trying to isolate it from political issues	6
"future", "compensatory"	They refer to the potential negative effect of (present and future) human activities on habitats and species, and to the measures to take to avoid this harm. They are influenced by the Precautionary Principle factor of the Technocracy discursive component	7
Keywords for Sustainable Development	Description and justification	Frequency
"sustainable development"	It refers to the denomination of the discursive component	1
"economic", "social", "cultural"	They refer to aspects to take into account when implementing conservation measures in N2000. These elements balance ecologic aspects of N2000 by including issues relevant for society and economy	11
"local", "regional"	They refer to the lower levels of implementation of the HD, important for the realization of N2000 and for the application	6

	of the Sustainable Development principle	
"measures"	They refer to the actions that need to be taken in order to conserve habitats and species. They take into account ecologic criteria but also economic, social and cultural requirements as well as local characteristics	36
"Economic and Social Committee"	It refers to the EESC, consultative body of the EU including civil society organizations from MSs. The Committee ensures that economic and social interests are represented in European policy. They bring forward the interests of industry, commerce, agriculture and trade unions	2
"human"	It refers to anthropic factors considered as part of N2000	2
"semi-natural"	It refers to habitat types protected under N2000 which depend on traditional human activities for their survival	1
"derog*"	They refer to the fact that some activities can be carried out in N2000 sites	8
"activit*", "plan or programme", "plan* or project*" "hunting", "fishing"	They refer to human interventions which can be carried out in or around N2000 sites but with limitations.	8
"management plan*"	The management of N2000 sites has to take into account ecological but also socio-economic criteria	1
"long-term"	It refers to the time frame of conservation encompassed in the HD and is influenced by the sustainability concept	6
Keywords for Participation	Description and justification	Frequency
Participation, participatory ⁴	They refer to the denomination of the discursive component	0
"education", "inform*", "forward*"	Types of participatory procedures encompassed in N2000 focused on the provision of information on the network	23
"consultation", "opinion of the general public"	Types of participatory procedures encompassed in N2000 in which the participants are requested to express their opinion	5
"Parliament"	It refers to the EP, composed by MS' representatives elected every five years	3
"Economic and Social Committee"	It refers to the EESC, consultative body of the EU including civil society organizations from MSs. The Committee ensures that the interests of the represented categories are taken into account in EU policy-making	2
"Committee"	It refers to the Habitats Committee (HC), organ assisting the EC in the implementation of the HD and composed by representatives of MSs such as Environmental Ministries	16
"public", "social", "cultural"	They refer to the inclusion of public interests in the formulation of legislations. They show how anthropic elements enter the framework established by N2000	18
"local", "regional"	They refer to the lower governmental levels and stakeholders dealing with the implementation of N2000 in the practice	6
Keywords for Neoliberalism	Description and justification	Frequency
"economic", "co-financ*", "financ*"	They refer to the financial and monetary aspects of N2000	15
"natural resources", "natural heritage"	They refer to the idea that nature does not only generate costs but also benefits	3
"licence*"	It refers to the licensing system for taking of specimens in the wild which could be set for annex V species	1

Table 2 shows that the number of keywords for Europeanization and Technocracy is much higher than the number of keywords for the other discursive components. Moreover, the frequency of some (groups of) keywords of Europeanization and Technocracy is very high in the text of the HD. The proportions among the number of keywords, and the proportions among their frequencies, resemble the proportion among the frequencies of discursive

⁴ These keywords have not been selected among the words of the HD text but have been inserted to show the low frequency of the Participation discursive component and the low level of attention of the directive toward participatory aspects

components presented in Table 1. This similarity supports the inferences about the general weight of discursive components in the text of the HD. Table 2 also makes clear that some (groups of) keywords are listed under more than one discursive component, where they refer to different interpretations of the same objects. These keywords, presented in Table 3, are bridging terms which give information on the interfaces among the discursive components.

	Europeanization	Technocracy	Sustainable Development	Participation	Neoliberalism
Europeanization			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "local", "regional" - "social", "cultural" - "Economic and Social Committee" - "measures" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "committee" - "local", "regional" - "education" - "inform*", "forward*" - "Economic and Social Committee" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "co-financ*"
Technocracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Annex*" - "select*", "designat*" - "Community interest", "Community importance", "Special Area* of Conservation", "special protection areas" - "coheren*", "network" - "transboundary", "biogeographical" 				
Sustainable Development					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "economic"
Participation					
Neoliberalism					

Table 3: (groups of) keywords shared among different discursive components. The Table presents the interfaces among discursive components showed by the presence of shared keywords. The keywords shared by two discursive components are reported in the cell interfacing the two discourses. The highlighted keywords belong to two different interfaces between discursive components, and link therefore all the discursive components involved. The black cells eliminate the repetitions in the interfaces among discourses. The empty cells show the lack of interface among some discursive components.

Table 3 shows that Sustainable Development, Participation and Europeanization share a big amount of keywords, just like Europeanization and Technocracy. Instead, Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism only share one keyword. The other discourses do not share any keywords.

The linguistic analysis of the HD showed the presence of ambiguous and ambivalent terms in the text of the legislation, which made particularly complex the coding of some portions of the text and the selection of keywords. These terms give a vague meaning to some sentences and paragraphs of the HD, and allow for different interpretations of the portions of the HD in which they recur. Examples of ambiguous and ambivalent terms in the HD are:

- "necessary", "appropriate", "requisite", "proper": referred to N2000 conservation measures
- "likely", "could be": referred to the negative impact of future human activities on protected sites

- "appropriate": referred to the assessment of plans and projects
- "proper": referred for example to the consultation of the public
- "significant": referred for example to the effect of plans and projects on conservation objectives of N2000 sites

3.2.3 Relevance of the discursive components in the sections of the HD

The HD is divided in sections dedicated to different aspects of the nature conservation system encompassed in the directive. Here I report the list of the HD's sections completed by a brief description of the contents of these sections:

- "Preambles", which sets the ideological premises of the directive and its goals. They place the HD in the wider international and European nature conservation arenas.
- "Definitions" (articles 1 and 2), which characterizes the main concepts used in the directive.
- "Conservation of natural habitats and habitats of species" (articles from 3 to 11), which deals with the identification, proposal, selection and designation of N2000 sites, and with the conservation measures to apply in the sites including the AI for plans and projects.
- "Protection of species" (articles from 12 to 16), which deals with the conservation measures necessary to ensure the protection of species in N2000 and with derogations from this protection system.
- "Information" (article 17), which deals with the reporting system on N2000 implementation which involves EC, MSs and the general public.
- "Research" (article 18), focusing on the necessity of scientific research for ensuring the functioning of N2000.
- "Committee" (articles 20 and 21), which describes the role of the HC.
- "Supplementary provisions" (article 22), which deals with the introduction and reintroduction of species, and with the promotion of education on nature conservation
- "Final provisions" (articles 23 and 24), which deals with the transfer of responsibilities from the EC to the MSs.

Table 4 presents the dominance of discursive components in the various sections of the HD.

	Europeanization	Technocracy	Sustainable Development	Participation	Neoliberalism
Preamble	X	X	X		
Definitions	X	X			
Conservation of natural habitats and habitats of species	X	X	X	X	
Protection of species	X	X	X	X	
Information	X		X	X	
Research	X	X			
Procedure for amending the annexes	X	X			
Committee	X			X	
Supplementary provisions	X	X		X	
Final provisions	X				

Table4: dominance of the discursive components in the sections of the HD. The Table shows which discursive components are dominant (X) in the different sections of the HD.

Table 4 makes clear that Europeanization is dominant in all the sections of the HD, while Neoliberalism is not dominant in any of the sections. In the sections "Conservation of natural habitats and habitats of species", "Protection of species" and "Information" four discursive components out of five are relevant and in this case it is hard to define which ones are dominant. These represent the most complex sections of the HD.

3.2.4 Relative position of the discursive components in the text of the HD

To get a better understanding of the discursive structure of the HD, it is important to look at the relative position of and relation between the discursive components in the text. I analyzed the HD's text in terms of proximity and overlapping among quotations coded under different discursive components. This analysis provides a basis for further inferences on the dynamics linking different discursive components. The analysis resulted in the following observations:

- Quotations coded under Europeanization and Technocracy often appear close to each other in the text. This can be explained by saying that these two are the most frequent discursive components according to section 3.2.1. However it must be noted that cases in which quotations coded under these discursive components appear near to each other are much more frequent than cases in which the quotations appear in isolation. Two situations occur:
 - Quotations coded under Europeanization appear as fragments of text within quotations coded under Technocracy
 - Quotations coded under Technocracy appear as fragments of text within quotations coded under Europeanization
- Quotations coded under Europeanization and Technocracy are the only ones appearing in isolation in text of the HD
- Quotations coded under Neoliberalism almost always appears as (groups of) words quotations coded under Europeanization and Sustainable Development
- Quotations coded under Neoliberalism often appear near to quotations coded under Participation.

3.3 CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE OFFICIAL IMAGE OF N2000

To analyze the official image of N2000 I studied the HD and other important documents constructing the interpretation of N2000 offered by the EC (European Council Directive 79/409/EEC; EC, 2000b; EC, 2001; EC, 2002; EC, 2004; EC, 2004b; EC, 2006; EC, 2007; EC, 2007b; EC, 2007c). I related the linguistic analysis of section 3.2 to the analysis of the content of these documents in order to get a better understanding of the justifications and reasoning applied by the EC to the establishment of a specific common understanding of N2000. This section presents the results of the contextual analysis mirroring the structure of section 3.2. The contextual analysis of legislative and policy documents is enriched by information retrieved during interviews with key experts of the HD and BD.

3.3.1 Frequency of the discursive components in the text of the HD: meaning and consequences for the official image of N2000

The linguistic analysis shows that Technocracy and Europeanization are the most frequent discursive components in the HD. These can be considered the dominant discourses in the legislative base of the official image of N2000. For Europeanization this can be explained by the fact that the HD is a European directive which makes references to the organizational structure of the EU and previous EU legislations. Leon Braat (2010, pers. comm.) explains

that references to previous EU legislative acts in EU directives strengthen the EU legislative system and makes it appear coherent, consistent and continuous. The strengthening of the EU legislative system occurs in the HD through the inclusion of BD's areas in N2000. In this way, the HD appears as fitting in and building on the framework established by the BD in 1979. Europeanization influences the official image of N2000 especially with respect to the nature conservation responsibilities assigned to MSs. All the factors of Europeanization presented in section 2.2.2 are influent in the text of the HD and in the official image of N2000:

- the Subsidiarity Principle influences the transfer of selecting, designating, managing, and reporting responsibilities assigned to the MSs
- the Discretionary Freedom influences the possibility of MSs to fulfill their responsibilities with the leeway of adapting the HD's requirements to national and local criteria
- the Principle of Integration influences the integration of environmental concerns in the assessment of human activities, and the "integration option" for financing N2000
- the Common Identity concept influences the establishment of a common interest toward the conservation of biodiversity which should be applied with a joint action of MSs
- the Politics of Information factor influences the reporting system for N2000 involving EU, MSs and the general public

Technocracy influences the HD and the official image of N2000 with the concept of "vulnerable nature" in need of conservation for its intrinsic ecologic value. Nature conservation has to occur through ecologically focused methods defined in the HD (Scholl and Chilla, 2005) which lists the natural elements to protect, the rules for the identification of areas to protect, and the criteria for the application of conservation measures. These elements, rules and criteria are especially included in the HD's annexes, basic elements of nature conservation under N2000 (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.). The annexes of the HD proclaim the power of science to determine the requirements of nature, and they are a manifestation of the Technocracy discourse. The EC presents the science-based policy solutions of the HD and N2000 as essential elements (the only feasible and effective) for the conservation of biodiversity. Science is used to legitimize the conservation of biodiversity through the HD and N2000. This factor makes clear the high frequency of Technocracy in the HD and its relevance in the official image of N2000.

Also according to Leon Braat (2010, pers. comm.), the HD was written as a science and expertise-based policy. Braat stated that "people in the late 1980s and early 1990s realized that they had to start protecting crucial habitats to allow species to survive, and the requirements of [...] species needed to be known in terms of area and enabling conditions. This was needed in order to develop external signals for society on the importance of protecting nature and biodiversity" (Leon Braat, 2010 pers. comm.). Science was therefore used to justify the need of the HD and N2000 to society. This was particularly important in light of the problems that started when the implications of N2000 became clear. To protect an area, N2000 requires the regulation and enforcement of numerous factors which need to be regulated and enforced around this area (Leon Braat, 2010 pers. comm.). As specified in the AI procedure, N2000 requires all current and future human activities to be evaluated in terms of their implications for protected areas through systematic quantitative methods (EC, 2002). This procedure is perceived as a technocratic constraint by developers of socio-economic activities. The HD, by protecting not only species but also habitats, adds a technocratic element to the framework established by the BD, which was instead concentrating on species (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.). Habitats are very sensitive to, for

example, excesses of nitrogen or changing water table, and for this reason they are more endangered by human activities than species. This increases the possibility of a clash between nature conservation and socio-economic interests within N2000 (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.). The technocratic character of N2000 has been addressed as the main cause of local stakeholders' aversion toward the network (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001).

Despite the fact that the HD can be seen as the "Europe's way to take up the agreement of Rio de Janeiro, which is strictly linked to the concept of Sustainable Development" (Leon Braat, pers. comm. 2010), Sustainable Development has only a medium frequency in the text of the HD. The discourse influences the conciliation of biodiversity conservation with economic and social factors, and with local and regional features. In the HD and in the official image of N2000, Sustainable Development is interpreted in its stronger version (see section 2.2.2): biodiversity is perceived as an incommensurable resource which is degrading and cannot be substituted. For this reason biodiversity needs to be conserved through integration of environmental concerns in socio-economic activities. Because of the influence of Sustainable Development, no activities are excluded *a priori* from N2000 sites, and it is possible for human activities to obtain derogations from the conservation system under certain conditions. However, these derogations have proven to be very hard to obtain in practice (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.; Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.). This raises doubts about the actual influence of Sustainable Development in N2000 practices.

Participation has a low frequency in the HD, which considers participatory procedures as a useful but not essential element for N2000 implementation (Rauschmayer *et al.* 2009). Public participation is not a requirement of the HD, but the national authorities shall employ it "if appropriate" (European Council Directive 92/43/EEC, art. 6.3). Participation in the official image of N2000 is left entirely to the MSs' discretion, and only few national implementation processes have involved participation (van Apeldoorn *et al.*, 2010). For this reason Participation has been addressed as a symbolic and rhetoric policy element in the official image of N2000 (Rauschmayer *et al.* 2009). This discourse influences the official image of N2000 with respect to communication or consultation procedures involving governmental and non-governmental actors. Besides the strong inclusion of MSs' authorities, according to the HD local actors may be consulted if appropriate, and only after the proposal and selection of N2000 sites which are based on scientific criteria. This shows the technocratic and top-down character of the official image of N2000.

According to Rob Jongman (2010, pers. comm.), Participation is not a dominant discourse within N2000 because the HD was developed during the 1980s, when many of the EU MSs - such as France (McCauley, 2008) and Italy (Ferranti *et al.*, 2010) - did not use participatory strategies in their national policies. The HD also needed to be vague enough to be acceptable to countries with a tradition of non-state actor involvement (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.) such as the Netherlands (Van der Zouwen and Van den Top, 2001.). This vagueness enabled some countries to pursue a participatory approach (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001). In general, Participation is not an important part of the official image of N2000 (Leon Braat, pers. comm. 2010). It is considerably less important than Europeanization, Technocracy and Sustainable Development.

Neoliberalism has a very low frequency in the text of the HD, and a low relevance in the official image of N2000. In the HD, some manifestations of Neoliberalism can be detected in the conceptualization of biodiversity as a resource, and in the emphasis on the importance of financing N2000. Besides the attempt of the EC to present N2000 as an opportunity rather than as a constraint for human activities (EC, 200b; EC, 2001; EC, 2002), the benefits related to ecosystem goods and services are not included in the official image of N2000. The

same is true for direct compensations to stakeholders perceiving loss of income or land value for the inclusion of territories in N2000 and the restrictions to human activities imposed by the HD (EC, 2001). This situation makes the official image of N2000 hostile to (almost) all economic activities surrounding N2000 sites, and to economic actors who carry out these activities (Schaminee, pers. comm. 2010).

3.3.2 Keywords shared by different discursive components and ambiguous terms in the text of the HD: consequences for the role of discursive components in the official image of N2000

The keywords shared by different discursive components in the text of the HD (see Table 3 in section 3.2.2) represent a basis for the development of dynamics linking the discursive components. Through these dynamics, the discursive components influence the official image of N2000 in conjunction. The shared keywords represent a common terrain for the discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy and in some cases recall the co-occurring themes among discourses presented in Figure 3 reported at the end of section 2.2. In this section I report the brief texts summarizing the co-occurring themes displayed in Figure 3 which are the basis for the development of specific discursive components' dynamics. These co-occurring themes were identified studying the similarities among the involved discourses as described in the international literature. The presence in the official image of N2000 of discursive components' dynamics based on these co-occurring themes shows that the network is embedded in the international policy context.

According to Table 3 of section 3.2.2, Europeanization on the one side shares keywords with Participation, and on the other side with Sustainable Development. Moreover, shared keywords exist between Europeanization, Sustainable Development and Participation (keywords highlighted in Table 3). It is around these shared keywords that I identified the development of the following dynamics linking discursive components:

- **Dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation.** These dynamics influence for example the conception of the HC, which is an organ established to give MSs the opportunity to express their interests in the N2000 policy process at the European level. These dynamics also influence the idea that "education", "information" and data sharing between EC, MSs and the public facilitate N2000 implementation (EC, 2002). Especially this last idea reflects the theme "Provision of information in policy is an important aspect of policy-making", which co-occurs in the Europeanization and Participation discourses (see Figure 3 in section 2.2).
- **Dynamics linking Europeanization and Sustainable Development.** These dynamics influence for example the attention at the European level toward "social" and "cultural" aspects in the nature conservation system endorsed by N2000. Conservation measures in N2000 sites should balance environmental and socio-economic aspects, in that way reflecting the theme "Environmental issues integrated in human activities" co-occurring in the Europeanization and Sustainable Development discourses (see Figure 3 in section 2.2).
- **Dynamics linking Europeanization, Sustainable Development and Participation.** These dynamics influence for example the attention toward local and regional requirements in the nature conservation system endorsed by N2000, which results in the involvement of the EESC in some of the policy processes related to the network. The attention toward the local and regional dimensions reflects the following themes: I) "Appropriate action at the appropriate level", II) "Local (state and non-state) actors are the most suited to deal with local problems", and III) "Public involvement is an important input for policy-making". These themes are co-occurring in the Europeanization, Sustainable Development and Participation discourses (see Figure 3 in section 2.2).

Table 3 shows one shared keyword between Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism, basis for the development of dynamics between the two discursive components. **Dynamics linking Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism** influence the attention toward financial issues in the official image of N2000. Moreover these dynamics influence the idea that Economic activities can take place in and around N2000 sites if they do not harm habitats and species, or if (in absence of existing solutions and in front of public interest) the developers of the activities can compensate for the harm. This last idea reflects the following themes: I) "Human activities can continue without restrictions if environmental damage can be compensated", II) "Economistic and anthropocentric view of nature", and III) "Inclusion of non-state actors in policy-making". These are co-occurring themes between the Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism discourses.

Table 3 also shows shared keywords among discursive components which do not mirror co-occurring themes of Figure 3, but represent the basis for the development of the dynamics linking discursive components which I report here below. Because these dynamics do not reflect co-occurring themes among discourses pre-identified in the international policy arena, it can be stated that they developed in the particular context of N2000:

- **Dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy.** These dynamics influence the lists of endangered habitats and species important for European biodiversity which are included in the HD's annexes. These dynamics also influence the process of sites' selection on which the European system of nature conservation is based. Moreover these dynamics influence the idea of N2000 as an ecologically coherent network covering the whole European territory with a transboundary approach.
- **Dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Europeanization.** These dynamics influence the idea that nature conservation needs to be co-financed at the European level to be efficient. The co-financing system developed for N2000 and based on the "integration option" results in the actual financing of N2000 being in the hand of the MSs and ultimately of the stakeholders affected by N2000. Private local actors carrying out economic activities in or around N2000 sites assume financial responsibilities in the implementation of the network.

In section 3.2 I underlined the frequent use of ambiguous terms in the text of the HD, which contribute in making the meaning of the HD's requirements vague and not univocal. Ambiguous terms are used in the HD especially with respect to the obligations of MSs in implementing the directive. Another example is the use of ambiguous terms like "appropriate" and "proper", referred to conservation measures in N2000 sites, to give MSs the discretionary freedom necessary to apply these measures. These ambiguous terms, as well as the sentences and paragraphs in which they are inserted, are subject to arbitrary interpretations. The use of these terms in the legal text of the HD is the main reason for the publication of interpretive documents by the EC, which are aimed at fixing the meanings of ambiguous requirements of the HD through an official and "correct" interpretation of the directive. Through this fixation of meanings the EC selects concepts belonging to different discourses, which concur to build the official image of N2000. For example, the concept of "significant effect" of plans and projects of N2000 sites could be interpreted in different ways, but the EC defined it in scientific terms which relate the significant effect for example to the range of endangered species (EC, 2001). Despite the attempts of the EC to formally determine the meaning of the ambiguous requirements of the HD, discussions and legal procedures still go on around the interpretation of ambiguous terms in the N2000 everyday practices (EC, 2006b). This shows that the attempt of the EC to give specific meanings to vague terms and characterizing these through selected features proper of specific discourses

fails in front of the practice of N2000, in which different discourses might influence the meaning of these terms when actors come to implement the text of the HD.

3.3.3 Relevance and relative position of the discursive components in the HD: consequences for the official image of N2000

In this section I combined the results of sections 3.2.3 and section 3.2.4 to understand the meaning of these result in relation to the context of the official image of N2000. I report the results of this part of the contextual analysis in relation to the various sections of the HD, in order to show the influence of the discursive components and their dynamics on the various elements of the conservation system encompassed by N2000.

3.3.3.1 Preamble

The section sets the background for the requirements of the HD and places the N2000 discursive strategy in the wider contemporary context of nature conservation. For example, it refers to the Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community to underline the importance the EU attributes to environmental protection. Moreover it refers to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), signed in the same year of publication of the directive, to characterize the approach of the HD toward the biodiversity loss problem.

Being the Preamble an introductory section, it features all the discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy, even if only a few can be considered dominant. The elements which enter the introductory section of the HD are the ones that the EU selected for generally defining the official image of N2000. The only discursive components which are dominant in this section are Europeanization, Technocracy and Sustainable Development. Europeanization is present in this section with all its factors: Subsidiarity Principle, Principle of Integration, Politics of Information and Common identity. This is understandable considering that the HD is a European directive, which aims at legally establishing the European paradigm of nature conservation over the national approaches. Technocracy is visible in the scientific criteria for nature conservation under N2000, such as the “favourable conservation status” of habitats and species, the establishment of SPAs and SACs for the protection of endangered elements, and the attention for the sites’ “conservation objectives” in the management of N2000 (Council Directive 92/43/EEC). The presence of these elements and the focus on scientific aspects of biodiversity in the introductory section of the HD has important consequences for the official image of N2000. In the official image of the network, the concepts of wilderness and endangered nature encompass an eco-centric approach to biodiversity, which attributes those intrinsic and ecological values to biodiversity and uses these as a reason for its conservation (Scholl and Chilla, 2005). Sustainable Development is literally mentioned in the preamble of the HD and emphasizes the role of economic and social issues in counterbalancing the otherwise strict ecological approach. An example is the concept of “derogations” from the general protection system, which can be obtained by human activities “on certain conditions” (Council Directive 92/43/EEC).

The discursive components do not dominate the preamble of the HD in isolation, but link to other discursive components. In the preamble of the HD all the dynamics linking discursive components which I identified in section 3.3.2 are present, but as for the single discursive components, only a few are dominant. The dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy are strongly dominant, and allow these two discursive components to reinforce each other in the introductory section of the HD. These are among the dynamics which I consider as characteristic of N2000 (see section 3.3.2 of this report). In the Preamble section, these dynamics are linguistically characterized in some cases though the localization of fragments of text referable to the Technocracy discursive component within fragments of

text coded under Europeanization. Figure 4 shows this situation displaying a print-screen of the analysis carried out with *Atlas.ti*.

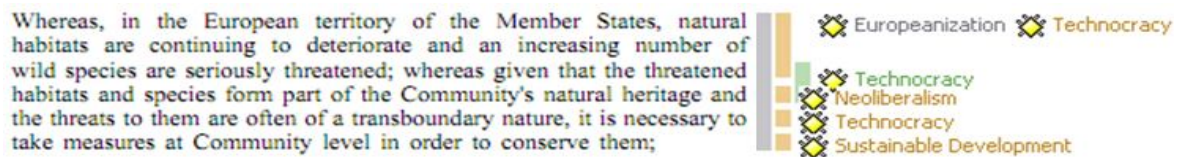


Figure 4: dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy

In this paragraph of the Preamble section, elements of Technocracy are used to justify political statements coded under Europeanization. In particular, the deterioration of natural habitats and wild species in the European territory is used to justify Communitarian actions to conserve the common natural heritage. In other paragraphs of the Preamble, the EC's power of designating a site against MSs' will is justified though the ecological essentiality of that site for the maintenance of habitats and species at the European level. The presence of these elements in the introductory section of the HD results in an emphasized influence of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy on the official image of N2000, where science is perceived as speaking the truth to European policy-making (EC, 2000b; EC, 2001).

In other situations the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy appear in the Preamble of the HD with the localization of fragments of text referable to the Europeanization discursive component within fragments of text coded under Technocracy, as shown in Figure 5.

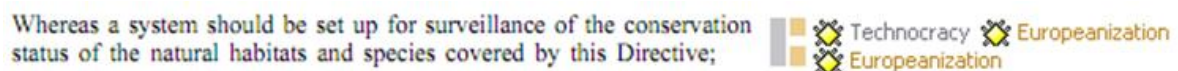


Figure 5: dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy (2)

Figure 5 shows that the application of the technocratic system of nature conservation based on the conservation status criterion needs to be enforced by a system of surveillance set at the European level in order to be effective. This figure shows the idea that Technocracy needs Europeanization for its practical implementation. This idea is also expressed in policy documents emanated by the EC and constructing the official image of N2000 (EC, 2002; EC, 2007).

Other dynamics among discursive components which dominate the Preamble of the HD are the dynamics linking Europeanization, Sustainable Development and Participation. The presence of these dynamics in the text of the HD can be evinced from Figure 6.

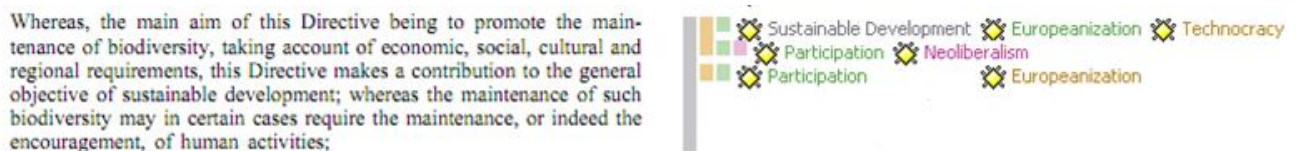


Figure 6: dynamics linking Europeanization, Sustainable Development and Participation

In this figure the fragments of text coded under Participation and Europeanization mutually reinforce the role of the two discourses, and at the same time reinforce the role of Sustainable Development. This occurs though the idea that non-scientific criteria such as "economic, social, cultural and regional requirements" need to be taken into account in the European framework of biodiversity conservation. This idea is frequently present in the documents constructing the official image of N2000 (EC, 2000b; EC, 2001; EC, 2002)

3.3.3.2 Definitions

This section of the HD reports the definitions of concepts used in the directive and underpinning the establishment of the network. Many of these definitions are repeated, reviewed or elaborated in official documents constructing the official image of the network (EC, 2000b; EC, 2001; EC, 2002; EC, 2007). Most of the paragraphs in this section of the HD are coded under the Technocracy, which sometimes dominates paragraphs in isolation. This is a rare linguistic result for discursive components in the HD. Moreover, this fact has important consequences for the official image of N2000, where mostly the elements of the nature conservation system endorsed by N2000 are delineated through technical-scientific approaches.

Besides appearing in isolation in this section of the HD, quotations coded under Technocracy often appear within quotations coded under Europeanization (and *vice versa*). Dynamics linking Technocracy and Europeanization dominate this section of the HD, for example characterizing the definition of “natural habitat types and species of Community interest”, “priority habitat types and species”, and “conservation status” of habitats and species (Council Directive 92/43/EEC). These science-based definitions are the pillars of the European nature conservation system of N2000 and of the official image of N2000 (EC, 2002). Figure 7 shows for example that the Community interest for specific habitat types is justified by ecological reasons and reasons of European representativeness.

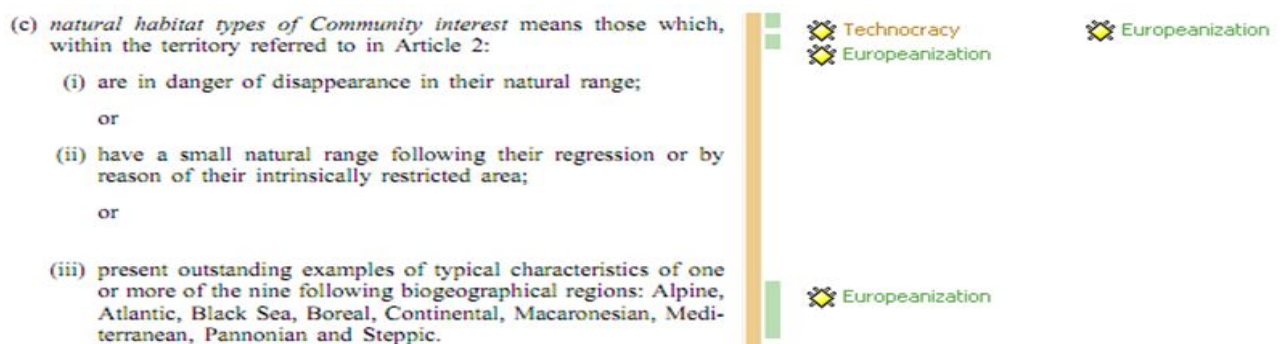


Figure 7: dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy (3)

The subdivision of the European territory in “biogeographical regions” shows the influence of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy. This influence is shown in the concept that the implementation of N2000 needs the definition of territorial organizational units not based on national boundaries but on geographical, ecological, biological and climatic features (EC, 2002). These territorial units become European units of transnational nature conservation and are used by the EC to attribute an apolitical character to the official image of N2000. However, the a-political organizational approach of the official image of N2000 (Scholl and Chilla, 2005) has some pitfalls. In the practice, the fact of belonging to one or more biogeographical regions becomes a highly political and national issue for MSs (Joop Schaminee, pers. comm. 2010). Through the establishment of these regions the EC has the power to determine which countries are responsible for certain territorial units. The issue of responsibility creates political tensions between MSs and the EC because it is established in a top-down technocratic process informed by the scientific and technical work of the European Topic Centers (ETCs) (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.). Moreover, the national nature conservation responsibility of MSs belonging to one biogeographical region increases when a new MS accesses the EU and is included in that specific region. With the accessions of a new MS indeed new species and habitat types might be added to the list of habitats and species protected in the region (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.). Also the concept of “priority” shows the influence of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy, and is employed by

the EC to characterize the official image of N2000 (EC, 2007b). The habitat types and species with conservation priority are the ones which require special attention by MSs since highly endangered (in ecological terms) within the European territory (Rob Jongman, pers. comm. 2010).

3.3.3.3 Conservation of natural habitats and habitats of species

This section sets the rules for the conservation of habitats under N2000, element of the nature conservation system endorsed by the network which distinguishes N2000 from other conservation approaches in Europe (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.). For this reason, the discursive structure of this section is important in distinguishing the official image of N2000 from other attempts of the EU to enforce nature conservation on the European territory. This section of the HD is very broad, and all the discursive components besides Neoliberalism are relevant in delineating the system for habitats' conservation (see Table 4 of section 3.2.3). Habitats represent an important element of the nature conservation system of N2000. The habitats to preserve are listed in annex I of the HD. Moreover, the habitats of the species listed in annex II are protected in N2000. In this section of the HD the actions to be taken by MSs and EC to conserve habitats are characterized in technical and ecological terms. For example, the proposal of lists of pSCIs by MSs, the revision of these lists by the EC and the official designation of areas as N2000 sites are based on purely scientific criteria (EC, 2002).

The reliance on science and on hierarchical relations between EC and MSs in organizing the first steps of N2000 implementation (the selection of sites) shows the influence of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy on the system of habitats' conservation. Europeanization and Technocracy mutually reinforce each other's role in this section of the HD. As in previous sections, in this section on the one hand scientific reasons are used to justify actions taken at Community level. On the other hand, the enforcement of the technocratic approach toward nature conservation is presented as dependent on factors of Europeanization for its enforcement. This is clear in the official image of N2000 which presents the network as a territorially and ecologically coherent system (EC, 2002). This concept has been addressed with the term "overall coherence", referred to a network which has to be ecologically functional on a European scale (EC, 2006). The coherence of N2000 is ensured by the linkage of protected areas through ecological corridors among the protected sites (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.). Despite this ecological notion of corridor encompassed in the idea of ecological network, it is interesting to underline that the term "corridor" does not appear in the HD, and the linkages among the areas are only briefly described in article 10 though few examples. The low attention toward the corridors in the HD and in the official image of N2000 creates ambiguity around the image of N2000 as a coherent ecological network (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.; Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.).

In this section of the HD, the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy not only work to reinforce the role of the two discursive components, but also function to limit the relative influence of the discursive components on the habitats' conservation system. For example the Discretionary Freedom factor of Europeanization gives a space of maneuvers to MSs for the implementation of the HD's requirements. However, this space of maneuver is limited by the ecological requirements of the sites which have to be taken into account by the MSs as ultimate criteria. Another example is the reporting system related to the requirements of the HD which shows the influence of the Politics of Information factor of Europeanization. Under this system MSs have continuously to communicate with the EC on the decisions taken and on the means used to implement N2000. However, the content of the reports should not regard the policy processes undertaken at the national levels but contain the technical and scientific evaluation of status of the ecological objectives of N2000 sites (EC, 2002).

The financing of N2000 is one of the most complex issues in the implementation of the network and is assessed in this section of the HD. This complexity is demonstrated by the publication of interpretation manuals, communications and handbooks by the EC to clarify the issue (EC, 2004b; EC, 2007b; EC, 2007c), and by the creation of an information technology tool explaining the “connection between management activities and funding opportunities” in accessible way (EC, 2007c p.5). These are among the most interesting documents constructing the official image of N2000. The main guidance handbook on financing N2000 (EC, 2004b) is a thick volume containing information on EU funds that can be used by MSs to co-finance Natura 2000 through the “integration option” (EC, 2004b p.8). This option has been preferred at the European level to the option of funding N2000 through funds expressly dedicated to the network. The EU funds included in the “integration option” are the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Fisheries Fund (EFF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund, and the Financing Instrument for the Environment (LIFE). N2000 can be financed through these funds when the measures for which co-financing is sought fall within the objectives of these funds (EC, 2004b). The EC justifies the choice of the “integration option” with the enhancement of the cooperation among MSs and the integration of nature conservation interests in socio-economic activities (EC, 2004b). This justification is influenced by the dynamics linking Europeanization and Sustainable Development. Critiques to the integration option developed specifically on the idea that that the objectives of the EU funds included in the financing option for N2000 mostly clash with nature conservation, for example farming competitiveness and innovation. These objectives have priority over nature conservation in the allocation of EU funds in the prioritized EU action framework for co-financing (Leon Braat, 2010 pers. comm.).

The lack of a dedicated fund for N2000 shows the influence of the dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Europeanization, which specifically developed in the context of N2000 (see section 3.3.2). These dynamics are particularly relevant in this section of the HD, where fragments of text coded under Neoliberalism often appear in paragraphs referred to Europeanization. Moreover they are particularly relevant in the official image of N2000 (EC, 2007b; EC, 2007c). The EU believes in and emphasized the need for N2000 to be financed, but chooses for the integration option instead of intervening with a dedicated co-financing input to support N2000 implementation. Because of the competition with EU funds’ objectives, N2000 hardly receives EU co-financing and is funded by MSs and other state and non-state actors involved in its implementation (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.).

The role of Sustainable Development is relevant in this section of the HD. The role of this discursive component and its dynamics is better understood through the analysis of article 6, controversial article to which I dedicate Box 3 inserted below. This controversy is shown by the publication by the EC of various interpretative manuals dedicated to the explanation of the various paragraphs of article 6 (EC, 200b; EC, 2001; EC, 2006). Participation as a discursive component is relevant in this section of the HD, influencing the consultation of MSs for the identification of N2000 sites and for the definition of the co-financing needs of N2000. The dominance of Participation is a rather rare linguistic result of section 3.2.3. Participation influences the consultation of MSs for the identification of N2000 sites. Box 3 further elaborates the role of this discourse.

Box 3: contextual analysis of the controversial article 6 of the HD

Article 6 of the HD deals with the conservation of habitats and species in N2000 sites' and has a "crucial role" in safeguarding these endangered elements within the network, setting the scene for the application of conservation measures and of the AI for plans and projects (EC, 2000b p. 5). This makes for the importance of the article. The article has also other features recognized at the European level, which are the complexity and ambiguity of its requirements which made it necessary for the EC to publish interpretive manuals expressively dedicated to the paragraphs of the article (EC, 2000b; EC, 2001; EC, 2006). The ambiguous linguistic formulation of the article and the consequent vagueness of its requirements make for the controversy of article 6 of the HD (EC, 2007). This result has been confirmed by the linguistic discourse analysis of section 3.2.2, which shows the presence of a conspicuous number of ambiguous terms. The meaning of most of these ambiguous terms has been fixed by the EC in the manuals interpreting article 6, while others remain subject to multiple interpretations. The use of such a high number of ambiguous terms can be explained by the fact that this article sets the scene for the actual practical implementation of N2000. Too strict and unambiguous requirements in this article would have not been accepted by the MSs as part of the HD (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.). In its attempt to establish a common understanding of these terms, often the EC uses statements such as "it is obvious that" (EC, 2007 p. 12); "it appears logic that" (EC, 2007 p. 20), "it is only logical to assume that" (EC, 2000b p. 26). These sentences make clear the EC's interest in promoting a univocal meaning for the ambiguous terms and a common interpretation of article 6. This interpretation is an important part of the official image of N2000. Despite the attempts of the EC to exclude alternative interpretations of article 6, the controversies in interpreting this article remain and often lead to infringement procedures for MSs (EC, 2006b).

Article 6 features all the discursive components and most of the dynamics identified in section 3.3.2. Technocracy appears with respect to habitats' and species' ecological requirements which have to be taken into account in the sites' management. Technocracy is also present in the "case by case" basis on which the sites' management should be founded (EC, 2000b; EC, 2001), according to which the conservation status of species and habitats should be considered in the specific case of the site where these natural elements recur. In this way the EC recognizes the dynamic feature of environmental systems (EC, 20001). However, this approach clashes with the provision by the EC of numerous standard formats, procedures and methodologies to use and apply when putting the site's conservation into practice (EC, 2001). This apparent incongruence is solved by Leon Braat who stated that the use of models in policymaking is justified by reasons of accountability and fairness assured by the peer-review system that validates models, and by the search for a de-personalized type of knowledge (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.). The statement of Leon Braat makes clear the technocratic approach of the EC in envisaging the use of standardized and expertise based knowledge for managing N2000 sites. According to Joop Schaminee (2010, pers. comm.) the "case by case" approach is not applied fairly in the practical management of Natura 2000 sites. The use of standardized procedures for the sites' management and projects' assessment mainly negatively affects smaller private stakeholders who see the permits for their activities denied in the light of the requirements of article 6. Other actors instead, such as developers of transportation infrastructures like highways and railways, often are not affected by the technocratic aspects of the AI since their activities are labeled as elements of "overriding public interest" (Council Directive 92/43/EEC).

Sustainable Development has a strong role in article 6. The importance of this discourse is clear in the AI of plans and projects likely to have a negative effect on N2000 sites. The AI has to be carried out by national authorities in light of N2000 sites' conservation objectives. However, plans and projects assessed as negatively affecting N2000 sites can be carried out anyway for reasons of overriding public interest, including socio-economic issues. The body of court cases on N2000, conceptualized in the example of the farmers and the developers of infrastructures, shows however that the balance between scientific ecologic criteria and socio-economic interests is unbalanced emphasizing the economic side (EC, 2006b). Strongly economically driven activities like the construction of a highway are allowed in or around N2000 sites, while socially relevant activities like farming fail the technical-scientific exam of the AI. Despite these considerations, the AI makes socio-economic issues an element of discussion in the European nature conservation arena, and shows the influence of dynamics linking Sustainable Development and Europeanization. If needed, national authorities can recur to public consultation for the AI of plans and projects. Participatory elements, even if voluntary for the national authorities who should apply it, are included in the idea of the AI showing the influence of dynamics linking Sustainable Development, Europeanization and Participation. Participation is not a dominant discourse in article 6, but it influences the assessment of plans and projects in conjunction with the other two dominant discourses.

3.3.3.4 Protection of species

The section deals with the conservation of species listed in annexes IV and V, for which MSs should prohibit specific means of capture and killing also listed in the HD's annexes. As the previous section of the HD, this section is very broad and all the discursive components are present. All the discursive components besides Neoliberalism are relevant. Europeanization makes its appearance with the Subsidiarity Principle factor in the transfer of conservation responsibilities from the EC to the MSs. The discourse moreover appears with its Politics of

Information factor in the reporting system involving EC and MSs. Technocracy influences the scientific character of the lists of species and criteria on which the Protection of Species is based in the official image of N2000 (EC, 2002). Moreover, humans' presence in nature is here presented as a damaging element which needs to be regulated in order to conserve the intrinsic value of nature. This shows the eco-centric approach of the official image of N2000 which reflects the relevance of Technocracy. Next to Europeanization and Technocracy, also Sustainable Development plays a role in this section. The protection system for the species encompasses the possibility of obtaining derogations for different reasons including: nature conservation; serious damage to human activities such as farming, forestry and fishing; public health and safety; environmental economic and social reasons of overriding and public interest; research and education; to allowing of limited taking of specimens. These reasons make clear that socio-economic issues are included in the nature conservation system of N2000 in order to make the conservation system more flexible and adaptable to human needs (EC, 2002). Despite this strong focus on derogations in this section of the HD, Rob Jongman reports that derogations in the practical implementation of N2000 have been used in a very limited extend (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.). This raises doubts over the role of Sustainable Development in the HD: are the principles and criteria proper of the discourse actually incorporated in the framework established by N2000, or is the discourse used as a façade in the official image of N2000?

Participation as a discursive component appears in the recurrent use of the term "public". The discourse links to the Europeanization discursive component in this section of the HD. The dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization appear clear in the conception of the HC's role: the EC is required to communicate with this committee of MSs' representatives with respect to the provision of derogations to the system of species' protection. In the text of the section these dynamics display within fragments of text coded under Participation inserted in quotations coded under Europeanization. This situation is shown by Figure 8.

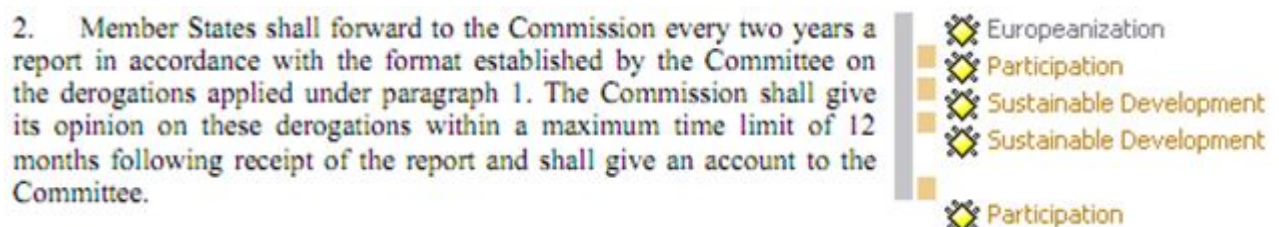


Figure 8: dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation

Figure 8 also makes clear the importance of information transfer in this section of the HD. Information transfer between different governmental levels is a pillar of both the Participation and Europeanization discursive components.

3.3.3.5 Information

This section is rather short and only four of the five discursive components are present (Neoliberalism is absent). According to Table 4 in section 3.2.3, only three of the discursive components are dominant: Europeanization, Sustainable Development and Participation. The information transfer between EU, MSs and the general public is used in the official image of N2000 to underline the transparency character of the policy processes related to the network (EC, 2002). In this section Europeanization is present with its Politics of Information factor with respect to the organizational structure of the reporting system. MSs have to create reports for the EC which provide information on the national implementation of N2000, and the EC on her turn has to create reports on the European progresses with the network to be

submitted to MSs, the EP and the EESC. Moreover the EC is required to create accessible information for the European public on the state of the creation of the network at Community level. This last particular feature of the reporting system shows the influence of Participation, which links with Europeanization in this section of the HD. Dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation influence the idea that information transfer with respect to N2000 has to involve not only governmental levels but also the general public. The EC fulfills the requirement of divulging information on N2000 by regularly publishing the N2000 Newsletter, a periodical magazine dedicated to the implementation of the network (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/natura2000nl_en.htm). Moreover, dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization are visible in the emphasis put on information, education and data sharing in this section of the HD. Europeanization and Participation also link to Sustainable Development in dynamics which are visible in the role of the EESC, consultative organ which represents economic and social actors in the policy processes at the European level.

Technocracy appears in this section with respect to the content of the information that the MSs have to provide to the EC. This aspect is not emphasized in the HD but assumes a bigger role in the official image of N2000 (EC, 2002).

3.3.3.6 Research

The section deals with the importance of scientific research for the implementation of N2000 and of the sharing of scientific information among MSs. This theme recurs in most of the documents constructing the official image of N2000 (EC, 2002; EC, 2004; EC, 2007) and shows the influence of dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy. Europeanization is present with its Common Identity and Politics of Information factors: sharing updated scientific information among EU MSs can harmonize and facilitate the implementation of N2000 (EC, 2007). These dynamics are the only ones which are visible in this section of the HD.

3.3.3.7 Procedure for amending the Annexes

In this section only the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy are present. Like the HD, also the documents constructing the official image of N2000 make clear that modification of the annexes are only justified for technical and scientific reasons (EC, 2002). These dynamics maintain their influence in the practice of N2000, where the annexes of the HD have been updated almost exclusively for the accession of new MSs in the EU which required the addition of new elements to the lists of protected habitats and species (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.)

3.3.3.8 Committee

This section deals with the institution of the HC, organ which assists the EC in the implementation of the HD by providing advices and by suggesting interpretations of the directive. This section sees the influence of dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation on the role of the HC, organ which includes representatives of MSs and allows the expression of national objections and opinions in the framework established by N2000.

3.3.3.9 Supplementary provisions

This section is dedicated to the invasion of exotic species and the reintroduction of native species, which the MSs have to regulate according to scientific criteria. The dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy dominate this section of the HD. Moreover, because the reintroduction of species in the natural environment has to follow a "proper consultation of the public concerned", also Participation is present. Also the dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization are relevant in this section of the HD.

3.3.3.10 *Final provisions*

This section deals with the deadlines for the MSs established to put the HD into practice, and with the obligation of MSs to report on the transposition of the directive. The Europeanization discursive component dominates this section, and the description of the MS's responsibility in implementing the HD included in the official image of N2000 (EC, 2002).

3.3.3.11 *The annexes of the HD*

The annexes of the HD represent the basis of the European nature conservation system encompassed in N2000 (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm; Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.). Reference to the annexes is made in all the documents constructing the official image of N2000 (see for example EC, 2000b; EC, 2001; EC, 2002; EC, 2004; EC, 2006), showing the importance of these elements of the HD for the whole N2000 discursive strategy. According to my linguistic analysis the annexes show the influence of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy. The annexes are for a big part composed of lists of species reported with their scientific Latin denomination, and habitat types are delineated through ecological terms (HC, 2007). These lists have been created using exclusively ecologic criteria and relying on the Precautionary Principle (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.), and this shows the influence of Technocracy on these elements of the HD. As in other sections of the HD, the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy influence the use of technocratic elements to justify actions to be taken at the European level. The scientific criteria used for the creation of the annexes are used to justify the selection of specific habitats and species to include in the HD's lists, which become protected in the whole European territory and require the joint action of MSs.

Annex I is dedicated to "natural habitat types of community interest whose protection requires the designation of special areas of conservation". The title of the annex already shows dynamics linking Technocracy and Europeanization, which are visible in the concept that the natural habitat types here listed represent elements of common interest for MSs. These elements justify the establishment of SACs on the European territory. Not only natural but also semi-natural habitats are represented in the list, the last described as habitats which depend on human activities for their maintenance (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.). Semi-natural habitats are often characteristic of North-Western Europe, geographic area where humans have interacted with the environment for so long that it is hard to identify completely natural elements. For example, semi-natural grasslands, forests and estuaries have been inserted in the HD with the intention to conserve also species characteristics of agricultural areas and managed forests. These species are considered as part of nature, as well as the humans who manage their habitats. In this concept the Sustainable Development discourse makes its appearance in the inclusion of humans and their activities in the European framework established by N2000. This last element shows the presence of dynamics linking Sustainable Development and Europeanization in this annex of the HD.

Annex II includes a list of "animal and plant species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of special areas of conservation". Again, the title shows the dominance of dynamics linking Technocracy and Europeanization. Important for this annex is the issue of the inclusion or exclusion of species from the list. The species which are excluded do not receive protection under N2000, and this is the case of many species which instead would need protection, according to Schaminee (2010, pers. comm.). The decision regarding the inclusion of a specie in the list has been based on negotiations among scientists and ENGOS involved in the HD's formulation. Some of the species had missionaries who understood the importance of these lists for the future of European nature conservation, and pushed for the inclusion of their favorite species (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.). This is the

case of the bats, which are largely protected in N2000 sites. This system makes the exclusion of species from the lists a “missed chance” (Schaminee, 2010, pers. comm.) for many species which are highly endangered but did not have a strong representation during the negotiations of the HD’s annexes. Another important issue for this and the previous annexes of the HD is the priority status assigned to certain ecological elements of the lists, which are marked with an asterisk. The ecological priority assigned to habitat types and species in the European territory shows the influence of dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy, and has important consequences for the official image of N2000. Indeed, the priority status of certain habitats and species determines the possibility for MSs to ask EU co-funds for their conservation (Schaminee, pers. comm. 2010; EC, 2007b).

Annex III lists “criteria for selecting sites eligible for identification as sites of community importance and designation as special areas of conservation”. The annex is dominated by dynamics linking Technocracy and Europeanization which are strongly visible in the overall concepts of SCIs and SACs. These are sites which, according to strictly scientific criteria, are important for nature conservation in Europe. These two discursive components are the only ones present in this annex, and relevant for the selection of sites to insert in N2000 (EC, 2002).

Annex IV lists “animal and plant species of community interest in need of strict protection”. Most of the species whose habitats are listed in Annex I recur also in this annex. This annex has been one of the elements of the HD which caused the greater deal of lawsuits in the history of N2000 (Schaminee, pers. comm., 2010). This annex often gave the opportunity to nature conservationists to stop projects in the name of protected species which are sometimes very common in the European territory.

Annex V lists “animal and plant species of community interest whose taking in the wild and exploitation may be subject to management measures”. These are for example species which are quite common because have been traditionally used by humans or are still in use (e.g. *Hirudo medicinalis*). Moreover this annex lists species which represent a danger for humans and need to be controlled, e.g. the species *Canis lupus*. This annex sees the appearance of the Sustainable Development discursive component, since man, his interests and activities are taken into account in this part of the HD (Schaminee, pers. comm. 2010).

Annex VI lists the “prohibited methods and means of capture and killing and modes of transport”. The Technocracy discursive component dominates this annex and influences the idea that several methods of killing and capturing specimens in the wild should not be allowed within N2000 sites because damaging the habitats or population of species.

3.4 CONCLUSIONS

The linguistic and contextual analysis of the official image of N2000 has demonstrated that Europeanization and Technocracy are the discursive components with the higher degree of influence on the formal interpretation of the network provided by the EC. The EC indeed characterizes the N2000 discursive strategy mainly through concepts and argumentations proper of these two discourses. These two discursive components are the most frequent in the text of the HD, and they are also strongly represented in the BD and in the EC documents on N2000. However, Europeanization and Technocracy are not the only discourses visible in the official image of N2000. Sustainable Development appears in the HD with a frequency of about a half of the frequency of the two dominant discursive components, and is present in the documents published by the EC on N2000 with a medium relevance. This discourse is

visible in the attempt of conciliating environmental with socio-economic interests, resulting for example in the possibility of obtaining derogations from the strict system of habitats' and species' protection. Participation is also present in the official image of N2000: it presents a frequency of about one fourth of the two dominant discursive components in the text of the HD, and is sometimes appearing as a theme in the documents published by the EC. Its appearance is clear in the participatory procedures imposed or envisaged by the HD, for example involving the EP, the HC and the general public. Neoliberalism appears even if with a very low relevance in the official image of N2000: its frequency is almost insignificant compared to the one of the two dominant discursive components in the text of the HD, and an extremely limited space is given to concepts proper of this discourse in the documents published by the EC on N2000. Its appearance is clear in the focus toward the financing of the network.

Based on this analysis it is clear that the formal texts that make up N2000 mainly frame biodiversity loss as a scientific problem which affects the whole European territory and needs to be addressed through a Communitarian action. This problem definition also involves the promotion of a conservation system based on scientific knowledge and values (e.g. application of the Precautionary Principle in the conservation measures) and on the various factors mentioned in the description of the Europeanization discursive component: Principle of Integration, Discretionary Freedom, Subsidiarity Principle, Politics of Information and Common Identity. Elements of Europeanization and Technocracy reinforce and limit each other in the official image of N2000. For example, my analysis showed that, on the one hand, elements proper of Technocracy are used to justify actions taken at Community level. For example, the European lists of habitat types and species included in the HD are the basis for the development of protected areas on the whole European territory, since they represent the most important species for European biodiversity. On the other hand, the science-based nature conservation system encompassed in N2000 is applied through the factors of Europeanization, e.g. the subsidiary transfer of responsibilities from EC to MSs and the information transfer involving EC, MSs and the general public. These elements of Europeanization are necessary to enforce the technocratic system of N2000 implementation described in the HD. From my analysis I deduced that Europeanization and Technocracy do not influence the official image of N2000 in isolation, but rather in conjunction. These two discursive components are linked in dynamics which can be visible in specific elements of the official image of N2000 and include concepts and paradigms proper of both the discursive components.

Besides the dominant dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy, the analysis of chapter 3 allowed me identifying other dynamics linking discursive components which are visible in the official image of N2000. These dynamics are not hegemonic in the official image of N2000, but are relevantly contributing to frame the biodiversity loss problem and its solution. Moreover, they show the role of the other three discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy in the construction of the official image of N2000. These dynamics are:

- Dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation, which are visible for example in the inclusion of European participatory organs in the N2000 implementation process (such as EP and HC) and in the importance attributed to education and provision of information in the framework of N2000.
- Dynamics linking Europeanization and Sustainable Development, which are visible for example in the integration of socio-economic issues in the nature conservation framework of N2000.

- Dynamics linking Europeanization, Sustainable Development and Participation, which are visible for example in the idea that actions to protect biodiversity have to be taken at the European, national and local levels in order for N2000 to be successfully implemented.
- Dynamics linking Europeanization and Neoliberalism, which are visible for example in the idea that nature conservation needs to be financially supported at the European level though without the creation of an apposite EU fund for the network

All these dynamics link the three non-dominant discursive components (Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism) to one of the dominant discursive components (Europeanization). The three non-dominant discursive components do not have a strong relevance in the official image of N2000. For Sustainable Development, this low relevance could be linked to the fact that the discourse is particularly hard to put into practice in a strategy. For Participation and Neoliberalism a reason for the low relevance could be that the discourses were not strongly applied in the nature conservation policy arena of EU and MSs at the time of development of the HD. However, by linking to Europeanization, these three non-dominant discourses entered the official interpretation of N2000 provided by the EC and gained legitimacy in the N2000 discursive strategy.

Moreover my analysis identified another dynamic linking two of the non-dominant discursive components: Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism. These dynamics are visible in the emphasized attention toward economic issues (which are more strongly represented than social issues) in the integration of environmental and human interests encompassed in N2000. This dynamic is not very relevant in the official image of N2000, but its presence will have important consequences for the practical implementation of N2000 and future developments of the N2000 discursive strategy.

An interesting result presented in this chapter of the thesis is that some of the discursive components' dynamics influencing the official image of N2000 reflect co-occurring themes among discourses identified at the international level (see Figure 3 in section 2.2 of this report). These co-occurring themes represent a common terrain for actors of the international nature conservation arena who subscribe to the involved discourses. The presence of these discursive components' dynamics in the official image of N2000 makes clear that the network is embedded in international environmental governance. This is for example the case of dynamics linking Europeanization, Participation and Sustainable Development. Other dynamics linking discursive components and influencing the official image of N2000 instead do not reflect co-occurring themes among discourses displayed in Figure 3 of section 2.2. These last dynamics can be considered characteristic of the N2000 context, and are interesting to study in order to understand the specificity of the discursive construction of N2000. This is for example the case of dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy.

CHAPTER 4

Influence of the discursive components' dynamics on the Natura 2000 policy process

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The second research question of the thesis deals with the European policy process developed around the design and implementation of the N2000 discursive strategy, and it reads as follows:

Which dynamics take place among the discursive components (and the actors who subscribe to the discursive components) during the history of the N2000 discursive strategy, and how do these dynamics influence the related policy processes?

This chapter focuses on the changes occurred within the N2000 discursive strategy during different phases of the N2000 policy process. It uses a selection of important moments in the N2000 process to analyze the dynamics of the discursive components as they are reflected in the roles and positions of the actors, in the types of knowledge they hold, and in the arguments they use to represent their interests.

Taken together, the selected milestones provide an overview of the N2000 process because they are regularly spread over the N2000 policy process time-frame and because they constitute important moments of the policy process which are covered by several scientific articles, policy documents and publications related to N2000. The analysis of these written documents is complemented with interviews with important actors which participated or have a relevant knowledge of the policy process at issue (see 2.5.2.1, and annex 3). Here I list the milestones of the N2000 policy process selected in this study:

- The process of drafting the HD (covering the years 1988-1992)
- The biogeographical seminars (starting in 1996 and being particularly frequent till the early 2000s)
- The stakeholders' conference of Bath (1998)
- The first wave of concern for financing N2000 (covering the years 2001-2004)
- The second wave of concern for financing N2000 (covering the years 2008-2010)

To support the analysis, a timeline related to important developments in international and European contemporary nature conservation is included in annex 4 of this report. This timeline represents the background of the development of the N2000 policy process. From a discourse analysis perspective this background is important because the discourses circulating in the international and European nature conservation arenas also affect the process of development of the N2000 discursive strategy, influencing the roles of actors, their positions and their strategies. This timeline, together with the analysis of the N2000 milestones will provide the basis for the conclusions drawn in section 4.7.

4.2 THE DRAFTING OF THE HD

This section reports on the drafting of the text of the HD, covering the years 1989-1992. Before starting with the description of the policy events taking place in this milestone of the N2000 policy process it is interesting to report on the external relevant episodes influencing the drafting of the directive. For example, the Bern convention (see annex 4) has had an important influence on the HD. According to several interviewees, the HD's technocratic rationale is to a large extent based on the Bern convention, especially with respect to the role of the annexes (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.; Braat, 2010 pers. comm.; Jones-Walter, 2010 pers. comm.). As in the Bern convention, the protection of natural elements in the HD is based on the concept of "priority", which means that some of the species and habitat types

listed in the annexes are more strictly protected than others. Also the HD's concept of "Special Areas of Conservation", i.e. a site protecting priority habitats and species was inspired by the Bern convention (Coffey and Richartz, 2003). Moreover, the idea that nature conservation should be carried out through the establishment of protected areas can also be traced back to the Bern convention (see annex 4). This focus on core areas explains why N2000 has often been described as a "patchwork" rather than a "network" (IEEP, 2010; Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.). The influence of the Bern convention has resulted in a lack of attention to the role of ecological corridors, which are not explicitly mentioned or characterized in the HD. Defining N2000 as a "network" can be perceived as a strategy for incorporating the cutting-edge scientific information on the benefits of ecological networks which were circulating in the national academic arenas since the early 1980s (Samways *et al.*, 2010), for example in MSs like the Netherlands⁵ (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.). This strategy however has not been backed up by real measures to create a network through ecological corridors which for example allow the movement of species across more anthropic territories (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.). The focus on natural elements in the HD strengthens the analysis of chapter 3 about the relatively low influence of the Sustainable Development discursive component in the official image of N2000.

According to Jones-Walters (2010, pers. comm.), the HD has been influenced by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held in Rio in 1992 (see annex 4), which shares with the HD the year of publication and the explicit reference to Sustainable Development. However, the connections between HD and CBD have not been made explicit in official documents, since the EU's official response to the Rio Summit is the PEBLDS of 1995 (see annex 4) and not the HD (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.). From the PEBLDS the Pan European Ecological Network (PEN) has been developed, which includes many N2000 sites. In the PEN the idea of connectivity is made much stronger and the value of ecological corridors is better recognized (Haslett *et al.*, 2010). It is since the introduction of the PEN⁶ that the role of ecological corridors became stronger also in N2000, bypassing in this way the legal text of the HD and the meaning given there to the idea of connectivity among sites (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.). The influence of the PEBLDS and the PEN on the N2000 discursive strategy has resulted in an enhanced role of ecological corridors in anthropic areas and an increased importance of the Sustainable Development discourse (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.).

Also the processes taking place around the BD in the years 1988-1992 critically influenced the negotiations for the drafting of the HD's text, especially with respect to the idea that reasons of "overriding public interest" can be a justification for carrying out plans and projects in N2000 sites (Cashman, 2011 pers. comm.). Cashman stated (2011, pers. comm.): "When negotiations were taking place we had a ruling from the ECJ in the case C-57/89. The EC was accusing Germany of breaching article 4.4 of the BD, dedicated to site protection provisions. THE ECJ ruled that article 4.4 of the BD was to be interpreted as not allowing damage except where there was an "overriding public interest", also of socio-

⁵ The influence of the Netherlands on the drafting of the HD and the design of the N2000 discursive strategy can be explained, among other things, by the fact that the MS chaired the EC in 1992 when the directive was published (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.)

⁶ After this moment the N2000 ecological corridors become for example an important element for the implementation of agri-environmental schemes in Agenda 2000 (EC, 1998), and will be mentioned in later discussions about financing N2000 as a way to reduce expenditures. The ecological corridors among N2000 sites will become an extremely valuable element in the post-2010 biodiversity strategy, which will withdraw attention from the core areas and concentrate on the connecting elements, the ones actually able to provide ecosystem services (Samways *et al.*, 2010).

economic nature. Article 6 of the HD was modified accordingly to this ruling, allowing for the authorization of damaging projects of socio-economic character in case of overriding public interest". Because of court cases generated around the BD, the Sustainable Development discourse entered the framework of the HD. The concept of public (socio-economic) interest was inserted in the N2000 discursive strategy as an element to balance the technocratic conservation of habitats and species. In the next two sections I describe the processes taking place during the years of the HD's drafting and analyze these from a discursive perspective.

4.2.1 Processes taking place during the drafting of the HD

The drafting of the HD has been a long and laborious negotiation process to which different actors contributed in different ways (Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). The EC put into practice a consultation procedure with the aim of making the negotiations as inclusive as possible. As a first step, the EC informally consulted representatives of MSs, scientific institutions and experts, representatives of the economic sector included in the EESC and EC-Directorates, and international ENGOs (Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). According to Jones-Walters (2010, pers. comm.) this last category of actors is also the one that lobbied at the European governmental level for the creation of an EU directive which translates the Bern convention in legally binding terms. The informal consultation represented the basis for a first draft of the HD prepared by the EC in 1988 (Coffey and Richartz, 2003) which was submitted for scrutiny to different actors. During the years 1989-1992 to the following actors have been officially called to comment on this draft (Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.; Cashman, 2011 pers. comm.):

- National experts: official of MSs selected by the same MSs
- Scientific experts: ENGOs, scientific institutes and organizations selected by the EC

During the official consultations all the elements in the HD have been negotiated among EC, MSs, ENGOs and scientific experts, who reached a final unanimous consensus (Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). The MSs' representatives belonging to the EU at that time had possibility of veto on many aspects of the HD, such as the deadlines of implementation. According to Stuffmann (2010, pers. comm.) it is surprising how the MSs during the implementation of the HD could not keep up with the same deadlines they were so influential in determining.

This official consultation was followed by the development of a second draft of the HD which was presented to the EP and the CE for final approval. The result of this process is the final text of the HD published in 1992, which has been hardly modified after this year (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.) presents therefore only slight differences with the text I analyze in chapter 3. The text of the HD we read today presents therefore only slight differences respect to the text of 1992.

According to Stuffmann (2010 pers. comm.), the consultation procedure leading to the final text of the HD makes for the inclusiveness and completeness of the negotiations for the drafting of the directive. For example, the EP and the CE were supposed to represent national interests of society groups potentially affected by the HD at the national and local levels such as farmers, landowners, transportation sector and economic organizations such as trade unions. These national and local actors were not directly consulted by the EC, but their interests could still enter the framework of the HD through the national representation in the EP and CE (Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). The same Stuffmann (2010, pers. comm.) however reflects on the fact that the indirect consultation of society groups potentially affected by the HD was limited to those interest groups organized and represented at the national or European levels. Categories of actors such as foresters, hunters and tourist operators were not provided with the possibility of expressing their interests in the drafting of the HD. In some cases however the national experts repaired to the exclusion of these

stakeholders representing their interests during the negotiations. This is for example the case of Italy which was pushing for maintaining the role of hunters in natural areas.

Stuffmann (2010, pers. comm.) described the HD as an inclusive piece of legislation representing at best the interests of the consulted actors. However, during the negotiations some MSs opposed the whole idea of drafting a European directive on the ground that wildlife conservation has no legal or political basis (Gibbs *et al.*, 2007). Other MSs opposed the HD since they did not want to enforce the complex system of habitats' conservation encompassed by the directive (Coffey and Richartz, 2003). Other MSs opposed the directive for being too strict toward human activities (Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). Like Italy did to defend hunting activities (Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). These national critiques have been partially addressed in the HD through the strategy of inserting concepts proper of Sustainable Development such as flexibility and integration of environmental, social and economic interests. However, this strategy has not been always followed by a practical application of the same concepts in the implementation the HD (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.). This situation strengthens the analysis of chapter 3 about the relatively low influence of the Sustainable Development discursive component in the official image of N2000.

The most extensive information I could retrieve on the drafting of the HD regards the construction of the annexes. The annexes include incontrovertible technocratic criteria for the nature conservation system encompassed in the N2000 discursive strategy (see section 3.3.3.11) which strongly influence the whole N2000 process. For example the science-based character of the annexes, and of the processes taking place during their construction, have been described as and criticized for imposing rigidity to N2000 implementation (Paavola, 2004). In 1992 the annexes have been institutionalized in a semi-definitive form which, just like the rest of the HD, has been hardly modified during the history of N2000. Modifications have been applied only in 2004 and 2007 with the accession of new MSs in the EU (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.), and only encompassed the addition of new habitats and species to protect (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.; Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.).

Because of this particular semi-definitive character of the annexes, and their relevance for the implementation of N2000, it is important to document the processes taking place during the drafting of these parts of the HD. According to Nicholas Hanley (2010, pers. comm.), much of the species and habitats listed in the annexes came from the Bern convention (see annex 4). As mentioned before this convention influenced the HD's annexes with its technocratic character. In the annexes of the HD the Bern list was integrated with national or local inventories of endangered species produced by environmental governing bodies, ENGOS, and international scientific organizations and institutions. Moreover a collaboration was set with IUCN for the establishment of a European list of endangered species important for biodiversity (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.). In particular for annex I, the main source of reference is the classification of habitats developed under the CORINE Biotopes project (HC, 2007). Considering the sources chosen at the European level to build the annexes, it is clear how exclusively scientific criteria underpin these parts of the HD. Moreover, the actors who could influence the destiny of the European natural environment through the building of the annexes were the ones who held scientific knowledge and the ones who belonged to European or national governmental bodies. Socio-economic perspectives and actors are excluded from this phase of the N2000 development process.

The finalization of the annexes has been carried out after a long consultation of MSs' representatives, previously defined as national experts and dealing with nature conservation policy (e.g. environmental Ministers). The draft lists of habitats and species to include in the

annexes, based on the sources mentioned above, were presented to the MSs with a request for comments in 1989. Discussions with the national experts dealing with the HD have been carried out until 1991 (HC, 2007). During this period few MSs undertook laborious surveys to contribute to the finalization of the annexes (EC, 1998). Most MSs instead did not take the consultation for the drafting of the HD very seriously. Because of the commitment already taken in the Bern convention, some MSs did not put attention in the analysis of the lists submitted to them by the EC. They failed in assessing if the proposed lists covered the endangered species of their national territories and sent back the lists with no or minor comments (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). The same information was confirmed by Schaminee (2010, pers. comm.), who has been involved in the European nature conservation arena since before the introduction of the HD. He linked the absence of some important species in the HD's lists to this lack of attention by the MSs. He stated: "at the time when the lists were made, nobody knew that they would have become so important and determinant" (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.). The lack of attention by the national authorities in the drafting of the annexes negatively affected later stages of N2000 realization, when the final lists had to be applied in the sites' designation and management (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.).

Also ENGOs have been involved in the creation of the HD's annexes (Arroyo-Schnell, 2010 pers. comm.; Cashman, 2011 pers. comm.). Their involvement since the early stages of the N2000 process is justifiable with the fact that ENGOs lobbied for the creation of the HD (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.), and with the scientific contribution they made during the creation of the annexes (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). Schaminee (2010, pers. comm.) mentioned that ENGOs represented a political force in the N2000 process, which included bottom-up processes in the creation of the HD's annexes. During the negotiations indeed they based their position also on the knowledge provided by the regional offices on which they rely. However, the ENGOs involved in the drafting of the annexes are organizations of nature conservationists and vegetation or animal scientists, reinforcing the technocratic feature of the drafting of the annexes (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.; Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.).

4.2.2 Analysis of the processes taking place during the drafting of the HD: influence of the discursive components and their dynamics

Two discursive components have been particularly influential on the N2000 discursive strategy during drafting of the HD: Europeanization and Technocracy. The only actors officially consulted for the drafting of the directive belonged to EU governmental bodies or were representatives of the scientific arena. Socio-economic actors were mostly excluded from the policy processes in this milestone of the N2000 policy process, and this confirms the findings of chapter 3 on the low importance of Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism in the construction of the official image of N2000. Stuffmann (2010, pers. comm.) justified this exclusion with the fact that at the time of the consultations for the drafting of the HD, the concept of "stakeholder" was not used with respect to nature and biodiversity. He stated: "stakeholder is the one who has a stake. I think everybody is a stakeholder of biodiversity and nature" (Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). It is for this reason that the EC believed the best way to assess the single interests of individual economic sectors was consulting the national governments representing them. The fact that many MSs did not efficiently address the interest of the portions of society affected by the introduction of the HD during their official consultation should not be blamed on the EC but on the national governments (Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.).

According to Stuffmann (2010, pers. comm.), the EC did not have the intention of excluding determined actors from the consultation processes related to the HD. The main goal of the EC was the one of establishing an adequate consultation for ensuring the development of a strategy which could guarantee the long-term survival of European biodiversity (Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). This consultation could not allow the emerging of specific private interests above the general interest of preserving biodiversity. Therefore also the socio-economic actors that felt excluded from this consultation processes should believe in their empowerment to still use the natural resources in the future (Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). Stuffmann presented a top-down perspective on nature conservation policy, according to which the government (in this case the EC) is able to interpret the common good and put it into (nature conservation) legislations.

The processes taking place during the drafting of the annexes show very clearly the influence of Europeanization and Technocracy, and of the dynamics connecting these two discursive components. The selection of data sources made at the European level for building the lists of habitats and species included in the annexes translated in the selection of the actors who had authority in the European nature conservation arena. These were representatives of European governmental bodies (MSs) and scientific actors. The content of the annexes also show the influence of the dynamics connecting Europeanization and Technocracy on the drafting of the HD: only ecologically important species and habitats representatives of European biodiversity are listed in the annexes. Socio-economic aspects of nature conservation do not enter the framing of the concept of endangered biodiversity encompassed in the official image of N2000 (see chapter 3), excluding the influence of Participation and Neoliberalism on the drafting of the HD. Instead, the Sustainable Development discourse has a role in the annexes of the HD. Much of the habitats included in the annexes can be defined as "semi-natural" (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.) because recurring in anthropic areas such as grasslands or forests. However this discourse was not influential enough to apply an actual balance between environmental and social and economic interests during the drafting of the HD.

The drafting of the text of the HD, and of the annexes in particular, represents the "problem definition phase" of the N2000 policy process, together with the selection of the N2000 sites (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.). In this phase of the N2000 process the solution of the biodiversity loss problem is framed in the N2000 discursive strategy. Most interviewees justify the lack of involvement of socio-economic actors in the drafting of the HD saying that this involvement is only useful and effective in the "problem solution phase" of a legislation, in this case the N2000 sites' designation and management (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.; Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.; Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.; Arroyo, 2010 pers. comm.). In their opinion, the HD is a good piece of legislation, since it does involve affected stakeholders in the adequate phase of implementation. Although the involvement of a broader range of stakeholders in the problem definition phase might have given better results with respect to the acceptance of the network in society, it would have been extremely time consuming and not effective from an ecological perspective. For this reason the approach of the EC is considered by the interviewees to be the best one for effectively reaching ecologic goals (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.; Leon Braat, 2010 pers. comm.; Arroyo-Schnell, 2010 pers. comm.). According to Jones-Walters (2010, pers. comm.), the lack of influence of Participation and Sustainable Development and the reliance on a technocratic approach in the drafting of the HD makes of the HD a "strong piece of legislation", which however gives space for discussion with stakeholders. These discussions can take place after the N2000 sites are designated, and if meaningful can lead to the modification of sites' boundaries or change other characteristics of the network.

The influence of the dynamics connecting Europeanization and Technocracy on the drafting of the HD draws for the whole history of the directive during the N2000 process. The text of the directive indeed has been significantly modified only for the accession of new MSs in the EU and for scientific updates (European Council Directive 92/43/EEC). This makes of the HD a stable legislative pillar during the N2000 process which supports the dominance of Europeanization and Technocracy and of the dynamics connecting these two discourses on the whole N2000 discursive strategy.

4.3 THE SELECTION OF N2000 SITES: THE BIOGEOGRAPHICAL SEMINARS

This section reports on the process of selection of N2000 sites, and in particular on the biogeographical seminars which started in 1996 and continued with strong frequency until the early 2000s (see Table 5). In these years several biogeographical seminars were dedicated to the various biogeographical regions of the EU territory. These seminars were the setting for negotiations between EC and MSs with respect to the lists of sites to include in N2000. The basis for the negotiations was the lists of pSCIs submitted by the MSs. Table 5 also shows the bilateral meetings set to revise and update the lists of SCIs for the various MSs. These revisions and updates took place, with the same structure of the biogeographical seminars, mostly consequently to the modifications of the HD's annexes which followed the accession of new MSs to the EU (see section 4.2). These modifications encompassed the introduction of new habitats and species in the HD's annexes, increasing the nature conservation responsibility of the MSs belonging to the biogeographical regions where new habitats and species recur (CEEWEB, 2004; Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm).

Region	Event	Date (place)	MS concerned
ALP	First Alpine Seminar	October 1997 (Salsburg, AT)	Austria Finland France Germany Italy Spain Sweden
	Second Alpine Seminar-Apennines	March 1998 (Rome, IT)	Italy
	Second Alpine Seminar-Scandinavian Alps	April 1999 (Vargön, SE)	Finland Sweden
	Second Alpine Seminar-Alps	July 1999 (Gap, FR)	Austria France Germany Italy
	Second Alpine Seminar-Pyrénées	September 1999 (Toria, ES)	France Spain
	Third Alpine Seminar	October 2001 (Brussels)	Austria Finland France Germany Italy Spain Sweden
	Bilateral meeting	June 2002 (Wien, AT)	Austria
	Bilateral meeting	July 2002 (Paris, FR)	France
	Bilateral meeting	July 2002 (Brussels)	Italy
	Bilateral meeting	July 2002 (Madrid, ES)	Spain
	Bilateral meeting	January 2004 (Bonn, DE)	Germany
	First Alpine Seminar EU10	May 2005 (Bled, SI)	Poland Slovakia Slovenia
	First Alpine Seminar EU2	June 2008 (Sibiu, RO)	Bulgaria Romania
	Bilateral meeting	April 2009 (Paris, FR)	France
	Bilateral meeting	May 2009 (Brussels)	Italy

ATL	First Atlantic Seminar	September 1999 (Kilkee, IE) and November 1999 (Paris, FR)	Belgium Denmark France Germany Ireland Netherlands Portugal Spain United Kingdom
	Second Atlantic Seminar	June 2002 (Den Haag, NL)	Belgium Denmark France Germany Ireland Netherlands Portugal Spain United Kingdom
	Bilateral meeting	May 2003 (Brussels)	Belgium
	Bilateral meeting	June 2003 (Brussels)	Netherlands
	Bilateral meeting	July 2003 (Paris, FR)	France
	Bilateral meeting	July 2003 (Madrid, ES)	Spain
	Bilateral meeting	July 2003 (Brussels)	United Kingdom
	Bilateral meeting	September 2003 (Brussels)	Ireland
	Bilateral meeting	January 2004 (Bonn, DE)	Germany
	Bilateral meeting	April 2009 (Paris, FR)	France
BOR	First Boreal Seminar	April 1999 (Vargon, SE)	Finland Sweden
	Second Boreal Seminar	March 2003 (Koli, FI)	Finland Sweden
	First Boreal Seminar EU10	December 2005 (Lilaste, LV)	Estonia Latvia Lithuania
CON	First Continental Seminar	March 2000 (Gesves, BE)	Austria Belgium Denmark France Germany Italy Luxemburg Sweden
	Second Continental Seminar	November 2002 (Potsdam, DE)	Austria Belgium Denmark France Germany Italy Luxemburg Sweden
	Bilateral meeting	May 2003 (Brussels)	Belgium
	Bilateral meeting	January 2004 (Bonn, DE)	Germany
	Bilateral meeting	March 2004 (Brussels)	Austria
	Bilateral meeting	April 2004 (Paris, FR)	France
	First Continental Seminar EU10	April 2006 (Dava, CZ)	Czech Republic Poland Slovenia
	First Continental Seminar EU2	June 2008 (Sibiu, RO)	Bulgaria Romania
	Bilateral meeting	April 2009 (Paris, FR)	France
	Bilateral meeting	May 2009 (Brussels)	Italy
MAC	First Macaronesian Seminar	November 1996 (Canary Islands, ES)	Portugal Spain
	Second Macaronesian Seminar	July 1997 (Azores Islands, PT)	Portugal Spain
MED	First Mediterranean Seminar	February 1998 (Thessaloniki, GR)	France Greece Italy Portugal Spain

	Second Mediterranean Seminar	November 1999 (Sesimbra, PT)	France Greece Italy Portugal Spain
	Third Mediterranean Seminar	January 2003 (Brussels)	France Greece Italy Portugal Spain
	Bilateral meeting	June 2004 (Madrid, ES)	Spain
	Bilateral meeting	July 2004 (Paris, FR)	France
	First Mediterranean Seminar EU10	December 2006 (Brussels)	Cyprus Malta
	Bilateral meeting	April 2009 (Paris, FR)	France
	Bilateral meeting	May 2009 (Brussels)	Italy
PAN	First Pannonian Seminar EU10	September 2005 (Sarrod, HU)	Czech Republic Hungary Slovakia
	First Pannonian Seminar EU2	June 2008 (Sibiu, RO)	Romania
BLK	First Black Sea Seminar EU2	June 2008 (Sibiu, RO)	Bulgaria Romania
STE	First Steppic Seminar EU2	June 2008 (Sibiu, RO)	Romania

Table 5: list of Biogeographical seminars with date and location. source: http://biodiversity.eionet.europa.eu/activities/Natura_2000/pdfs/History_of_the_biogeographical_process.pdf

A closer look at the dates of Table 5 and the official deadlines for the implementation of N2000 makes clear that substantial delays took place in the sites' proposal and selection. For example, according to the HD the sites' selection was to be completed by 1998, while in reality the first groups of sites were approved in 2001 for the Alpine biogeographical region. These delays were due, among other things, to the insufficient proposal of sites by many MSs and to the discussions among national authorities, ENGOs and local stakeholders with respect to the lists of pSCIs (EC, 1998; CEEWEB, 2004). Some of these discussions took place at the national level, and not much is reported about that in the literature on N2000. However, some of the discussions took place during the biogeographical seminars, which I describe and analyze in the next sections.

4.3.1 Processes taking place during the biogeographical seminars

The biogeographical seminars were a long, complex and resource consuming exercise where the sufficiency of the national lists of pSCIs was put under scrutiny (Hanley, pers. comm. 2010). The national lists of sites had to be sufficiently representative of the endangered biodiversity in Europe. The main terms of reference for the evaluation were the annexes of the HD: the pSCIs had to be representative of the species and habitats inserted in the annexes (Hanley, 2010 pers.comm.). The evaluation was made for each biogeographical region, species by species, habitat by habitat, for each country belonging to the region and participating to the specific seminar. This laborious process sometimes took days for a single biogeographical region (Hanley, 2010 pers.comm.).

The European Topic Centers (ETCs), consortia of national scientific institutes under contract with the European Environmental Agency (EEA), carried out the actual technical analysis of the lists of pSCIs prior to the seminars on behalf of the EC-DG Environment (Coffey and Richartz, 2003). The Different ETCs⁷ which carried out the analysis during the history of the biogeographical seminars were composed by different scientific partners but involved in the

⁷ ETC on Nature Conservation (1995-2000); ETC on Nature Protection and Biodiversity (2001-2004); ETC on Biological Diversity (2005-2008); new ETC on Biological Diversity (since 2009).

seminars always with the same role (EEA, 2011). Independent unpaid scientists supported the scientific and technical work of the ETCs, such as Joop Schaminee who I interviewed.

The ETCs based the analysis of the lists of national pSCIs on scientific criteria, such as the so called "20%-60% rule" (Hanley 2010, pers. comm.; CEEWEB, 2004) which I report in Box 4.

Box 4: the "20% - 60% rule"

- Habitat types and species which occurrence is covered to an extent higher than 60% are considered, in principle, as sufficiently represented
- Habitat types and species which occurrence is covered to an extent lower than 20% are considered, in principle, as insufficiently represented
- Habitat types and species which occurrence is covered to an extent between 20% and 60% are the subject of a case-by-case analysis

The "20% - 60% rule" is however only used as a principle (Hanley 2010, pers. comm.), and other criteria are also employed in the analysis, like the size of the total area designated for a species or habitat in a particular country, or the proportion of range of a certain species or habitat covered by the national proposals. Nicholas Hanley (2010, pers. comm.) reported two examples of the application of these criteria: "I remember one case in the UK. The heathlands habitat is very common there. The UK had proposed an enormous amount of hectares for that habitat type, which however only represented 16% of the occurrence of the habitat in the country which is beneath the 20% threshold. But the UK said that nevertheless that was the most common habitat type they presented [...] and they proposed sites all over the country in order to cover the range. The EC accepted the argument of the UK. Another example is the Canary Islands, where we had a certain habitat type of an endemic species which only exists in 5 sites in the world belonging to the Island. If this species recurs in only 5 sites, the best way to conserve it is if all the 5 sites are protected. Spain proposed only 3 of those sites, though covering more than 60% of the habitat occurrence in the country. However we did not accept it. This is to show how we used the concept of flexibility".

The results of the analyses carried out by the ETCs were sent by the EC-DG Environment to the MSs with a request for corrections (CEEWEB, 2004). The MSs returned the revised lists of pSCIs, which were discussed and agreed upon during the seminars. The finalization of the SCIs for the various biogeographical regions was not based on voting mechanisms, but on a process of consensus building (CEEWEB, 2004).

The biogeographical seminars included the following actors: EC's representatives; ETCs' representatives; representatives of the MSs whose territories are included in the biogeographical region at issue; independent experts; representatives of NGOs and land users' organizations (CEEWEB, 2004). The EC maintained the role of organizer, moderator and coordinator of the seminars (CEEWEB, 2004). Nicholas Hanley stated (2010, pers. comm.) "The EC set the meetings and proposed the conclusions. [...]. I would hope, and this is my personal pride, that people felt that the kind of conclusions that I was putting forward represented an objective conclusion based on the information presented by the ETC and on arguments presented by the different sectors". This demonstrates the EC's commitment to establish fairness among the participants based on the HD's criteria, without favoring any actor in particular. Hanley stated about the final lists of SCIs (2010 pers. comm.): " [...] many of the MSs when they [*the final lists*] came out they had to admit that the process was done quite objectively. Relatively few criticisms afterwards have been expressed on the seminars. That was the strength of the process, that it was very open, the people from the ETCs were doing very scientifically sound assessments and they researched all kind of references in the literature". The scientific criteria used by the ETCs during the assessment

ensures, in the words of Hanley, the transparency, openness and objectivity of the sites' selection process.

MSs's role in the sites' selection is the one of preparing and revising the national list of pSCIs, sometimes together with national ENGOs, and sending delegates to the seminars to defend the national proposals. The role of the MSs during the seminars is highly political and the MSs put their national interests forward in the debates (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.). Sometimes already prior to the seminars, national political forces expressing economic and social interests influenced the proposal of sites. Nicholas Hanley states (2010, pers. comm.): "The problem was that environmental Ministers in many MSs had the forestry sector saying <No> to this, the transport administration saying <No> to this, the agricultural people saying <No> to this. Even the military did not want N2000 in its training grounds". With respect to the attitude of MSs' representatives during the seminars, Hanley declares: "Very often the staff coming as a delegation from the States, from the German Länder for example, was as aware as we were of the insufficiency of the national proposal. The decision that was proposed had a political strength in it. Very often people from environmental Ministries would have proposed more, but this was rejected by their political governors [...]. They came to defend, but their ability to objectively defend was often very poor. Some of the Ministries were actually quite pleased when they were sent home with the Commission saying <insufficient, you have to do more> because obviously they had been overruled at the State level during the proposal of sites. For example they have been told <we will not designate more than 5% of the territory for N2000>. That cuts across all the scientific principles on what should and should not be designated" (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.).

The same ideas expressed by Hanley about the political role of MSs in the seminars are confirmed in the literature. For example, an interesting phenomenon repeatedly took place during the seminars. This was the case in which MSs proposed lists of pSCIs which were not considered complete by the EC, ENGOs and independent experts (CEEWEB, 2004). One of the reasons for the proposal of incomplete lists is the pressure put on MSs by the definitive character of the final list of SCIs, since once a site has been inserted in this list it is unlikely to ever drop off unless its conservation status becomes favourable. This pushed the MSs to avoid the proposal of sites where nature conservation strongly conflicted with economic development and social issues, because of the complexity of applying the HD's requirements in these circumstances (CEEWEB, 2004). In cases of insufficiency of the national list of pSCIs often ENGOs such as WWF presented the so called "shadow lists" of sites. Though developed with scientific criteria sometimes not mirroring the criteria encompassed in the HD's annexes, the shadow lists were considered by the EC as a valuable reference during the seminars. The shadow lists often led to further meetings and discussions in which the participants were required to present more evidence for their arguments (CEEWEB, 2004). Another reason for the political role of MSs during the seminars is explained by Nicholas Haney (2010, pers. comm): "Because biodiversity in Europe is not evenly spread [...] countries like UK, Belgium and Holland which have historically a higher density of population, are more developed and have [...] destroyed more in the past, nowadays have less of the critical habitats and species than Spain, Greece and many Mediterranean countries". The type of natural heritage of each MS influences the level of responsibility of the States in the implementation of N2000 (Ferranti *et al.*, 2010), and their attitude toward the proposal of sites to include in the network. The MSs with a higher level of biodiversity and a higher conservation burden more commonly perceive N2000 as an obstacle. This causes a less cooperative attitude of these MSs during the seminars (Haney 2010, pers. comm.).

The ENGOS were coordinated in the biogeographical seminars by the European Habitats Forum (EHF), which is a platform of organizations established in 1991 with the role of advising and providing input for the implementation of nature conservation policies in Europe, especially the BD and HD (IUCN, 2010). Box 5 reported below gives an insight in the positions and strategies of the EHF during N2000 implementation. During the seminars the ENGOS fought for the completeness and coherence of N2000, sometimes presenting their own alternative proposal of sites (CEEWEB, 2004). In some cases however, the ENGOS during the seminars lost of sight the magnitude of their requests in the defense of nature (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.). On the issue Nicholas Hanley states (2010, pers. comm.): "We did not always support the ENGOS because often they were asking crazy things". Moreover, ENGOS during the seminars ensured the transparency of the selection process reporting pitfalls in the national processes of identification of sites (CEEWEB, 2004). Nicholas Hanley (2010, pers. comm.) states on the national identification processes for the pSCIs: "sometimes we would know with clear detail the whole process because ENGOS were coming to tell me what had gone on in a particular MS. This was a fairly transparent process".

The land users' associations participated in the seminars through the involvement of the N2000 Users' Forum (NUF), which includes representatives of landowners and land managers such as farmers and foresters (ELO, 2006). Box 5 gives an insight in the positions and strategies of the NUF during N2000 implementation. The NUF was not always included in the seminars, but officially only after 2002 (<http://circa.europa.eu/>). Nicholas Hanley stated (2010, pers. comm.): "I insisted to take the landowners as well because at the beginning they were left out. I said *<no! They can have scientific authority, they can have a contribution to make>*. And even if they do not have major contribution to make I want them to understand the objectivity with which we are doing this. I want that when we say *<this country has not done enough>* they understand. They can send their scientific advice and say *<well, here are the criteria that flow from the language of the directive>*". This makes clear that the EC considered landowners as a relevant element of reference for the establishment of N2000. If landowners can conform to the scientific knowledge and criteria of the HD, they are given a chance to make comments over the results of the ETCs' analysis. However in the practice landowners had the role of silent participants and observants during the biogeographical seminars (Weber and Christophersen, 2002).

The last category of participants in the biogeographical seminars was represented by the independent experts invited by the ETCs to provide the EC with relevant scientific information (CEEWEB, 2004). Nicholas Hanley reported that these experts had the role of remembering the importance of the scientific knowledge and criteria endorsed by the HD for the N2000 sites' selection. He stated: "what happened quite often was that the MS would say *<we do not have that species in our country>*. And then we would have the professor saying *<yes, we have it. I have my field notes: we have it in this, this and this site>*" (Nicholas Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.). This anecdote shows that during the seminars scientific actors defended the positions of nature (defined in scientific terms) against the MSs' insufficient proposal of sites.

Box 5: EHF and NUF, two main platforms in the N2000 policy process

The EHF and the NUF are platforms representing respectively ENGOS and rural landowners and users. They were both created to deal with the implementation of N2000 and they have similar objectives (ELO, 2006; IUCN, 2010):

- Representing interest groups and organizations at the European level
- Contributing the negotiations and consultation processes related to N2000, in order to assist and advice policy-makers
- Promoting the sustainable use of natural resources on the European territory
- Promoting the communication and exchange of best practices among the members

The main differences between the two platforms can be found in the interests they represent and in the strategies they apply at the European level to push their interests forward in the implementation of N2000 (Weber and Christophersen, 2002).

The EHF includes 14 ENGOS under the lead of the World Wide Fund for nature (WWF), e.g. BirdLife International, European Environment Bureau, European Natural Heritage Foundation, ECNC, Eurosite, EUROPARC Federation, Friends of the Earth Europe, IUCN Regional Office for Pan-Europe, Planta Europa, and Wetlands International. Created in 1991, the EHF was the only non-governmental actor directly consulted with respect to the HD's drafting, contributing with the ecological expertise of its members to the creation of the annexes (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). Moreover the EHF was involved in the HC since 1993 and in all the Biogeographical seminars. The EHF had the role of observer in the seminars, but practically contributed to the discussions with the same strength than the MSS' representatives (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). Moreover, regular formal and informal meetings and exchange of information took place between EC-DG Environment and the EHF, bypassing the MSS' level (Weber and Christophersen, 2002; IUCN, 2010). The influence of the EHF on the N2000 process has been very strong, and justified in literature with the potential of ENGOS in providing ecological data and representing an interface with civil society. However, other reasons can be found for this strong influence, such as the tight ideological linkages existing between the EHF and EC-DG Environment. The relations between the DG and some of the members of the EHF (e.g. WWF and Birdlife) date back to the BD, and are based on shared views, beliefs and goals (Arroyo-Schnell, 2010 pers. comm.). These are relations of mutual assistance and exchange of personnel (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). It is to remember how the same ENGOS lobbied at the European policy level for the creation of the HD (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.), and promoted the objective of an effective and efficient implementation of N2000 (Arroyo-Schnell, 2010 pers. comm.). The same objectives of ENGOS are shared by EC- DG Environment, and are the basis for a strong coalition between the EHF and the DG in the implementation of N2000.

The NUF was founded in 1999 under the lead of the European Landowners' Organization (ELO), and includes interest groups, federations, unions and associations of farmers, foresters, hunters, recreational anglers and sport fishermen (ELO, 2006). Confédération Européenne des Propriétaires Forestiers, Fédération des Associations de Chasse et Conservation de la Faune Sauvage de l'UE (FACE), Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the EU and General Confederation of Agricultural Co-operatives in the EU are examples of members of this platform (ELO, 2006). The year of its foundation shows that the European representation of the NUF started later in time respect to the EHF. During the drafting of the HD, most of the stakeholders represented by the NUF were not organized and/or were not represented at the European level (Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.). For these reasons they were not able to make use of the possibility of being consulted by the EC (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). An exception is represented by the ELO which was created in 1992 and was the only organization of rural stakeholders involved (even if indirectly) in the negotiations giving life to the HD (Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.). Only in later stages the ELO has also been involved in the Biogeographical seminars but with the role of silent participant. It is to underline however that landowners and other rural stakeholders had the possibility to influence the implementation of N2000 through the contributions of the national governments, through the EESC, and through the Committee of the Regions after its establishment in 1994 (Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.). Rural stakeholders meaningfully entered the framework established by N2000 only during the sites' designation and management. The reasons for this late involvement are: the failure of rural stakeholders' interest groups in addressing biodiversity issues in early phases of N2000, and the focus on socio-economic aspects encompassed in the opinions they expressed on N2000 (Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.). This attention toward socio-economic issues allowed the NUF to develop a coalition with EC-DG Agriculture based on shared goals and perspectives: rejection of strict impositions over property rights, affirmation of the right to utilize the land, and recognition of the local expertise in managing the environment (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). These goals, distant from the HD's aims, make of the coalition a rather politically weak alliance in the establishment of N2000.

4.3.2 Analysis of the processes taking place during the biogeographical seminars: influence of the discursive components and their dynamics

The Technocracy discursive component has a strong influence on the structure of the biogeographical seminars. During the seminars the MSs' proposal of sites were assessed through scientific criteria: the main references for the assessment are the lists of habitats and species included in the HD and the "20%-60% rule". Moreover the actual assessment is carried out by scientific actors (the ETCs and independent experts). Also Europeanization is strongly influent in this phase of the N2000 process: the lists of habitats and species on which the sites' selection is founded were selected at the European level, and not at the national or local levels, during the drafting of the HD. Technocracy and Europeanization link in the biogeographical seminars dominating together the N2000 sites' selection phase. The influence of the dynamics linking Technocracy and Europeanization is also confirmed by the fact that only actors which could make a scientific contribution to the process were called to participate in the biogeographical seminars. These were not only scientific actors such as ETCs and scientific experts, but also environmental Ministries of European MSs, and non-state actors organized at the European level (EHF and NUF).

The role of the NUF in the biogeographical seminars shows the influence of Participation on this phase of the N2000 process, discursive component which, according to section 4.2, was irrelevant in the previous milestone of the process. The NUF had the role of mere observer during the seminars, without actually influencing the outcomes of the scientific process of sites' selection but only providing a term of reference (Cashman, 2010 pers. comm.). However its presence in the seminars allowed a process of education and training with respect to the HD's rationale which was supposed to increase the acquaintance of rural stakeholders with the framework established by N2000. The influence of Participation is also showed in the role of ENGOS during the seminars, which relies on the contribution of regional offices providing bottom-up information on the processes of sites' identification. ENGOS are able during the seminars to unveil political forces operating at the MSs' level, and negatively affecting the completeness of the national lists of pSCIs. In the role of the ENGOS during the biogeographical seminars it is possible to identify the influence of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation. These dynamics are not dominant in this milestone of the N2000 policy process. For example, the NUF only represents the interests of rural landowners and users, and other categories of land users such as representatives of business, industry, tourism and transportation sectors are excluded from the seminars.

The rigidity of the lists included in the annexes, which have been hardly modified during the N2000 process and only for the addition of elements, clashes with the concept of "flexibility". This concept has been often used to describe N2000 implementation and linked to the Sustainable Development discourse (EC, 1998; 2002). Also Hanley in his interview (2010 pers. comm.) referred to the flexibility of the sites' selection process indicating that the "20-60% rule" is applied just as a guideline. However, I see the flexibility to which he refers as a "technocratic flexibility", operating within a strict and technocratic framework which allows the sites' selection to be based on a variety of principles which all concern scientific criteria. This shows the low relevance of the Sustainable Development discursive in this phase of the N2000 process.

Despite the attempts of the EC to carry out the biogeographical seminars in a purely scientific and European climate, socio-economic forces were put into motion during the seminars. First, the attempt of the EC to make biodiversity conservation a transnational matter creating biogeographical regions clashed with the individual national responsibility of the MSs within each region. On the one hand, the individual national responsibility was required by the concept of EU directives. On the other hand, it developed political tensions in

the process of the seminars shown by the MS' reluctance to propose sites where environmental issues contrast with socio-economic questions and which would be difficult to manage. Moreover, the absence of a voting system to finalize the list of pSCIs on the one hand could enhance understanding among actors (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.), but on the other hand could also easily turn into the imposition of ideas of more powerful actors upon others. For example in the seminars EC, ETCs, independent experts and ENGOS allied with environmental Ministers of MSs present in the meetings in the name of nature's right to be conserved. This represents a strong alliance influenced by the dynamics linking Technocracy and Europeanization. The national lists of pSCIs were often evaluated as inadequate and sent back for modifications to the MSs, without a real opposition of the national environmental Ministries present at the seminars (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.). This alliance imposed its rationale on another less powerful alliance, arisen at the national level between socio-economic interest groups and the national authorities controlling socio-economic sectors. The results of this alliance were the incomplete national lists of pSCIs discussed at the biogeographical seminars. The strategy of this socio-economic alliance was only been the one of delaying the sites' selection process, which was ultimately conducted with scientific criteria as required by the HD. However this alliance together with other socio-economic forces put into motion during the N2000 sites' selection phase, showed the sprouting of participatory and neoliberal elements that will become essential in the following milestones of the N2000 process.

4.4 THE CONFERENCE OF BATH "NATURA 2000 AND PEOPLE: A PARTNERSHIP"

This section reports on the conference of stakeholders organized in Bath (UK) by the EC on the 28th-30th June 1998 with the title "Natura 2000 and people: a partnership". The conference had the general aim of addressing the delays which were occurring in the early stages of N2000 implementation. One of the causes of the delays was the incomplete lists of pSCIs submitted by MSs, which slowed down the process of sites' selection respect to the HD's deadlines. The aversion of national and local actors affected by the implementation of N2000 was one of the factors conditioning the proposal of incomplete lists of pSCIs (EC, 1998b). This aversion was especially caused by the fear that the network could be an obstacle for socio-economic activities. The aversion toward N2000 was also the main issue of the conference of Bath: the EC aimed at harmonizing diverse interpretations of N2000, developing a positive conception in the imaginary of the socio-economic sectors affected by the implementation of the network (EC, 1998; EC, 1998b). The specific goals of the conference were (EC, 1998b):

- Encouraging cooperation and understanding among actors
- Providing a forum for the exchange of knowledge
- Providing an opportunity to discuss problems and controversies

The conference was targeted at MSs' representatives, opinion leaders at the European and national levels and representatives of local stakeholders. Participants included Environmental Ministries from different MSs; representatives of ENGOS; scholars such as biologists and ecologists; managers of natural areas; representative of land owners and users. The conference started with presentation sessions held by representatives of the EC and environmental national authorities, followed by workshops dedicated to the various socio-economic activities affected by the implementation of N2000, and to specific issues in the realization of the network which affected the involved sectors (EC, 1998).

4.4.1 Processes taking place during the conference of Bath

Michael Meacher, Minister for the Environment of the UK, introduced the conference starting the presentation session and underlying the importance of the N2000 project for the EU, and its meaning for the global commitment taken during the Earth Summit of Rio. About the Summit he stated: "The twin themes of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development came together then. They are ideas which have captured people's imagination and gained political momentum" (EC, 1998 p.6). He reported that the 1998 EU Biodiversity Strategy (see annex 4) similarly aimed at integrating biodiversity conservation into socio-economic activities. Michael Meacher also underlined the science-based character of the "deceptively simple" requirements of the HD (EC, 1998 p. 6). However, he recognized that stakeholders affected by the HD's implementation did not always understand the scientific rationale behind the sites' selection. He recommended the involvement of stakeholders in early stages of the site's designation and to open a dialogue with various parties without forgetting industrial and commercial interests. It is important to avoid misconceptions about the negative impact of N2000 on economical activities. N2000 aims at living with these activities in a sustainable way: "the reason for making designations is [...] to put a flag on the site which says <take notice>, not <keep out>" (EC, 1998 p. 8).

Ritt Bjerregaard, Member of the EC with responsibility for the Environment, showed that the way how "scientists, politicians and media" depicted the degradation of the natural environment (EC, 1998 p. 10) was often not understood by local stakeholders. This generated aversion among local stakeholders toward the implementation of N2000. In addition, he stated that "nature conservation is not just an ethical consideration" and "Nature includes people. People are part of nature. It is a partnership." (EC, 1998 p. 13). Often in partnerships one of the parts gets most of the benefits of the cooperation, while the other is left to pay the costs. This is not what he wished for N2000. For example, N2000 could be an "attractive label for some commercial activities", benefiting the business and commercial sectors affected by its implementation (EC, 1998 p. 14).

Franz Fischler, member of the EC responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development, presented the future revision of the CAP, as proposed by the EC in the Agenda 2000 program (EC, 1999). He underlined the relation between agriculture and nature displaying the environmental benefits of non-intensive traditional forms of agriculture. Agenda 2000 continued the agri-environmental schemes of the 1992 CAP reform (see annex 4) and integrated environmental issues into human activities for example by strengthening the reliance on direct payments for compensation (EC, 1998).

Jose Guerreiro, Secretary of State for the Environment in Portugal, addressed the benefits for different traditional human activities derivable from the improvement of the quality of the environment. He underlined the importance of delivering the benefits of nature conservation to local populations, also in order to honor the essential role that these populations and their traditional activities play in nature conservation (EC, 1998).

The presentations have been followed by workshops. The main conclusions of the workshops focus on the themes of "partnership and involvement [...] from the bottom up [...] at an early stage [...] through local politicians, the farming community, the hunters and the people who [...] live in the area" (EC, 1998 p. 24). Part of this bottom-up process is "convincing people", not by imposing ideas over their interpretations, but by incorporating their viewpoints in nature conservation and development of sustainable activities (EC, 1998 p. 24). Surprisingly, the economic dimension of nature and the economic benefits derivable from N2000 have not been strongly underlined during the workshops.

Here I report in more detail the most relevant workshops and their conclusions (EC, 1998; EC, 1998b):

- Workshop on tourism. Tourism and nature conservation reinforce each other. On the one hand tourism creates jobs and revenues, and it can provide an economic reason to preserve biodiversity also in marginal and fragile territories. On the other hand nature conservation provides the enhanced and healthier natural environment from which the (eco)tourism benefits. However, tourism can potentially damage the environment and recreational activities should be managed in a sustainable way. The integration of recreational and environmental issues can be facilitated by the private ownership of natural areas, and by convincing local actors that a "change of values" has to take place in order to carry out this integration. In order to enhance the acceptance of N2000, local people views have to be integrated in early phases of the implementation process and economic benefits of tourism have to be locally distributed.
- Workshop on hunting. Nature conservation and hunting are linked on the European territory: 90% of natural and semi-natural areas are used for recreational angling and hunting, and 20 million people are involved in these activities. Hunters hold the strongest misconceptions over N2000, strongly fearing the exclusion from natural areas. At the same time, the role of hunters as managers of the natural environment is not recognized at the European level, and this contributes to the feeling of exclusion of these stakeholders. This role should be recognized at the European level: hunters should be involved and their knowledge integrated in the management of N2000 in order to enhance their acceptance of the network. Moreover information on N2000 should be available in an understandable format for these stakeholders.
- Workshop on agriculture. Traditional, non-extensive and high quality types of agriculture have an environmental added value compared to standard modern agriculture. This has to be recognized at the European level to enhance farmers' acceptance of N2000. Moreover, farmers should be involved from the bottom-up since early stages of the sites' designation; they should be target of awareness raising and communication campaigns on N2000; and their values (e.g. maintenance or increase of income and job opportunities) should be incorporated in the framework of N2000.
- Workshop on forestry. The EU was never particularly committed in the promotion of sustainable forestry approaches. This contributed to the aversion of the forestry sector toward N2000. Public forests should work as examples of integration of nature conservation and forestry interests. Private forest owners should be addressed by dissemination of information on the sustainable use of their forests, and on the conservation value of their lands in order to enhance their acceptance of N2000. Foresters should be involved in long term partnerships and receive financial incentives for the application of environmentally friendly forestry methods.
- Workshop on Communication and Awareness-raising. The target, message, language and images of communication campaigns are important elements to consider when a message on N2000 needs to be provided to determined stakeholders. Communication moreover should be "inclusive, honest, transparent, proactive and simple" (EC, 1998 p. 98), and use "consensus-building and participatory techniques" (EC, 1998 p. 99). Formulating a message that can enhance the pride of stakeholders for the conservation value of their lands is important to evoke a positive image of N2000.
- Workshop on Financing Management of N2000 sites. The financial instrument LIFE has been an essential catalyst for the financing of starting measures for N2000 sites. The maintenance of this fund for the future will be as essential. However, the LIFE instrument has a small budget, and the financing of N2000 should be integrated by other EU-funds, national funds, and local financing means such as tourism and eco-labeling. A wide range

of EU funds are already available for N2000, but these are not used in the best way mostly because of the lacking capacity, competency and awareness of national authorities.

4.4.2 Analysis of the processes taking place during the conference of Bath: influence of discursive components and their dynamics

The discursive component which apparently has the strongest influence on the “stakeholders’ conference” of Bath is Participation, since the conference included a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental actors representing different interests on the European territory. Moreover, important elements of Participation influenced the discussions taking place in the conference: the inability of local stakeholders to understand the HD’s scientific rationale; their feeling of exclusion from the N2000 sites’ selection; the missed perception by the EC of the value of local knowledge for N2000; the imposition by the EC of external values and interpretations on local stakeholders. The recommendations made during the conference were also influenced by Participation, regarding for example the early inclusion of local stakeholders in policy processes and their information in an understandable language and format. However, for example the business, industrial and transportation sectors were excluded from the conference. This raises doubts on the completeness and inclusiveness of the process carried out by the EC to select stakeholders for the conference, and on the role of Participation in the conference.

Participation was not relevant enough to influence the conference in isolation, but dynamics connect it to other two discursive components: Sustainable Development and Europeanization. The actors addressed as stakeholders and included in the conference of Bath are mostly rural actors (farmers, foresters, hunters) whose traditional and extensive approaches to socio-economic activities could facilitate the maintenance of some habitats and species important for European biodiversity and coexist with nature conservation. Participation, Europeanization and Sustainable Development linked in dominant dynamics which influenced the actors selected by the EC for the conference of Bath.

An exception is the role of tourism, sector addressed during the conference of Bath even if not strictly related to rural socio-economic activities potentially contributing to conserve endangered European habitats and species. Tourism was indeed perceived a strictly economically driven activity which mostly contrasted with nature conservation. However, its linkages with the natural environment and its possibility to raise important revenues made it an appealing sector to include when talking about the future management of N2000. The role of tourism in the conference of Bath shows the influence of the Neoliberalism discursive component, which becomes relevant for the first time in the history of N2000. The influence of Neoliberalism can also be detected in the idea that N2000 represents a benefit for economic activities, concept especially related during the conference of Bath to the tourism sector.

Neoliberalism was also not relevant enough to influence the conference of Bath in isolation, but it linked to the Sustainable Development discursive component. The dynamics connecting the two discursive components are clear in the idea that nature conservation can be integrated in socio-economic activities representing a benefit for these, insofar as it can generate extra revenues for the actors carrying out the activities. The economic benefits derivable from N2000 should be made clear to, and equally shared among, the actors directly involved in and affected by the establishment of the network. The dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Sustainable Development were not dominant in this milestone of the N2000 process, but they contributed in shaping the N2000 discursive strategy of these years.

4.5 THE FIRST WAVE OF CONCERN FOR FINANCING N2000

This section deals with the period covering the years 2001-2004, which have focused on the issue of financing N2000. This issue has been one of the most contested in the history of the network (EC, 2006b). In the period 2001-2004, for the first time in the N2000 policy process, a strong focus has been put at the European level on financial issues regarding the network. For example, manuals and documents have been produced by the EC on the issue of financing N2000 (EC, 2004; EC, 2004b; EC, 2007b first published in 2004). Moreover, the financing of the network has been subject of consultation procedures started by the EC (EC, 2004c) as well as of discussions within the HC (Art. 8 WG, 2002). For these reasons I refer to this period as “the first wave of concern for financing N2000”. During this phase important decisions were taken on the financing of the network for the years 2007- 2013, thus the events taking place during the first wave of concern for financing N2000 determined several of the processes taking place during future phases of N2000 implementation.

4.5.1 Processes taking place during the first wave of concern for financing N2000

Despite financial issues related to N2000 came out already during the conference of Bath (see section 4.5), the EC recognized only in 2002 the need to discuss at the European level the financing of the network (EC, 2007b). To reach this goal the EC elaborated a consultation strategy which could support the drafting of a Communication of the Commission to the Council and the Parliament on Financing N2000 (EC, 2004). The consultation was aimed at collecting the opinions of stakeholders involved in the realization of N2000, on how the network should be funded (EC, 2007b). Several actors were called to contribute and interact to find solutions to the financing issue.

The consultation procedure set by the EC consisted of two main elements (EC, 2004c):

- 1) Consultation of the WG on article 8 of the HD. The WG was created to deal with financial aspects related to N2000 (see Box 6). The EC in 2002 required the WG to prepare a report on the financing of N2000. The EC considered this report as the “initial phase of consultation” and used it as basis for the consultation of other stakeholders.
- 2) Consultation of MSs, targeted stakeholders and the general public during different moments of the first wave of concern for financing N2000. These moments are: I) two Presidency Conferences where MSs’ representatives were called to give oral and written comments on the financing of N2000 (EC, 2004c); II) a stakeholders’ conference where targeted governmental and non-governmental actors were asked to give oral and written comments on the financing of N2000; III) a web consultation set up on the EC’s website and to which several categories of civil society actors voluntarily participated (private citizens, governmental authorities at the European, national and local levels, institutions and organizations). These three moments of consultation have been based on the article 8 WG’s report but also gave space for comments non concerning the issues treated in the report (Art. 8 Working Group, 2002).

Sections 4.5.1.1 and 4.5.1.2 report on the most interesting processes taking place during these consultations. Section 4.5.1.3 reports on the Communication of the EC on financing N2000 drafted relying on the results of the consultation procedure described above.

Box 6: the N2000 Working Groups

Since the early 2000s the EC started to establish Working Groups (WGs) which would address difficult implementing issues related to N2000. The WGs are established under the HC only when important implementing issues need a more clear definition than the one included in the HD and BD. The aim of the WGs is reaching a common understanding of facts and concepts among the included actors (EC and MSs' representatives, stakeholders' interest groups and ENGOS). The WGs are also called "Expert Groups" (EC, 2004) because designed by the EC to best answer to important implementation questions. The HD does not require the establishment of these WGs, but their creation is a strategy developed by the EC to facilitate the implementation of N2000 (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). The WGs are not responsible for taking decisions, but they create "interpretative notes" which are submitted to the HC for a formal approval (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). The opinions included in these notes have been considered as important points of reference by the EC during the N2000 process (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.), and have been assessed in EC steering groups actually taking decisions on the implementation of N2000 (Arroyo-Schnell, 2010 pers. comm.). Through the WGs the involved stakeholders have the opportunity of meaningfully influencing the European level of policy making regarding N2000.

Here I report information on some of the WGs established by the EC for the implementation of N2000:

- Article 8 WG on Financing N2000. Set in 2001 and including MSs' representatives, representatives of Council of European municipalities and regions (CEMR), of the EHF and of the ELO. Between 2001 and 2002 the WG drafted a document for the EC which included the options for the future financing of N2000 and estimations of future costs (Art. 8 WG, 2002).
- Article 12 WG on Species Protection. This WG represented a platform for the work on the interpretation of Article 12 of the HD. The group met from 2002 to 2005, including representatives of MSs, scientific experts, the EHF, and the NUF. The WG prepared a report on the interpretation of the protection of species under the HD (Article 12 Working Group, S.D.).
- Wind Energy WG. This WG developed guidance on how to make wind energy developments compatible with nature conservation requirements. Meetings took place from 2005 to 2008 including representatives of EC Directorates, of energy industries, of MSs and of ENGOS. The WG drafted a guideline manual on wind energy development in the respect of European nature conservation legislations (EC, 2010b).
- Estuaries WG. Group of MSs' representatives, scientific experts, stakeholders (e.g. representatives of port operators and of dredging industries) and ENGOS established in 2006 to advise the implementation of the HD and BD in estuaries. The group recently developed a guideline for the implementation of the BD and HD in estuaries and coastal zones (EC, 2011).
- Non-Energy Extractive Industries WG. The group worked on the preparation of guidance on non-energy extraction in N2000 sites. It included MSs' representatives, scientific experts, and representatives of stakeholders (e.g. representatives of mining industries and of the ELO) and ENGOS. Meetings took place in 2008 and 2009 and resulted in a guidance manual on the relation between non-energy mineral extraction activities and N2000 (EC, 2010c).
- Marine N2000 Sites WG. The group involves only MSs' authorities and ENGOS for the exchange of information on the establishment of the N2000 network in the marine environment. Meetings took place since 2008.
- Reporting WG. This WG deals with the reporting requirements under the HD articles 16-17, and BD article 9 and 12. Meetings took place since 2008 involving ENGOS, N2000 users' such as hunters and foresters, governmental authorities and scientific experts and institutes (<http://circa.europa.eu/>).

The dates in the list show that the EC recurred to the strategy of creating WGs more and more often since the year 2001. The participants to the WGs vary enormously, as the topics touched by the groups. The participation of actors to the WGs is determined by the EC which selects the stakeholders to invite, but also by the preference of MSs and non-governmental stakeholders who participate to the WG according to the level of interest they have for the topic of the WGs.

4.5.1.1 Processes taking place during the consultation of the article 8 WG

This section reports on the consultation of the article 8 WG, also called "WG on Financing N2000", taking place in the years 2001-2002 (<http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/env/Home/main>). The WG was formed by representatives of MSs (Austria, Spain, France, Denmark, Sweden), representatives of stakeholders groups (ELO), representatives of ENGOS (e.g. RSPB and BirdLife) and representatives of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) (Art. 8 Working Group, 2002). The CEMR is a European organization of local and regional governments representing towns, municipalities and regions of the EU. The EC described the consultation of the WG as an inclusive process because of the "wide range of interest groups involved" (EC, 2004c p. 3). However, besides the CEMR, all other participants to the WG are professionally involved in nature policy and conservation.

The EC selected the categories of participants to the WG and called stakeholders belonging to these categories to join the meetings. The participation of actors to the article 8 WG, as well as to other WGs set for the implementation of N2000, is voluntary and mostly linked to the interest of actors in the topic of the WG (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.). The EC also provides technical support to the group through the participation of representatives of EC-DG Environment, EC-DG Agriculture, EC-DG Regional Policy and EC-DG Budgets (Art. 8 Working Group, 2002). In particular, representatives of DG Environment guided the work of the WG, facilitating deliberations, giving legal advices and organizing the meetings.

The result of the consultation of the article 8 WG was a report which included a common elaboration and interpretation of article 8 of the HD. This common elaboration was needed because a legal interpretation of this article of the HD was considered too strict for the coming designation and management phases of N2000 (EC, 2004). The report moreover considered the “changes that have taken place since 1992 to funding instruments, to budgets and in policy initiatives” and provides policy recommendations for the current and future phases of the N200 process (Art. 8 Working Group, 2002). The report concentrated on quantifying the financial needs and discussing different funding options for N2000 (Art. 8 Working Group, 2002). The total EU costs for N2000 for the period 2007-2013 were estimated as ranging between 3.4 and 5.7 billion Euros per year. This estimate was based on the answers of MSs to questionnaires, which were discussed in two meetings of the article 8 WG before the report was finalized (Art. 8 Working Group, 2002). In the report, the WG defined three options for the future financing of N2000, which could repair the current insufficient financing situation identified by the MSs in the questionnaires (Art. 8 Working Group, 2002). The EC used the three options as a basis for the consultation of other governmental and non-governmental actors during the first wave of concern for financing N2000. The three options identified by the article 8 WG for the future financing of N2000 are:

- OPTION 1: using existing EU funds and integrating the financing of N2000 in the planning of these funds
- OPTION 2: using an extended LIFE-Nature fund which can cover the co-financing needs of N2000
- OPTION 3: creating a new funding instrument expressively dedicated to N2000 which can cover the co-financing needs of the network

4.5.1.2 Processes taking place during the stakeholders' conference on financing N2000

This section deals with the consultation of state and non-state actors taking place on the 26th of March 2003 in Brussels, which is one of the most interesting events of the first wave of concern for financing N2000. The EC invited actors to participate to the conference and asked them to also present a written communication on the financing issue. Not all stakeholders took the chance to bring written comments (EC, 2004c) The participants to the stakeholders' meeting are listed by the EC with contact details (EC, 2004c p. 23-27). I categorize the participants as follows:

- ENGOS (e.g. BirdLife International, Wetlands International, Europarc, WWF, FERN, FACE, Transport&Environment, Natuurmonumenten)
- Networks of ENGOS, GOs and private individuals (e.g. Boreal Forest Network, Taiga Rescue Network, European Mountain Forum, PLANTA EUROPA, IUCN, EHF, INFORSE-Europe, CCB)
- Environmental organizations of GOs, ENGOS and private individuals (e.g. Eurosite, European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism, Seas at risk)
- Associations and organizations of interests groups (e.g. Europeche, European Landowner Organization, Bureau of Nordic Family Forestry, Syndicat des Sylviculteurs du S-OE, COPA-COGECA, MTK, British National Farmers Union, UNICE)

- Scientific and policy institutes and networks (e.g. IEEP, Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, EEC, Center for Ecology and Hydrology, Societas Europea Herpetologica)
- Regional organizations and associations (e.g. EUROMONTANA, British Regional Organizations)

This list shows the variety of stakeholders involved in the stakeholders' meeting organized by the EC. Mostly, the categories of stakeholders include international, national and local representatives. The regional level of representation was high especially for UK and France, and many international and national ENGOs involved had regional offices on which they relied. The interest groups and associations composing many of the platforms and networks listed above are formed by voluntary private and organized local actors. The EC described the debates taking place during the meeting organized to orally consult stakeholders as "very lively" (EC, 2004c p.7), and the hearing event as characterized by a "good level of participation which gave rise to substantial discussions" (EC, 2004 p. 4). The list of participants to the stakeholders' meeting shows, next to the bottom-up dimension described above, also an international dimension. This international dimension was encompassed in the participation of European networks and platforms developed around specific environmental issues and linking actors bypassing national levels of representation. Most of the European platforms had an office in Brussels, through which they followed the European policy processes related to N2000 (Weber N. and Christophersen T. 2002).

The stakeholders' meeting reflected over two important points of the future financing of N2000. These were: I) the funding option on which basing the future financing system and II) the conservation measures eligible for funds. Moreover the EC provided the stakeholders with a limited space for other comments non concerning these two points. Despite the three options offered by the article 8 WG for the future financing of N2000 (seen section 4.5.1.1), the responses of the consulted stakeholders to point I) revolved around two preferred possibilities. The first of the possibilities does not correspond to any of the options proposed by the article 8 WG but represents a combination of options 1 and 2 (EC, 2004c):

- 1st POSSIBILITY: using existing funds and reinforcing LIFE-Nature, possibility preferred by most MSs' representatives. Stakeholders raised a concern with respect to this possibility, which I call "political competition", i.e. the ability of national environmental ministries to access EU funds traditionally accessed by other ministries. Moreover, MSs argued that the LIFE fund should be reinforced to cover the N2000 conservation measures which are not financed by other EU funds.
- 2nd POSSIBILITY: creating a new Natura 2000 fund, possibility preferred by ENGOs, landowners' and land users' interest groups. This possibility was developed to respond to the considerations of stakeholders' on the "competition of objectives", arising between biodiversity conservation and socio-economic activities, for the request of funds traditionally dedicated to those activities. Moreover the stakeholders asked the EC to show a higher level of coherence and commitment in conserving biodiversity, supporting this conservation with adequate funds.

With respect to point II) of the consultation, ENGOs and landowners emphasized the role of forestry measures, and argued for the expansion of existing funds or the creation of a separate fund. This issue linked to the direct compensation for stakeholders for the perceived loss caused by the inclusion of their territories in N2000. Most MSs' representatives however had a different opinion on the forestry issue, since national legislations already restricted forestry interventions in many natural and semi-natural areas, and it was therefore improper to attribute such a great impact of N2000 on the national forestry sectors (EC, 2004c).

The stakeholders' consultation provided space for other comments not concerning the two consultation points addressed above. Within this space, especially ENGOs expressed comments on the following issues:

- Financial situation of accession countries
- Importance of demonstrating the benefits of ecosystem services provided by N2000 to local populations, and making local populations aware of their role in nature conservation
- Problems with funding environmentally friendly measures in agriculture with the CAP and request of information on the state of reform of the CAP
- Lack of uniformity in the criteria used by MSs for the assessment of future financing needs for N2000 which affects the funding estimate included in the article 8 WG's report
- Request of more attention for the loss of land use and land value encompassed in the establishment of N2000

The MSs' representatives instead focused on the following aspects:

- Uncertainty of costs estimates in the report of the article 8 WG
- Usefulness of the financing report for countries where national funds are already provided for N2000

4.5.1.3 The EC's Communication on financing N2000

This section reports on the EC's Communication to the EP and the CE, based on the consultation of the article 8 WG and of governmental and non-governmental actors carried out in the years 2001-2004 (EC, 2004). The aim of the Communication was to advise the planning of the financing of N2000 for the years 2007-2013 (EC, 2004). The EC described at p. 40-43 of the Communication the role of the different types of consultation in the creation of the document. For example, the EC took the stakeholders' opinions into consideration in the light of the "positions and interests of the commenting person or party" (EC, 2004 p. 41).

The Communication stressed the "economic dimension of biodiversity" and the "strength of economic arguments for conservation" (EC, 2004 p. 7), repetitively referring to concepts such as costs, benefits, opportunities, resources, land prices, compensations. The Communication supported the idea that economic benefits can be derived from the establishment of N2000. The issue of direct compensation for the establishment of a N2000 site was very briefly treated in the document. For example, the EC did not foresee a possibility of compensation for costs incurred for I) restriction on land use practices, II) land value decrease and III) profit foregone.

The EC presented an estimate of the total annual costs for the management of N2000 of 6.1 billion Euros/year, estimated for the EU-25. However, the EC could not estimate how much money would be allocated to N2000 from EU funds, since this would depend on the MSs' approach in allocating EU funds (EC, 2004). The lack of clearness with respect to the financing responsibilities for N2000 became evident in the Communication, which did not say if N2000 would be mainly financed through EU or national funds. On the financing responsibilities Nicholas Hanley stated (pers. comm. 2010): "If you want me to be absolutely honest with you, that issue has never been settled". The issue of responsibility in nature conservation is critical in the development of N2000, and the first wave of concern for financing N2000 did not contribute to solve doubts on this issue. However, Nicholas Hanley stated (2010, pers. comm.): "the process was neither a total failure nor a total success". For example, the first wave of concern on financing N2000 brought to the debate the need of stronger funds for N2000, the need to maintain the LIFE fund against pressures who wanted to eliminate it, and the need to insert nature conservation elements in the future CAP reforms (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.). According to Hanley (2010, pers. comm.), especially the CAP reforms represented "a meaningful increase in the opportunities for funding N2000". With

respect to the 2003 CAP reform Hanley reported: “it took away some of the incentives for farmers to intensify more, which was one of the drivers of environmental destruction [...]. There were no longer grants for land drainage, no premiums for higher productivity which would encourage pollution. We moved from productivity payment to area based payment to take the incentives away” (Nicholas Hanley, pers. comm. 2010).

In the Communication, the EC recognized the inadequacy of the wording of article 8 of the HD for the current Community financing system, and proposed a tailored interpretation of the article suited for the latest evolutions of the EU financing mechanism (EC, 2004). With respect to the eligibility of measures, the EC suggested that EU funds should be directed only to priority habitats and species. With respect to the funding option, the EC excluded a significant increase in the LIFE fund and the possibility of creating a dedicated fund for N2000. The EC opted for the so called “integration option” (EC, 2004 p. 43), consisting in the integration of the co-financing of N2000 in other EU funds, namely EAFRD, EFF, ERDF, ESF, Cohesion Fund, and LIFE. The Communication on financing N2000 extensively treated the consequences of the 2003 CAP reform (see annex 4) for the management of N2000, which enhanced the opportunities for environmental Ministries to obtain funds for the establishment of N2000 in rural areas, and for farmers to obtain compensations for the inclusion of their territories in the network (EC, 2004 p. 30). Moreover, the Communication reported on the recent increased possibilities of funding for N2000 with the Cohesion Fund (EC, 2004).

However, the “integration option” is not embraced by the EC without reserves. The Communication reported a list of gaps encompassed in the selected funding option (EC, 2004), including some of the concerns expressed by MSs and non-governmental actors in the space for “other comments” provided by the EC during their consultation. Examples are the “political competition” and the “competition of objectives” reported in section 4.5.1.2 that could negatively affect the financing of N2000, and the essential role played by LIFE in the implementation of N2000. However, reflecting over the impossibility for LIFE to ever become a sufficient fund for managing N2000, Hanley stated (2010, pers. comm.): “we never expected that it LIFE would be anything more than pilot and demonstration things; it could never sustain the long time management of the network. But it was a useful experimentation fund used to show how you can do things. The idea is that if you pick up some good examples and try to test them, these examples could be implemented more substantially in the network. To a certain extent that project did work, since some of the things that were initially funded under LIFE-Nature (e.g. agricultural habitats) have been picked up and have been put into [...] agri-environmental schemes”.

4.5.2 Analysis of the processes taking place during the first wave of concern for financing N2000: influence of the discursive components and their dynamics

The EC presented the consultation carried out during the first wave of concern for financing N2000 as a broad participatory process including a wide range of stakeholders and applying different consultation methods (EC, 2004). For example, the EC applied both a targeted type of consultation and a broad range public consultation. Moreover, the EC required some of the stakeholders to provide both oral and written comments (EC, 2004). This last factor increases the fairness of the consultation process, since it reduces the differences in argumentative skills among consulted actors (Fischer, 2003). Indeed, actors with better oral argumentative skills could have been advantaged if the EC applied only a oral type of consultation, and actors with better writing skills could have been advantaged if the EC applied only a written type of consultation. The influence of Participation on this milestone of the N2000 process is clear in the description provided in the EC’s Communication.

Despite the attempt of the EC to set a fair and inclusive consultation procedure, important differences among participants remained with respect to the written comments. Indeed, not all participants requested to present written comments replied to the request, missing a chance to influence the policy processes related to the financing of N2000. This is the case of many non-governmental actors. This could be due to the fact that these stakeholders have less financial resources and fewer personnel to employ in the drafting of a written document than other stakeholders (e.g. MSs and some international ENGOs like WWF and Birdlife). Moreover there is a difference in the frequency with which the various stakeholders were consulted, which shows that Participation does not influence the first wave of concern for financing N2000 in isolation, but in connection with other discourses. The consultation of non-governmental actors took place only during the one-day stakeholders' meeting in Brussels and through the web. These moments of broad consultation generated results which could lack of meaningfulness, if considering the short time frame of the stakeholders' conference and the selectiveness of the internet mass medium⁸. MSs' authorities instead, representing the national pillars of the EU, are the category which was consulted more often and with the more various consultation methods. MSs' representatives participated in the article 8 WG; they answered questionnaires; they participated in Presidential Conferences; they participated to the stakeholders' conference where they mostly provided written and oral comments; and they had the possibility to join the web consultation. This shows the influence of the dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization on the first wave of concern for financing N2000.

The dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation also influenced the WG's report and the groups' composition and functioning. The aim of the WG was to draft a written document which could support the EC's consultation strategy and ultimately the EC's Communication. The EC determined which actors could participate, opting for actors appearing in the Europeanization scheme of Figure 2 (section 2.2.2) and another European governmental body: the CEMR. Moreover, the EC provided technical support for the work of the WG. The WG's estimate of the future costs of N2000 was based on the estimates of the MSs which were consulted by the WG through questionnaires.

The consultation of MSs, targeted stakeholders and the general public revolved around the findings of the article 8 WG's report, and was framed by the EC to provide stakeholders' opinion on two specific issues (financing options and eligibility of measures). For this reason, the consultation of these stakeholders can be considered rather rigid and structured around the top-down relations among European and national actors of the EU. For example, the EC organized the stakeholders' meeting, acted as mediator, and reported on the consultation procedures and its results (EC, 2004c). Moreover, during the first wave of concern for financing N2000 the article 8 WG framed the financing problem, while other stakeholders were called to comment on the problem in a second moment. This situation raises doubts on the meaningfulness of the consultations which followed the publication of the article 8 WG's report, and confirms the doubts on the role of Participation in characterizing the first wave of concern for financing N2000.

Despite the rigidity of the consultation procedure, the possibility of expressing "other comments" offered a space for flexibility in the consultation (EC, 2004c). The opinions expressed by stakeholders among the "other comments" were mostly critiques on important aspects of the funding options for N2000 not included in the article 8 WG's report. An important issue was the competition which could affect the financing of N2000 when the

⁸ For example it is likely that not all sectors of the public interested in or affected by the discussions on the future financing of N2000 used the internet or visited the EC's website on a regular basis.

funding of the network would be integrated in other EU funds. These critiques show the influence of the Neoliberalism discursive component for example on the perspectives of ENGOs, which committed to make clear the need of a proper financing of N2000 in the management phase. Despite the relevance of these critiques, these comments were not strongly addressed in the EC's Communication (EC, 2004), showing the low influence of Neoliberalism on the results of the first wave of concern for financing N2000. Moreover, the fact that criticisms expressed by stakeholders on the integration option for financing N2000 were not communicated by the EC to the EP and PE confirms previous doubts on the actual influence of Participation on the first wave of concern for financing N2000.

During the stakeholders' meeting two coalitions emerged around the two points of the consultation (financing options and eligibility of measures). On the one side MSs' representatives preferred the possibility of using EU existing funds and supported the integration of environmental issues into other sectors. The Sustainable Development discursive component influenced the approach of MSs which hold that environmental interests could and should be integrated into socio-economic issues. On the other side ENGOs and socio-economic interest groups supported the creation of a fund expressly dedicated to N2000, sharing the belief that funds for nature conservation should be granted at the EU level, independently from other funds. Different interests are hidden behind this belief, from the defense of the intrinsic right of nature to be protected endorsed by ENGOs, to the concern for the right of compensation expressed by socio-economic actors affected by N2000. Although these two interests potentially clash in the framework established by N2000 (being the first inspired by eco-centric technocratic beliefs and the second by Neoliberal anthropocentric beliefs), they were joined in the discussions taking place during the first wave of concern for financing N2000 by the dynamics linking Technocracy and Neoliberalism.

The Communication of the EC to the EP and CE presents the conclusions of the Commission to the discussions taking place during the first wave of concern on Financing N2000. However the Communication did not fully mirror the discussions arisen during the consultation of MSs' representatives, targeted stakeholders and general public. For example, in the Communication the influence of Neoliberalism is much stronger than during the consultations. The EC particularly emphasized the idea that (economic) benefits can be derived from the establishment of N2000, also if the Communication did not come to use the concept of "ecosystem services" which is an explicit manifest of Neoliberalism. The idea of the economic benefits derivable from N2000 was influenced by a "weak" interpretation of Neoliberalism, and supported the final choice of the integration option instead of a fund expressly dedicated to N2000. The integration of environmental and socio-economic interests encompassed in the integration option reveals the influence of the dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Sustainable Development on the first wave of concern for financing N2000.

The influence of the dynamics linking Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism on this period of the N2000 process is also evident in the importance of maintaining traditional agricultural activities encompassed in the 2003 CAP reform (see annex 4). The economic benefits of stakeholders for the establishment of N2000 and the EU funds of the integration option should cover, in the idea of the EC, the financial needs of the network. Due to the influence of the dynamics linking Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism on the first wave of concern for financing N2000, socio-economic actors entered the framework established by N2000 and their opinions became relevant for the EC next to the opinions of other important stakeholders traditionally involved at the European level: MSs, scientific institutions and ENGOs.

4.6 THE SECOND WAVE OF CONCERN FOR FINANCING N2000

The last milestone of the N2000 policy process I selected covers the years 2008-2010. I call this period the “second wave of concern for financing N2000” because characterized by the focus of discussions and policy events on the future financing the network. The CE required the EC to review EU expenditures, including the costs for conserving biodiversity. The EC was also required to advise the planning for the EU co-financing system covering the years 2013-2020, task which involved addressing the financing of N2000 (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010b). Important similarities exist between the first and second wave of concern for financing N2000. For example, in both milestones of the N2000 process the EC applied a consultation procedure to assess the opinions of stakeholders on the financing of N2000 finalized at supporting the drafting of a Communication to the EP and CE on the issue.

4.6.1 Processes taking place during the second wave of concern for financing N2000

The core element of this milestone is the 18 months project “The economic and social benefits associated with Natura 2000” (<http://ecologic.eu/3237>), commissioned by the EC-DG Environment in 2008 to IEEP, Ecologic Institute and GHK. The first is an independent institute of policy analysis, the second a non-profit think tank for environmental research, and the third a consultancy company. The project was aimed at I) estimating the costs of managing N2000; II) increasing the awareness on the benefits derivable from the network in order to enhance the acceptance of Natura 2000; and III) creating a methodology to systematically update the costs estimates (IEEP, 2010). The commissioned parties agreed in reaching the aims of the project by relying on the consultation of stakeholders, and accomplished this task by using different consultation methods: questionnaires for MSs, stakeholders’ interviews and a stakeholders’ conference. The next three sections report on the three different consultation methods applied by the EC and its commissioned parties in the project “The economic and social benefits associated with Natura 2000”.

4.6.1.1 Cost questionnaires for the MSs

In order to present an estimate of future costs of managing N2000, the EC and its commissioned parties collected and assessed data from MSs on the up to date costs associated with N2000. In 2008 questionnaires were sent to the EU-27 MSs and returned by June 2010. Two of the 27 MSs (Finland and Romania) did not answer the questionnaires (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010b). The resulting costs’ estimate for the period 2013-2020 stand between 5.5 and 5.8 billion Euros/year, lowering the 6.1 billion Euros/year estimate of 2004 for the period 2007-2013 (IEEP, 2010). One of the reasons why the estimate based on the MSs’ input was lower than in the first wave of concern might be that some MSs carried out the costs’ assessment basing on existing costs rather than future ones, and existing funds rather than desirable ones (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010). There were no objective figures demonstrating the decline of the costs associated with N2000 in the period 2008-2010, but rather an increase was foreseen (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010). The uncertainty related to the 2008 estimates was increased by the different ways the MSs interpreted the questionnaires and the different methods they used to assess costs. Differences in approaching the costs’ estimate were related among other things to the conservation strategy of the MSs- e.g. land purchase VS agreements with landowners (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010). An interesting outcome of the questionnaires was that MSs mentioned different types of costs related to the management of N2000: one-off management costs, recurrent management costs and investments (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010).

4.6.1.2 Consultation of targeted stakeholders through a survey assessment

This section reports on the second consulting method employed by the EC and its commissioned parties: a survey assessment aimed at inquiring the level of appreciation and awareness of the ecosystem services provided by N2000 (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010b). Ecosystem services can be defined as the resources and processes offered by ecosystems and from which humans can derive a benefit (IEEP, 2010). The concept of ecosystem services spread in the international and European nature conservation arenas of the late 2000s (see annex 4), and the N2000 policy processes did not represent an exception. The concept of ecosystem services has been repetitively used in the documents and publications of the first wave of concern for financing N2000 (Kettunen *et al.*, 2009; Gantioler *et al.*, 2010; Gantioler *et al.*, 2010b; IEEP, 2010). This concept can be considered as a social construction, as shown in Box 7.

The survey was addressed to targeted stakeholders: 111 individuals from 23 MSs were interviewed, and included national representatives, scientific experts, and representatives of ENGOs and stakeholders' groups. The survey displayed that the awareness about ecosystem services was widespread among the public, stakeholders and policy makers. However, almost only people professionally involved in nature policy and conservation were aware of the existence of N2000 (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010b). Therefore, just a limited number of interviewees could give a meaningful answer to the survey on the ecosystem services derivable from N2000. The survey revealed that the benefits of N2000 were perceived as relevant at the regional and national levels of implementation, while less relevant at the international level. In general, N2000 was perceived as a burden, and stakeholders knew about its existence mainly for the court cases it generated (EC, 2006b). For example during the survey N2000 has been described as limiting the level of public access to natural sites, as imposing strict regulatory frameworks, and as not providing an adequate compensation for loss of income (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010b).

Box 7: social construction of the concept of "ecosystem services" in the nature conservation arena

Leon Braat (2010, pers. comm.), from his 30 years experience in the science-policy interface, considers the concept of "ecosystem-services" as constructed in the academic nature conservation arena. The denomination of the concept represents "a bridge between environment and economics; [...] between nature conservation and consumption, production and profit". The environmental and economic realms are traditionally perceived as separated, while they are in reality strictly connected. This is the reason why politicians do not manage to take decisions benefiting both realms (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.).

In order to help politicians to "speak two languages" (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.), during the 1990s the discipline of "environmental economics" has been introduced, and the concept of "ecosystem services" built as central pillar of this discipline. Leon Braat participated to the academic processes giving life to this discipline and to the concept of ecosystem services (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.). The aim of this discipline is providing a more realistic method for studying the interlacing between economic and environmental issues. In the same way, the term "ecosystem services" is an innovative way to describe what farmers and foresters did since a very long time, i.e. managing ecological processes and deriving an economic profit from it.

4.6.1.3 Stakeholders' conference on financing N2000

This section reports on the stakeholders' conference on financing Natura 2000 organized by the EC and its commissioned parties in Brussels on the 15th and 16th of July 2010 (IEPP, 2010). This conference represented a crucial occasion in which stakeholders discussed meanings and interpretations, put their interests on the table and tried to defend them. The conference represented representing an important element of similarity between the first and second waves of concern for financing N2000.

The stakeholders' conference had the twofold aim of presenting the latest studies on N2000 costs and benefits and on the importance of investments in the network, and discussing the current "integration option" for financing N2000 and viable alternatives for the future (IEPP, 2010): The conference involved three types of sessions: presentations, panel discussions and Working Round Tables. During the presentations and panel discussions, experts of a certain topic were joined to discuss issues related to that topic in front of an audience. The Working Round Tables involved a limited number of selected stakeholders interested in, affected by or expert of a certain topic to discuss specific issues (IEEP, 2010).

The presentations and panel discussions taking place during the conference are reported below in a chronological order (IEPP, 2010):

- 1) Ladislav Miko, Director of the Nature Unit at DG-Environment, underlined the uniqueness of the N2000 project and the need to ensure adequate financing also for the ecological corridors linking the protected areas. Since funds for N2000 will not be higher in the upcoming period than in the past, he suggested that stakeholders would continue exploring financing possibilities linked to the integration option, and innovative financing methods such as private investments.
- 2) Matt Raymen, representative of GHK, presented the costs' estimate derived from the MSs' questionnaires. He underlined the uncertainties encompassed in this estimate caused by the different assessing methodologies used by MSs, and the lack of complete knowledge of the future conservation measures and costs. These uncertainties made the estimate a "low estimate". Ctibor Kocman from DG Environment replied proposing an estimate of 6 Billion Euros/year, which is nearer to the estimates carried out in the first wave of concern for financing N2000, but still lower. After Raymen's presentation, interest groups, such as the Confederation of the European Forest Owners, required information on the methodology used by MSs to estimate costs. The presentation and discussions focused on the reduction of costs through connection of N2000 sites by means of elements of the green infrastructure (see Box 8).
- 3) A panel discussion was organized on the financial resources needed to implement N2000 and on the methods to improve future costs' estimates. The participants presented experiences, problems and critical thinking related to the assessment of future costs for N2000. Dalia Cebatoriunaite (State Service for Protected Areas of Lithuania) stated that for her country the estimate was based on current management measures and not on future ones. For current measures most of the funds were provided by Structural and Cohesion Funds, and less by LIFE, EAFRD and EFF. Also national funds were provided for N2000, but these competed with funds for national protected areas. Peter Torkler (WWF Germany) underlined the competition for funding affecting N2000 as a consequence of the integration option. Moreover, EU funds were nationally distributed without a clear distinction between N2000 sites and other protected areas, establishing a new type of competition between European and national nature conservation systems. According to Torkler, this situation needed a better coding of EU funds nationally allocated. Ludo Holsbeek (Department for Environment Nature and Energy of the Belgian Flanders), focused on the importance of stakeholders' involvement and on the relevance of the green infrastructure for the success of N2000 (see Box 8). He reasserted the need of a fund dedicated to N2000 to avoid the problems of funding competition. Rafael Hidalgo (Ministry of the Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs in Spain) described the experience of a decentralized country with N2000 which could benefit from a better connection among protected areas. The panel discussion then moved to the difficulties in accessing EU funds for N2000. Only in Belgium the administrative system did not represent a problem for the accession of the right funds by the right authorities. In general, the possibility of small ENGOs to access funds appeared very low. The need was

expressed for more training of national and local authorities to access EU funds. Moreover, attention was put on the lack of connectivity among protected areas, which made of N2000 a patchwork rather than a network.

- 4) Patrick ten Brink (IEEP) in his presentation reflected over the benefits derivable from N2000, distinguishing between “real money” benefits (e.g. tourism and preservation of genetic resources), “potential to be real money” benefits (e.g. carbon storage which can become a source of money when a market is established on this good) and “welfare” benefits (e.g. recreation, cultural identity, landscape and amenity values). Brendan Dunford (HNV Services), Orieta Hulea (WWF Romania) and Anne Duijn (CREDOC) introduced three examples of socio-economic benefits derivable from N2000 sites in three different MSs.
- 5) David Baldock (IEEP) chaired a session including several presentations by EC’s representatives from different DGs traditionally responsible for the EU funds currently composing the integration option for financing N2000. These actors explored the possibilities of funding N2000 under these funds. Krzysztof Sulima (DG Agriculture) explained that N2000 within the CAP was mostly financed by Pillar 2 (dedicated to Rural Development Regulation), which attracted less EU funds than Pillar 1 (dedicated to Market Support Measures and Direct Subsidies to EU producers). Agnes Kelemen (DG Regional Policy) underlined that focusing on the benefits of ecosystem services could help the funding of N2000 under the Structural Funds, which link the financing of the network to the sustainable socio-economic development of European regions. The future funds made available by DG Regional Policy to N2000 will be less conspicuous than current ones, since future EU priorities will not include biodiversity conservation. Leitica Martinez Aguilar (DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries) reported that funding of N2000 within the EEF was only linked to fishing activities, while it should have also been linked to the protection of the marine environment. Joaquin Capitao (LIFE unit of DG Environment) reported that many MSs did not use the LIFE instrument as they could have, possibly because of national funds available for N2000 but most likely because of a missing match between funds and measures which needed to be funded. The presentations were followed by discussions on the possibility for MSs to request financing for capacity building finalized at the accession of EU funds for N2000. Moreover the discussions made clear the need of a better coding (“earmarking”) of funds allocated to N2000, both at the European and national levels.
- 6) Marianne Kettunen (IEPP) introduced innovative financing strategies for N2000 which could also help enhancing the awareness for the need of conserving biodiversity and the acceptance of the network among local actors. As examples of these innovative strategies she mentioned: I) earmarking of funds for N2000; II) green taxes related to N2000; III) eco-labeling of products from N2000 sites. Her introductory presentation was followed by presentations of actors reporting examples of innovative financing strategies. Pedro Clemente (CENSE) reported on the fiscal transfer to Portuguese regions based on the number of N2000 sites present in the regions, which represented a sort of compensation. Zenon Tederko and Mark Day (Birdlife) discussed the potential of small and medium sizes enterprises in financing N2000 for example through investments in biomass extraction, certification of products and engineering projects.

Box 8: the green infrastructure and Natura 2000

The “green infrastructure” is described as the network of natural systems around and within urbanized areas which provide multiple services and benefits for humans and the environment. It includes trees, parks, traditional agricultural elements, rivers, wetlands, coastal elements and elements providing important services for humans. Among these services, protection against flooding, linkage of natural areas, provision of recreational spaces, mitigation of the effects of climate change and improvement of the quality of the environment are important examples (IEEP, 2010b). The concept of green infrastructure is strongly linked to the one of ecosystem services (EC, 2010). Both concepts enter the nature conservation arena in the last twenty years with great potentialities for the future (EC, 2010; Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.). In the European nature conservation arena the green infrastructure has recently been linked to N2000 (IEEP, 2010; Gantioler *et al.*, 2010). The green infrastructure can provide a connection among N2000 sites, and enhance the role of ecological corridors among core areas of ecological networks (EC, 2010) not emphasized until latest phases of the N2000 policy process (see section 4.2).

In the perspective of the green infrastructure, ecological corridors among N2000 sites do not have the ambiguous and weak role they had in article 10 of the HD, and they are not anymore intended only as a way to ensure the genetic exchange among populations. Corridors assume the ideological function of integrating nature conservation and traditional socio-economic activities, function already recognized in the 1998 and 2003 CAP reforms (see annex 4). Moreover the corridors take the function of contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, and assuring resilience in ecosystems (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.). The emphasis put on ecological corridors during the latest stages of the N2000 policy process also influenced the idea, stressed during the second wave of concern for financing N2000, that ecological corridors among N2000 sites can reduce the overall costs of the network (IEEP, 2010; Gantioler *et al.*, 2010; Gantioler *et al.*, 2010b). According to Jones-Walters (2010, pers. comm.), this is a politically and economically driven idea with little ecological foundations, but aimed at stimulating socio-economic sectors to reduce costs in a period of economic crisis.

The stakeholders’ conference on financing N2000 also included the interactive consultation of actors in Working Round Tables (WRTs). The WRT is a consultation method modeled on the format of the AmericaSpeaks/Global Voices’ “21st Century Town Meetings ©”. This format has been adapted to the N2000 case (IEEP, 2010). The method is described by IEEP (2010, p. 12): “small groups of a maximum of ten people discuss issues independently of the other groups [...]. A facilitator gathers the ideas generated in the round-table discussion and sends them to a ‘theme team’.” The discussions in the WRTs followed a strict pre-defined order of topics: each topic was discussed for 30 minutes, and for each topic a facilitator summarized the main issues and ranked three issues considered most relevant by participants. The organizers ensured that each WRT represented a mix of “MSs’ representatives, stakeholders and EC services” IEEP (2010, p.12).

A background document was distributed beforehand to the participants to help initiate discussions during the WRTs (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010). The document informed stakeholders on the interim results of the project “The economic and social benefits associated with Natura 2000” (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010). For example, it provided information on the results of the MSs’ questionnaires of 2008, but also on the difficulties encountered by MSs in answering the questions. The document also provided information on the benefits of investing in N2000, and on the role of ecosystem and cultural services derivable from the network. The document denounced a lack of “quantitative/monetary and well documented information on the socio-economic benefits associated with protected areas [...] in Europe” (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010 p. 8) and the “under-appreciation of the value of N2000 in the public” (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010 p. 8). This trend should be reversed into a higher appreciation of the value of nature, for example through development of instruments like the “Natura 2000 benefits valuation toolkit” (Kettunen *et al.*, 2009) which shows the benefits derivable from the network (Gantioler *et al.*,

2010). Figure 9 represents the perceived significance of benefits derivable from the network, which changes among the international, national and local levels of N2000 implementation.

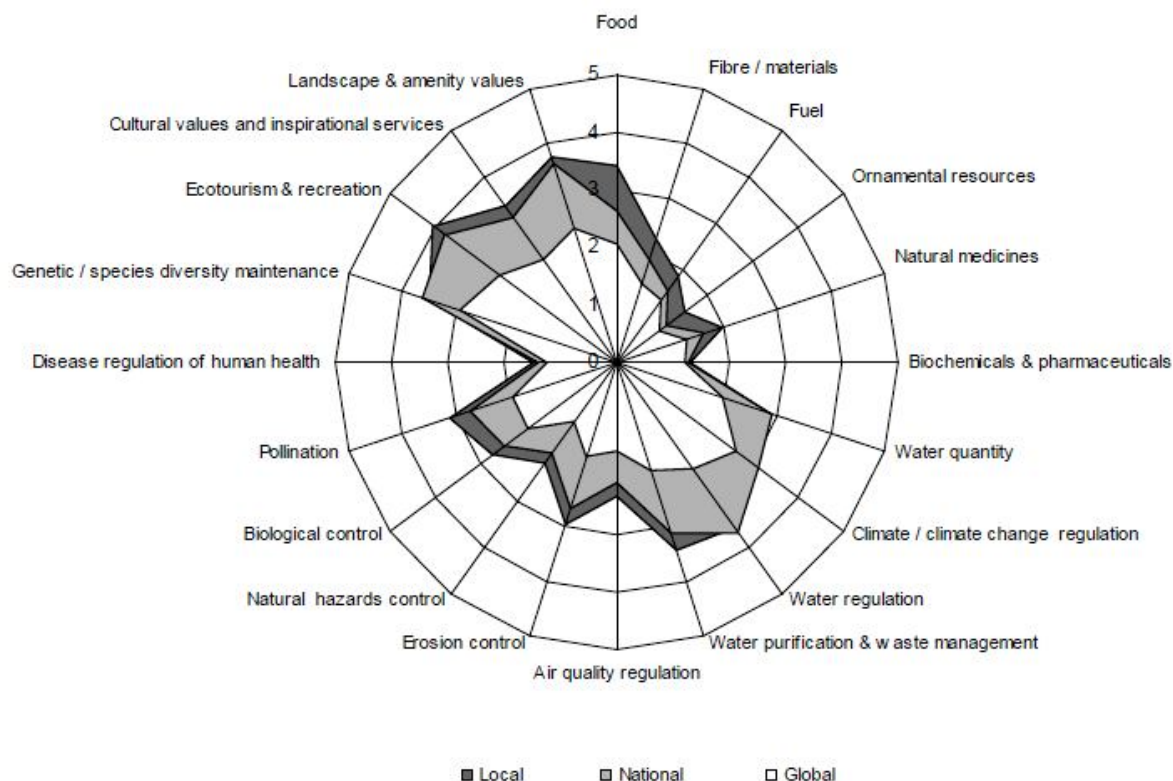


Figure 9: estimated/perceived relevance of Natura 2000 in providing different ecosystem services at the local, national and global levels. The relevance is expressed on a scale of 1 to 5. Source: Gantioler *et al.*, 2010 p. 9

The background paper for the WRTs described innovative funding sources for N2000 as alternative financing methods to the “integration option”. Examples are investments in a N2000 site, which could be justified by the tourism, flood protection or air pollution control added values brought by the establishment of the protected site. Another example is the use of Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) to support managers of N2000. These examples show that during the second wave of concern for financing N2000, actors with the economic potential of investing in N2000 entered the framework established by the network with their interests and values.

Two sessions of WRTs took place during the stakeholders’ conference on financing Natura 2000. Below I report information on these two sessions:

- 1) The first session focused on current financing opportunities for N2000 and included 10 WRTs. During the WRTs, LIFE was described as a valid instrument to start up management activities. The EFF was considered not enough exploited for the financing of N2000, and the EAFRD lacked of funds’ earmarking which did not allow saying how much money has been spent for the network. The discussions underlined the lack of stakeholders’ capacity in accessing funds and that many of the management measures for N2000 were only partially covered by EU funds. The efficiency of the integration option could be improved through capacity building in accessing funds for MSs and ENGOS, and through the creation of a European operational program for N2000 combined with national operational programs (IEEP, 2010).

2) The second session of WRTs focused on future financing options. The main conclusions regarded the need to finance the linkages among protected areas to ensure connectivity, and the need of a dedicated fund for N2000 or an enhanced LIFE fund. The possibility of an operational program for N2000 was embraced by the actors participating to the WRTs, but only if it would impose MSs legal obligations to respect the program. This session of WRTs presented the integration option as the most viable and likely possibility for the future financing of N2000, especially if supported by the economical exploitation of ecosystem services. Innovative financing options for N2000 were mentioned during the WRTs and included fiscal credits, payments for ecosystem services, fees and carbon credits (IEEP, 2010).

4.6.2 Analysis of the processes taking place during the second wave of concern for financing N2000: influence of the discursive components and their dynamics

The influence of Participation on the project “The economic and social benefits associated with Natura 2000” is very strong. The EC and its commissioned parties agreed to carry out the project with the support of a consultation exercise employing traditional and innovative consultation methods to assess the opinions of various stakeholders on the future financing of N2000. The use of the questionnaires, the interviews and the stakeholders’ conference shows the aim of the EC to reach a meaningful insight in stakeholders’ opinions. The opinions collected will be used by the EC to draft a Communication for the EP and the CE on the costs of N2000 for the years 2013-2020, which will be published in the first half of 2011 (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010). The focus on the consultation of various stakeholders represents a similarity between the first and second wave of concern for financing N2000, but the second wave of concern encompasses a more meaningful form of Participation than the first wave. For example during the second wave the consultations were not structured around pre-defined points, but the stakeholders had more leeway to put forward the issues interesting them the most. Face to face interviews were carried out to assess the opinions of a wide variety of targeted stakeholders (see section 4.6.1.2), which allowed the EC and its commissioned parties to get a deep insight in the perspectives of the interviewees. Moreover, the stakeholders’ conference on financing N2000 organized in 2010 lasted two days, instead of the one day of the stakeholders’ conference of 2003, and gave wide space to critical thinking on the current integration option for the financing of N2000. During the conference, the organizers used the innovative consultation method of the WRTs, which show that the EC refined its consultation method since the first wave of concern for financing N2000.

The EC commissioned the project “The economic and social benefits associated with Natura 2000” to three different non-governmental actors respectively dealing with diverse issues: policy, environmental protection, and consultancy. The choice of the commissioned parties shows the attempt of the EC to avoid a top-down technocratic imprint in the project and allow a variety of perspectives to guide and assess the consultation of stakeholders. The lower influence of Technocracy on this period of the N2000 process is clear in the fact that for the first time the network’s implementation and financing was justified by the services that N2000 can provide, and not by the intrinsic value of the biodiversity it preserves (Haslett, 2010).

Also Europeanization became less influential during the second wave of concern for financing N2000 than in previous periods of the N2000 process. The emphasis on the provision of ecosystem services as a justification of private investments in N2000 can be perceived as a further withdrawal of the EU from the responsibility of conserving biodiversity. This responsibility, as well as the costs and benefits of N2000, are left to the national and local

governments and actors which deal with N2000 in everyday practices. The participation of stakeholders' to the policy process was not bounded to their European representation, but different types of actors, also those who were not organized at the EU level, were consulted during this period of the N2000 process. However, the influence of Europeanization is still evident on the fact that MSs's authorities, representing the national pillars of the EU, were the actors consulted more often (through questionnaires, interviews and participation in the stakeholders' conference). This shows the influence of the dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization on the second wave of concern for financing N2000. Just like in the first wave of concern for financing N2000, however, the consultation of MSs through questionnaires raised critiques related to the lack of harmony in the use of the questionnaires by the different national governments (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010). This generated a costs' estimate strongly affected by uncertainties and not fully reliable (IEEP, 2010). The Common Identity factor of Europeanization does not achieve in influencing this period of the N2000 process.

The focus on the concept of ecosystem services shows the influence of Neoliberalism on this period of the N2000 process. The new neoliberal perspective on the network's financing holds that the "benefits of conservation are often greater than the investment needed" (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010b p.10). Despite this idea was not proved in quantitative terms (Stuffman, 2010 pers. comm.), it was put forward by the EC and its commissioners during the first wave of concern for financing N2000. The benefits provided by N2000 justified private investments in the network, allowing the entrance of economic actors in the framework established by N2000. Despite the lower influence of Technocracy on this period of the N2000 process, the concept of ecosystem services gave authority to scientific experts and economists in the framework established by N2000, since the services provided by ecosystems are measured in quantitative ecological and economic terms. The concept of ecosystem services appears therefore as influenced by the dynamic linking Neoliberalism and Technocracy. Moreover, the concept of ecosystem services which has been constructed to link ecologic and economic interests (see Box 7) is influenced by the Sustainable Development discourse. In the use of this concept it is possible to denote the effects of other dynamics, the ones connecting Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism. These dynamics substituted the balance between environmental, societal and economic aspects encompassed in Sustainable Development with a focus on only two of these aspects: environment and economy. An interesting outcome of the first wave of concern for financing N2000 is that stakeholders were aware of the ecosystem services derivable from nature, but not of the existence of N2000 on the European territory (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010b). This shows that Neoliberalism managed to influence this period of the N2000 process spreading the concept of ecosystem services in the European nature conservation arena, while Europeanization failed in connecting ecosystem services and N2000.

The strong influence of Neoliberalism on this period of the N2000 process is also shown by the repetitive use of concepts such as "costs estimate", "trends", "fund coverage", "drivers of costs", "benefits", and "beneficiaries", which refer to the economic and financial aspects of N2000 implementation. During the consultations, stakeholders put particular attention on the alternative financial instruments for N2000 network, such as investments, eco-labeling, certification and green taxes, which were presented as a valid alternative to the integration option. Another example of the influence of Neoliberalism is the idea that reduction of management costs for N2000 can be obtained through the establishment of ecological corridors. Despite this idea was not ecologically proved (see Box 8), ecological corridors became essential elements of the N2000 discursive strategy in the years 2008-2010. Ecological corridors were addressed in the documents of the second wave of concern for

financing N2000 as the portion of ecological network which provides the most ecosystem services. Because ecological corridors are mostly located in anthropic areas, a focus on these elements of the ecological network gives further importance to the dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Sustainable Development: the ecological corridors are able to join environmental and economic interest on the European territory, and contribute to the success of N2000.

The outcomes of the stakeholders' conference on financing N2000 organized in 2010, and especially of the WRTs, reported the critiques to the current "integration option" for financing N2000, such as the failures of the EEF and EAFRD in financially supporting the network, and the lack of actors' capacity in accessing EU funds. These financial failures of the N2000 project are one of the causes of aversion of stakeholders toward N2000. During the WRTs, the finger is pointed toward the European but also the national level of N2000 implementation. The participants to the WRTs often referred to the fact that it was the phase of transposition of the HD into national legislation that made the mode of the national implementation of N2000. It was the approach of MSs' authorities that defined the rigidity with which N2000 was implemented and the system through which it is financed, attributing technocratic, participatory or neoliberal features to N2000. This fact was confirmed by interviews with EC representatives and HD's experts I carried out during the thesis. interpretation which gives a (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.; Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.; Arroyo Schnell, pers. comm. 2010).

4.7 CONCLUSIONS

The second research question inquires the influence of the discursive components and their dynamics on the policy processes related to the N2000 discursive strategy during the history of the network. The analysis of the policy processes taking place at the European level in the milestones of the history of N2000 listed in section 4.1 shows interesting results. The first result is that the influence of discourses on the history of N2000 was determinant in shaping policy processes, actors' interests and strategies during these processes, and related outcomes. The various discourses I included as discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy influenced the selected milestones with different strengths, which changed for each component along the timeline of the N2000 policy process. Moreover, the discursive components did not influence the policy processes in isolation, but in combination with other discursive components, with which they linked in specific dynamics. Also the dynamics linking the discursive components changed along the timeline of the N2000 policy process. Despite these variations in discursive components' strength and dynamics, I noticed that the influence of discourses on the N2000 process followed interesting patterns and trends along the history of the network. For example, it is interesting to notice that the dynamics which link discursive components and influence the N2000 discursive strategy become always more complex and entangled during the history of N2000.

The drafting of the HD, covering the years 1989-1992, was mainly influenced by the dynamics linking Technocracy and Europeanization. Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism did not meaningfully influence policy events. The dynamics dominating the first milestone also dominated the N2000 sites' selection during the biogeographical seminars. This second milestone however was also partly influenced by Participation, which linked with Europeanization and influenced the selection of participants to the seminars. Participation remained a relevant discourse in the third milestone, the conference of Bath, during which it linked to Europeanization and Sustainable Development in dominant dynamics. The dominant influence of the dynamics linking Participation, Europeanization and

Sustainable Development substituted the hegemony of the dynamics linking Technocracy and Europeanization. The conference of Bath appears as influenced by another discursive component, which was not dominant before but had a role in shaping actors' positions and strategies: Neoliberalism. This discourse linked to Sustainable Development in dynamics which allowed economic interests and actors having a role in the framework established by the N2000 discursive strategy. The last two milestones are influenced by a more complex framework of discursive components. The first wave of concern for financing N2000 is influenced, just like the previous milestone, by Participation, which linked in this milestone to Europeanization in dominant dynamics. The dynamic linking Europeanization, Participation and Sustainable Development and dominating the third milestone dropped the last component for concentrating on the first two. Sustainable Development though remained a relevant discourse in this milestone and linked to Neoliberalism in another dominant dynamic influencing the first wave of concern for financing N2000. These dynamics appeared also in the previous milestone, but only here became dominant. Neoliberalism influenced the first wave of concern for financing N2000 also through other dynamics linking this discourse to Technocracy. The dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Technocracy were not yet dominant in this phase. The second wave of concern for financing N2000 was influenced by the same dynamics linking discursive components which influenced the first wave of concern for financing N2000. However, these dynamics had a different dominance on policy events. The dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation lost their dominance in influencing the second wave of concern for financing N2000. The importance of Participation managed to keep the dynamics relevant, but Europeanization almost completely lost its role. Neoliberalism became a dominant discourse in influencing this milestone, and dominant became the dynamics linking this discourse to Sustainable Development on the one side, and Technocracy on the other side.

Here I report Table 6 where I summarize the influent discursive components for each milestone of the N2000 policy process, their dynamics and the dominance of these dynamics.

DRAFTING OF THE HD	BIOGEOGRAPHICAL SEMINARS	CONFERENCE OF BATH	FIRST WAVE OF CONCERN FOR FINANCING N2000	SECOND WAVE OF CONCERN FOR FINANCING N2000
E+T	E+T P+E	P+E+SD N+SD	P+E N+SD N+T	P+E N+SD N+T

Table 6: influence of the discursive components' dynamics on the milestones of the N2000 policy process. The table shows the discourses which were influent on the various milestones of the N2000 processes reporting them with the initial letter of their denomination. The symbol + indicates the development of dynamics linking discursive components, while the red font refers to the dominance of the dynamics influencing the milestones.

Table 6 shows the patterns and trends of the discursive components dynamics in influencing the N2000 discursive strategy. The dynamics between Technocracy and Europeanization dominated during the framing of the biodiversity loss problem in the drafting of the HD, remained dominant during the biogeographical seminars and then lost their hegemonic position. Europeanization remained influent during the whole N2000 process linking to other discursive components. This can be explained with the fact that N2000 is a project of the EU, based on an EU directive which regulated its implementation on the EU territory. Technocracy instead lost its influencing role during the Conference of Bath, and re-gained it only during the first wave of concern for financing N2000. The loss of dominance of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy was mainly due to the role of other discursive components

which started to influence the N2000 discursive strategy during the biogeographical seminars and the conference of Bath, and became dominant in the following milestones. This is the case of Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism, which developed complex relevant and dominant dynamics and made the N2000 process extremely complicated especially after the N2000 sites' selection and the start of the management phase.

Figure 10 shows the dynamics of the discursive components for each selected milestone on a timeline. The biogeographical seminars as milestone cannot be easily represented on the timeline since they took place continuously since 2001 until 2009. However, as showed in section 2.5.2.2, for the sake of the thesis I consider this milestone as terminated in the early 2000s, when the frequency of the seminars was drastically reduced. For this reason I use a dotted line to delimit this milestone.

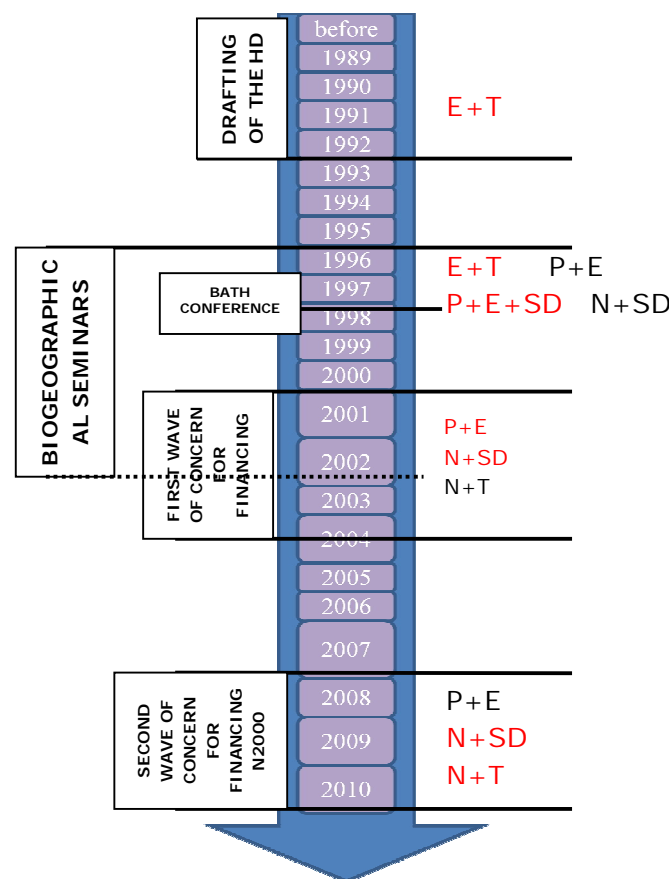


Figure 10: timeline reporting the discursive components' dynamics influencing the milestones of the N2000 process. The timeline shows on the left the milestones selected for the study of the N2000 policy process, and on the right the dynamics of the discursive components influencing each milestone. The milestones of the biogeographical seminars and conference of Bath overlap on the timeline. For this reason the figure shows in the first line the dynamics influencing the biogeographical seminars, and in the second line the dynamics influencing the conference of Bath.

If comparing figure 10 with the timeline included in annex 4 it is possible to notice that the dynamics of the discursive components, influencing the N2000 discursive strategy in the various phases of the N2000 policy process, follow the dynamics of discourses in the same phases of the international and European nature conservation arenas. An example is the role of Neoliberalism and the use of the concept of ecosystem services which represents a

manifest of this discourse. The concept entered the international nature conservation arena in 2005 with the publication of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Reports. After this year, the concept of ecosystem services has been among the protagonists of the most important policy processes taking place at the international and European levels. For example, the role of the ecosystem services was strong during the Postdam Initiative of 2007 and the Athens Conference on Biodiversity Protection of 2009 (see annex 4). In the same years, the concept entered the framework established by N2000 during the second wave of concern for financing the network. As a consequence of the influent role of Neoliberalism on the framework established by N2000 in the latest years of the process, it is expected that ecosystem services will take an even greater role in the future of the N2000 discursive strategy, just as economic actors able to invest in these services and in the benefits derivable from the network (Haslett *et al.*, 2010).

CHAPTER 5

Discursive approach to (dis)empowerment of actors in the framework established by Natura 2000

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The third research question of the thesis deals with actors' (dis)empowerment in the framework established by N2000, and reads as follows:

Which actors are (dis)empowered within the framework established by N2000, and how is their level of (dis)empowerment influenced by the dynamics of the discursive components?

This chapter focuses on the discursive dimension of actors' (dis)empowerment. It tackles this topic by examining how the level of (dis)empowerment of various categories of actors is determined by the influence of the dynamics linking discursive components. Chapter 4 showed that the relevance of these dynamics in the N2000 discursive strategy changes during the history of N2000. For this reason this chapter studies the discursive dimension of actors' disempowerment in relation to three phases identified in the history of N2000. These three phases are:

1. The drafting of the HD. This is the problem definition phase of the N2000 discursive strategy, covering the years 1989-1992.
2. The sites' selection phase. This phase starts in 1996 with the first biogeographical seminar, and continues for a big part of the N2000 process with similar structure. For the purpose of this thesis, I consider this phase as terminated in the early 2000s, when the attention in the N2000 policy process starts to be more strongly focused on the sites' designation and management than on the sites' selection.
3. The designation and management phase. This phase officially starts in 1998 according to the HD. However, it is not until 2001 that the first list of N2000 sites has been approved at the EU level and the actual designation and management phase can start.

I classified the actors involved in the N2000 process in categories, in order to study the discursive dimension of the (dis)empowerment of these actors in a systematic way and presents clear results. Below I report the categories of actors I use in this chapter of the thesis, and which I label "discursive categories of actors"⁹ (see section 2.5.3.1):

- I) EC-DG Environment
- II) MSs
- III) regional and local administrations
- IV) ENGOS
- V) scientific institutions and experts
- VI) landowners, farmers, foresters, hunters and fishermen
- VII) tourism sector
- VIII) business and industry sectors
- IX) port operators¹⁰

These categories are all involved in the N2000 policy process, in different extents according to the specific phase of the process. Moreover, the different categories of actors hold different types of responsibilities in the implementation of N2000, which interlace with different proportions during the phases of the N2000 policy process. The holding of responsibilities is one of the most important criteria of actors' empowerment, since responsibility often means

⁹ It is important to underline that these categories of actors are constructed for the sole purpose of the analysis carried out during this thesis. In the practice of N2000 these categories are blurred. For example the ENGOS in some MSs are also landowners of N2000 sites.

¹⁰ In this chapter categories VI to IX are sometimes referred to as "N2000 users" (ELO, 2006), because their activities are carried out in or around N2000 sites, of which they become intensive users

also power to take decisions over issues directly concerning actors' interests (Tranchant, 2007). The different types of responsibilities hold by the discursive categories of actors in the implementation of N2000 are:

- Vertically structured and legal responsibilities in putting the N2000 discursive strategy into practice, and monitoring the implementation of the network. These responsibilities are imposed by the HD and are in part hold in by the EC (who selects the SCIs, and monitors the progresses of the network) and in part transferred to MSs (who transpose the HD, identify the N2000 sites, manage the network, and produce reports for the EC on the progresses of N2000). These correspond to discursive categories I) and IV). MSs often delegate part of these responsibilities to regional and local administrations, corresponding to discursive category III).
- Not formalized management responsibilities hold by local stakeholders and "N2000 users" whose activities fall in or around N2000 sites, or who own these areas. These correspond to discursive categories from VI to IX. Some of these stakeholders are also addressed at the European level for their contribution in the management of the natural environment (EC, 2005). The fulfillment of their responsibilities is considered essential for the success of the N2000 project (EC, 2005).
- Consultative, informative and evaluative responsibilities hold by ENGOs and scientific institutions and experts, corresponding to discursive categories IV and V. These categories are mostly not practically affected by the implementation of N2000 in the field¹¹. For example, they are mostly required to: monitor and evaluate N2000; provide and disseminate information on the network and its implementation; provide ecological and social data necessary for the network's realization.

However, as shown in sections 2.1.3 and 2.5.3.1, it is not only the responsibility that actors have in implementing N2000 (and the power that comes with this responsibility) that determines actors' empowerment. Other criteria are reported in the institutional literature on N2000, which are useful to determine actors' empowerment (see section 2.5.3.1). This chapter of the thesis deals with the criteria of (dis)empowerment through a discursive approach, i.e. determining how the dynamics of the N2000 discursive strategy affect the elements which are usually considered as depending on the structure of institutions and policy-making. This thesis considers factors such as involvement, availability of resources, accessibility of information and capacity building defined as enabling conditions of empowerment (Fung and Wright, 2003) to be influenced by the discursive components dynamics rather than simply by institutions. In the same way, factors such as lack of information, biased selection of the involved actors and the imposition of external values and perspectives, defined as causes of disempowerment (Ribot *et al.*, 2006), are considered in this thesis as related to the influence of particular dynamics linking discursive components rather than simply to failure of institutional structures in society.

5.2 (DIS)EMPOWERMENT OF ACTORS IN N2000: GENERAL ANALYSIS

When studying the N2000 discursive strategy from a general perspective over (dis)empowerment of actors, though the application of the criteria for analysis exposed in section 2.5.3.1, I can identify some features of the strategy which result in actors' empowerment as well as features which result in actors' disempowerment. The elements of

¹¹ As explained in the previous note, in some MSs, such as the Netherlands, ENGOs are also owners of N2000 sites, and for these categories of actors apply the considerations made for category VI in this chapter of the report

the N2000 discursive strategy which result in an empowered condition of the actors involved are the following:

- MSs hold discretionary freedom on how to carry out their responsibility tasks in the development of N2000, provided that their nature conservation responsibilities are fulfilled. This is true especially for the transposition of the HD into national legislations, carried out in the stage of the N2000 process which I call sites' selection phase (see section 5.1). The transposition was carried out within rules, principles and values proper of the national policy contexts, and defined the mode in which the N2000 discursive strategy has been implemented at the national level (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm; Braat, 2010 pers. comm.; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.; Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). The discretionary freedom empowers MSs to take and implement decisions, and adapt the implementation of N2000 to national, regional and local characteristics. This last element also potentially empowers local governments and non-governmental actors, according to the extent to which knowledge, views and values of these actors have been included in the national policy paradigm of N2000 implementation.
- During the N2000 process the EC produced numerous documents, communications and guidance manuals focused on the correct interpretation of the HD's requirements and on N2000 implementation. The publication of these documents was particularly intense since the 2000s. These documents were targeted to various governmental and non-governmental actors involved in or affected by the implementation of N2000 at the European, national and local levels. The documents included the information which the actors needed to implement N2000 in respect of the requirements of the HD and the official image of N2000. The interpretive and guidance documents empowered the EC to affirm its own interpretation of the HD over other alternative interpretations which did not fit the official image of N2000. The actors who were target of these documents were empowered insofar as informed about the features of the responsibilities they held in the implementation of N2000.
- The EC developed consultation strategies to acknowledge opinions and perspectives of the actors involved in and affected by N2000, especially in the N2000 designation and management phase and in the period immediately preceding this phase. These stakeholders entered the framework established by N2000 with their knowledge and perspectives, and saw their level of empowerment increasing.
- During the N2000 process the EC refined its consultation methods on important issues related to the implementation of the network (e.g. financing). This can be seen as an attempt to develop an always more inclusive policy process, with the resulting empowerment of the actors that joined the discussions related to N2000.
- Non-governmental actors had the possibility to influence the European political process related to N2000 through non-conventional political channels, which diverged from the traditional top-down relations between EC, national governments and regional or local governments. These opportunities, presented to specific categories of actors in different phases of the N2000 process, contributed to actors' empowerment. However these possibilities were not presented with the same extent to all categories of actors.

The elements of the N2000 discursive strategy which instead result in the disempowerment of actors are the following:

- MSs are legally responsible in front of the EU with respect to the national conservation performance. This allowed the EC starting legal procedures to denounce the conservation failures of MSs. For the MSs, this meant that they could have incurred in legal problems if they did not fulfill their responsibilities in implementing N2000. These elements limited the freedom of MSs contributing to their disempowerment. Moreover, the official image of N2000 provided by the EC in the documents and manuals produced on the network was

the term of reference for the lawsuits. This meant for MSs that the national interpretations of the HD had to conform to the European interpretation in order to be considered legally satisfying. This element represented an imposition of European values and perspectives over the national ones, which disempowered MSs. Indirectly, also regional and local governments and non-state actors involved in N2000 were disempowered by this factor, since their perspectives (even when incorporated by the national transpositions) had to conform to the European paradigm.

- The HD assigned responsibilities of implementing the N2000 discursive strategy to governmental and non-governmental actors, without the creation of a fund expressly dedicated to N2000 which could support the responsible actors. This element contributed to the disempowerment of all the categories of actors which are responsible for the implementation of N2000.
- Some categories of actors were excluded from various stages of the N2000 process, especially during the HD's drafting and the sites' selection phase. This exclusion contributed to the disempowerment of these actors. The EC slowly along the years recognized the need to involve all the discursive categories of stakeholders which I use in my thesis, whose empowerment increased in the last phases of the N2000 process. However some stakeholders, excluded from the list of discursive categories, remain under-represented and disempowered in the framework established by N2000.

The combination of empowering and disempowering elements change for the various actors along the timeline of N2000 implementation, as already hinted in the list above. Here below I report Table 7 presenting an overview of the actors' (dis)empowerment in the three phases of the N2000 policy process.

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VII	IX
HD'S DRAFTING	1-Organization of consultations of other categories 2-Drafting of HD's final version	Formal consultation	Indirect involvement through consultation of cat. I	Formal consultation	Formal consultation	Indirect involvement through consultation of EC Directorates			
			Partial exclusion			Partial exclusion	Exclusion	Exclusion	Exclusion
SITES' SELECTION PHASE	1- Delegation of selection responsibility to MSs 2-Organization of the policy process of sites' review 3-Final word on the national lists of pSCIs 4-Lawsuits against MSs	1-Responsibility of selecting the pSCIs (sometimes delegated to cat. III) 2-Discretionary Freedom 3-Possibility to informally contact EC	Responsibility of selecting the pSCIs	1-Involvement in biogeographical seminars since the start 2-Scientific authority during the seminars 3-Presentation of Shadow Lists of pSCIs 4-Challenging national approaches to sites' selection	1-Technical analysis of pSCIs on behalf of the EC 2-Involvement in Biogeographical seminars	Involvement in biogeographical seminars since 2002			
		Imposition of EC perspective through lawsuits	1-Lack of information and training on N2000 2-Exclusion from biogeographical seminars			1. No scientific authority during the seminars biogeographical 2. Role of silent participants in the seminars	Exclusion	Exclusion	Exclusion

DESIGNATION AND MANAGEMENT PHASE	1-Delegation of designation and management responsibility to MSs 2-Monitoring responsibility 3-Publication of guidance and interpretive manuals on HD and N2000 4- Informal communications with MSs 5-Establishment of a political alliance with cat. IV 6-Lawsuits against MSs 7-Organization of WGs and workshops	1-Designation responsibilities 2-Management responsibilities (sometimes delegated to cat. III) 3-Participation in WGs 4-Participation in workshops	1-Formal management responsibility 2-Participation in policy processes, negotiations and consultation 3-Involved in workshops	1-Shared views with the EC- DG environment 2-Establishment of a political alliance with cat. I 3-Evaluation responsibility of N2000 progresses 4-Participation in policy processes, negotiations and consultations 5-Provision of financial resources by the EC through LIFE 6-Provision of information and data to cat. I 7-Organization of workshops 8-Participation in WGs 9-Participation in workshops	1-Evaluation responsibility of N2000 progresses 2-Participation in policy processes, negotiations and consultations 3-Organization of workshop 4-Involvement in WGs 5-Involvement in workshops	1- Informal management responsibility 2-Participation in policy processes and negotiations 3-Organization of workshops 4-Participation in WGs 5-Participation in workshops	1- Informal management responsibility 2-Participation in policy processes and negotiations 3-Economic potential of investing in N2000 4-Target of manuals published by the EC 5-Participation in workshops 6-Inclusion of values and perspectives in N2000 during the last few years	1- Informal management responsibility 2-Participation in policy processes and negotiations 3-Economic potential of investing in N2000 4-Target of manuals published by the EC 5-Participation in workshops 6-Inclusion of values and perspectives in N2000 during the last few years	1- Informal management responsibility 2-Participation in policy processes and negotiations 3-Economic potential of investing in N2000 4-Target of manuals published by the EC 5-Participation in workshops 6-Inclusion of values and perspectives in N2000 during the last few years
	Lack of EU funds dedicated to N2000	1-No monitoring responsibility 2-Lack of EU funds dedicated to N2000 3-Imposition of EC interpretation of HD	1-Lack of information and training on N2000 2-Lack of EU funds dedicated to N2000 3-Exclusion from WGs 4-Imposition of EC interpretation of HD	Lack of EU funds dedicated to N2000	1-Reduced focus of N2000 policy processes on strictly scientific issues 2-Substitution of intrinsic value of nature with the economic value of nature in the framework of N2000	1-Lack of EU funds dedicated to N2000 2-Negatively perceived livelihood changes 3-Exclusion of values and perspective from N2000 framework (especially hunters) 4-Imposition of EC's interpretation of HD	1-Lack of EU funds dedicated to N2000 2-Exclusion from WGs 3-Negatively perceived livelihood changes 4-Imposition of EC's interpretation of HD	1-Lack of EU funds dedicated to N2000 2-Excluded from WGs 3-Negatively perceived livelihood changes 4-Imposition of EC's interpretation of HD	1-Lack of EU funds dedicated to N2000 2-Negatively perceived livelihood changes 3-Changed livelihood in a way perceived as negative 4-Imposition of EC's interpretation of HD

Table 7: discursive categories of actors and factors of their (dis)empowerment in the phases of the N2000 policy process. The numbers in the upper part of the table correspond to the discursive categories of stakeholders reported in section 5.1. The phases reported in the vertical part of the table are the phases of the N2000 process identified in sections 5.1. For each phase, I report the elements of actors' empowerment (first row for each phase) and disempowerment (second row for each phase).

In the next chapter I analyze these changes in (dis)empowerment from a discourse analysis perspective, studying how they reflect the changes in dynamics linking discursive components' in the three phases of the N2000 process.

5.3 DISCURSIVE DIMENSION OF ACTORS' (DIS)EMPOWERMENT IN N2000

Chapter 4 has shown that the discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy link with each other in dynamics differently influencing the N2000 discursive strategy in the various phases of the N2000 history (see Figure 10 in section 4.7).

- Europeanization is a rather stable discourse which influences all the N2000 process. The discursive component linked to other discourses during the policy process. For example, Europeanization linked to Technocracy in dynamics which dominated the HD's drafting and sites' selection phases. The discourse then linked to Participation

and Sustainable Development during the transition between the sites' selection and sites' designation and management phases. Europeanization remained strongly linked to Participation during the whole designation and management phase.

- The influence of Sustainable Development is visible in HD's drafting phase with respect to the insertion of semi-natural habitats and related species in the annexes of the HD. However the discourse became relevant in the policy processes related to N2000 only during the sites' selection phase, in which it linked with Participation and Europeanization. The discourse is also influent during the designation and management phase, where it linked to Neoliberalism.
- Technocracy dominated the HD's drafting and sites' selection phases where it linked to Europeanization. The discourse lost importance during the early designation and management phase, but it appeared again as a hegemonic discursive component during the last years in connection with Neoliberalism.
- Participation appeared as a discourse with a rather low influence during the sites' selection phase where its influence was filtrated by Sustainable Development and Europeanization because of the dynamics linking these discourses. The influence of Participation increased during the designation and management phase where the discursive component linked to Europeanization in dominant dynamics.
- The influence of Neoliberalism appears only in the designation and management phase where the discourse strongly linked to Sustainable Development in dominant dynamics. Moreover, Neoliberalism established other dominant linkages with Technocracy during the last years of the designation and management phase.

According to the theoretical framework of my thesis, the dynamics of the discursive components during the N2000 policy process influence the roles, interests and strategies of actors, and ultimately their level of (dis)empowerment in the framework established by N2000. Mostly, the discourses which dominated a specific phase empowered the actors that have a role in the paradigm of the discourse, or subscribed to the discourse. Because of the dynamics linking discursive components, actors' (dis)empowerment is influenced by the combination of elements proper of the various discursive components linked in the dynamics. Sections from 5.3.1 to 5.3.5 discuss the way how the dynamics linking the different discursive components influence the (dis)empowerment of actors in the framework established by N2000, during the various phases of the European policy process.

5.3.1 Europeanization and (dis)empowerment of actors in N2000

The influence of Europeanization is strong during the whole N2000 policy process, and is visible for example in the fixed relations and distribution of responsibilities between EP, CE, ECJ, EC, and MSs. One of the strongest features of the influence of this discourse is the distribution of nature conservation responsibilities along the different branches of the EU system, to reach different governmental and non-governmental actors at the European, national and more local levels.

The first actors of the N2000 policy process whose level of (dis)empowerment is influenced by Europeanization are the MSs. According to the HD, MSs are the main responsible actors for biodiversity conservation in Europe, and have the legal duty to organize, finance and manage N2000. The EU however provides co-financing support. The MSs are in part free to implement the HD in the way they believe more appropriate, according to the Discretionary Freedom factor of Europeanization. This factor empowers MSs to adapt the biodiversity conservation system to national requirements, especially with the transposition of the HD into national legislation (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.). As a result, the N2000 policy process at the national level had different characteristics according to the MS (Jongman, 2010 pers.

comm.; Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). According to the Subsidiarity Principle, however, MSs are not totally free in the implementation of the HD. They are legally responsible for their overall national conservation performance, which has to respect the objectives and deadlines of the HD.

During the implementation of N2000 the EC maintains the roles of controller and guarantor of the correct and complete implementation of the network through a system based on the information sent by MSs (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.; Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.). This system is influenced by the Politics of Information factor of Europeanization (see section 2.2.2). The MSs have to report on many aspects of N2000 implementation (European Council Directive 92/43/EEC). The EC assesses these reports with the help of ENGOs and scientific institutions, and uses them to produce evaluative documents (EHF, 2006). The final evaluative and monitoring actor of N2000 is therefore the EC, and not the MSs who are responsible for the implementation of the network. The form of control that the EC maintains through the task of monitoring N2000 reduces the level of empowerment of MSs.

The EC also holds the role of guaranteeing that N2000 is properly implemented, and all the HD's requirements are satisfied by the MSs. The EC does this through different strategies, including the infringement procedures and lawsuits in which the EC involves MSs for their incorrect transposition or implementation of the HD (Coffey and Richartz, 2003). The infringement procedures and lawsuits function to formally and legally oblige MSs to comply with the HD (McCauley, 2008). Some MSs perceive this situation as a reduction of their implementing freedom and possibility to adapt N2000 to national and local characteristics (Julien *et al.*, 2000; Van der Zouwen and Van den Top, 2001). The use of legal instruments is perceived by MSs as a form of pressure exercised by the EC and aimed at the imposition of its own interpretation of the HD over the national ones (Van der Zouwen and Van den Top, 2001; McCauley, 2008; Beunen *et al.*, 2009). These feelings express a condition of disempowerment for (the economic and social policy sectors of) national governments.

The infringement procedures have also a positive function for MSs, since they contribute to create a body of jurisprudence around N2000 to which actors can refer in their disputes, and which can avoid same controversies in future (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). Legal questions between EC and MSs often give life to communications of the EC targeted to the EP, the CE and the same MSs (EC, 1998c; EC, 2002). Moreover, legal disputes can re-empower nature conservation policy actors at the national level, such as the environmental Ministries who have been disempowered during the national discussions with agricultural and economic sectors over the lists of pSCIs (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). According to representatives of the EC, the use of legal methods is justifiable because the MSs were consulted previous to the publication of the HD. The MSs reached a consensus upon the requirements of the HD through a process of negotiation based on voting and including the possibility of veto (Stuffman, 2011 pers. comm.). Finally, MSs formally agreed upon the requirements of the HD through the signing of the directive itself (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.; Stuffmann, pers. comm. 2011). The legal procedures are perceived at the EC level as the only method to deal with the incongruent attitude of some MSs in the implementation of the HD. These are the MSs which gave low priority to the implementation of N2000 since the moment in which the discussions on the HD started at the European level (Van der Zouwen and Van den Top, 2001; Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.). The possibility for the EC of starting legal procedures to force MSs to comply with the HD is a demonstration of the high level of empowerment of the EC in the N2000 policy process, reflected by the constant dominance of the Europeanization discursive component.

The only possibility left to the MSs by the EC's legal procedures is complying with the requests of the EC in order to avoid the lawsuits (McCauley, 2008). Some of the more proactive MSs propose creative measures and aim to find solutions that respect the requirements of the HD and at the same time pursue national goals (Palerm, 2006). These MSs maintain a high level of control over their natural environment. They apply European biodiversity conservation principles but also promote national development. In this way they achieve a rather high level of empowerment. Some other less proactive MSs instead satisfy the EC requests without a particular national strategy or goal, and with the sole aim of avoiding lawsuits. N2000 does not represent an opportunity but an obstacle for these MSs (Apostolopoulou and Pantis, 2009). The level of empowerment of these MSs is quite low since the HD becomes for these states an imposition which limits their control over the natural environment.

The proactive MSs often use the possibility to ask informal advice to the EC with respect to difficult implementation issues (Palerm, 2006; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). This can be done independently from the infringement procedures started by the EC, but also during the course of these legal actions (Palerm, 2006; Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.; Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.). This is a possibility which is ensured to MSs by the Politics of Information factor of Europeanization. The informal exchange of data and information between EC and MSs is an important aspect of empowerment for the MSs, because it makes them able to ask EC's non-binding opinions and advices on the legal interpretation of some aspects of the HD (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). In that way, MSs can be informed about the possible mistakes in implementing the HD and prevent the lawsuits. The informal consultations often lead to the creation of informative publications by the EC on the criticalities of N2000 implementation, in which for example difficult terms are explained (EC, 2006).

Another practice of the EC which is influenced by the Politics of Information factor of Europeanization is the creation of interpretation and guidance manuals dedicated to the network. These manuals are mainly targeted to national authorities responsible for N2000 implementation (EC, 2000b; EC, 2001; EC, 2007; EC, 2007b). In these manuals the EC- DG Environment expresses its official interpretation of N2000, and proposes a "common understanding" of the HD (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.) which becomes also a point of reference during legal disputes (Hanley, 2010 pers. comm.). Like the informal exchange of data between EC and MSs, these manuals are supposed to facilitate the implementation of N2000 and inform MSs, consequently increasing their level of empowerment. However, the interpretative manuals can be also seen as a way of the EC to impose a preferred and "correct" way to implement N2000, consequently reducing the interpretative freedom of MSs and their level of empowerment.

Europeanization also influences the level of (dis)empowerment of regional and local administrations, which have been often delegated by MSs to fulfill some of the HD's tasks (Van Apeldoorn *et al.*, 2010; Ferranti *et al.*, 2010). Despite this responsibility, the important practical role of this category of stakeholders in implementing N2000 is not recognized at the European level by the production of guidance manuals targeted to these actors. According to the HD, the diffusion of information on the implementation of N2000 below the national level is a responsibility of MSs, and the EC does not have legal obligations on this issue (Council Directive 92/43/EEC; Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). The failure of national governments in training and informing local authorities with respect to the implementation of N2000 leads to an implementation gap (Bouwma *et al.*, 2008). As a result of this failure, local governments are unable to effectively contribute to the development of N2000 and deal with the implications of the network (Apostolopoulou and Pantis, 2009; Beunen *et al.*, 2009; Ferranti *et al.*, 2010; Vandenabeele, 2011 pers. comm.). For example, local governments are unable

to deal with conflict management around N2000 sites (Gibbs *et al.*, 2007; Beunen *et al.*, 2009) because they do not hold a “rational” administrative approach toward the natural environment. In the resolution of conflicts among different interests their lack of capacity resulted in some occasion in the unconditioned support of the party which is (economically) stronger and exercises power to reach its goals (Apostolopoulou and Pantis, 2009). This represents a factor of disempowerment for these actors because although they have important implementing responsibilities, they lack the information needed to fulfill these responsibilities. This situation is surprising if considering the importance of the Politics of Information factor of Europeanization in N2000, and leads to wonder if the EC should take a stronger role in the information of local governmental actors to supply to the failures of MSs (Bouwma *et al.*, 2008).

Europeanization also influences the level of empowerment of ENGOS, who have a prominent role in the implementation of the network during all the three phases of the N2000 process (Weber and Christophersen, 2002; Cent *et al.*, 2007; McCauley, 2008b). In the N2000 process ENGOS hold a great level of authority, comparable to the one of other traditional actors of the EU system like the MSs. For example ENGOS lobby at the European level for the creation of the HD and had a great influence in the drafting of the HD (Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.; Arroyo-Schnell, 2010 pers. comm.). Moreover, they have a prominent role in the sites’ selection with the participation to the biogeographical seminars, as well as in the designation and management phase where they were involved in HC’s meetings and consultations by the EC. The empowerment of ENGOS in the framework established by N2000 partially depends on the powerful role of the EC in the European governing system encompassed in Europeanization. Tight links exist between EC-DG Environment and some of the ENGOS, whose collaboration dates back to the development of the BD (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). This constant collaboration was and is still based on a shared interest in protecting European biodiversity and enforcing a legally binding system to ensure nature conservation (Weber and Christophersen, 2002; Arroyo-Schnell, 2010 pers. comm.). The EC recognized the role of ENGOS in providing ecological data on the European territory, and in interfacing the European level of policy-making and the European public (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). These are two important roles of ENGOS which need to be analyzed separately.

A very important element of ENGOS’ empowerment in the framework established by N2000 is the recognition of their scientific contribution in the development of the annexes of the HD, and in the evaluation of the progresses of the network (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). This element shows the influence of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy on ENGOS’ empowerment, and is more extensively treated in section 5.3.3. With respect to the interface between EC and the public, ENGOS provide the EC with information on stakeholders of N2000 and on their opinions with respect to the network, thanks to the experience acquired by ENGOS’ regional and national offices (Cent *et al.*, 2007). ENGOS moreover represent a partner for the EC in the alliance against the socio-economic policy sectors of) national governments, which was aimed at denouncing incorrect national implementations of the HD (Weber and Christophersen, 2002; CEEWEB, 2004). Moreover, ENGOS act as intermediaries between the EC and the public, fostering in society the input of EC’s interests of correctly implementing the HD and successfully conserving biodiversity. The EC depends on ENGOS for “justification and reproduction of its existence” (Weber and Christophersen, 2002 p. 4).

This strict collaboration between EC and ENGOS has developed during the years in a powerful political coalition (see the Box 5 in section 4.3.1). The establishment of this coalition between

governmental and non-governmental actors allows linking N2000 to the concept of Multilevel Governance, where ENGOS represent a bottom-up force (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). Many elements of Multilevel Governance are included in the Europeanization discursive component used in the framework of my thesis (see section 2.2.2). As a consequence of this coalition, ENGOS can influence the European nature conservation policy, often bypassing the regional and national governmental levels (Weber and Christophersen, 2002; CEEWEB, 2004; Cent *et al.*, 2007; McCauley, 2008b). Moreover, as a consequence of this coalition ENGOS are provided with financial resources mostly through the LIFE financial instrument, to which ENGOS have a higher degree of access compared to other non-governmental actors (McCauley, 2008b). This exclusive condition of empowerment of ENGOS appears as a political strategy of the EC aimed at financially supporting groups which on their turn can ideologically support the EC (McCauley, 2008b).

The last category of actors whose (dis)empowerment in the framework established by N2000 is strongly influenced by Europeanization is represented by the non-governmental organizations and associations of stakeholders who deal with the practice of implementing N2000. These are the so called "N2000 users", corresponding to discursive categories from VI to IX (see section 5.1). These actors often organize in sectoral interest groups (e.g. NGO) aimed at reaching a political representation for the group's interests at the European level. This aim is achieved through the establishment of an office in Brussels which follows the European policy processes from near (Weber and Christophersen, 2002; Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.). This strategy guarantees a role for the interest groups in the European governing system, as displayed in Figure 2 of section 2.2.2. The same strategy has been used by the interest groups in the N2000 policy process. N2000 users are not involved in the decision-making process related to N2000 since the start, but only after 2001 when they strongly lobby the EU level for the inclusion in the biogeographical seminars (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). Since the designation and management phase, this category of stakeholders is included in the negotiations and consultations related to N2000; for example they join quite extensively the N2000 WGs (see Box 5 in section 4.3.1) and the N2000 workshops (see Box 9 here below). The increased importance of the role of N2000 users in the last ten years of the N2000 process contributes to the empowerment of these actors, and mirrors the dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation which are relevant for the N2000 discursive strategy especially during the designation and management phase. These dynamics are also visible in the attention toward these actors in EC's publications on the network, and in the recognition of their function of managers of the environment (EC, 2005; EC, 2007d; EC, 2010b; EC, 2010c; EC, 2011). The role of N2000 users in the European policy processes related to N2000 becomes even stronger under the influence of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Neoliberalism and dominating the last years of the designation and management phase. Actors who carry out economic activities in or around N2000 sites are recognized in these years as managers of the areas surrounding their activities and see their level of empowerment increasing in the framework established by N2000.

Box 9: the workshops dedicated to N2000

An interesting aspect of the N2000 process which has a strong relation with the (dis)empowerment of the involved actors is the organization of several workshops dedicated to the implementation of the network at the European, national and regional levels. The workshops, organized with increased frequency since the early 2000s onwards, are meetings where very wide varieties of stakeholders are joined to discuss relevant issues in the realization of N2000. A conspicuous number of these workshops have been commissioned and funded by the EC, who established contracts with third parties from different sectors actually organizing and guiding the workshops. The organization of workshops at the various governmental levels, which join governmental and non-governmental actors, shows the influence of Europeanization and of the dynamics linking this discourse to Participation and Sustainable Development. Especially socio-economic actors, excluded from previous stages of the N2000 policy process, access the European level of decision-making with their frequent acknowledgment in and participation to the workshops. The workshops represent a factor of empowerment for these socio-economic actors, since they constitute a window of opportunity for expressing their interests in the N2000 process.

Here I report three interesting examples of workshops commissioned by the EC:

- 1) WWF (and ENGO), IEEP (a policy institute) and MOCCU (an agency working with digital media) were involved in a project under contract with the EC and focused on "Linking Management and Financing of Natura 2000". The project was finalized at producing information and tools to facilitate the use of European funds for N2000 at the national and regional levels (Torkler and Arroyo, 2008). The project was targeted to national authorities and N2000 sites' managers. Under the project, workshops in 25 different MSs have been organized between 2007 and 2008 with the objectives of I) presenting an IT tool which facilitates the application for funds and II) creating dialogues and networks around the issue of financing N2000. The training of management authorities and stakeholders' to the access European funds was supposed to enhance the possibility of these actors to obtain funds for a proper implementation of N2000 (Torkler and Arroyo, 2008), and contribute in this way to their empowerment. Different types of actors participated to the workshops, varying according to the MSs in which the workshops took place. ENGOS extensively participated in all workshops, while Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries or Forests and the municipalities were present in three quarters of the workshops. Research institutes and universities participated in about two thirds of the workshops. Representatives of regional administrations were present in half of the workshops, especially in federal governments. The participation of other relevant Ministries such as Ministries on Work, Industry and Finance was very limited (Torkler and Arroyo, 2008). The workshops tackled, among others, the following specific issues (Torkler and Arroyo, 2008).
 - Review financing of Natura 2000 from Community funds
 - Discussion of national/regional implicit funding eligibility for Natura 2000
 - Best practices in combined financing
 - How to integrate national data/Interpreting national funding priorities to cover Natura 2000 needs
- 2) The European Center for Nature Conservation (ECNC) in 2009 signed a contract with the EC, together with ALTERRA- a research institute- and EUROSITE- a network of governmental organizations, non-governmental bodies and privates collaborating for the management of the European natural environment. Within the project "Dealing with conflict in the implementation and management of Natura 2000 network - Best practices at site level" the partners collected direct information from stakeholders, experts and policymakers about conflicts related to N2000 through the organization of workshops (ECNC, 2010). Three regional workshops took place (Central and Eastern Europe, South Europe and North-West Europe), to which representatives of socio-economic sectors, ENGOS and governmental authorities involved in and affected by N2000 were invited.
- 3) Natura 2000 Networking Programme (Eurosité, 2010) was a program managed by Eurosité (a network of GOs, NGOs and privates), Europarc federation (a federation of natural parks' managers) and ELO (an NGO) on behalf of the EC. It involved series of training events and workshops aimed at promoting N2000 in the European MSs. The program focused on the diffusion of good practices and of the benefits of networking for the establishment of N2000, and aimed at improving communication, applying capacity building and developing partnerships for nature conservation. Target of the program were national authorities responsible for N2000, stakeholders affected by the implementation of the network and the general public (Eurosité, 2010). Under the program, meetings and workshops took place in 2007 in different European MSs, and included representatives of nature conservation organizations, scientific institutions, governmental authorities, representatives of farmers' and foresters' associations, representatives of networks of users of coastal areas, and other stakeholders involved in or affected by the realization of N2000. These actors came from a wide variety of MSs (Eurosité, 2010). The topics of the workshops varied among different topics, such as (Eurosité, 2010):
 - Natura 2000 and Tourism
 - Sustainability of the Natura 2000 network - Combining environmental, social and economic benefits
 - Natura 2000: For the people, by the people
 - Wildlife and Live Firing - Natura 2000 on Military Training Areas
 - Conflict resolution

5.3.2 Sustainable Development and (dis)empowerment of actors in N2000

The Sustainable Development discursive component presents complex dynamics in the N2000 process, and this is reflected in the way the discourse influences actors' (dis)empowerment. Sustainable Development is directly mentioned in the text of the HD, influencing the ideal integration of environmental, social and economic concerns encompassed in N2000. Also the

official image of N2000 emphasizes this integration as one of the innovative elements of the nature conservation system encompassed in the network. With integration as its core idea, Sustainable Development would empower stakeholders holding environmental, social and economic interests. In this ideal situation, all the actors involved in and affected by N2000 would be simultaneously empowered in the framework established by the network: ENGOs and scientific institutions and experts who believe that nature should be conserved for its intrinsic and scientific value; tourism, business and industry sectors who try to maximize their financial income by exploiting natural resources; local governments and actors whose livelihoods depend on the N2000 sites and have social claims on these areas. However, this discourse is not relevant during the drafting of the HD, from which socio-economic actors have been excluded. This contributed to the disempowerment of these actors in this phase of the N2000 process.

Sustainable Development becomes relevant in the sites' selection phase, where socio-economic actors were involved during the biogeographical seminars. The involvement of these actors in the European policy processes related to N2000 through the participation of the NUF to the biogeographical seminars shows the influence of dynamics linking Sustainable Development, Europeanization and Participation. These dynamics empower actors who have a socio-economic interest in the natural environment, and whose livelihood and/or activities depend on the natural environment. However, the level of empowerment reached by these actors in this phase of the N2000 process is limited insofar as representatives of the NUF are involved as observers during the seminars. As seen in chapter 4, the NUF does not come to actually influence the decision-making processes of the biogeographical seminars because they do not conform to the scientific rationale of the HD. However, socio-economic actors were provided with the possibility of becoming familiar with the policy processes related to N2000 and this contributes to their partial empowerment in the sites' selection phase. Here it becomes clear the ambiguous role of Sustainable Development is empowering and at the same time disempowering the actors addressed by or subscribing to this discourse.

During the designation and management phase Sustainable Development is relevant in the dynamics linking this discourse to Neoliberalism. These dynamics are already present in the transition from the sites' selection phase to the designation and management phase, but it is only during the second that they become dominant. Especially during the latest years of the designation and management phase, economic actors see their role increasing in the implementation of N2000. In this phase the envisaged balance between environmental, social and economic interests is unbalanced toward economic issues. Indeed, in this phase social factors and actors are excluded from policy events which are instead dominated by economic issues and actors with an economic potential of investing in the network. The dominant role of these actors and their values in policy processes during the designation and management phase is facilitated by the linkages between Neoliberalism and the integration factors at the core of Sustainable Development. These dynamics however result in the disempowerment of the other two categories of actors addressed by and subscribing to Sustainable Development: the actors with a social relation with the natural environment and the actors who are devoted to the protection of the natural environment for its intrinsic value.

In all the three phases of the N2000 process, the influence of Sustainable Development is not strong enough to actually put in practice the balance between environmental, social and economic factors. This can be perceived as a missed chance for the simultaneous empowerment of environmental, social and economic actors in N2000. All the dynamics linking Sustainable Development to other discourses and influencing the N2000 process have an ambiguous relation with the (dis)empowerment of the actors addressed by Sustainable

Development. Indeed these actors are at the same time empowered and disempowered by these dynamics. This shows the unclear implications of the presence of Sustainable Development in the discursive structure of N2000. Despite these considerations, it has to be considered that N2000 was designed at the European level to allow everyone, also the actors who have a short term socio-economic interest on the territory, to enjoy the benefits of biodiversity in the long run (Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.). This is without doubt a sign of the importance of Sustainable Development for the ultimate goals of N2000 and for the final empowerment of stakeholders. Despite the simultaneous empowerment of environmental, social and economic actors seems a rather impossible target to reach in the practice and in a short time frame, this does not mean that the ideals of Sustainable Development should not be pursued in the long run. Sustainable Development, through the ideal simultaneous empowerment of actors, requires from all parties the recognition of the right of other parties to manage the European natural environment. This idea can be exploited for the resolution of conflicts among different interests around the use of N2000 sites.

5.3.3 Technocracy and (dis)empowerment of actors in N2000

Technocracy presents clear dynamics in the N2000 process, and in the same clear way the discourse influences actors' (dis)empowerment. The role of Technocracy is prominent especially during the HD's drafting, where the discourse links to Europeanization and empowers actors holding scientific knowledge in the negotiations giving life to the directive. The dynamics between Technocracy and Europeanization dominate also the sites' selection phase, where scientific actors have the bigger say next to European and national governmental actors empowered by Europeanization. Technocracy loses importance during the early stages of the designation and management phase, where the discourse links to Neoliberalism in dynamics which are not hegemonic in their influence on the N2000 discursive strategy. These dynamics however become dominant during later years of the designation and management phase and are visible in the relevance of quantitative ecological methods in determining ecosystem goods and services. The dominance of these dynamics in this period of the N2000 process is based on the idea that the economic value of nature is superior to other types of economic interests (Gibbs *et al.*, 2007).

The actors which are more clearly empowered by the dominance of Technocracy are scientific experts and institutions. These actors are target of a long lasting consultation which contributes to give life to the HD especially with respect to the annexes (Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.). These actors are also strongly involved in the biogeographical seminars, where the ETCs carried out the technical analysis of the pSCIs' lists. Scientific institutions and experts are among the only actors which can influence decision-making processes in the first two phases of the HD. The knowledge they hold is recognized in the framework established by N2000 since its start, and becomes a solid base for the implementation of the network. These elements strongly contribute to the empowerment of scientific institutions and experts during the HD's drafting and sites' selection phases. During the designation and management phase these actors are delegated the task of evaluating the N2000 progresses, but the attention dedicated to scientific actors in the N2000 discursive strategy is marginal compared to the actors that implement management measures in the practice. During the last years of the designation and management phase, (economic) scientists assume an important role because the emphasis on ecosystem services of the N2000 discursive strategy gives them the authority of measuring and determining the flow of goods and services derivable from ecosystems.

Similar considerations on the influence of Technocracy can be made for the level of empowerment of ENGOS, whose involvement in the HD's drafting and sites' selection phases is an exception respect to other non-governmental actors which have been excluded (McCauley, 2008b; Weber and Christophersen, 2002). As shown in section 5.3.1, this exceptional involvement shows the influence of the dynamics linking Technocracy and Europeanization, and is linked to the shared goals and views between ENGOS and EC-DG Environment. The most important objective shared by EC and ENGOS is the need to conserve European biodiversity through a legally binding system based on scientific criteria (Weber and Christophersen, 2002; Arroyo-Schnell, 2010 pers. comm.). The exceptional role of ENGOS is also supported by the scientific data that ENGOS can provide to the EC to reach this objective. The ecological knowledge held by ENGOS, for example included in the "shadow lists" presented at the biogeographical seminars, is recognized by the EC as a valuable cross-checking element for the approval and revision of N2000 sites' lists (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). ENGOS hold scientific authority in the process of implementation of N2000 comparable to the one of scientific institutions and experts, even if the scientific base of their work sometimes does not entirely correspond to the rationale of the HD. For example, the creation of the shadow lists is influenced by missionaries of particular species, who lobby for the inclusion of sites particularly important for their specific objectives (Cent *et al.*, 2007; Jones-Walters, 2010 pers. comm.). This lack of correspondence between HD's criteria and ENGOS approach is also addressed by other stakeholders such as organizations of forest owners (Julen *et al.*, 2000). Despite this lack of correspondence, the scientific authority of ENGOS is guaranteed for the whole N2000 policy process, and makes for the empowerment of these actors in the framework established by N2000 (Weber and Christophersen, 2002; McCauley, 2008b).

The actors which are instead disempowered by the influence of Technocracy are those who do not conform to the scientific rationale of the EC, which is included in the documents constructing the official image of N2000 (see chapter 3). These are for example the MSs which do not base the proposal of sites to include in N2000 on purely scientific criteria, or use scientific criteria which do not conform to the HD's requirements (Gidds *et al.*, 2007). These MSs have been involved in controversies with the EC which often end in legal procedures (Coffey and Richartz, 2003). Some of the controversies for example regarded the 20%-60% rule (see Box 4 in section 4.3.1) applied in those countries where one or a few habitats are predominant. These countries should have proposed an exaggerated amount of sites to satisfy the percentage rule, and this was perceived as a problem by national governments who felt their legitimacy put aside by the HD's legitimacy (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001). Other actors which are disempowered by the dominance of Technocracy in the first two phases of N2000 are the N2000 users, corresponding to discursive categories from VI to IX (see section 5.1). These actors are excluded from policy processes because of their lack of scientific authority, and sometimes they are included but without an actual influence on decision-making processes (this is the case of the NUF in the biogeographical seminars).

During the first phases of the N2000 policy process, N2000 users carry types of knowledge and perspectives on environmental issues which are strongly divergent from the ecological and technical conceptions of EC, ENGOS and scientific institutions (McCauley, 2008b). N2000 users carry viewpoints that collide with the ones encompassed in the HD, holding a socio-economic approach to problems which does not match the technocratic framework of the N2000 discursive strategy (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). The importance of Technocracy in the early phases of N2000 implementation is one of the main causes of disempowerment of land owners and users such as farmers, foresters, hunters, port and tourism operators, business representatives (McCauley, 2008; 2008b). These actors show

aversion toward the network, and contest the technocratic legitimacy of N2000 putting forward their own form of legitimacy during protests (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; Hiedanpää, 2002). The reasoning carried out by local stakeholders is the following: if different experts have different ideas and recommendations with respect to environmental issues, and they are often unable to reach an agreement, why should land owners and land users take this ensemble of ecological knowledge for granted, and the scientific values deriving as meaningful? Why should scientific values be considered superior to local values? (Hiedanpää, 2002). For example, in the perspective of N2000 users, the primary value of a land it is not the ecological one, but the production one. This value is not encompassed in the technocratic framework of the early stages of the N2000 process (Hiedanpää, 2002).

5.3.4 Participation and (dis)empowerment of actors in N2000

Participation has a weak role in the first two phases of N2000 implementation. The word "participation" does not appear in the HD, and the directive does not make participation of stakeholders compulsory in the implementation of N2000. This results in the fact that during these first two phases only four out of nine discursive categories of actors of section 5.1 meaningfully contribute to the European policy processes and affect decision-making. These are the EC, MSs, scientific institutions and experts, and ENGOs (Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.), who subscribe to the Europeanization and Technocracy discursive components. This situation is mirrored at the national level where, because the missing imposition of participatory procedures in the HD, MSs transpose the HD following national policy traditions which often do not include Participation as a principle (Jongman, 2010 pers. comm.). Most MSs do not involve N2000 users in communications or consultation procedures for the sites' selection, disempowering these actors also at the national level (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.; Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001). Participation links to Europeanization and Sustainable Development during the sites' selection phase, influencing the aim to integrate socio-economic concerns in environmental policy processes at different governmental levels (see section 5.3.2). Moreover the discourse links to Europeanization in other dynamics which influence for example the organization of the Bath Conference, European conference of stakeholders aimed at discussing problems arisen in the implementation of N2000. However, section 4.4 showed that the outcomes of this conference are not actually addressed in the following phases of the N2000 process. The actors which are more strongly empowered are the ones who subscribe to the Technocracy and Europeanization discursive components, and this shows the low influence of Participation in empowering actors during the early stages of N2000.

One of the reasons for the lack of meaningful involvement of N2000 users and local governments in the early stages of N2000 implementation is that in the late 1980s and early 1990s much of these actors were not acknowledged at the European level as "stakeholders" of the N2000 network (Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.). This contributes to the disempowerment of most of N2000 users, with the exclusion of categories VI and VII which at least are acknowledged in the policy events of those years. This disempowered condition is also caused by the fact that representatives of MSs, who have the task of communicating with the EC on important society sectors affected by the HD and N2000 during their official consultation of 1989-1992, in this occasion do not perform their task sufficiently (Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.). Moreover, many of the actors excluded from decision-making processes are not organized in interest groups in this phase of the N2000 process, or the interest groups have no European representation (Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.; Weber and Christophersen, 2002). Only after landowners, farmers and the other actors constituting discursive category VI establish the NUF, they are involved in European policy processes

related to N2000 (see Box 5 in section 4.3.1). This situation shows the influence of dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation.

During the interviews I carried out for this thesis I discussed several times the effectiveness of the approach to decision-making processes in the early stages of N2000. Many interviewees supported the technocratic way in which the HD was drafted and the sites were selected at the European level. The lack of meaningful involvement of N2000 users in the early stages contributes to the aversion of stakeholders toward N2000, but also to the effectiveness of nature conservation under the HD (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.; Braat, 2010 pers. comm.; Jongman, 2010, pers. comm.; Stuffman, 2010 pers. comm.). For example, the time frames which would have been needed to give life to a meaningful participatory exercise in the late 1980s and early 1990s, involving categories of stakeholders at the time not acquainted with nature conservation principles, could have been detrimental for the effectiveness of conservation measures (Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.). Moreover a policy outcome based on participation would have lacked effectiveness because of the restrictions imposed by socio-economic interests held by many of the sectors which could have been involved (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.).

Participation has a stronger role in the designation and management phase of the N2000 process, where it dominates through dynamics linking the discourse to Europeanization. It is only during this phase, that the EC starts meaningfully involving N2000 users in conferences, consultation meetings, WGs, workshops and other initiatives aimed at consulting and informing these actors with respect to N2000 implementation. The need to involve N2000 users is recognized at the European level as essential in order to enhance the acceptance and functionality of the network (El Teide Declaration, 2002; Tiemann and Siebert, 2009). Leon Braat stated on the issue (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.): “the social and economic problems came out when it turned out that to protect an area on the map you need to enforce all things around it: agriculture, emissions, water management. That’s when people in Brussels woke up and said: *<we should have involved the locals!>*”. This is especially true for the forestry sector, which does not receive much support in N2000, despite the essential role of forestry in the management of the European natural environment (Krott *et al.*, 2000).

The inclusion of N2000 users during the designation and management phase is supported by the publication of interpretation manuals targeted to the various sectors (EC, 2001b; EC, 2003; EC, 2005; EC, 2007d; EC, 2010b; EC, 2010c; EC, 2011), and of guidance manuals on the LIFE fund which can be used to financially support projects in N2000 sites (EC, 2003b; EC, 2006c; EC, 2008). The provision of information to the actors responsible for the implementation of N2000 represents an element of empowerment for these actors, and shows the influence of dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization. Indeed, the actors who are informed are the ones acknowledged at the European level as responsible for the implementation of N2000.

Dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization are visible in the establishment of WGs and creation of workshops for the implementation of N2000, especially during the designation and management phase. The WGs and workshops represent the occasion for a wide variety of stakeholders to meet and exchange information on important issues in the implementation of N2000. The EC establishes the WGs and then calls MSs’ representatives and important stakeholders to participate. Stakeholders groups not contacted by the EC can also volunteer to participate if interested (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). Actors’ participation is voluntary, and is often linked to the level of interest that MSs or interest groups have for the issues addressed in the WGs. For example, the Estuaries WG sees a very active participation of representatives of UK, Germany, France and NL, countries where ports represent an

important source of income for the national economy (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). The Wind Energy WG includes representatives of Denmark, UK, Netherlands and Belgium, countries where the wind energy industry is highly diffused (<http://circa.europa.eu/>). The WGs become integral organs of the European governing system. As shown in Box 5 of section 4.3.1, the documents produced by WGs become important elements of reference for the N2000 policy process at the European level (Article 12 Working Group, S.D.; EC, 2010b; EC, 2010c; EC, 2011). With the participation to the WGs, various categories of stakeholders are made able to influence decision-making processes at the European level and see their level of empowerment increasing in the framework established by N2000.

Non-state actors such as representatives of landowners and farmers, included in the NUF, and of port operators, included in the ESPO, are active participants in the WGs (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). With the assiduous participation to the WGs, these actors see their level of empowerment increasing in the latest stages of the N2000 policy processes. In the WGs these actors are not only recipients of information but they also contribute with their knowledge and expertise to shape the outcomes of the meetings. According to Kremer, the aim of the WGs is not only producing interpretative documents, but also promoting “common views and understanding” around issues which could be subject to different interpretations. In this aim it is possible to detect the intention of the EC to acknowledge local interpretations of the HD which diverge from the official image of N2000 in order to establish a consensual common meaning which is acceptable by EC, MSs and interest groups. In the WG’s meetings moreover the requirements of the HD are explained to the stakeholders in their own language and through their own perspectives, and in this way they are better assimilated by the actors (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). Through the participation in the WGs stakeholders see their knowledge base recognized and incorporated in the common views elaborated in the meetings. Moreover, stakeholders are made able to understand the rationale of the HD and often they reply producing codes of conduct and guidance booklets for their activities focused on the implications of N2000 (ELO, 2006b; FACE, 2006; ESPO, 2007). Moreover, non-governmental actors give life to voluntary initiatives related to biodiversity conservation, such as the development of international cooperative projects between ports aimed at safeguarding protected natural elements (e.g. the INTERREG and TIDE projects). These elements represent further factors of empowerment for these actors, which is influenced by the dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation in the designation and management phase of the N2000 process. Important perplexities persist however on the disempowerment of those categories of actors which do not find a place yet in the WGs, such as the people living in and around N2000 sites, farmers, foresters, fishermen, and the tourist sector.

The WGs not only empower economic interest groups and non-governmental actors, but also the EC, which sees the acceptance for N2000 increasing among stakeholders. This increased acceptance allows the EC carrying out in a more easy way her task of ensuring the efficient application of the HD, and reduces the possibilities of conflict between EC and socio-economic actors. These conflicts slow down the process of N2000 implementation, distancing the EC from the attainment of her goal, i.e. halting the loss of biodiversity. Through the WGs and the enhanced collaboration of involved stakeholders, the EC attempts to transform the aversion of stakeholders in acceptance and collaboration, smoothing the complex process of N2000 implementation.

Other actors which are empowered by the strong participation in the WGs are the ENGOs (see Box 5 of section 4.3.1), whose level of empowerment is influenced by the dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization. Once again ENGOs are well acknowledged actors of N2000 policy processes and their participation in WGs is considered as essential in the development of the N2000 discursive strategy. Alberto Arroyo-Schnell working at WWF explained that the

work of ENGOS in the WGs has been coordinated through the EHF (Arroyo-Schnell, 2010 pers. comm.). He stated: "In recent times we try to coordinate our non-governmental efforts in participating in this kind of WGs, since they are so many and it is difficult to follow all the work [...]. We try to make sure that if we, WWF, are not part of these WGs, at least another organization of the EHF will be part of it". The participation of the ENGOS to the WGs is made univocal with discussions previous to the meetings aimed at ensuring the communication of a common message on the targeted issues (Arroyo Schnell, 2010 pers. comm.). The common message transmitted by ENGOS is the need of creating an adequate system for biodiversity conservation in Europe. Arroyo-Schnell, personally involved in some of the WGs on N2000 stated (2010, pers. comm.) "We believe the BD and HD to be very powerful tools, and we aim at improving the implementation. We make sure that all the relevant sites are included in the network, terrestrial and marine, [...] they have a proper management in place, and that there is adequate financing". Arroyo-Schnell described the WGs as opportunities for the ENGOS to take part in the formulation of opinions which will influence decision-making. The interview with Arroyo-Schnell made clear the shared beliefs between EC and ENGOS regarding the usefulness of ensuring the correct application of the HD to protect biodiversity in Europe. This sharing of ideas is at the basis of the coalition between ENGOS and EC already described in section 5.3.3, and shows the influence of the dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization.

The role of the dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization are also visible in the practice of creating workshops dedicated to the implementation of N2000 (see Box 9 in section 5.3.1). Participants invited to the workshops constitute a wide variety of stakeholders including governmental bodies, experts, ENGOS and socio-economic stakeholders affected by the implementation of N2000. Even regional administrations, which have been mostly excluded by N2000 policy processes, find place in these workshops, and are finally trained to carry out the role of implementing the network. Workshops at the European level are often organized by non-state actors (mostly scientific institutions and ENGOS, but sometimes also members of the NUF) involved in contracts with the EC. The workshops show, besides the traditional alliances between EC and actors holding scientific knowledge, a new type of alliances between the EC and the NUF. Interest groups members of the NUF are involved in official contracts with the EC for the creation of workshops aimed at diffusing information on N2000 among the stakeholders represented in the interest group. In that way representatives of farmers, foresters and other stakeholders included in category VI are put in charge of translating the EC's message in an understandable way for landowners and land users. This accounts for the empowerment of these stakeholders, who are not anymore perceived as recipients of the EC's message, but are called to help the EC in fostering its message among the actors implementing N2000. Discursive category VI acquires the authority to train other actors with respect to the implementation of N2000, also with the possibility of transmitting its views and perspectives to the N2000 discursive strategy. Because of the possibility of organizing workshops, or participating to the workshops, all the discursive categories of stakeholders of section 5.1 see their level of empowerment increasing in the framework established in N2000. This empowerment is influenced by dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization visible in the N2000 workshops.

Despite the attempt of the EC to recognize the role of N2000 users in the management of N2000, through inclusion in policy processes such as the WGs and the workshops and the publication of guidance manuals, some of the categories of stakeholders still feel that their values and perspectives are not included in the framework established by N2000. This feeling of exclusion and subordination reduces the level of empowerment of these actors. For example foresters perceive that the entrepreneurial freedom and compensation principles are

not represented in N2000 (Julien *et al.*, 2000). Landowners complain about the lack of attention toward the emotional value of lands and its compensation (Vandenabeele, 2011 pers. comm.; Julien *et al.* 2000). The livelihood changes that the framework established by N2000 imposes on these stakeholders are perceived as symptoms of lack of attention of the EU for local needs (Julien *et al.*, 2000; Paavola, 2004). In general, the HD is perceived as not addressing multiple levels of wellbeing and social emotions (Hiedanpää, 2002). For example, some of the main areas of conflict during the designation and management phase concern land use and ownership issues. Where the land is privately owned, greater discussions take place over the implementation of N2000 because of the important changes introduced in the management of those lands by the network (Bouwma *et al.*, 2008). Livelihood changes for private owners imposed by the HD result in conflicts and generate feelings of resentment, disappointment, regret, concern, envy and anger (Hiedanpää, 2002). These feelings develop especially where farmers and foresters feel a competition with actors representing other land uses, such as the tourism sector and the militaries (Vandenabeele, 2011 pers. comm.). Farmers and foresters feel that these land uses are treated with favoritism with respect to the insertion of territories in N2000, and perceive their own role as subordinated (Vandenabeele, 2011 pers. comm.). These actors support the need of cooperation approaches and financial incentives in the management of the natural environment, rather than regulative systems like the HD (Getzner and Jungmeier, 2002). Cooperative and contractual agreements, as well as financial compensations, would allow the livelihood of these stakeholders to continue without too many changes. At the same time, these instruments would increase the awareness of these actors with respect to environmental issues, and their acceptance of N2000 (Julien *et al.*, 2000).

In the analysis of the role of Participation in influencing actors' (dis)empowerment, it is interesting to discuss the situation of the hunters, group of actors belonging to discursive category VI. Hunters are included in the NUF since 1999 through FACE. Their level of empowerment increases with the inclusion of the NUF in the biogeographical seminars after 2002. Despite the high level of participation of these actors in meetings and conferences, their level of empowerment can be considered particularly low respect for example to foresters, farmers and fishermen. This low level of empowerment is caused by the negative image describing the hunters as "killers" in the European and national nature conservation arenas (Julien *et al.*, 2000; Alphandéry and Fortier 2001; Vandenabeele, 2011 pers. comm.). Their ecological knowledge and role (especially in solving the problem of predation) are not recognized at the European level as valuable in the implementation of N2000 (Vandenabeele, 2011 pers. comm.). One of the objectives of the NUF is to transmit a positive message to society and raise awareness about the existence of sustainable hunting methods adapt for the management of the European natural environment in general, and N2000 areas in particular (ELO, 2006). The lack of ecological authority of hunters translates in the lack of transfer of financial resources for the management of the natural environment, factor which further increases the disempowerment of these actors (Vandenabeele, 2011 pers. comm.; Julien *et al.*, 2000). Hunters often receive financial support only when they join nature conservation organizations in biodiversity protection programs (Vandenabeele, 2011 pers. comm.).

5.3.5 Neoliberalism and (dis)empowerment of actors in N2000

Neoliberalism has a weak role in the HD's drafting and sites' selection phases where it does not meaningfully contribute to the empowerment of any of the discursive categories of actors of section 5.1. Economic actors were not directly included in the negotiations and consultations giving life to the HD. Moreover, the use of economic criteria for the creation of the lists of pSCIs is opposed by the EC during the sites' selection phase. This low attention,

and even aversion, toward economic issues at the European level results in the disempowerment of economic actors in the first two phases of N2000 implementation.

The role of Neoliberalism becomes stronger during the designation and management phase of the N2000 process. The first wave of concern for financing N2000 (2001-2004) brings policy processes to reflect over the necessity of guaranteeing an adequate financing to the network to ensure its success. However, the policy events of this period do not focus on market based instruments or systems of compensation for the financing of the network, which are typical elements of Neoliberalism. This shows that in the early stages of the designation and management phase the discourse has a low influence in empowering economic actors, despite the dominant dynamics linking this discourse to Sustainable Development, and the non-dominant dynamics linking it to Technocracy. The solution chosen at the European level for financing N2000 is the “integration option”, according to which MSs are responsible to finance N2000 helped by the co-financing input of the EU. N2000 sites are co-financed by European funds dedicated to agriculture, fishery, development, cohesion and other objectives sometimes competing with nature conservation. The competition between the traditional objectives of these funds and N2000 for the assignment of EU funds is described as a pitfall of the integration option during the whole N2000 process. As a result of this competition, the financing of N2000 finally is not carried out through EU funds but through the pockets of the actors who see their territories included in the network and their economic activities affected by the HD (Julien *et al.*, 2000; Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; McCauley, 2008; Vandenabeele, 2011 pers. comm.). The lack of a fund expressively dedicated to the network is an element of disempowerment for the local socio-economic actors who have nature conservation responsibilities under N2000, since in many cases it does not allow these actors fulfilling their responsibilities in the best way during the early stages of the designation and management phase.

During the early stages of the designation and management phase moreover, economic actors find their economic activities sometimes put under scrutiny, sometimes stopped or forbidden by N2000 (Kremer, 2010 pers. comm.). Stuffmann during his interview referred to economic actors like “the victims of N2000” (Stuffmann, 2011 pers. comm.). This reference is supported by the fact that court rooms have been and still are filled with cases regarding the assessment of implications of economic plans and projects in and around N2000 sites. Developers of plans and projects are attacked by all sides because their activities affect the conservation status of BD’s and HD’s habitats and species (EC, 2006b). As reported in section 5.3.4, values such as entrepreneurial freedom, compensation, loss of income and loss of land value are not included in the N2000 discursive strategy. These are all values proper of the Neoliberalism discourse, which clearly do not contribute to the empowerment of economic actors in this early stage of the designation and management phase. In the N2000 discursive strategy of these years, actors who carry out economic activities are therefore disempowered not only financially, but also ideologically, with respect to the use of the natural environment.

Neoliberalism plays a stronger role in influencing the empowerment of actors in the last stages of the designation and management phases. In the last years indeed, many of the discussions related to N2000 revolve around the possibility of using new market based financing instruments for the financing of the network, such as voluntary agreements, labeling and certification. These issues are central during the second wave of concern for financing N2000 (2008-2010), and become topics of publications by the EC (EC, 2009; EC, 2010d). The big role played by Neoliberalism in this phase of the N2000 process is shown by the use of the concept of “ecosystem services” (EC, 2010; EC, 2010b). This concept encompasses an ecosystemic and economic approach toward nature conservation, which

asserts that conserving ecosystems allows preserving the services that nature provides for humans. During the last years of the designation and management phases Neoliberalism empowers those actors who have an economic potential as investors in the network and as beneficiaries of biodiversity (EC, 2010). Especially the business and industry sectors (rather than farmers, foresters and fishermen) which are able to generate large revenues from the exploitation of natural resources and invest in the conservation of nature are involved in WGs and workshops on N2000. These sector actors are also target of manuals published by the EC on N2000 (EC, 2010b; EC, 2010c; EC, 2011). These elements can be linked to influence of the dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Sustainable Development. Under the influence of these dynamics, economic factors become more important than societal ones in the integration of human interests with nature conservation. Actors who carry out strongly economically driven activities are empowered compared to socio-economic actors whose activities are linked to culture and traditions and who are instead disempowered. As already stated in section 5.3.2, these dynamics have ambiguous implications for actors' (dis)empowerment, since they empower specific economic sectors disempowering others.

During the last years of the designation and management phase, Neoliberalism becomes stronger especially through the dynamics which link this discourse to Technocracy. These dynamics influence the idea that the flow of services derivable from ecosystems should be measured in scientific, technical and economic terms to be exactly determined and exploited in the most efficient way (EC, 2009; Haslett *et al.*, 2010). This situation empowers ecologists and economists who gain the authority to assess ecosystem services. Moreover these dynamics are also visible in the idea that the economic value of nature (the services derivable from ecosystems) is more important than economic private interests, such as the land productivity or the expansion of ports (Gibbs *et al.*, 2007). This factor does not completely disempower economic actors, since these actors have still the possibility of reaching economic objectives exploiting ecosystem services in a sustainable way under N2000. However, their level of empowerment is diminished by this factor in comparison with a situation in which Neoliberalism dominates alone the last years of the N2000 process. A complete empowerment of economic actors could occur with the actual application of market based instruments to the conservation of biodiversity, such as green taxes, labeling and certifications for the financing of N2000. These financial instruments, which for the moment are only discussed in the latest policy events related to N2000 (Gantioler *et al.*, 2010; IEEP, 2010), could become the future of the network.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The study of the discursive dimension of actors' (dis)empowerment in N2000 showed that changes in actors' (dis)empowerment mirror with a quite high resemblance the trends of the dynamics linking the discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy. For this reason I can conclude that these dynamics have a relevant influence in shaping actors' (dis)empowerment within N2000, confirming the great role given to discourses in the theoretical part of my thesis. The main element confirming the theory underpinning this thesis is that the actors that support or are addressed by specific discourse(s) are strongly empowered in the phase(s) where the discourse(s) dominate the N2000 discursive strategy.

Dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy dominate the HD's drafting and the sites' selection, where only traditional actors of the EU system and actors holding scientific knowledge are able to influence policy processes at the European level. The fact that these are the only dynamics actually influencing the problem definition phase of N2000 has

important repercussions for the (dis)empowerment of actors in the whole N2000 process. Actors empowered by these dynamics in the HD's drafting will be strongly empowered during the whole process of N2000 implementation. Important examples are the EC and ENGOS, who develop an alliance based on concepts proper of the Europeanization and Technocracy discourses during the early stages of N2000 implementation. This alliance remains powerful for the whole history of N2000. EC and ENGOS are the actors which are more strongly empowered in the N2000 process according to Table 7 in section 5.2. This table shows that the EC and ENGOS do not present other elements of disempowerment than the general lack of funds affecting the implementation of the network. Other actors strongly empowered by the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy, and who hold authority during the whole N2000 process, are scientific institutions and experts. The dominance of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy in the problem definition phase of N2000 has also repercussions for the actors disempowered in this phase. Socio-economic actors are not involved in the drafting of the HD, and they do not have a meaningful role during the sites' selection. These actors will manage to influence policy processes related to N2000 only during the designation and management phase, when the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy lose importance in the N2000 discursive strategy.

During the designation and management phase socio-economic actors see their level of empowerment increasing through their gradual inclusion in N2000 policy processes, and the gradual recognition of their perspectives as valuable in the implementation of N2000. This increased empowerment is influenced by dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation, which introduce the need to involve affected actors displayed in the N2000 discursive strategy of these years. The dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation are relevant already during the sites' selection phase. In this phase however they meaningfully influence only the empowerment of MSs and ENGOS. These dynamics become dominant during the designation and management phase, when a much wider variety of stakeholders is involved in N2000 policy processes. These processes include consultation conferences, meetings of WGs and workshops dedicated to the network.

During the designation and management phase, also the dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Technocracy are dominant and influence actors' empowerment. Under the influence of these dynamics, the economic value of nature becomes more important than other economic values attributed to the European territory in the framework established by N2000. These dynamics empower economic actors who are able to pursue this economic value of nature by exploiting the concept of ecosystem services, and the actors who are able to determine the value of ecosystem services.

Two sets of dynamics linking discursive components which I identify as relevant and even dominant in some periods of the history of the N2000 discursive strategy do not have a clear relation with actors' (dis)empowerment. These are the dynamics linking Europeanization, Participation and Sustainable Development which dominate the sites' selection phase, and dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Sustainable Development which dominate the designation and management phase. These dynamics at the same time empower and disempower the categories of actors which subscribe to or are addressed by the involved discourses. For example under dynamics linking Europeanization, Sustainable Development and Participation socio-economic actors are called to participate to the N2000 sites' selection but they are not able to influence policy processes in this phase of the N2000 process. Under the influence of dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Sustainable Development, economic actors are empowered when their activities are strongly economically driven and generate high revenues, while they are disempowered when their activities are more related to socio-economic factors than strictly economic ones. I relate this phenomenon to ambiguous relation

of Sustainable Development with the (dis)empowerment of the actors addressed by the discourse. As shown in section 5.3.2, Sustainable Development does not clearly influence actors' (dis)empowerment because of the attempt of empowering economic, social and environmental actors at the same time, which is the core of the discourse. For Sustainable Development, and the dynamics which link this discourse to other discourses, an ideal and too inclusive approach toward the actors to empower translates in the impossibility to clearly empower or disempower these actors in the practice.

CHAPTER 6:
***Conclusions, discussion and
reflections***

6.1 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This thesis applies a discourse analysis approach and analyses the importance of discourses in shaping contemporary nature conservation policy, by focusing on one of the emblems of the European realm: the N2000 network. N2000 is treated as a strategy developed by the EU for the solution of the biodiversity loss problem. I conceive the N2000 strategy as influenced by five main discourses, i.e. principles and governance/political trends which are institutionalized, accepted by society and transformed into practice in the contemporary European nature conservation policy. These discourses are: Europeanization, Technocracy, Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism. Because based on elements proper of these discourses, I consider N2000 as carrying the properties and characteristics of the 5 discourses listed above.

This study shows that and how discourses strongly influence the legislative and policy documents constructing the official image of N2000, the processes taking place during the history of the network, and the implications of N2000 for the actors involved in or affected by the implementation of the network. The main conclusions of the thesis are the following:

- 1) Discourses shape meanings related to N2000; actors' roles, interests, strategies, interactions and power dynamics in the implementation of the network; and actors' (dis)empowerment in the framework established by the network. These results strongly confirm the theory on which the thesis is based.
- 2) Single discourses do not shape the elements of point 1) in isolation, but in conjunction with other discourses. Discourses indeed establish dynamics which link themes shared by the discourses involved or bridging factors among discourses. These dynamics shape the elements of point 1) according to the principles and governance/political trends characterizing the involved discourses.
- 3) The development of discursive dynamics and the hegemony of these dynamics in shaping the elements of point 1) change along the timeline of N2000 implementation. For example, the dynamics linking discursive components and dominating the legislative text of the HD are not the same dynamics which dominate later stages of N2000 implementation.
- 4) The changes in discursive components' dynamics influencing the N2000 discursive strategy during the different stages of the N2000 process are not random but follow a precise trend.
- 5) The trend of the discursive components' dynamics influencing the N2000 discursive strategy during the various phases of the N2000 policy process is strongly determined by the discursive dimension of the contemporary international and European nature conservation arenas. The discourses which are dominant in the international and European contexts during specific time periods also influence the N2000 discursive strategy in the same periods.

In the following three sections I report on the specific conclusions of the three research questions of the thesis.

6.1.1 Conclusions to the first research question

The first research question of the thesis deals with the official image of N2000, as reflected in the interpretation of the network the EC provides in the legislative and policy documents related to N2000. The analysis of the official image of N2000 identifies Technocracy and Europeanization as the dominant discourses. The way how N2000 frames the biodiversity loss problem relies heavily on technocratic notions such as the concepts that "science speaks the truth to power" and the Precautionary Principle, and on factors proper of Europeanization

such as Discretionary Freedom, Principle of Integration, Subsidiarity Principle, Politics of Information and Common Identity (see sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 of this report). Technocracy and Europeanization mutually reinforce each other in the dynamics linking these two discourses and influencing the official image of N2000. Under the influence of these dynamics, actions taken at Community level to conserve biodiversity are justified because of scientific concerns for the loss of biodiversity. Under the influence of the same dynamics, the technocratic approach toward biodiversity loss encompassed in N2000 finds an application through the established system of relations among European actors proper of Europeanization.

Other discursive components are also visible in the official image of N2000, but are less influent than Europeanization and Technocracy. Sustainable Development for example has a medium relevance for the official image of N2000, shaping the idea that environmental concerns and socio-economic interests should be integrated. Participation and Neoliberalism have a low influence on the official image of N2000, weakly influencing respectively the acknowledgement of the presence of socio-economic activities going on in and around N2000 sites and the attention toward financial aspects concerning to the network. These non-dominant discursive components develop dynamics which repetitively link them to Europeanization. These are the dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation; the dynamics linking Europeanization and Sustainable Development; the dynamics linking Europeanization, Participation and Sustainable Development; the dynamics linking Europeanization and Neoliberalism. These dynamics develop around themes shared by the discursive components involved, such as the attention toward the public shared by Europeanization and Participation; the attention toward local governments shared by Europeanization and Sustainable Development; and the inclusion of state and non-state actors encompassed in Europeanization and Neoliberalism (see Figure 3 in section 2.2). The existence of such shared themes between non-dominant discourses (Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism) and dominant ones (Europeanization), allows the non-dominant discourses entering the official image of N2000 and contributing to construct the framing of the biodiversity loss problem.

The discursive structure of the official image of N2000 partially reflects discourses developed at the international level, as well as interlaces among discourses identified in this context. Indeed, some of the dynamics which influence the official image of N2000, and link elements proper of different discursive components, display through the insertion of specific co-occurring themes in N2000 appearing among the ones displayed in Figure 3 of section 2.2. These co-occurring themes are identified basing on the international literature on these discourses and their linkages (WCED, 1987; Dryzek, 1997; Fischer 2000; Fung and Wright, 2003; Connelly and Smith, 2003; Paavola, 2004; Jensen and Richardson 2004; Corburn, 2005; Cornwall and Brock, 2005). Clear examples are the dynamics linking Europeanization, Participation and Sustainable Development. These dynamics developed around the following internationally recognized co-occurring themes, which here I summarize in short sentences:

- "Local (state and non-state) actors are the most suited to deal with local problems"
- "Appropriate action at the appropriate level"
- "Public involvement is an important input for policy-making"
- "Power not centralized in the nation state but distributed to lower levels of government and to non-state actors"

These are principles which are proper of all the three discursive components involved, and represent a common ground for the actors subscribing to the three discourses.

Some other dynamics linking discursive components and influencing the official image of N2000, instead, developed in the specific context of the network. These are the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy, and the dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Europeanization. These dynamics reflect elements bridging the involved discourses which have not been widely recognized in the international arena, and which therefore I consider characteristic of the N2000 context. Especially the dominant dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy can be considered specific of the official image of N2000 and, as will be shown in the next session, of a big part of the N2000 implementation process.

6.1.2 Conclusions to the second research question

The outcomes of a complex strategy like N2000 do not only depend on the legislations and policy documents underpinning the strategy, but also on the processes taking place during the implementation. Therefore, my thesis does not only concentrate on the official image of N2000 but also on the processes taking place during the design and implementation of the N2000 discursive strategy. The second research question of the thesis studies the history of N2000 at the European level by focusing on the influence of the discursive components and their dynamics on the N2000 discursive strategy in different stages of the process. In order to carry out this study I divided the N2000 policy process in 5 milestones. The study of these milestones shows that different dynamics linking discursive components influenced the N2000 process in different moments of the history of the network.

The first milestone I analyzed is the drafting of the HD, covering the years 1988-1992 and representing the problem framing phase of the N2000 policy process. This milestone was dominated by the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy. Elements proper of these two discourses were used at the European level for the selection of the actors to consult and to involve in negotiations. Moreover these dynamics influenced the types of knowledge which were considered as valuable in the N2000 discursive strategy of that period. These results show a clear link between the first years of the N2000 policy process and the framing of the biodiversity loss problem in the official image of N2000, in which dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy are dominant. However, the other non-dominant dynamics influencing the official image of N2000 (the dynamics involving Participation, Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism) did not influence the HD's drafting. This is surprising considering that the directive represents the legal basis for N2000, around which the official image of the network revolves. This situation makes clear that some of the dynamics linking discursive components have been influencing the official image of N2000 independently from the policy processes taking place during the problem definition phase of the N2000 history. Discourses not influencing policy processes in the HD's drafting entered the final legal text of the HD and shaped the official image of N2000. This shows that the discursive link between policy processes and policy outcomes is not straightforward and often new discourses not relevant in policy processes can be identified in the outcomes of these processes.

The second milestone I analyzed is represented by the biogeographical seminars, which started in 1996 and were carried out quite frequently until the early 2000s. In these years, the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy were still dominating the N2000 discursive strategy. In particular, they influenced the criteria for the selection of sites, as well as the role of actors included in the seminars. This milestone was also influenced also by dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation, which are not dominant but still relevant for the N2000 discursive strategy of these years. These dynamics allowed the Participation discourse to enter N2000 policy processes for the first time in the history of the network. Since the last years of this milestone and under the influence of these dynamics, socio-

economic actors were included as observant in European process of the selection of sites to include in N2000.

The third milestone I analyzed is the conference of Bath, organized in 1998 to discuss problems arisen with N2000 during the sites' selection. One of the problems assessed in the conference is the lack of meaningful inclusion of socio-economic actors during the early years of N2000. The dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy lost their influence on the N2000 discursive strategy during this milestone of the N2000 process, and were substituted by the dynamics linking Sustainable Development, Europeanization and Participation. These dynamics increased the role of socio-economic actors and their interests, which were directly addressed in the conference of Bath. During the conference of Bath these actors are provided the possibility to actively participate in policy processes related to N2000 for the first time in the history of the network. However, the fact that the conclusions of the conference of Bath did not have real consequences for the following steps of the N2000 history allows expressing doubts on the meaningfulness of the participation of socio-economic actors in this milestone. This milestone was also influenced by dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Sustainable Development. These dynamics were not dominant, but they were visible in the emphasis of the conference on the economic implications of N2000, rather than on the social consequences of the network's establishment.

The fourth milestone I studied is the first wave of concern for financing N2000, covering the years 2001-2004. This milestone presents more complex sets of dynamics than the previous ones. This milestone was influenced by dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation, which were dominant in the N2000 discursive strategy of these years. The role of Participation became important when management issues related to N2000 started to increase in importance. The EC in this period organized a consultation procedure at the European level to know the opinion of different actors on financing aspects related to N2000. The first wave of concern for financing N2000 was also influenced by dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Sustainable Development, which became dominant in this period of the N2000 process. The focus over economic rather than social consequences of N2000 implementation became stronger and stronger during this milestone. Moreover, this milestone was influence by dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Technocracy. These dynamics were not dominant, but influenced the alliance between actors holding an eco-centric approach to nature, and actors holding economic interests over the natural environment. This alliance focused on proposing the creation of a fund expressly dedicated to N2000 to support the management of the network.

The fifth milestone I considered is the second wave of concern for financing N2000, covering the years 2008-2010. This milestone shows similarities with the previous one, presenting the same dynamics linking discursive components, but with a different dominance on the N2000 discursive strategy. The dynamics linking Participation and Europeanization were not anymore dominant in this milestone, but influenced the structure of the consultation processes taking place on the financing issue. The dominant dynamics were the ones involving the Neoliberalism discursive component, and were related to the concept of ecosystem services which was widely exploited in the N2000 discursive strategy of these years. These are the dynamics linking Neoliberalism to Sustainable Development on the one side and to Technocracy on the other side.

The study of the N2000 process shows that the influence of the discursive components' dynamics on the N2000 discursive strategy changes following a rather clear trend in the history of the network. Although there is a consistent degree of continuity between the different milestones, shown by the fact that each milestone presents dynamics which were

influential also in the previous milestone (see Figure 10 in section 4.7), there are also clear shifts in composition and dominance of the discursive components' dynamics. For example, the dominance of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy affected both the first and second milestone. The second milestone however was also influenced by other non-dominant dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation. These last dynamics influenced the third milestone including also elements of Sustainable Development, and became dominant. The third milestone presented also non-dominant dynamics linking Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism. In the fourth milestone, the dominant dynamics of the previous milestone drop the Sustainable Development discourse and remain dominant linking only Europeanization and Participation. The non-dominant dynamics of the third milestone became dominant in the fourth milestone. Moreover, the fourth milestone is also influenced by non-dominant dynamics linking Technocracy and Neoliberalism. The fifth milestone presents the same dynamics than the fourth one, but with a different level of dominance. This description makes clear that the shifting balance of the discursive components in the history of N2000 is continuous and it is evolving, therewith shaping the implementation process. Each milestone of the N2000 process represents a development of the previous milestone and a preview of the next milestone. At the same time however each milestone presents new discursive characteristics that clearly distinguish it from previous and future milestones.

The analysis of the trends of the discursive components' dynamics during the history of N2000 is backed up in this thesis by the study of the discursive dimension of the contemporary international and European nature conservation arenas. The timeline inserted in annex 4 of this report represents the discursive background in which the N2000 discursive strategy developed. This thesis identifies a synergy between nature conservation worldwide, at the European level, and in the specific context of N2000 during different time periods. This synergy is made clear by the discursive similarities which can be identified in the comparison between the timeline in annex 4 (representing the international and European nature conservation arenas) and Figure 10 in section 4.7 (representing the history of N2000). This synergy guides the trends of the discursive components' dynamics in N2000, which is not randomly shaped but mirrors the international and European discursive trends.

6.1.3 Conclusions to the third research question

The analysis of the discursive dimension of N2000 is not completed by the study of the discursive construction of the biodiversity loss problem encompassed in the official image of N2000, and by the analysis of the influence of discourses over policy processes related to the network. An important part of the analysis is the study of the implications of N2000 as perceived by the actors involved in and affected by the implementation of the network. Focus of the third research question of my thesis is the level of (dis)empowerment of actors in the framework established by N2000, and the way in which the changes in discursive components' dynamics influence this (dis)empowerment. In order to study the implications of the N2000 discursive strategy, I divided the N2000 process in three stages: the HD's drafting, the sites' selection, and the designation and management phases. I categorized the actors involved in and affected by the implementation of N2000 in nine categories. These categories are: I) EC- DG Environment; II) MSs; III) regional and local administrations; IV) ENGOs; V) scientific institutions and experts; VI) landowners, farmers, foresters, hunters and fishermen; VII) tourism sector; VIII) business and industry sectors; IX) port operators.

My analysis showed that some of the dynamics linking discursive components have clear consequences for actors' (dis)empowerment. For example, during the HD's drafting which was dominated by the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy the actors which

were mostly empowered were the ones holding scientific knowledge (categories IV and V), and the main actors of the EU system (EC and MSs). During the sites' selection, the dominance of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy empowered the same actors empowered in the previous stage. Moreover, the dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation partially empowered local actors whose activities in and around N2000 sites were acknowledged in policy processes like the conference of Bath. In the designation and management phase, different dynamics became dominant and empowered different categories of actors. The dynamics linking Europeanization and Participation empowered societal actors like the rural stakeholders belonging to category VI, which are recognized at the European level as responsible actors in the implementation of N2000. The dynamics linking Technocracy and Neoliberalism empowered actors holding the scientific and economic knowledge (like categories IV, V, VII, VIII and IX) needed for identifying, measuring and emphasizing ecosystem services provided by N2000.

The influence of two sets of dynamics does not have clear implications for actors' (dis)empowerment. These are the dynamics involving Sustainable Development, and linking this discourse on the one side to Participation and Europeanization, and on the other side to Neoliberalism. These dynamics introduced both elements of empowerment and disempowerment for the actors addressed by or subscribing to the involved discourses. For example, dynamics linking Sustainable Development, Participation and Europeanization in the sites' selection phase empowered category VI, which was involved in the biogeographical seminars after 2002. The actors belonging to this category however were not able to influence policy processes because they did not conform to the scientific rationale of the HD. Dynamics linking Sustainable Development and Neoliberalism during the designation and management phase empowered actors who carry out strongly economically driven activities in and around N2000 sites, who were included in policy processes like the WGs and workshops on N2000. However, other types of economic actors like farmers and foresters, whose activities are driven more by culture and traditions than by maximization of the economic profit, still perceived the exclusion of their values and interests from the framework established by N2000 during the designation and management phase. Moreover, the superiority of the economic value of nature over other economic interests for the natural environment, and the lack of a concrete possibility of compensation for loss of income contributed to create a feeling of aversion of these actors toward N2000. The dynamics linking Sustainable Development to other discourses have an ambiguous relation with actors' (dis)empowerment, since Sustainable Development as a discourse encompasses actors' empowerment but restricts it by balancing scientific, social and economic interests over the natural environment. A similar balance is hard to implement in practice, and as hard is the simultaneous empowerment of actors with contrasting interests. Under the influence of these dynamics, the actors addressed by the Sustainable Development discourse are at the same time empowered and disempowered in the framework established by N2000, and this makes for the ambiguous relation with actors' (dis)empowerment of the dynamics linking Sustainable Development to other discourses.

6.2 DISCUSSION

This thesis shows that the influence of specific discourses on the HD's text and on the other legal documents and manuals produced by the EC had strong consequences for the whole history of N2000. For example, the strong dominance of dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy in the legal text of the HD was the basis for the development of an alliance between EC-DG Environment, scientific institutions and experts, and ENGOS (Weber and

Christophersen, 2002; Coffey and Richartz, 2003; EEA 2011). This alliance has been hegemonic in the whole implementation of N2000 and has been based on a common interest in safeguarding European biodiversity. As a result of this alliance, the EC, scientific institutions and experts and ENGOs are among the actors which have been most strongly empowered during the whole process. Another example is the low relevance of the Participation discourse on the HD and on the official interpretation of the network provided by the EC, which resulted in the exclusion of socio-economic actors during the first ten years of N2000 implementation (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; Coffey and Richartz, 2003). It is not until the designation and management phase of the N2000 process that these actors meaningfully entered policy processes related to N2000 (Weber and Christophersen, 2002). These examples show that the system of European environmental governance encompassed in N2000 is characterized by a form of "rigidity" (Luhmann, 1989) which displays in the consequences of the discursive construction of the HD's legal texts on the implementation of the network.

However, the formal texts alone are not sufficient to understand the meaning of a complex policy like N2000 (Yanow, 1997). The analysis of the N2000 process showed also that from a discursive perspective the text of the HD and the manuals interpreting it are rather loose from policy processes and events taking place during the history of N2000. This result shows that, next to the rigidity feature exposed above, the N2000 history is characterized by a form of "flexibility" (Luhmann, 1989), which displays in the discursive divergence affecting formal texts, policy processes and policy outcomes. On the one side, the legal text of the HD presents a wide variety of discursive components dynamics, while the negotiation process giving life to the directive has been influenced by one sole set of dynamics (linking Europeanization and Technocracy). On the other side, the N2000 implementation process especially during the designation and management phase is dominated by dynamics which are not present or are not dominant in the HD and in the official image of N2000. During the implementation of N2000 dynamics involving Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism, mutually linking these discourses or connecting them to Europeanization and Technocracy, grew of importance and became dominant in the N2000 discursive strategy of the last years. The importance of these dynamics substituted the hegemony of the dynamics linking Europeanization and Technocracy which dominated the first years of N2000 implementation. These results make clear that discourses can contribute in shaping the implementation of a policy, rather independently from the discursive structure of legal and policy texts which underpin this implementation.

Under the influence of the dynamics involving Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism especially during the designation and management phase, socio-economic actors were recognized at the European level as key actors for the management of N2000 sites, involved in policy processes and addressed by documents produced by the EC on N2000. The entrance of socio-economic actors in the framework established by N2000 represents an important policy change in the history of the network, which until now was dominated by actors of the Europeanization system and actors holding scientific knowledge. The enhanced role of socio-economic actors during the last ten years of the history of N2000 reflects the changing approach of the EC toward environmental governance in general (EC, 2001c) and toward the implementation of N2000 in particular (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.). An example is the recognition at the European level of the essential role of socio-economic actors for the stages following the designation of N2000 sites, and involving the management and financing of the network (Braat, 2010 pers. comm.). These are the actors who have to deal with N2000 on a daily basis, and their acceptance of the network is perceived as essential for the success of conservation measures. The EC tried to enhance the acceptance

of N2000 among socio-economic actors by explicitly acknowledging their views and interpretations related to N2000. Some of these views and interpretations are encompassed in the Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism discourses. Examples are: the importance of socio-economic claims on the natural environment; the request for involvement in policy processes by socio-economic actors; and the search for new financing sources for the network. The attempts to enhance acceptance are most clear in the creation of WGs and organization of workshops dedicated to the network, occasions in which the N2000 network has been explained to stakeholders, and stakeholders' interpretations have been gradually assimilated in the framework of N2000. The WGs and workshops have been aimed at producing a consensual interpretation of N2000 which satisfies both the actors who are traditional missionaries of N2000 (EC, ENGOs and scientific institutions and experts) and the socio-economic actors which have been strongly opposing the network.

The increased role of socio-economic actors in the framework established by N2000 during the last ten years reflects also the organization of these actors in interest groups who increasingly opened offices in Brussels to lobby at the European level (Weber and Christophersen, 2002; Stuffmann, 2010 pers. comm.). In that way the interest groups obtained a European representation and reached a high level of involvement in policy processes related to N2000. Groups representing socio-economic interests also started protest movements to show their aversion toward the implementation of N2000 (Alphandéry and Fortier, 2001; Hiedanpää, 2002). The main reasons for this aversion are the changes in livelihood and the economic losses imposed by the implementation of the network on the European territory. In this perspective, through their lobbying activity and the protests socio-economic actors strived toward a higher level of empowerment in the framework established by N2000 and made their voice be heard at the European level of policy-making.

However, in this thesis the changes occurring in the implementation of a policy are not purely attributed to actors' free will. For example, the increased role of socio-economic actors in the implementation of N2000 during the last ten years cannot simply be attributed to the EC recognizing the need of involving these actors for the success of the network. Neither can this increased role be simply attributed to the intentional effort of socio-economic actors to influence N2000 and include their interests and perspectives. Instead this thesis emphasizes the role of discourses in shaping actors' perspectives and constructing their interests and strategies (Foucault, 1980; Hajer, 1995; Fischer 2000) during the implementation of N2000. Actors can manipulate discourses and their free will is still determinant in the design and implementation of a policy like N2000 (Hajer, 1995; 2005b; 2006). However the extent to which actors can intentionally and fully determine policy changes with their actions is limited by the general structure of the discursive framework underpinning the context in which actions and policy changes take place (Foucault, 1980; 1994). Based on this perspective, the increased role of socio-economic actors is explained in this thesis by the changing influence of principles and governance/political trends in this discursive structure. In particular, this increased role can be explained by the increased importance of Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism in the last ten years of N2000 implementation.

The analysis of the wider nature conservation background in which the N2000 implementation took place has made clear that the enhanced importance of Sustainable Development, Participation and Neoliberalism reflects wider trends in the international and European environmental governance. In the international and European contexts, as well as in the specific situation of N2000, Sustainable Development is strongly influent until the early 2000s, Participation shapes policy processes until the half of the decade, and Neoliberalism plays its bigger role in the last years. These results are obtained by comparing the description of the international and European nature conservation policy milestones included in annex 4

of this report with the timeline of N2000 implementation of Figure 10 in section 4.7. These results show that, in nature conservation policy, discourses generated and affirmed at the international level in different time periods also influence the European arena and the specific context of N2000 implementation in the same time periods. This influence occurs partially independently from elements like actors' intentions and strategies, and is like a framework which structures and shapes these elements as well as the resulting policy processes and policy outcomes (Foucault, 1980; 1994). Actors can act within this framework, and also partially modify it to reach their goals (Hajer, 1995; 2005b; 2006). However this thesis shows that the discursive framework of a specific policy context, and the way how it is constructed following international discursive trends, is relevant, next to the actions of the actors involved, for understanding this policy context. This confirms the theoretical notions underpinning the thesis and displayed in section 2.1. Unveiling the changing discursive construction of N2000 allowed me showing that the discursive components' dynamics influencing the N2000 discursive strategy are as important for deeply understanding the implementation of the network as legal and policy texts underpinning the network and as the occurrence of policy events. The discursive approach I applied in my thesis allowed me exploring a new insight in policy changes taking place during the implementation of N2000 and their causes.

The methods of discourse analysis I selected for the thesis allowed me demonstrating that discourses do not influence N2000 and its implementation in isolation, but in conjunction with other discursive components. The discursive components of the N2000 discursive strategy develop dynamics linking co-occurring themes or relating bridging elements proper of the discursive components involved. Because of the involvement in these dynamics, the discursive components sometimes mutually reinforce each other, and sometimes limit each other's influence on the N2000 discursive strategy. Often, the development of these dynamics allows discourses which are not dominant in a certain time period linking to hegemonic discourses and anyway influencing the N2000 discursive strategy of that period. The sets of dynamics influencing the N2000 discursive strategy change along the history of N2000 as a result of the interplay and struggles of these dynamics. Mostly the following situation occurs: when a dominant set of dynamics loses dominance another set of dynamics, which was already influencing the N2000 discursive strategy but with a non-dominant role, substitutes it becoming hegemonic. This allows concluding that dynamics linking discursive components do not start unexpectedly to influence policy and determine policy changes, but their influence is part of a process. From a discursive perspective each phase of the N2000 history represents a development of previous phases, and a preview of the next phases. This idea can be linked to the concept of "path dependency", which refers to the existence in governance of legacies from the past. These legacies work to restrict possible developments in policy processes (North, 2005). However, as confirmed by my study, this "path dependence" cannot fully determine the evolution of policy processes in N2000. It represents an element of rigidity which is counterbalanced by elements of flexibility like the possibility for actors to partially influence and steer N2000 policy processes (Luhmann, 1989).

The analysis I carried out has demonstrated a trend in the discursive construction of the different phases of the N2000 process. This trend reflects the elements of rigidity and flexibility described above (Luhmann, 1989), since it follows international and European discursive trends but at the same time is influenced by discursive dynamics typical of the N2000 context. The identification of this trend allows for making some inferences on future stages of N2000 implementation. The last years of N2000 implementation are characterized by an increasing dominance of Neoliberalism in the N2000 discursive strategy (Haslett *et al.*, 2010). On the one side Neoliberalism links to Sustainable Development, influencing the

emphasis over economic aspects and the attention toward economic actors encompassed in the concept of ecosystem services. On the other side, Neoliberalism links to Technocracy, influencing the superiority of the economic value of nature to other economic interests on the territory, and the quantitative approach toward ecosystem services. Based on the trend identified in the discursive structure of the N2000 discursive strategy and on the current situation, it can be expected that Neoliberalism will be a dominant discourse in the future stages of N2000 implementation. This expectation is strengthened by the shifting conservation focus, from habitats and species (which represent European endangered biodiversity) to ecosystems (which provide goods and services), which is currently taking place in scientific and policy debates (Haslett *et al.*, 2010). According to some sources, the conservation of ecosystems and the enhancement of their services are only possible through a conservation approach which is more flexible than the one encompassed in the HD. The annexes of the HD are perceived as rigid scientific elements which limit nature conservation to static components of ecosystems, without recognizing the dynamicity and versatility of these ecosystems (Haslett *et al.*, 2010). Similar ideas on the annexes of the HD and the approach of N2000 toward nature conservation were already diffused in the scientific arena during past phases of the N2000 history (Amirante, 2003; Schaminee, 2010 pers. comm.). However it is only during the last years of N2000 implementation that these claims entered the N2000 policy realm, supported by the diffusion of the concept of ecosystem services which is at the core of Neoliberalism.

In the current debates focused on the role of ecosystems in nature conservation and on the failure of the HD in addressing the versatility of these ecosystems, different actors envisaged the modification of the directive (Balkenende, 2009; Haslett *et al.*, 2010). This modification should be focused on the conservation of wide ecosystems composed by natural and anthropic elements which collaborate in the provision of services. A similar modification would allow socio-economic actors being actually involved in the management of the natural environment, and being able to carry out the activities which they depend on in accordance with European laws. This situation would enhance the possibility to obtain ecosystem services from N2000 (Balkenende, 2009; Haslett *et al.*, 2010) and would show the triumph of Neoliberalism in the discursive framework of N2000. Similar relevant discussions on the importance of ecosystems and their services and the need of modifying the HD are just started, and are expected to continue in the next years of N2000 implementation (Haslett *et al.*, 2010). The foreseen importance of the role ecosystems and their services in next years confirms the expectations of the continuing dominance of Neoliberalism in the future of N2000.

Current debates on the importance of ecosystem services and the need of changing the approach of N2000 allow making inferences on the way Neoliberalism will be influencing the N2000 discursive strategy in the future. For example, I can speculate on the fact that Neoliberalism might link to other two discourses which are relevant but not dominant in the last years of the N2000 policy process: Europeanization and Participation. Dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Europeanization could result in the top-down application at the European level of market based instruments aimed at generating revenues for the management of N2000. These market based instruments could for example take the form of European green taxes related to the conservation of ecosystems (IEEP, 2010; Gantioler *et al.*, 2010; 2010b). Another market based instrument which could be used at the European level under the influence of these dynamics is the application of a system of transferable or marketable permits for the depletion of ecosystems. A similar system is supposed to induce socio-economic actors to reduce their negative impact over nature, similarly to the European Union Emission Trading Scheme applied to the emission of greenhouse gases (Christiansen and

Wettestad, 2003). Instead, dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Participation could result in the establishment of bottom-up and local partnerships between governmental and non-governmental actors for the management and financing of N2000. These partnerships could exploit the provision of ecosystem goods and services provided by N2000, sharing responsibilities and revenues. The partnerships could make use of market based instruments such as labeling, certification and licenses (IEEP, 2010; Gantioler *et al.*, 2010; 2010b). The revenues derived from these instruments could satisfy the economic interests of actors carrying out activities in or around N2000 sites, and the need of financing sources for the management of the network affecting local and national governments.

Despite the neoliberal requests of modifying the HD to include ecosystem services and empower economic actors, the EC does not believe that there is a need to change the legal text of the directive (Barroso, 2009). The modification of the HD's legal text is an extremely laborious and time consuming exercise which, since 1992, has never been carried out if not in rare occasions like the accession of new MSs in the EU. The modifications applied in the past to the HD did not alter principles and concepts of the directive but, in the case of the new accessions, they only added species or habitat types to the annexes. Most likely, the legal text of the directive will not be modified to include the neoliberal top-down and/or bottom-up forces described in the paragraph above, but these forces might be incorporated in the N2000 discursive strategy through interpretative manuals and policy documents produced on the network.

When influencing the N2000 discursive strategy through the manuals and documents on N2000 produced by the EC or by other actors, dynamics linking on the one side Neoliberalism and Europeanization and on the other side Neoliberalism and Participation will have strong implications for the stakeholders of the N2000 context. These two sets of dynamics will work to strongly empower actors with an economic potential, whose (dis)empowerment is ambiguously influenced by dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Sustainable Development in the current phase of N2000 implementation. Actors who can invest in ecosystem services derivable from N2000 sites (like business corporations, industries, and the tourism sector) will acquire authority in policy processes related to N2000 (Kosoy and Corbera, 2010). These actors, because of the strongly economically driven activities they carry out, will be the protagonists of policy events and will be able to insert their views and perspectives in the N2000 discursive strategy. Neoliberalism indeed encompasses a high level of empowerment for economic non-state actors (Dryzek, 1997). Its dominance in the discursive construction of N2000 can increase the variety of actors included in N2000 policy processes compared to the situation in which Technocracy is dominant and excludes all actors not holding scientific knowledge (see for example the HD's drafting and the sites' selection phases).

However Neoliberalism, with its focus on economic aspects and its lack of attention toward social issues (McAfee and Shapiro, 2010; Kosoy and Corbera, 2010), encompasses also the disempowerment of actors who carry out economic activities driven by social values like culture and traditions, rather than by maximization of the economic profit (McAfee and Shapiro, 2010). This is for example the case of farmers, foresters and fishermen which in most cases will not be able to privately invest in ecosystem services. These actors would be strongly disempowered in a situation in which dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Europeanization are dominant, and influence the establishment of a taxation system or an allowances-based system for nature conservation in Europe. These actors would be indeed disadvantaged compared to strongly economically driven actors who would be able to afford to pay high taxes and buy allowances to go on undisturbed with their activities (Brenner and Theodore, 2007).

Instead, socio-economic actors like farmers, foresters and fishermen could reach a higher level of empowerment under the influence of dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Participation. Participation indeed would give an inclusive nuance to neoliberal principles, increasing the attention of the N2000 discursive strategy toward social issues. These dynamics would empower local socio-economic actors, who could establish partnerships with governments or other actors with a stronger economic potential (Linder, 1999). These partnerships would allow governmental, economic and social actors to be empowered in the framework established by N2000. Governments and actors with a stronger economic potential could provide the financial resources necessary to invest in ecosystem services, and local socio-economic actors could manage the ecosystems focusing on the provision of services (Poncelet, 2001). All the parties involved would benefit from the revenues obtained from the exploitation of ecosystem services, increasing their level of empowerment in the framework established by N2000. However dynamics linking Neoliberalism and Participation will most likely subjugate strong social claims encompassed in Participation, since the inclusion of actors in policy processes will be bounded to the economic relations of these actors with the natural environment (Brenner and Theodore, 2007). Also scientific claims over the environment, and the actors who are interested in the intrinsic value of nature and consider this as a reason to protect it, will be excluded from the N2000 discursive strategy as a consequence of the dominance of these dynamics. This situation would undermine current European nature conservation goals, which could in future be directed toward the exclusive protection of the economically derivable elements of nature and forget about concepts like biodiversity and sustainability (Mcafee and Shapiro, 2010).

6.3 REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDY

The first important reflection on the thesis regards the discourse analysis approach I applied to the study of N2000. By choosing this method of analysis, I expected to reach new insights in the process of design and implementation of the network, which have not been addressed by scholars who used other methods of analysis for the same policy process. My expectations have been confirmed by the practical experience I had with discourse analysis during my thesis. The exploration of the N2000 context from a discursive perspective allowed me developing an unconventional perspective over the network and its implementation, which unveils interesting aspects not described before. As first, the application of a meaningful discourse analysis required me to study the whole policy process related to N2000, from the design of the network to the latest developments. This type of study was needed in order to explore the changes in the discursive construction of the network. Many other studies on the network only concentrate on a specific time period or specific events of N2000 implementation (Verschuuren, 2004; Paavola, 2004; Palerm, 2006; Gibbs *et al.*, 2007; Mehtälä and Vuorisalo, 2007; Apostolopoulou and Pantis, 2009). The completeness of the historical analysis I carried out in my thesis represents one of the strengths of my study. As second, my study confirmed the theoretical notions underpinning the thesis which reflect over the social construction through discourses of humans' perspectives over the world, and of the interactions among actors (Hall, 1993; Hajer, 1995; Fischer, 1998; Hajer, 2006; Hajer and Versteeg, 2005; Herrnstein-Smith, 2005). N2000 is not an exception compared to other policy realms: in this context like in others, discourses are perceived as shaping actors' perspectives, their interests and strategies in policy-making, and the related policy outcomes. As third, my study showed that the discursive structure of N2000 changes along the years of the network's implementation, and this change follows a specific trend. This trend strongly mirrors discursive trends at the international and European levels. As a consequence of this trend, the implementation of N2000 is subject to a sort of "path dependence" (Mahoney,

2000), insofar as the structure of policy events occurring during the implementation are partially pre-determined by the shape taken by the discursive trend in a specific historical period, and assume this shape with a partially predictable degree of similarity. This discursive trend represents a frame in which the actors can act, and which can be partly modified by actors, but which limits actors' actions through the discourses dominating it in certain time periods. These results allow reaching a new understanding of the N2000 implementation process, and making inferences on the causes behind policy changes in this process. Because of the results I obtained through my analysis, I can state that these causes are most of all of a discursive nature.

The use of a discourse analysis approach did not only have advantages for my study, but also disadvantages. The main disadvantage has been the need to select the discourses which are more significant for N2000 in the multitude of discourses recognizable in the international and European nature conservation arenas. This selection was necessary in order to simplify the analysis of N2000 in discursive terms, but led to the exclusion of discourses which are central in many policy debates and processes. An example is the Governance discourse, which is not included in the theoretical framework of my thesis. Many aspects of N2000 and its implementation are linkable to this discourse, which also in literature has been often associated to N2000 (MC Cauley, 2008; Keulartz, 2008; Beunen and Duinveld, 2010). Examples are the distribution of nature conservation responsibilities to governmental and non-governmental actors at different levels (European, national and local), and the strength of bottom-up forces developed during the implementation of the network. Using Governance as discursive component of the N2000 discursive strategy would have allowed describing some of the topics treated in this thesis with more precision. However, many of the factors included in the Governance discourse present strong similarities with elements proper of other discursive components which I use in this thesis. These similarities are sometimes so strong (for example between Governance and Europeanization, or Governance and Neoliberalism) that they blur the boundaries between the other discursive components of the thesis. This would have made the discourse analysis of N2000 less systematic and understandable.

Another disadvantage of discourse analysis is that the actual analysis of documents and actors' statements which is at the core of the methodology is very time consuming. For this reason, discourse analysis is often carried out using computer programs like *Atlas.ti* which I used in my thesis for answering the first research question. These programs allow reducing the time frame of the analysis, but often present limitations to the analysis due to the specific functions of the programs. *Atlas.ti* has proved to be very useful for my discourse analysis, insofar as it allowed me visualizing the steps of the linguistic analysis of the HD, and working dynamically with the quotations coded under different discursive components. However the way how *Atlas.ti* deals with quotations revealed to be not completely suitable to my analysis. This is mostly because the program does not allow eliminating fragments of text from quotations coded under specific discursive components, and coding these fragments under other discursive components. This results in the overlapping of quotations in many sections of the HD, which partially altered the measurement of the frequency of the discursive components in the text. Despite this pitfall, I explain in chapter 3 that the most interesting result of the analysis is the proportion among the frequency of discursive components, which would remain rather unvaried by refining the method of analysis.

The long time frame needed during my thesis to carry out a discourse analysis of legal and policy documents related to N2000, and of the interviews with actors expert of or involved in the implementation of the network, had another consequence. This consequence is the restricted amount of time which I had for answering the third research question of the thesis

which focuses on the discursive dimension of actors' (dis)empowerment. Because of the short time available, I based the analysis of the discursive dimension of actors' (dis)empowerment in N2000 on the information retrieved while answering the first and second research questions of thesis. I combined this information with a limited literature research on actors' (dis)empowerment in the framework established by N2000. However, with more time available, it would have been interesting to directly inquire the level of (dis)empowerment of the categories of actors by setting interviews with key actors on the issue. These interviews would have provided specific information on the feelings and perceptions of the various categories of actors with respect to their level of (dis)empowerment in N2000, and with respect to the (dis)empowerment of other actors. This information is not retrievable in the scientific and professional literature on N2000. This information could have supported more strongly and represented a form of verification for my inferences on the implications of the discursive structure of N2000 for actors' (dis)empowerment.

The last reflection I made on my study regards the collection of information on events of the N2000 policy process which occurred many years before the development of this thesis. I refer for example to the HD's drafting and publication, which occurred more than 20 years ago. Because of this extended time frame, it has been particularly complex to find actors who were at that time involved in European policy processes, contacting them and obtaining an interview. Most of these actors are currently not involved in the nature conservation policy arena. This is for example the case of Claus Stuffmann, working at the EC until 1994 and since then retired. The interview with Stuffmann was difficult to set and organize, since it took place in an informal setting and had to deal with specific issues sometimes hard for the interviewee to recall. Nonetheless, I believe that the time spent in organizing and carrying out this interview has been compensated by the interesting and unique experience of interviewing an authoritative figure of N2000's history. The information provided by Stuffmann has a very high value for my discourse analysis insofar as it contains facts not included in the literature, and which would be otherwise lost in the body of knowledge related to N2000.

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ANNEX 2: List of acronyms used in the report

AI	Assessment of Implications
BD	Birds Directive
CAP	Common Agricultural Policies
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CE	Council of Europe
DG	Directorate Generale
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ECNC	European Center for Nature Conservation
EEA	European Environmental Agency
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EFF	European Fishery Fund
EHF	European Habitats Forum
ELO	European Landowners' Organization
ENGO	Environmental non-governmental organization
EP	European Parliament
ESF	European Social Fund
ETCs	European Topic Centers ¹²
EU	European Union
FACE	Federation of Associations for <i>Hunting</i> and Conservation of the European Union
GOs	Governmental Organizations
HC	Habitats Committee
HD	Habitats Directive
IEEP	Institute for European Environmental Policy
IGOs	International Governmental Organizations
MS(s)	Member State(s)
N2000	Natura 2000 network
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NUF	N2000 Users' Forum
PEBLDS	Pan European Biological and Landscape Strategy
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
pSCI	Proposed Site of Community Importance
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SCI	Site of Community Importance
SPA	Special Protection Area
UN	United Nations
WG	Working Group
WRT	Working Round Table
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

¹² The European Topic Centers changed names during the years, as it is shown in section 4.3 of this report.

ANNEX 3: LIST AND DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEWEES

- Rob Jongman. He works for Alterra (Wageningen, NL) where he is involved in studies on biodiversity and ecological networks. In 1990s he was involved in a research project on ecological networks which supported the design of N2000. In this occasion the concept of ecological network has been introduced from the Dutch context to the European arena. He worked for ECNC where he focused his activity again on the study of ecological networks. He is author of many publications on ecological and socio-political issues related to nature conservation.
- Leon Braat: He is a researcher at Alterra (Wageningen, NL) and he studies international biodiversity policy. He has a long working experience in the field of environmental models. During the 1970s he has been involved in the introduction of the "environmental economics" discipline in the academic arena. In this context he participated in the development of the concept of "ecosystem services". In the past three years he worked on Natura 2000 on conflict management and implementation, participating to projects commissioned by the EC. In the past he worked for the Netherland Environmental Assessment Agency for many years: he was head of the Biodiversity Unit and he had the role of policy advisor. In this circumstance he guided the yearly reports on the progresses of N2000 implementation in the Netherland (Natuurbalance). These reports analyzed the implementation of N2000 both from an ecological and policy perspectives.
- Joop Schaminee: he is a senior researcher in vegetation science and community ecology at Alterra (Wageningen, NL). He is also a professor at Wageningen and Nijmegen Universities. He works as an unpaid independent collaborator for the European Topic Center on Nature and Biodiversity (ETC/NB) with the role of expert and policy advisor. He cured many publications such as monographs and scientific articles.
- Nicholas Hanley. He studied as a biological scientist before working for the UK government, the European Parliament and the European Commission. He currently works for the European Commission at DG International Affairs, where he is head of the International Relations and Enlargement Unit. In the past he worked for almost fifteen years for DG Environment, where he was Head of Unit B.2, Nature/Biodiversity. In this occasion he chaired for five and a half years the biogeographical seminars and he chaired the meetings of the Art. 8 Working Group (Working Group on Financing N2000).
- Francois Kremer. He has been working for the EC- DG Environment, Nature Protection Unit since nearly 10 years. He participated in the meetings of the Habitats and Ornithology Committees and in many Working Groups on N2000, and in particular he chaired the Expert Group on Natura 2000 Management and the Working Group on the Estuaries and Ports. He was involved in informal communications between DG Environment and the MSs aimed at exchanging information on the implementation of the BD and HD.
- Liam Cashman: he works for the European Commission as Deputy Head of Unit of the Directorate A: Legal Affairs & Cohesion. At the moment of the development of the HD's legal text he was working at the Legal Unit of the European Commission, and he followed the discussion related to the drafting of the directive.
- Claus Stuffmann. He is currently retired. He worked for the European Commission from 1952 to 1994. Since 1967 he worked with European environmental and nature conservation policy, and he joined DG Environment from the moment of its creation. He was personally involved in the negotiations giving life to the legal text of the HD in the years 1988-1992.
- Alberto Arroyo Schnell. Since 5 years he works for WWF as N2000 Coordinator. Before this moment he worked for a Spanish regional government and participated in the process of implementation of Natura 2000. He is considered one of the best Natura 2000 experts (<http://ngonatura2000.blogspot.com/2010/12/alberto-arroyo-schnell-slovenia-should.html>).

- Lawrence Jones-Walters. He is a Senior Program Manager at the European Centre for Nature Conservation (UK). He is currently involved in the programs "Green Infrastructure" and "Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Assessment". In the past he worked for more than 20 years in the nature conservation field accumulating experiences in Europe and North America. He followed the development of the HD and the implementation of N2000 since the start.
- Valerie Vandenabeele. She works for two non-profit interest groups, *Hubertus Vereniging Vlaanderen* and *Landelijk Vlaanderen*, respectively representing hunters and landowners (especially foresters) in the Belgian nature conservation policy arena. The organizations inform the local hunters and landowners on what are the implications of the implementation of N2000 in their territories. The role of Valerie is the one of providing information to local actors translating the material coming from the EC, but also collecting opinions, reactions and feedbacks of these actors. She also writes articles on N2000 for professional journals targeted to landowners. The interest group *Landelijk Vlaanderen* is included in the ELO, leader of the Natura 2000 Users' Forum (NUF) platform. The ELO through the NUF takes part as consulted stakeholder in the policy processes related to the implementation of N2000.

ANNEX 4: Contemporary international and European nature conservation timeline

INTERNATIONAL MILESTONES

EUROPEAN MILESTONES

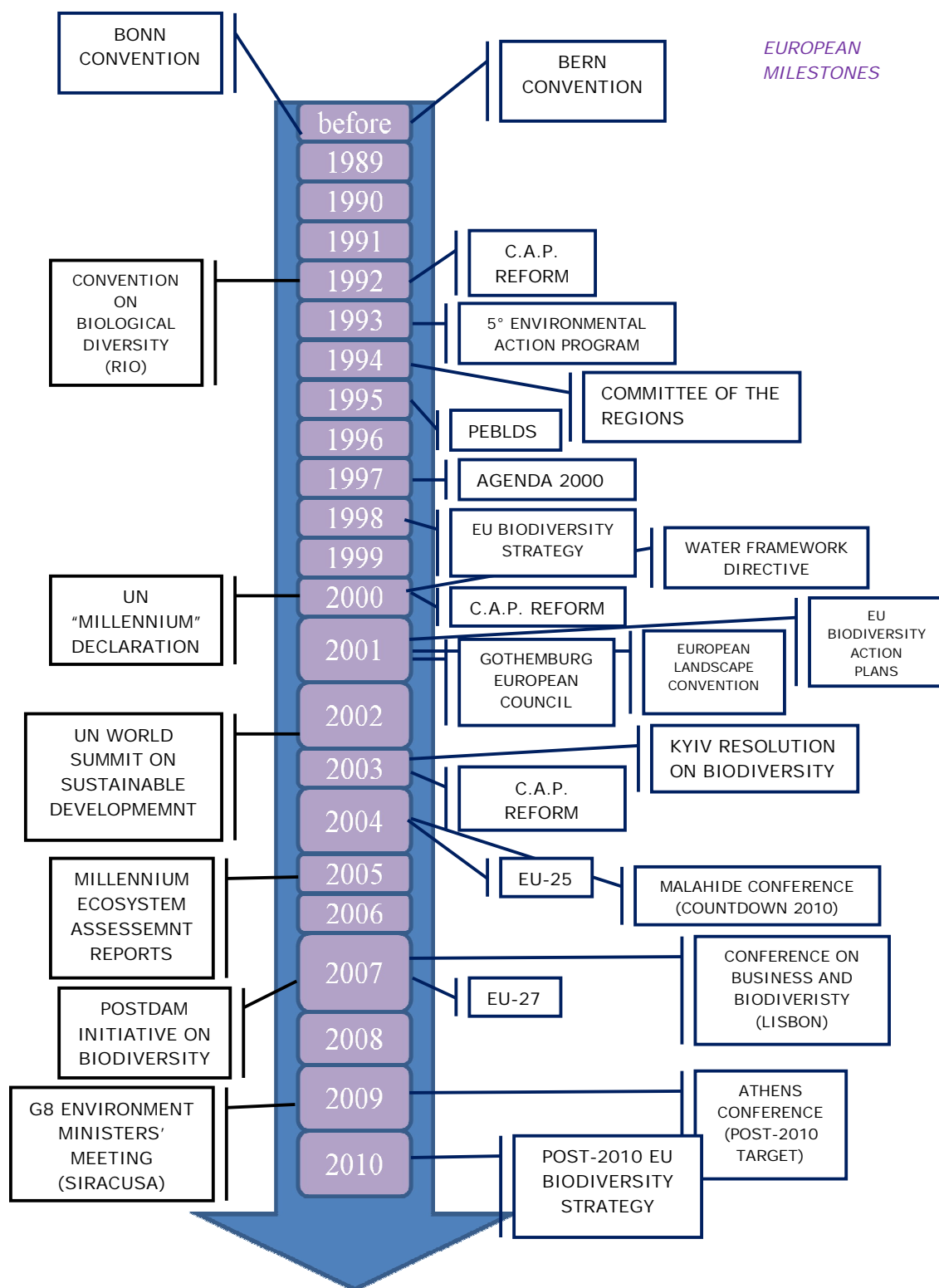


Figure 11: timeline reporting milestones of the international and European contemporary nature conservation milestones. This timeline includes the milestones related to the contemporary international (on the left side) and European (on the right side) nature conservation arenas. These arenas constitute the general background of the N2000 policy process. The discourses dominating this background in different parts of the timeline influence the delineation of the N2000 discursive strategy in the various phases of this history. The selection of the milestones reflects their function of reference for the analysis of the N2000 policy process.

Description of the international milestones composing the timeline of Figure 11

- **1979: Bonn Convention.** Convention on the “Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals”, signed under the United Nations Environment Program Migratory Birds. It currently counts over 100 international parties and it is not legally binding. The convention lists animal species threatened with extinction in Appendix I. The States parties to the convention have the commitment of conserving these species and restore their habitats. Migratory species that need international cooperative conservation efforts are listed in Appendix II of the convention. For the successful conservation of these last species the convention encourages the States to develop international and regional agreements which can become legally binding. The convention has a strict and technocratic approach to nature conservation, but its strength in reaching conservation goals effectively is limited by the absence of legally binding prescriptions
- **1992: Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).** Convention signed during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Rio “Earth Summit”). The intricacy of environmental conservation, economic development and social justice is underlined in the conference, expressing an international commitment for Sustainable Development. Focus of the conference is the protection of biodiversity, recognized as an essential element for nature conservation and human wellbeing. With respect to biodiversity, the convention establishes three goals: I) the conservation of biological diversity; II) the sustainable use of its components and III) the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derivable from the use of genetic resources. Among the actions taken by the parties of the CBD is the Agenda 21 program, a comprehensive plan aimed at reaching Sustainable Development goals at the international, national and local levels.
- **2000: UN “Millennium” Declaration.** Declaration signed by the worlds’ leaders in New York at the United Nations Millennium World Summit. The signing parties commit in a global partnership aimed at reaching the so called “Millennium Development Goals”. The goals deal with poverty reduction, empowerment and equality, improvement of health care, pursuing of environmental sustainability. The declaration is strongly influenced by the Sustainable Development and Participation discourses.
- **2002: UN World Summit on Sustainable Development.** This summit was joined by tens of thousands of representatives of States, ENGOs, business corporations and other major groups (farmers, indigenous people, scientific and technological communities, women, workers and trade unions). The Summit discussed difficult challenges such as the improvement of human wellbeing and environmental quality, focusing on different realms, such as: food, water, shelter, sanitation, energy, health services and business. The summit was dedicated to the assessment of the implementation of Sustainable Development principles, 10 years after the Summit of Rio. During this Summit the target of halting the loss of biodiversity before 2010 has been globally endorsed. A nineteen-action plan was agreed upon as a means of counteracting biodiversity loss. The relevant discourses for this Summit are Sustainable Development and Participation.
- **2005: Millennium Ecosystem Assessment reports.** The reports were published to present the results of a project of the UN aimed at assessing the consequences of ecosystem changes. The report underlines the relevance of ecosystem services’ provision to biodiversity and its conservation. According to the reports, the greatest threats to biodiversity come from the effects of land use change and climate change. These treats need to be addressed through cross-sectoral integration of policies and stakeholders’ involvement in biodiversity conservation. Moreover, the consideration that species’ populations, communities and ecosystems are not static calls for a dynamic ecosystemic approach. The discourses which have a relevant influence on these reports are: Technocracy (influencing the study of ecosystems); Neoliberalism (influencing the idea that nature can provide services); Participation (influencing the concept that stakeholders’ need to be involved).
- **2007 Postdam Initiative.** The initiative was joined by the environment Ministers of the eight leading industrialized countries (G8) and of the five major industrializing countries - China, India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa. The aim of the initiative is increasing awareness of the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and facilitating the development of cost-effective policy responses to the problem of biodiversity loss. The initiative proposed recommendations which consider the benefits of biodiversity conservation versus the costs of

its loss, and focused on ecosystem services. The importance of the Neoliberalism discourse for this initiative is evident in the use of the “ecosystem services” concept. Also Participation has a role in influencing the concept of awareness raising.

- **2009: G8 Environment Ministers’ meetings.** The meetings were held in Siracusa where G8 representatives, ENGOs’ representatives, business corporations and international organizations met for the establishment of an alliance focused on embracing environment and development together. An example is the commitment in emissions’ reduction and increase in energy efficiency. Biodiversity conservation is considered a key player in the battle against climate change. A greater public awareness is required as well as a bigger commitment from governments, considering the failures in reaching the 2010-target. The meeting launched the slogan ‘Biodiversity is Business’ to assess biodiversity no longer as an obstacle but as a resource and an opportunity for development. The Neoliberalism discourse triumphs during this meeting

Description of the European milestones composing the timeline of Figure 11¹³

- **1979: Bern Convention.** The convention is dedicated to the “Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats” and is aimed at conserving European wild flora and fauna through the promotion of the States’ collaboration. The convention regulates the conservation of endangered species by imposing restrictions on taking and use, and conserving their habitats. The convention lists the “protected” and “strictly protected” species. The first category is subject to a limited use, while the second is rigorously preserved. For the first category, the convention also lists the prohibited means and methods of capture, killing and exploitation. In later years the parties of the convention will agree on the creation of the Emerald Ecological Network. The influent discourses for this convention are Technocracy (which influences the list of species and prohibitions) and Europeanization (which influences the collaboration factor).
- **1992: CAP reform.** This was the major reform since the origins of the CAP (1992). The reform encompasses a new approach based on two elements: I) lowering institutional prices for key products and II) compensating farmers for loss of income. For the first time the CAP integrated environmental concerns in the agricultural policy sector, giving the prompt for the establishment of agri-environmental schemes in many MSs. The influencing discourses are Sustainable Development (see the integration of environmental and socio-economic agricultural activities) and Neoliberalism (see the compensation factor which economically sustains farmers involved in agri-environmental schemes).
- **1993: 5th EC Environmental Action Program.** The program covered the years 1993-2000 and titled “Towards Sustainability”. The program sets longer term objectives than the previous EC Action Programs and is focused on a more global approach. An important element was the integration of environmental issues in other policy areas, especially the ones controlling the sectors that cause environmental degradation. Moreover the program replaced a top-down approach in policy making based on command-and-control measures with an approach based on shared responsibility among environmental actors. The dominant discourse is Sustainable Development.
- **1994: Establishment of the Committee of the Regions.** The committee is the political assembly that provides the regional and local governmental levels with a voice in EU policy processes and legislations. The role of the Participation discourse is important in the establishment of the committee, as well as the role of Europeanization. The local

¹³ It is obvious to consider that all these milestones are influenced by the Europeanization discursive component, because related to the particular context of the EU. However, for some of the milestones the relevance of the discourse is strengthened by the policy events of the milestones. Only in these cases I report on the dominance of the Europeanization discourse in the description of the specific milestones.

governments and administrations represent one of the bottom-up forces of the EU system which deserve a participatory space in the EU policy processes.

- **1995: Pan European Biological and Landscape Strategy (PEBLDS).** The strategy represents the European response to the Summit of Rio and the CBD. It was adopted at the Ministerial Conference "An Environment for Europe" held in 1995 in Sofia, and its principal aims are: I) responding to the decline of biodiversity and landscape diversity, II) ensuring the sustainable use of the natural resources. One of the instruments of the PEBLDS is the establishment of a Pan European Ecological Network (PEN) in Europe, where the core protected areas are connected by ecological corridors ensuring the functionality of the system. The relevant discourses for the PEBLDS are: Europeanization (influencing the creation of the PEN) and Sustainable Development (influencing the aims of the strategy and the concept of landscape)
- **1997: Agenda 2000.** This report was published by the EC with the aim of advising the CE on a future EU policy. Element of the proposal was a further reform of the CAP which based on the successful 1998 CAP reform and focused on: greater market orientation of institutional prices, integrated approach to rural development, enhancement of the economic potential and the environmental value of rural areas, increase of the capacity of rural areas to sustain employment. Important policy objectives were: competitiveness of the agricultural sector, maintenance and enhancement of rural environment and landscape in agriculture, livelihood's sustainability in rural areas, and economic development of the rural economy. These objectives position Agenda 2000 in the core of the Sustainable Development discourse. Moreover the Neoliberalism discourse influences the focus on competitiveness.
- **1998: EU Biodiversity Strategy.** This strategy was aimed at fighting and preventing the causes of biodiversity loss within the framework of the CBD. This aim was pursued by conserving species and ecosystems, including agro-ecosystems, and bringing them at a satisfactory conservation status. Important in this framework was the integration of environmental policies into key policy areas. The Sustainable Development discourse is relevant for this strategy.
- **2000: CAP reform.** The reform followed the proposals of the Agenda 2000. The reform is aimed at developing a genuinely multi-functional, sustainable and competitive agriculture in Europe. The reform encompassed: I) lower institutional prices to encourage competitiveness, II) fair standard of living for the farming community through the reinforcement of direct payments, III) strengthening of the EU international trade position, IV) the taking into account of the consumers' concern over food quality and safety, environmental protection and animal welfare. These objectives were accomplished through compliance with minimum standards in the fields of environment, hygiene and animal welfare. Another important objective of the reform was the integration of environmental goals into the CAP through agri-environmental measures, direct payments and establishment of specific environmental conditions to the granting of payments at the national level. The overall goal was to establish a new rural development framework which was coherent and sustainable. The Sustainable Development discourse influences the integration of environmental concerns in agriculture, while the Neoliberalism discourse influences the issues of the direct payments and minimum standards. The financing of nature conservation under N2000 was also integrated in the CAP, with an interweaving approach that reflects the Integration Principle of Europeanization which becomes also relevant in the reform.
- **2000: Water Framework Directive.** The directive establishes a common framework for the protection and management of European waters focused on: pollution prevention and reduction, promotion of sustainable use of water, environmental protection, improvement of aquatic ecosystems and mitigations of floods' and droughts' effects. It applies to inland

waters as well as groundwater and coastal water. The directive has an ecosystemic approach to conservation of natural resources. For example, MSs have to establish management plans for all the river basins in their territory. With respect to bodies of surface water, the term of reference for the protection and use of waters is the “surface water status”, which is determined by the ecological and chemical status of the water body. Various discourses influence the directive. Europeanization justifies the use of a European legislation for the protection of waters on the European territory. Sustainable Development appears in the aims of the directive. Technocracy influences the use of the concept of “water status”.

- **2001: Gothenburg European Summit.** The summit was joined by the leaders of the EU and launched the first Sustainable Development strategy in the EU. The strategy called for a more responsible use of the European natural resources and the establishment of a system reducing the loss of biodiversity before 2010. During this summit the parties made a commitment to reach the 2010-target. Sustainable Development is the influential discourse for the summit.
- **2001: European Landscape Convention.** The convention promotes the protection and sustainable development of European landscapes and organizing the cooperation of the European States on landscape issues. The concept of “landscape is characterized through democratic terms as an “area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. Important pillar of the Convention is the relevance of public participation and negotiations among actors in matters concerning the landscape. This relevance flows from the consideration that the landscape is a common good therefore subject to common responsibility. According to the convention, the co-operation between governmental authorities at international, national and local levels, as well as between private parties and the public is necessary to achieve the sustainable development of the landscape. The Sustainable Development and Participation discourses are predominantly influencing the convention. Also Europeanization is relevant with respect to the cooperation concept.
- **2001: European Biodiversity Action Plans.** These plans were a follow-up to the EU’s Biodiversity Strategy of 1998, and were adopted by the EC with the goal of supporting integration of biodiversity conservation into four EU policy areas: natural resources, agriculture, fisheries and economic development. The plans contained indications for halting the loss of biodiversity in wildlife, ecosystems, crop varieties and animals. The Integration Principle factor of Europeanization influences the plans, as well as the Sustainable Development discourse which contributes to the idea of integrating environmental and human interests.
- **2003: Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity.** The resolution was signed by environment Ministries and representatives of 51 States in the UNECE region during the 5th Ministerial conference “environment for Europe”. The resolution reinforces the MSs’ commitment to reach the 2010-target. The resolution focuses on the following key issues: I) forests and biodiversity; II) agriculture and biodiversity; III) the PEN; IV) invasive alien species; V) financing of biodiversity; VI) biodiversity monitoring and indicators; V) public participation and awareness. Relevant discourses are: Sustainable Development, which influences the integration of different realms in the resolution; Participation, which influences the interest toward the public; Neoliberalism, which influences the interest toward the issue of financing nature conservation.
- **2003: CAP reform.** The reform introduced the concept of “single farm payment” which replaced EU payment programs benefiting farmers with respect to their production. The funds available for farmers were bounded to the “cross compliance” of these actors with environmental and other requirements set at EU and national levels for the implementation

of a sustainable agriculture. The Neoliberalism discourse influences the use of nature conservation standards, while Sustainable Development influences the “cross compliance”, integrating environmental concerns in agriculture.

- **2004: EU Enlargement to EU-25.** This is the largest single expansion of the EU, both in terms of territory, number of states and population. The following countries simultaneously accessed the EU: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Europeanization discourse dominates this milestone.
- **2004: Malahide Conference.** The conference was dedicated to the theme “Sustaining Livelihoods and Biodiversity: Attaining the 2010 Biodiversity Target in the European Biodiversity Strategy”. The conference followed a major process initiated in 2003 for review of the EC Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plans. This initiative aimed at assisting MSs in reaching the 2010 target. The conference brought together representatives from the key economic sectors affecting biodiversity, as well as representatives of the EC, MSs and civil society. The parties reached a consensus on the priority actions to take in order to reach the 2010-target. The role of civil society was emphasized as critical for the mobilization of the engagement of private sector and general public. Sustainable Development is the main discourse influencing the conference. Participation influences the ideas about civil society while Neoliberalism influences the importance given to the economic sector.
- **2007: Conference of Lisbon on Business and Biodiversity.** The conference was joined by business leaders, biodiversity experts, ENGOs and policy makers. The conference dealt with the environmental performance of businesses in Europe. The main aim was improving the understanding of the benefits (in level of competitiveness) which can be achieved through the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable use of resources. The Neoliberalism discourse influences the attention of the conference toward business and its role in safeguarding biodiversity. The Sustainable Development discourse influences the attention toward the sustainable use of natural resources. According to the Treaty signed during the conference, the EESC opened up for representatives of civil society, particularly in the economic, civic, professional and cultural field. This element shows the influence of the Participation discourse.
- **2007: EU Enlargement to EU-27.** Bulgaria and Romania entered the EU bringing the European MSs to the number of 27. The Europeanization discourse dominates this milestone.
- **2008: EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.** The directive which requires MSs to prepare national strategies for the management of their seas taking marine areas at a “good environmental status”. The main goals of the directive are ensuring the sustainable use of marine goods and services, and ensuring the safeguarding of the marine environment. MSs are in particular required to apply an ecosystem based approach to the management of human activities. The Europeanization discourse justifies the need to create a European legislation for protecting marine areas in the European territory. The Sustainable Development discourse influences the directive’s aim, while the Technocracy discourse influences the use of the concept of “environmental status”
- **2009: Athens Conference.** The conference was titled “Biodiversity protection- Beyond 2010. Priorities and options for future EU Policy”. The conference was aimed at framing the EU post-2010 biodiversity policy. The conference put together delegates from all the European MSs, representatives from ENGOs, European business and UN organizations. After the recognition of the persistence of the biodiversity loss problem in the EU territory despite the successes in the establishment of N2000, the conference drew recommendations for a better conservation of biodiversity. Among these, a better integration of biodiversity issues in economic sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, regional development, transport, energy,

trade and development aid. A focus was put during the conference to the importance of ecosystems and their value. This value should be recognized in the market price of ecosystem services and in political decision-making. The Neoliberalism discourse strongly influences the conference. Also Sustainable Development influences the idea that environmental and humans' interest should be integrated.

- **2010: post-2010 EU biodiversity strategy.** The strategy recognizes that the 2010-target has not been reached, and prepares the EU for a new approach in the conservation of biodiversity. The strategy is no more focused on single elements of biodiversity to protect (habitat types and species), but on a wider ecosystem approach. This approach is expected to increase public support for the implementation of EU biodiversity policy. Elements of this approach are ecosystem functioning, resilience and services, which need to be conserved in order to ensure the long term sustainability of biodiversity. The Technocracy discourse influences the framing of biodiversity in measurable terms, while Neoliberalism influences the focus on economically derivable aspects of ecosystems.