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Procedurally reducing complexity

The practices of German EU policy coordination

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Abstract: Policy coordination in federal states is inherently complex because it includes a multitude of actors at the federal and the sub-state level. If the sub-states want their interests to be included in the final decision, they need to coordinate with the federal level but also amongst themselves. Several individual interests are overlooked easier than coordinated interests of a group of sub-states. This paper puts forward the argument that during the coordination process, the actors from both levels meet in different constellations where they focus on different aspects of coordination, especially on different actors' interests separately. This is a strategy which enables them to procedurally reduce the complexity of the decision-making process. In order to empirically investigate this argument, first a thorough definition of coordination as process is provided and operationalized for empirical investigation. It is accentuated that coordination as a process has different dimensions which are relevant for the understanding of the coordination process. This argument is analyzed with the example case of German EU policy. The empirical data used are original expert interviews with German civil servants responsible for EU policy coordination at the sub-state level. It will be demonstrated that the actors strategically form voluntary coordination constellations which enables them to reduce complexity during the process.

Keywords: Executive coordination, multilevel governance, Germany, Bundesrat

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1. Introduction

Policy formulation in federal states rarely is a one-level activity. It usually includes actors from the federal as well as the sub-state level. The reasons for this can be twofold: either there are constitutional requirements for co-decision-making or the actors voluntarily work together to avoid or reduce incoherency, redundancies or negative externalities caused by their policies. The German federal state is an example where multilevel coordination in policy formulation is a constitutional requirement as well as a voluntary activity. Through the German Bundesrat, the sub-states have co-decision rights in federal policy-making. Additionally, there are many informal coordination activities between the sub-states, for example in the ministerial conferences.

This coordination is especially prominent when it comes to EU policy-making, where it has coined the expression of the "German Vote" (e.g. Moore and Eppler, 2008: 498; Schlitz, 2010) as a saying for the late positioning of Germany for negotiations in the EU's Council of Ministers. Literature has identified two reasons for this delay. First, the constitutional principle of departmentalism gives responsibility and autonomy to every minister for his/her own portfolio (Article 65 Basic Law; Fleischer, 2011a). This leads to a high sectoralization of policy-making in general. For EU policy in particular, competences are shared and expertise is distributed between different ministries on the federal level, namely the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Finances (Bauer et al., 2007; Derlien, 2000; Moore and Eppler, 2008). Secondly, due to the federal structure, the Länder are involved in EU policy-making. With the incremental extensions of their participation rights over the last decades and especially since the introduction of the Article 23 Basic Law (Europaartikel) (Calliess, 2000; Große Hüttmann, 2010; Jeffery, 1996) the Länder through the Bundesrat are important actors in domestic European policy coordination. Additionally, the Länder have installed their own offices and Representations in Brussels. Hence, the coordination of German EU policy is inherently complex and involves a multitude of actors at two levels of government.

This paper will build on these findings and extend them by looking into the process of German EU policy coordination at the sub-state level. Here we find 16 governments consisting of several departments which develop their own ideas, interests and preferences about EU policy. In order to be able to get heard at the federal level and to influence the German position in EU decision-making, the sub-states cannot act individually but need to form alliances amongst each other. This paper will look into the process of coordination between the sub-states themselves and with the federal level. It wants to answer the question how German EU policy coordination is organized and conducted at the sub-state level. Which strategies for building alliances to influence the German position are taken by the actors?

To answer this question, the theoretical and analytical perspective of the paper will be described (2.1.). The term coordination is used in literature in many different contexts; hence a context-specific definition is needed. This paper will thoroughly conceptualize coordination as a process with different dimensions (chapter 2.2), also indicating the definition's potential for generalization. Empirically, the process of German EU policy coordination at the sub-state level will be investigated in detail using data from expert interviews with ministerial bureaucrats (chapter 3 and 4). Chapter 5 will elaborate on the strategy of reducing complexity during the coordination process.

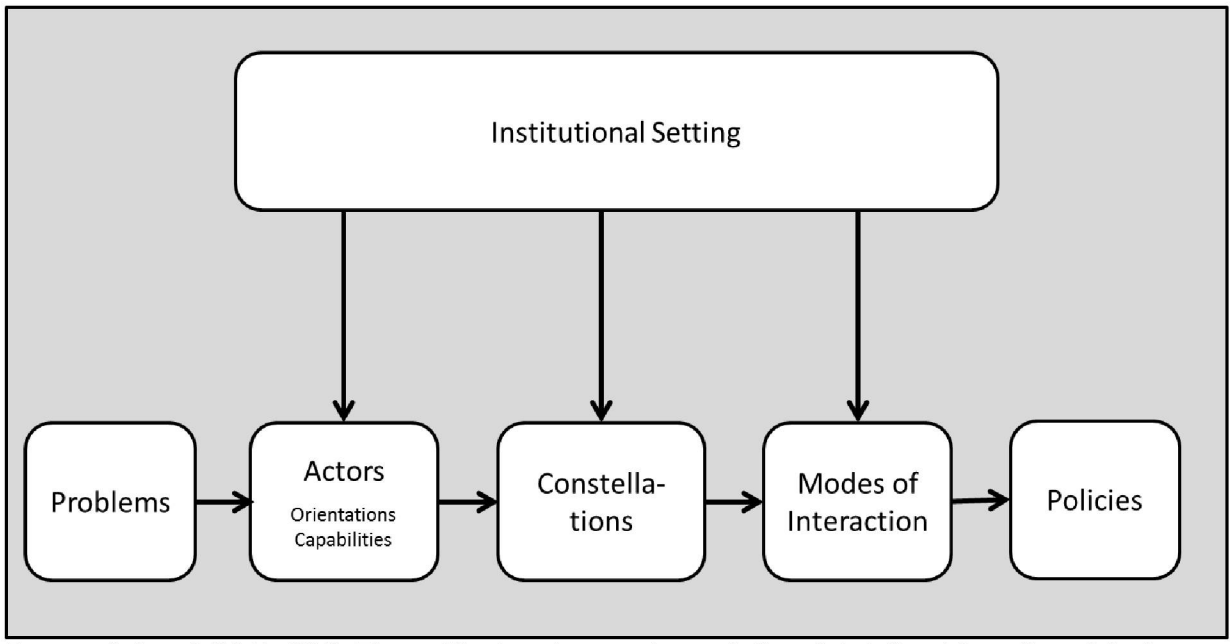
2. Conceptual Framework

Conceptually, the argument builds on an Actor-Centered Institutionalism argument in combination with a thorough definition and operationalization of coordination as a process.

2.1 Theoretical framework

The argument put forward here is a rational choice institutionalism argument, in particular the Actor-Centered Institutionalism (ACI) as introduced by Renate Mayntz and Fritz Scharpf (Mayntz and Scharpf, 1995; Scharpf, 1997). This framework explains political decisions as results of strategies of goal-oriented actors who act in an institutional context which, in turn, influences their strategies (Scharpf, 1997: 43-49). Therefore, institutions can empower or constrain certain strategies. Decisions in this framework can be explained by considering the actors, their constellations as well as their forms of interaction (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Explanatory Framework of ACI



Source: Scharpf (2011: 221). The political environment was deliberately left out from the original depiction because it is not part of the analysis.

The focus of this paper is on the aspect of "constellations" within the ACI framework. What is just described as "constellations" is in fact a multitude of different constellations in which the actors meet during the process of coordination. Literature on horizontal federalism and intergovernmental relations points to the fact that "the" sub-states need to be considered not only as one corporate actor as opposed to the federal level, but that each sub-state has its own interests and preferences (Nugent, 2009; Simeon,

2006). Within the different actor constellations, different interests and preferences, shared by the meeting actors, are expected to dominate at different points of time during the coordination process. The coordination process is mostly dominated by executive actors, the governments and their administrations of the federal state and the sub-states (Johns et al., 2007; Watts, 1989). The actors analyzed here are the departments of the sub-states and the federal state. They are conceptualized as corporate actors (Mayntz and Scharpf, 1995; Scharpf, 2006) emphasizing that even if decisions are in the end articulated by a single actor, they represent their organizational, in contrast to personal, preferences. However, one and the same actor can take on diverse roles, for example a minister is at the same time a party member, a deputy of his Land and of his sector. Hence, he has at the same time interests related to his political party, his constituency and his sector. During the process of coordination, it is hypothesizes, these interests will lead to meetings in different constellations.
H1: During the German EU coordination process, different actor constellations form according to the actors' interests and preferences.

2.2 Defining Coordination as a process

To analyze coordination, the term needs to be defined first. Here, a process definition of coordination will be used and different dimensions of the coordination process will be elaborated. Coordination is an often used term which has many definitions. Coordination can be defined as an outcome of a process or as the process itself (Peters, 2013). Coordination as an outcome according to Peters (1998: 296) is an 'end-state in which the policies and programs of government are characterized by minimal redundancy, incoherence and lacunae". By using this definition, nothing is yet said about how coordination is achieved, which 'strategies and instruments governments use to coordinate' (Bouckaert et al., 2010: 16), which is the core of defining coordination as a process. This involves analyzing 'the development of ideas about joint and holistic working, joint information systems, dialogue between agencies, processes of planning, and making decisions" (Six, 2004: 106) and sees coordination not as an 'end-state', but as different steps on the way to an 'end-state'. Coordination as process refers to the 'intervening stage of debate and deliberation" (Shepsle and Boncheck, 1997: 44) before the actual decision is taken, including also non-decision. By focusing on the process of how a decision comes about, the black-box of decision-making is opened, hence contributing to a better understanding and ultimately explanation of decisions. Thus coordination will here be defined as a process, involving different stages, in which actors prepare a collective decision.
In order to operationalize these stages of coordination, a three step scale is developed consisting of information, positioning and negotiation[1]. At the step of information actors communicate with each other and inform each other about their preferences and interests on a certain issue. At this point, no change in behavior of any one actor takes place. At the step of positioning actors position themselves towards other actors. This can involve delineation towards actors that were identified to have opposite preferences. It can however also involve inclusion in a sense that actors were identified to have similar positions and decide to work together to come up with a coherent opinion on an issue. At the third step of negotiation actors try to negotiate agreement according to the

[1] These steps are derived from the nine-step coordination scale by Metcalfe (1994) and the expert interviews.

decision rule. These different steps along the process of coordination can be carried out by different actors in different constellations.

Coordination can take place at different points of time during the policy cycle. In the agenda-setting phase actors can jointly decide to bring a topic to the agenda. Especially in policy formulation actors coordinate the formulation of a policy to be ratified. In the implementation phase actors can decide on whether and how to work together when implementing a policy. In contrast to coordinating the decision to jointly implement, the actual realization of the implementation will be called cooperation. Cooperation means that actors actually do what was agreed on or what is in the best interest of the group of actors as a whole, despite the fact that another behavior might put themselves individually in a better position (Shepsle and Boncheck, 1997: 197). Thus cooperation can follow coordination or it can emerge as "more temporary and informal" (Bouckaert et al., 2010: 17).

In a federal political system, such as the German Federal Republic, coordination can take place in various directions: there can be vertical coordination between the federal state and the sub-state level, horizontal coordination between the sub-state units themselves, or intra-constituency coordination only including the departments form one sub-state[2]. Intra-constituency coordination in Germany is at least as important as vertical and horizontal coordination because of the strong sectoral ministers due to the departmental principle, de jure (Article 65 Basic Law) and de facto (Fleischer, 2011a).

Finally, the basic cause of coordination can either be voluntary or coerced (Hegele and Behnke, 2013: 26f.; Peters, 2013: 573). Coerced coordination refers to a coordination process where the agreement of all actors is necessary for a decision to be agreed on. This kind of coordination process usually occurs as prescribed by the constitution, secondary law or in a strictly hierarchical setting. An example of a coerced coordination process is joint decision-making (Scharpf et al., 1976), where the actors need to agree on a joint decision or the status quo will be uphold. A voluntary coordination process in contrast does not require the actors to participate, the process is not legally prescribed and there are multiple exit-options for the actors. Table 1 summarizes the different dimensions of the coordination process.

[2] The usage of these terms is leaned on multilevel governance and federalism research. In public administration research, horizontal and vertical coordination are used slightly differently. Especially vertical coordination as used here does not come with the notion of hierarchy (e.g. Bouckaert et al., 2010: 23f.).

Table 1: Analytical Dimensions of the Process of Coordination

Analytical Dimension	Specification
Actors Interests	Political Constituency Sectoral
Time point of coordination (in the policy cycle)	Agenda-Setting Policy Formulation Implementation
Direction of Coordination	Intra-constituency Horizontal Vertical
Stages of Coordination	Information Positioning Negotiation
Cause of Coordination	Voluntary Coerced

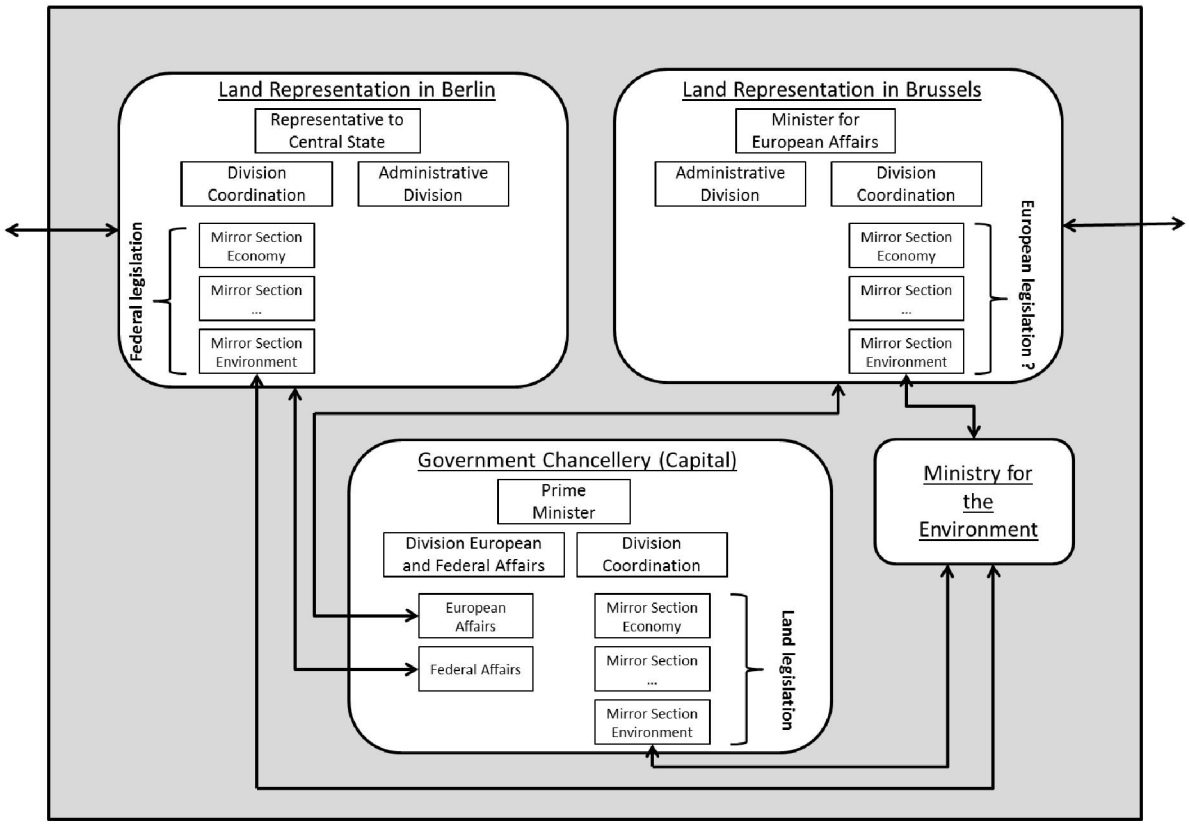
To understand the process of coordination of EU policy between the German sub-states and the strategies they use, all dimensions of the coordination process need to be considered. Because these dimensions are too manifold to be treated in one constellation, it will be secondly hypothesized that:
H2: During the German EU coordination process, different actor constellations are concerned with different dimension of the coordination process.

3. The sub-state actors in EU policy coordination

This chapter will describe the sub-state actors and their involvement in EU policy before the next chapter will analyze the actor constellations and the dimensions of coordination. The task of coordination in the German federal state is regularly attributed

to the government chancelleries, namely the federal chancellery (Bornemann, 2011; Fleischer, 2011b; Müller-Rommel, 2011) and the Permanent Representation in Brussels (Kassim and Peters, 2003), the state and senate chancelleries of the Länder (Häußer, 1995; Zerr, 2006) and the Länder Representations in Berlin (Laufer and Wirth, 1974; Schrenk, 2010) and Brussels (Zumschlinge, 1999). The government chancelleries (*Regierungszentralen*) are the administrative body of the head of government (chancellor or prime minister) (Häußer, 1995; Zerr, 2006). They have installed 'mirror units' which mirror the departments of the government; e.g. for each ministry in the Land there is a section in the government chancellery which is responsible for the contact to this ministry (see Figure 2). These mirror units in the government chancelleries are primarily concerned with coordinating Land issues. In order to deal with federal and European issues, the Länder have installed Land Representations in Berlin and Brussels. The Länder Representations in Berlin are essentially responsible for coordination in the course of the Bundesrat (Schrenk, 2010), whereas the Länder Representations in Brussels deal with European issues (Kropp, 2010; Zumschlinge, 1999: 174ff.). The Land ministries, as sectoral experts, additionally established organizational units for European relations within their ministries. For an overview of all actors involved in the process see Figure 2. The next section will analyze in which constellations the actors meet during the process of coordination and which dimensions of the coordination process are apparent in these constellations.

Figure 2: Actors involved in EU policy coordination



4. Empirical analysis

The following analysis is a case study of the process of coordination in a federal system. The case of Germany is chosen as an extreme case. The policy field of EU policy formulation is chosen because first, the German sub-states have strong incentives to try to influence the German federal government when it comes to EU decisions because they are affected by the decisions without a formal vote. Second, its inherently cross-sectoral nature makes EU coordination especially interesting because it usually involves at least one additional policy sector. Due to the strong role of sub-state units and the strong principle of departmentalism in Germany, the case combines problems of handling coordination across federal units and across policy sectors. Selecting an extreme case for a case study is valuable for exploratory purposes (Seawright and Gerring, 2008) and to highlight the extreme phenomenon which could otherwise be hidden by other phenomena. The aim of this study is to further develop the concept of coordination, to understand the structure of the coordination process and analyze the strategies the actors use.
The main primary data are derived from 14 semi-structured expert interviews with civil servants in the government chancelleries, including the Länder Representations in Berlin and Brussels, and Land ministries (Table 2). The interviews were mostly recorded, transcribed and coded according to the different dimensions of coordination. For the section on the minister's conferences, a dataset on four minister's conferences was used as a complement (for a description of the dataset see Hegele and Behnke, 2013). The following sections empirically analyze the actor constellations during the process of EU policy coordination in Germany. It will roughly follow the coordination process chronologically, starting with the beginning of the European policy process in Brussels, moving to the coordination process at the sub-state level within Germany and finishing with the decision of the Bundesrat.

Table 2: Organizational Affiliation of Interviewees

Organization of the Interviewee	Number of Interviewees
Government chancellery of the Länder	4 (3 esp. EU)
Länder Representation in Berlin	3 (1 esp. EU)
Länder Representation in Brussels	3
Federal Chancellery	1
Land Ministries	3

4.1 Land Representations in Brussels

First, the Brussels Land Representations are involved in the coordination process on-site in Brussels. They observe and contact the European institutions in Brussels directly[3]. They work according to the principle of mirror units, meaning that one of the bureaucrats in the Brussels Representation is responsible for communication and coordination with one or more of the Land ministries. Thus in the first coordination constellation, the officials in the Brussels Representations meet or contact their home ministries. In this constellation, sectoral interests will prevail because bureaucrats exchange their expert knowledge. According to the interviews, one of the main tasks of the Länder Representations in Brussels is information. They know the position of the European institutions, filter the relevant information for their ministry and develop expert knowledge on European matters which they can bring into the domestic policy process. One of the interviewees put it this way: "we need to hear the grass growing and how it is growing at the earliest time possible" (Interview 8, own translation). The government chancellery and the ministries can contact "their" mirror section in order to receive information on the state of the debate at the European level. In this constellation, the coordination process is dominated by sectoral interests, intra-constituency, at the stage of information and voluntary (Interviews 3, 8, 9 and 10).
Second, the officials of the Brussels Representations of all the Länder meet regularly in working groups, according to their sectoral affiliation. They share information and position themselves in the issues discussed. A deputy of the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany also participates. This stage of the coordination process thus is horizontal or vertical, still voluntary and circulates around sectoral interests (Interview 8, 10).
All in all, the Brussels Representations are important actors when it comes to collecting information and especially work according to a sectoral principle, either within each Land or horizontally and vertically. No important party political meetings in Brussels have been reported in the Interviews (8, 9 and 10) and cross-sectoral coordination within the constituency seems to mainly take place between the institutions located 'at home' (government chancellery and ministries).

4.2 Ministerial conferences

Ministerial conferences are meetings of the sub-state ministers according to their sectoral affiliation. There are 18 sectoral conferences and the Prime Ministers' Conference (PMC). The conferences usually discuss issues before they enter the Bundesrat agenda. One of the conferences is dedicated to European affairs, the European Ministers' Conference (*Europaministerkonferenz, EMC*) which was founded in 1992, meets three times a year and has two working groups, the "permanent working group of the EMC" which prepares the EMC plenary session and the working group "European communication" which coordinates the European public relations of the Länder. The activity of the EMC however is rare and limited, it is rather the sectoral ministerial conferences which deal with European issues in their respective sphere of competence (also Schmuck, 2009: 494). Considering the resolutions of the ministerial conferences of agriculture, environment, infrastructure and transportation (Hegele and

[3] Of course, the Brussels Representations also form coordination constellations with the EU institutions, which will not be discussed here because this paper focuses on EU policy coordination within Germany.

Behnke, 2013) shows the importance of the other sectoral conferences for the coordination of European policies. From the total number of 634 analyzed resolutions of the four conferences during 2006-2010, 81 concern European issues (13%). Most of these are discussed in the conference of the ministers for agriculture and the conference of the ministers for environment. This is not surprising as these policy fields are much more Europeanized than infrastructure and transportation (Table 3). The sectoral ministerial conferences hence play a bigger role in coordinating EU policy than the EMC and it was reported that the share of EU related topics is still increasing. These actor constellations are also oriented on sectoral interests. The aim of these voluntary conferences is information exchange between the Länder and with the federal level. Additionally, the Länder often ask the federal level to advocate certain Länder interests on the EU level. The ministerial conferences very often become active to support the sectoral concerns and by signing a political resolution in which they often support the respective federal ministry in its sectoral point of view, which might otherwise get lost during Bundesrat process or on the expense of other sectoral or the constituency interests (Interview 8, 13, 14).

Table 3: Number of issues discussed in the conferences

	All issues	**European issues**	**% of European in all issues**
Agriculture	264	**61**	23%
Environment	189	**11**	6%
Infrastructure	39	3	8%
Transportation	142	6	4%
Total	**634**	**81**	**13%**

On top, the Prime Minister's Conference (PMC) is hierarchically superior to the ministerial conferences because it is the meeting of the heads of government of the Länder. In this constellation the most important topics are discussed horizontally between the Länder and sometimes also vertically with the federal level. These are either topics which are of high salience at the moment or with which several sectoral conferences were concerned and did not find agreement. This actor constellation is also voluntary and serves information exchange and positioning of the actors (Interview 14)[4]. Before the conferences, pre-conferences are held by the actors according to their party political affiliations. The two big opposing camps, Social Democrats and Christian Democrats as well as in the last years the Greens, meet separately to discuss the issues from a party political point of view. In cases where the federal government

[4] See also http://www.thueringen.de/th1/mpk/themen/europa/, 26.04.2016.

belongs to the respective party family the federal ministry participates as well. In this voluntary coordination constellation, the sub-states exchange information and try to position themselves together as a party family (Interview 13, 14). In some sectors, the vertical coordination on EU topics takes place specifically according to this logic as well. One interviewee reported that the federal ministry meets with representatives from the sectoral conference, one from each party family, and discusses salient EU policies with them. These representatives hence need to know the position of their party political peers in order to ensure that their interests are taken into account (Interview 12).
To sum up, the ministerial conferences are voluntary actor constellations which are mainly involved in German EU policy coordination according to a sectoral division. They normally discuss issues before they enter the Bundesrat agenda and serve the exchange of information and positioning. Their mode of interaction is consensual and real negotiation between the actors only takes place at later stages, in the cabinets and the Bundesrat.

4.3 Länder cabinets

In EU matters, each Land finally needs to vote in the Bundesrat (see next section). The decision on how to vote needs to be agreed on in cabinet. Most Länder cabinets try to find consensus and otherwise cast a vote of abstention. Due to the sectoral orientation of the information collection and first positioning, intra-constituency coordination between the sectoral interests is needed to come to a cabinet decision which is oriented on the interest of the constituency as a whole. This represents another actor constellation in which either officials form different departments, state secretaries or the ministers themselves meet. The government chancellery is attributed a general coordination task due to the guideline principle associated with the office of the prime minister (Basic Law, Article 65). Additionally, in most Länder European Affairs as a topic is located in the government chancelleries as well. For this reason, the sectoral ministerial conferences as well as the Bundesrat committees report back to the coordination unit in the government chancelleries (Interview 12). At this step of the coordination process, constituency interests prevail. The members of government position themselves and negotiate in order to agree on a Bundesrat vote; coordination hence is coerced (Interview 1, 3, 4, 6, 7).

4.4 The Bundesrat

Article 23 Basic Law makes the Bundesrat an actor in German EU policy coordination. The Länder through the Bundesrat possess information and participation rights; take on a veto-player role in areas of Länder competence by directly participating in EU decision-making; have installed a Länder observer at the Council of Ministers; need to agree to further transfers of sovereignty with a two-thirds majority and have introduced a "European Chamber" in the Bundesrat (Moore and Eppler, 2008). Additionally, the Bundesrat is involved in German policy-making carrying out EU regulations through the regular co-decision rights. The Bundesrat is composed of members of government from the sixteen sub-states directly. Every Land has a certain number of votes ranging from three to six, as a function of their number of inhabitants. Votes need to be cast *en bloc* by the Land (Article 51 Basic Law). Decisions in the Bundesrat plenum are taken by

absolute majority of votes (Article 52 Basic Law). Before however a final Bundesrat vote can be taken, the actors meet in different constellations to coordinate this final decision.
First, during the first week of the institutionalized three week sequence of the Bundesrat, the Bundesrat committees meet according to policy sectors (c.f. Schrenk, 2010). In this actor constellation clearly sectoral interests prevail. The actors exchange information and position themselves toward each other. At this point, the federal level is involved, hence the coordination process becomes vertical, but is still voluntary. There are sixteen sectoral Bundesrat committees[5], mostly staffed by bureaucrats from the ministries or the government chancelleries (Sturm and Müller, 2013: 146-148). For European issues, the Bundesrat has installed a committee for issues of the European Union' (*Ausschus für Fragen der Europäischen Union*). The members of this EU committee are the last to meet and thus know how the other departments of their Land have voted in the other committees and can decide whether they agree or cast a different vote (Interview 3, 4, 6).
Due to the majority decision of the Bundesrat, the Länder need to take into account the positions of the other Länder as well. Hence, in the next actor constellations, deputies of the different Länder meet. This step of the coordination process is carried out by the Berlin Länder Representations which are called by one interviewee "the on-site troop" (Interview 7) because they can meet with each other and also the federal level directly. At this stage of the coordination process constituency interests prevail. In this voluntary actor constellation, information, positioning and also negotiation between the sub-states and with the federal state take place (Interview 4, 6, 7).
Right before the Bundesrat plenary session, the Länder meet according to their party political affiliations. There are meetings of the Social Democrats, the Christian Democrats and the Greens (c.f. Leonardy, 2002). In these meetings, which are voluntary and vertical if the federal government is a member of the respective political party, party political interests prevail and the actors try to position themselves as party members towards the issues discussed (Interview 4, 6). The last and decisive actor constellation is the Bundesrat plenary as such which is coercive in nature, involves all Länder and the federal level. Even though the federal state is not a formal member with voting right, it participates in the meetings and discussions as an observer and a guest in order to ensure vertical coordination. Here, last positioning and negotiation takes place and sectoral, party political and constituency interest are integrated (Interview 4, 5).

Table 4 summarizes the different constellations and dimensions of the coordination process they cover.

[5] The committees roughly correspond to the departmental organization at the federal level but are stable and not subject to changes in the departmental organization (Sturm and Müller, 2013).

Table 4: Actor Constellations and Dimensions of Coordination

Constellation	Actors' Interests	Direction	Stages	Causes
Brussels mirror sections and Land ministries	Sectoral interests	Intra-constituency	information	voluntary
Brussels Representations	Sectoral interests	Horizontal, Vertical	Information, positioning	voluntary
ministerial pre-conferences	Party political interests	Horizontal, Vertical	Information, positioning	voluntary
Ministerial conferences	Sectoral interests	Horizontal, Vertical	Information, positioning	voluntary
Prime Ministers' Conference	All interests	Horizontal, Vertical	Information, positioning	voluntary
Government chancellery and Land ministry/ cabinet	Constituency interests	Intra-constituency	Positioning, negotiation	coerced
Bundesrat committees	Sectoral interests	Horizontal, Vertical	Information, positioning	voluntary
Berlin Representations	Constituency interests	Horizontal, Vertical	Information, positioning, negotiation	Voluntary
Bundesrat pre-meetings	Party political interests	Horizontal, Vertical	Positioning	Voluntary
Bundesrat	All interests	Horizontal, Vertical	Positioning, negotiation	coerced

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The empirical analysis of the German coordination process of EU policy-making supports the two hypotheses. The actors meet in different constellations during the process of coordination and focus on different actors' interests in different meetings. Additionally, the further dimensions of coordination also vary during the process. This reveals a certain strategic pattern. First of all, the process is institutionally and

chronologically divided between the Länder Representations in Brussels, the ministerial conferences, the government chancelleries, the Länder Representations in Berlin and the Bundesrat. These all represent different constellations in which the relevant actors meet. The sub-states try to use these meetings to influence the German position on EU policies. This influence is possible because the sub-states are legally involved by the constitution to participate in EU policy-making but also because they possess expert knowledge on certain topics, especially on the implementation of policies which is mainly carried out by the sub-states in the German federal system.

During the process of coordination, a certain pattern of how the actor constellations follow each other can be detected. There are two actor constellations where a joint decision is necessary, hence coordination is coerced. However, in the cabinet as well as in the Bundesrat decisions can be taken by majority. For this reason, these two actor constellations are preceded by several voluntary meetings. When an issue first comes up, it is ideally picked up by the Länder Representations in Brussels and first coordination meetings around sectoral interests, within the own constituency and together with other constituencies takes place. When moved to the actor constellations within Germany, party political interests are also considered. Up to the point before the constituency needs to decide on its position, information exchange and positioning has taken place around all actor interests and directions of coordination. When a topic then enters the Bundesrat agenda, where a joint decision under majority rule needs to be taken in the end, another round of meetings dominated by sectoral, constituency and party political interests takes place, this time the actors enter negotiations.

Of course the chronology of this process is only simplified and in reality the order of the meetings where a certain issue is discussed can vary. But the merit of this approach is clearly that it reveals the underlying strategy the actors take. Because they know that in the end a majority decision could be taken by the Bundesrat, they organized voluntary coordination meetings in different actor constellations where they can disaggregate the different dimensions of the coordination process. If agreement is reached at an early stage of the coordination process only through information exchange or positioning, the topic will normally be considered to be solved and not be picked up at later stages. Hence, these meetings in several actor constellations help to procedurally reduce the complexity of the coordination process as a whole and at the same time promote consensual decision-making where possible.

This analysis hopes to contribute to research in two ways. First, a definition of coordination as a process has been put forward and operationalized for empirical investigation. The dimensions elaborated for the procedural definition of coordination can also be applied to other contexts, processes, policy fields or states; it might even serve as an analytic framework for international comparison. Secondly, it has been shown empirically that the complexity of decision-making, which is ubiquitous in today's intertwined and networked world, can be reduced procedurally in spite of, or maybe even because, multiple actors are involved.

6. References

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