

Beyond Size

Domestic Origins of Network Capital in the Council of the European Union

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Acknowledgments

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"Do it for the picture puzzle. Put it all together. Solve the world. One conversation at a time."

— Logic, *Disco Elysium*

Abstract

This thesis examines the Netherlands as a deviant case in the cooperation networks of the Council of the European Union. Drawing on seven waves of the Negotiations in the Council of the European Union dataset (2003-2021), it documents a trajectory more complex than the existing literature recognizes: a positive size-adjusted residual (overperformance) in every wave combined with a sustained decline in relative rank through 2015, followed by a sharp transformation that brings the Netherlands to the 3rd leading position in the dataset by 2021. A partner-group decomposition reveals that this aggregate pattern conceals continuous growth in cooperation from northern liberal-market states, wave-specific suppression from eurozone periphery and Visegrad states tracking identifiable policy crises, and a post-2016 recovery coinciding with the United Kingdom's departure.

Through explaining-outcome process tracing, the thesis advances parliamentary accountability for Council positions as the institutional configuration most consistent with this pattern. Drawing on Putnam, Tsebelis, and the Council cooperation literature, it specifies a mechanism in which domestically anchored, publicly committed positions generate credibility among aligned partners and rigidity costs among opposed ones. The thesis traces this mechanism through a four-link causal chain, drawing on primary institutional documentation, IOB coordination evaluations, Clingendael report practitioner testimony, formation-level analysis, and Tweede Kamer parliamentary records. Coalition governance, individual leadership/diplomatic capacity and agency-based alternatives are evaluated and found insufficient. A cross-country regression across the EU-27 demonstrates that parliamentary scrutiny strength, measured by the OPAL Institutional Strength Score, predicts network capital.

The thesis concludes that the domestic parliamentary accountability architecture constitutes the most plausible explanation of the Dutch trajectory, supported by cross-country evidence that parliamentary scrutiny strength predicts network capital across the Union. The thesis contributes methodologically by demonstrating that within-case decomposition reveals dynamics the dominant cross-sectional framework cannot detect. It also articulates the double-edged structure of the credibility-from-constraint logic, showing how the same institutional condition can simultaneously generate cooperation from aligned partners and resistance from opposed ones. The empirical contribution operates at two levels: the Dutch parliamentary accountability architecture for EU policy is documented in greater detail than the existing literature has produced, while a cross-country regression establishes that the institutional relationship holds across the EU member state population, robust to alternative outcome specifications, size controls, and scrutiny measures

Keywords: Network Capital, The Netherlands, Council of the European Union, Parliamentary Accountability, Deviant Case Analysis

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Introduction

Informal influence in the Council of the European Union is one of the central concerns in the study of the EU decision-making. As research has moved beyond formal institutional accounts of power, it has become clear that the capacity to shape negotiation outcomes depends not only on voting weight or institutional position but on the quality and density of the cooperative relationships member state representatives maintain across working groups and committees. Trust, reputation, and the ability to broker compromise over repeated interactions constitute a form of influence that formal models of EU bargaining have struggled to capture.

Network capital, developed by Naurin and colleagues (Naurin, 2007; Naurin & Lindahl, 2008; Naurin et al., 2022) from systematic survey data collected from national representatives involved in Council negotiations, measures¹ the degree to which a member state is selected as a cooperation partner by others. A member state with high network capital occupies a structurally central position in the informal cooperation networks that underpin Council decision-making: it is sought out, trusted, and embedded in dense patterns of repeated interaction. The significance of the concept extends beyond descriptive network analysis. Lundgren et al. (2019) demonstrate that network capital is one of the few variables that remains consistently and positively associated with bargaining success across multiple model specifications, where formal voting power and institutional roles frequently fail to predict outcomes. Network capital appears to capture something substantively meaningful about how influence operates in the Council.

Understanding what drives variation in network capital is therefore a question of considerable importance, and the existing literature offers a partial answer. Studies drawing on the Council cooperation survey data show that network capital is strongly associated with structural factors, most notably economic size, ideological proximity, and geographic clustering: larger economies have more at stake across more policy areas, ideologically proximate states have stronger incentives to coordinate, and geographically clustered countries share overlapping interests that facilitate alliance formation (Johansson et al., 2023). A baseline regression of network capital on economic size alone (see Section 2.3) explains approximately (0.47 R^2) of the variation across member states, confirming that size accounts for a substantial share of

¹ Through the following Question: Our first question concerns co-operation within your working group [the X group/committee]. Which Member States do you most often co-operate with in order to develop a common position?

observed differences in network centrality. Size-based prediction nonetheless leaves a systematic, patterned share of variation unexplained: some member states sit well above what their economic weight would predict, others well below, and these deviations are not random noise. A replication of network capital rankings using the ECFR Coalition Explorer survey (ECFR, 2020), an independent instrument based on unweighted top five cooperation nominations rather than ranked ties, produces highly correlated results (Pearson ≈ 0.90 ; Spearman ≈ 0.91). The broad architecture of Council cooperation is robust across independent instruments, which establishes that the residual structure reflects a genuine underlying pattern rather than a measurement artefact.

Within that residual structure, one case is the sharpest and most analytically tractable anomaly. The Netherlands, a medium-sized member state of seventeen million people, without exceptional voting weight or the economic mass of the largest members, ranks among the most sought-out cooperation partners in the Council in raw terms (in the 2021 wave, only after Germany and France). Once network capital is adjusted for economic size, however, the Dutch position has a distinctive temporal shape. For most of the period the Netherlands is structurally unremarkable, sitting at or below the median of established member states through the 2015 survey wave, then, across precisely the two subsequent waves, it moves to the single largest positive deviation from size prediction of any member state.

This is a theoretically significant puzzle. The literature has established that network capital is an empirically consequential resource, yet it offers limited insight into why a specific member state should accumulate it so far in excess of the structural expectation, and still less into how such a position is acquired at a particular moment rather than gradually. The Dutch case makes that gap visible: it has been noticed only as one more data point in the structural-determinants literature, never isolated as a deviant case and given a causal-mechanistic account, and connected to the relational realignment that follows the departure of a major member from a negotiating system.

The central research question follows from this puzzle: **What domestic institutional mechanism accounts for the trajectory of Dutch network capital documented in Chapter Two, and does the relationship this mechanism predicts hold across the EU member state population ?**

Answering this question requires shifting analytical attention from the EU level, where network capital manifests as an observable outcome of Council interaction, to the domestic level, where

the conditions shaping governmental behavior are formed. The thesis develops a theoretical framework drawing on the two-level games literature (Putnam, 1988), liberal intergovernmentalism (Moravcsik, 1993), veto player theory (Tsebelis, 1995), and the Council cooperation literature (Naurin & Wallace, 2008), and applies it through a sequential mixed-methods design combining quantitative exploratory analysis with explaining-outcome process tracing of the Netherlands as a deviant case.

The thesis proceeds as follows. Chapter Two situates network capital within the literature on informal influence in the Council and presents the exploratory data analysis through which the puzzle was identified. Drawing on the Naurin et al. (2022) dataset, it establishes the structural baseline, conducts the residual analysis that isolates the Dutch deviance, and demonstrates through cross-validation that the residual structure is not a measurement artefact. Chapter Three develops the theoretical framework, drawing on Putnam, Moravcsik, and Tsebelis and Council literature, and proposes a causal chain of the mechanism to be tested. Chapter Four sets out the research design, justifying the selection of the Netherlands as a deviant case and the use of explaining-outcome process tracing. Chapter Five presents the empirical analysis: it traces the mechanism link by link through the Dutch institutional record and practitioner evidence, evaluates the principal alternative explanations, and tests the institutional argument across the EU through a cross-country regression. Chapter Six concludes by reflecting on the contribution, its limitations, and directions for future research.

Chapter 2 - Mapping Informal Influence

2.1 Informal Influence and Cooperation in the Council

While the Council operates through legally defined voting procedures, most notably qualified majority voting, the outcomes of Council negotiations are rarely determined by votes alone. Behind every formal decision lies an extended process of negotiation, coalition formation, and informal coordination conducted across a dense network of working groups, committees, and bilateral contacts. In this environment, influence is not reduced to voting weight or institutional position. It depends equally on the quality and density of the cooperative relationships that member state representatives maintain with their counterparts, and on the trust, reputation, and credibility that governments accumulate through repeated interaction over time.

This informal dimension of Council politics has received increasing scholarly attention over the past two decades. A central contribution in this effort is the concept of network capital, developed by Naurin and colleagues on the basis of systematic survey data collected from national representatives directly involved in Council negotiations. Network capital captures the degree to which a member state is selected as a cooperation partner by other delegation representatives, not merely whether it participates in negotiations, but whether it is actively sought out.

The empirical foundation for this concept is the Negotiations in the Council of the European Union Dataset, developed at the Naurin et al., 2022, which compiles survey responses from national representatives across multiple waves between 2003 and 2021. Respondents are asked to identify the member states they cooperate most closely with in Council negotiations, producing a ranked set of cooperation ties for each respondent country. These ties are then aggregated to produce a measure of incoming cooperation weights for each member state, the sum of cooperation nominations it receives from others, weighted by the strength of those nominations. This aggregated measure constitutes the operationalization of network capital used in the present study, following established practice in the literature.

The centrality in network capital, accumulated through repeated interaction and sustained over time, constitutes a form of influence that is qualitatively different from formal voting power. It is relational rather than institutional, reputational rather than procedural, and informal rather than codified.

2.2 The Empirical Significance of Network Capital

Before examining what drives variation in network capital, it is worth establishing why network capital matters. The concept would be of limited theoretical interest if it were merely a descriptive property of network position with no broader consequences for how EU negotiations unfold. The existing literature suggests, however, that network capital is substantively consequential.

Research by Lundgren et al. (2019) examining bargaining outcomes in the reform of the Eurozone provides the most direct evidence on this point. Their analysis finds that network capital is one of the few variables that remains consistently and positively associated with bargaining success across multiple model specifications and control sets. Where formal voting power and institutional roles frequently fail to predict which member states achieve their preferred outcomes, network capital exhibits a positive relationship with bargaining success that survives demanding multivariate models. While these findings do not establish a causal direction, it remains possible that bargaining success and network capital are jointly produced by some third factor, they strongly suggest that network capital captures something substantively meaningful about how influence operates in practice.

The most recent wave analysis by the dataset's principal investigators confirms that network capital remained a structurally stable property of Council relations through 2021, with member states sustaining established cooperative ties over time, while also demonstrating that sharp deviations from that stability are possible and consequential: the Netherlands increased its share of total cooperation scores by 63 percent between 2015 and 2021, the largest increase recorded by any member state across any two consecutive survey periods, and by 2021 had joined Germany and France as a distinguishable top trio in the network capital ranking (Johansson et al., 2023).

2.3 Structural Determinants of Network Capital: What Literature Establishes

The existing literature on network capital has made substantial progress in identifying the structural factors associated with variation in cooperation ties across member states. Studies drawing on the Council cooperation survey data, most notably the comprehensive analysis by Johansson et al., 2023, demonstrates that three broad categories of structural variables are consistently associated with higher network capital: size, ideological proximity, and geographic clustering.

Size is the most powerful structural predictor. Larger countries and economies have more at stake across a wider range of policy areas, creating more opportunities for repeated interaction and making them more valuable cooperation partners for states seeking to build winning coalitions. Ideological proximity matters because member states with similar positions on the dominant GAL-TAN dimension of European politics have more to gain from coordinating their positions, making cooperation mutually beneficial. Geographic clustering reflects the fact that neighboring states share overlapping interests, face similar regulatory environments and have historically developed dense bilateral relationships that extend into the Council negotiating environment.

These findings are theoretically coherent and empirically robust. They explain the broad architecture of Council cooperation networks in a convincing way. Germany and France consistently occupy the top positions in network capital rankings because they combine large economic size with broad policy engagement and central ideological positioning. Groups of Nordic, Baltic, and Central European states cluster together because geographic proximity and ideological similarity create strong incentives for coordination. The structural literature thus provides a powerful account of the general pattern of cooperative ties in the Council.

2.4 Quantitative Exploratory Analysis: Replicating and Extending the Baseline

The present study begins by replicating these established findings using the most recent available data from the Naurin et al. dataset, before extending the analysis in a direction that the existing literature has not fully pursued.

A baseline regression of network capital on economic size confirms that GDP is a powerful predictor of network centrality. The model explains approximately 47 % of the variation in network capital across member states, consistent with the findings reported in the existing literature. The relationship is positive and statistically significant: larger economies systematically attract more cooperation ties from other member states, as the scatterplot illustrates clearly.

The explanatory power of structural factors for dyadic cooperative ties, rather than aggregate network capital, is considerably lower. Johansson et al. (2023) report regression models covering the 2015, 2018, and 2021 waves in which similarity in politico-economic systems, government ideology, and population size are the main significant determinants, with an overall R^2 of 0.133 to 0.144. Two further candidate explanations are tested and found null: holding the Council presidency shows no consistent positive effect on incoming network ties, and membership of the Economic and Monetary Union shows no effect on cooperative relations. The combination of these null findings with a relatively low explained variance confirms that structural factors leave a substantial and patterned share of network capital variation unaccounted for, and that neither institutional position nor integration status explains membership of the Council's cooperation core. An adequate explanation of the Dutch case must therefore locate its source elsewhere.

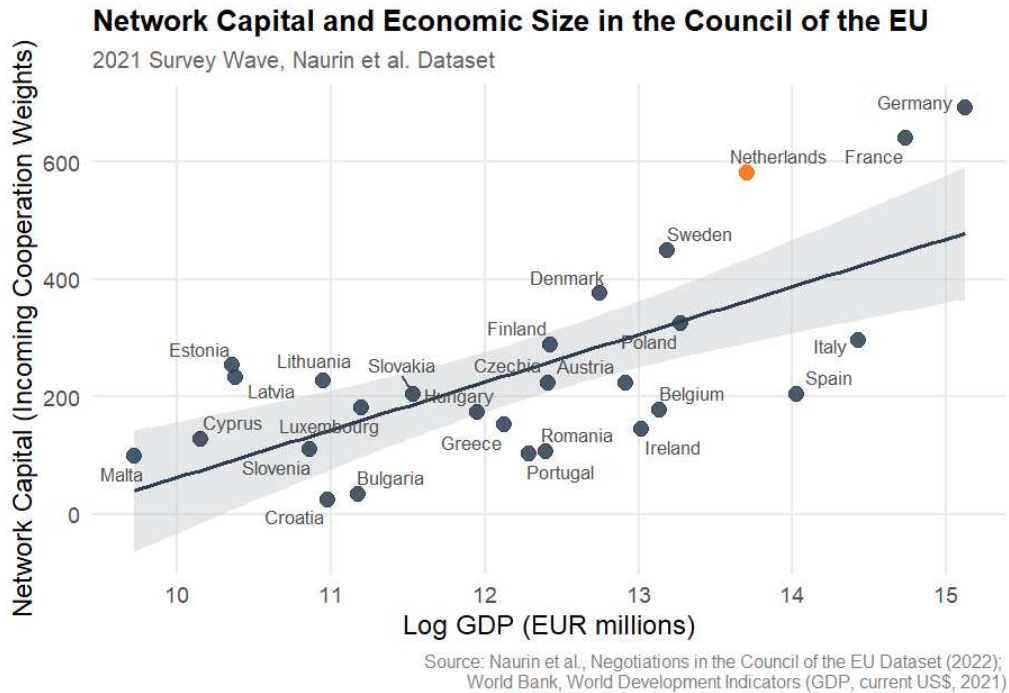
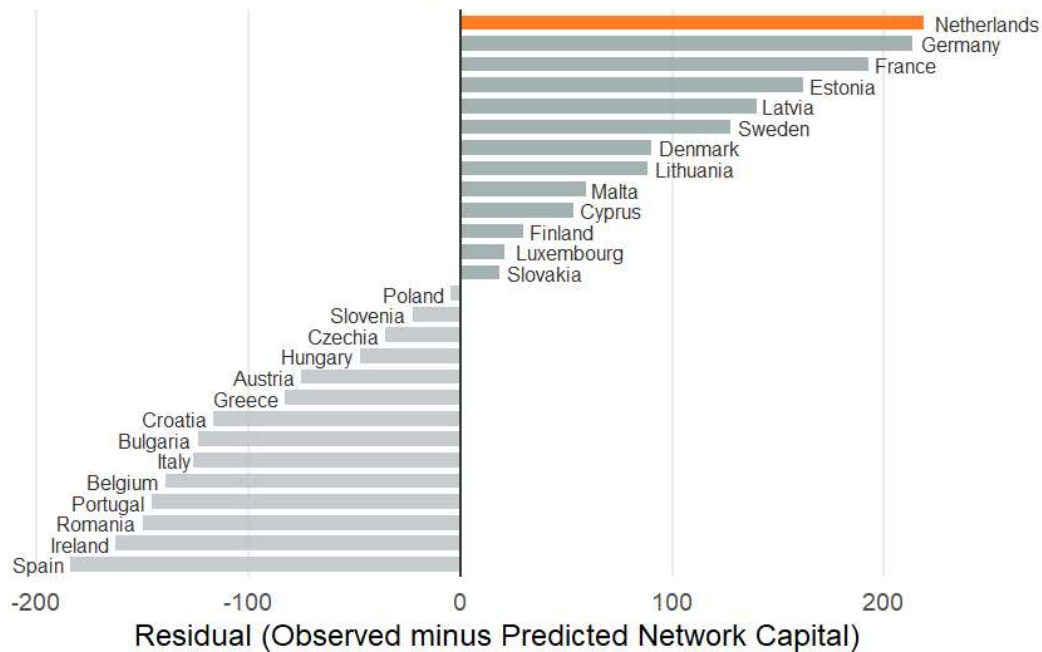


Figure 1: Network Capital and Economic Size in the Council of the EU

Examining the residuals from the baseline GDP model reveals a striking pattern: Some member states consistently display higher network capital than their economic size would predict, they are systematic positive outliers relative to size-based expectations. Others consistently fall below the predicted line. These deviations are not noise. They are patterned, persistent, and theoretically significant.

Deviation from GDP-Predicted Network Capital

Residuals from baseline OLS regression (log GDP), 2021 Survey Wave



Source: Naurin et al., Negotiations in the Council of the EU Dataset (2022)

Figure 2: Deviation from GDP-Predicted Network Capital

At the top of the positive residuals, across the most recent survey wave, sits the Netherlands. The gap between the Netherlands' observed network capital and its GDP-predicted value is larger than that of any other member state. It is not merely a positive outlier, it is the most pronounced positive outlier in the survey wave. A medium-sized economy of seventeen million people, without exceptional formal voting weight, consistently attracts more cooperation ties from other member states than its structural position would lead any model to predict.

The significance of the Dutch recent trajectory has been noted by the principal investigators of the Negotiations in the Council of the European Union dataset itself. Johansson et al. (2023) document that the United Kingdom's departure created a void at the top of the network capital ranking alongside Germany and France, a space subsequently filled by the Netherlands across the 2018 and 2021 survey waves. Prior to 2021, Italy and Poland had been identified as the most plausible candidates to fill this position, given their size and political weight (Johansson

et al., 2023). That neither did so, and that the Netherlands, a considerably smaller economy than either, emerged instead, is precisely what requires explanation. The present analysis extends this observation by examining the full trajectory across all seven survey waves from 2003 to 2021.

2.5 Cross-Dataset Validation: Ruling Out Measurement Artifacts

Before treating this pattern as a genuine empirical puzzle worthy of theoretical explanation, it is necessary to assess whether it might be an artifact of the particular survey instrument used. The Naurin et al. dataset has specific design features, ranked cooperation ties, a particular sampling strategy, a specific survey population, that could in principle generate patterns that do not reflect the underlying structure of Council cooperation.

To assess this possibility, the analysis is replicated using an independent data source: the ECFR Coalition Explorer survey, which captures cooperation patterns among member states through a different methodological approach. Unlike the Naurin et al. dataset, the ECFR survey uses unweighted top five nominations rather than ranked cooperation ties and draws on a partially different survey population (For the purpose of this analysis, government representative responses were isolated). These design differences are significant enough that substantial divergence between the two datasets would cast doubt on the robustness of any finding derived from either alone.

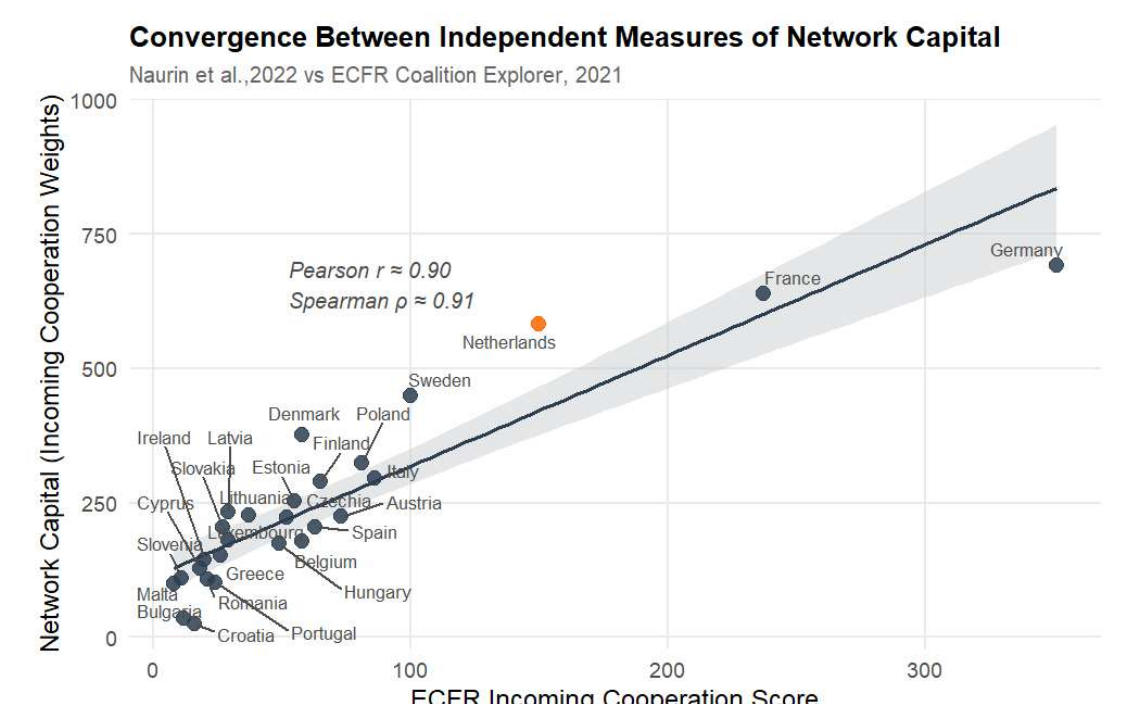


Figure 3: Convergence Between Independent measures of Network Capital

1)

The results of this cross-validation are striking. The Pearson correlation between network capital rankings derived from the two datasets is approximately 0.90, and the Spearman rank correlation is 0.91. Despite their methodological differences, the two surveys produce an almost identical picture of the relative network positions of member states in Council cooperation networks². The broad structure of informal cooperation in the Council is not a measurement artifact, it is a robust feature of how member states actually relate to one another in Brussels.

The cross-dataset validation therefore strengthens the empirical puzzle. The Dutch overperformance is not a function of how network capital is measured. It is a genuine and robust feature of Dutch engagement with Council cooperation networks.

2.6 The Puzzle: A Patterned Trajectory?

The robustness of the Dutch anomaly extends not only across measurement instruments but across time. Examining network capital rankings across the full series of Naurin et al. survey waves, from 2003 to 2021, reveals a trajectory that is more complex than the aggregate cross-sectional position of the Netherlands in the most recent wave alone suggests.

² Some differences in residual patterns do emerge between the two datasets. The ECFR instrument, because it uses unweighted nominations, tends to give somewhat greater prominence to small member states that benefit from regional cooperation ties, likely reflecting the fact that neighboring states are more likely to appear in each other's top five regardless of the overall intensity of cooperation. This difference in measurement approach means that size-adjusted residuals from the ECFR data should be interpreted with some caution, particularly for very small member states. Interestingly, the divergence between datasets is most pronounced at the upper end of the distribution, where the Netherlands scores substantially higher on the weighted measure than the unweighted ECFR instrument, suggesting that Dutch centrality reflects prioritized rather than merely frequent cooperation. For the purposes of the present analysis, however, the key finding is that the Netherlands' elevated position is confirmed across both datasets. It ranks among the most central actors in both surveys, and its positive deviation from structural expectations is visible in both residual analyses.

The most visible feature of the Dutch trajectory is the post-2016 surge. The Netherlands' size-adjusted rank moves from eighteenth of twenty-eight in 2015 to fifth of twenty-eight in 2018 and first of twenty-seven in 2021. The connection to the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union is direct and has been noted in the literature. Johansson et al. (2023), in the first published analysis to include the 2021 survey wave, note that increasing its share of total cooperation scores by 63 percent between 2015 and 2021 the largest increase recorded by any member state across any two consecutive survey periods. That the Netherlands filled the position rather than authors' predicted Italy or Poland, both identified as more plausible candidates given their size, is already analytically interesting.

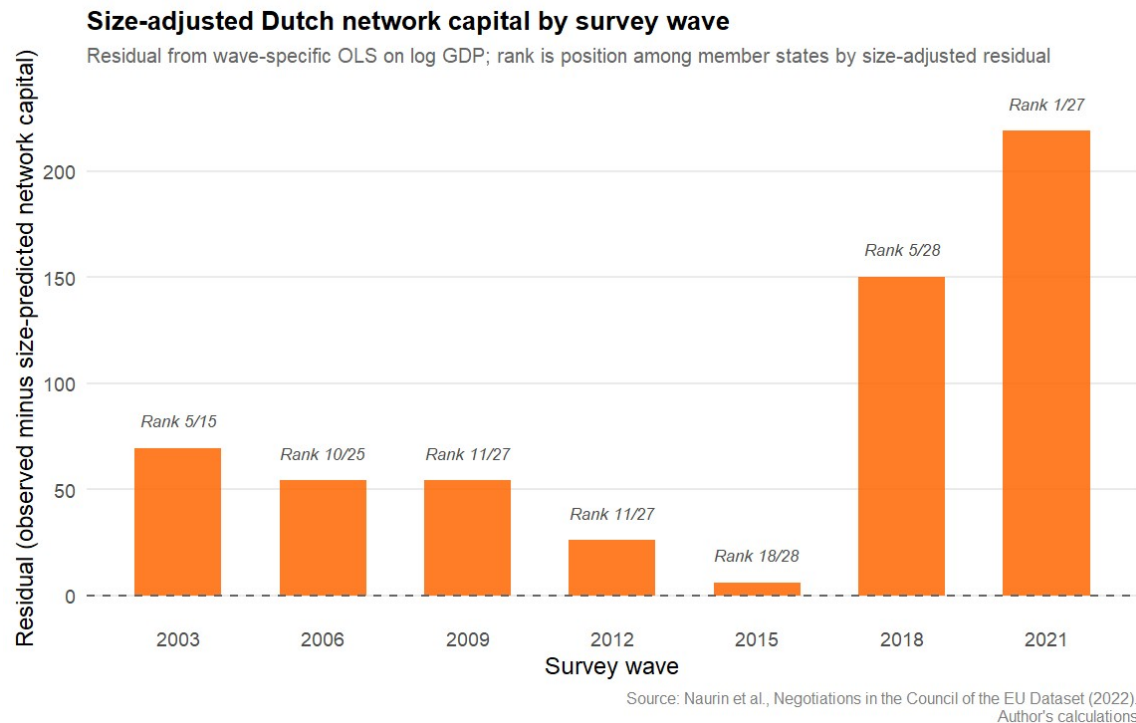


Figure 4: Dutch network capital residuals by survey wave

What the existing literature does not address is the other notable feature of the Dutch trajectory: the sustained decline in relative performance across the decade preceding the Brexit surge. The Netherlands' size-adjusted rank falls from fifth of fifteen in 2003 to eighteenth of twenty-eight in 2015, a decline that places it below the median of the member-state distribution in the wave immediately before the surge begins. Johansson et al. (2023) analyze only the 2015, 2018, and 2021 waves and do not examine this longer trajectory. The full seven-wave residual picture shows that the Netherlands was not building toward the Brexit surge from a position of consistent strength, at least at face value.

This decline coincides in timing with two of the most politically disruptive periods in the observation window: the eurozone crisis, which dominated Council agenda from approximately 2009 through 2015, and the migration crisis, which reached its peak salience in 2015. Whether this coincidence is structurally meaningful or incidental cannot be determined

Dutch Incoming Cooperation by Partner Group, 2003–2021

Mean cooperation weight received by the Netherlands from each partner group, by survey wave

Wave	Northern-Liberal	Eurozone Periphery	Visegrad
2003	3.69	1.00	—
2006	3.86	1.28	1.67
2009	4.21	0.74	2.03
2012	4.29	0.84	0.82
2015	4.84	0.34	0.00
2018	5.23	0.85	0.62
2021	6.36	2.34	1.00

Source: Author's calculations based on Naurin et al. (2022). Partner groups defined based on identifiable policy crises. The Netherlands is excluded from all groups. 'NA' for Visegrad in 2003 reflects the pre-accession status of Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia.

Table 1: Dutch Incoming Cooperation by Partner Group, 2003–2021

from the aggregate residual alone, because the aggregate measure treats incoming cooperation weights as a uniform sum across the full member-state population. If specific policy crises reduce cooperation from identifiable groups of member states while leaving other groups unaffected, the aggregate decline would be visible while its structured origin would not. A decomposition by partner group, separating states whose policy positions align with the Netherlands from those whose positions are opposed on the dominant dossiers of each period, allows that structure to be examined.

Table 1 presents Dutch incoming cooperation weights decomposed by three partner groups (see Annex A) across all seven survey waves: northern liberal-market states whose policy preferences align broadly with the Netherlands on fiscal governance and the single market, eurozone periphery states most directly affected by the conditionality arrangements the

Netherlands supported during the eurozone crisis, and Visegrad states whose positions on migration distribution were opposed to the Dutch position during the migration crisis. Cooperation-seeking from northern liberal-market states rises continuously from 3.69 in 2003 to 6.36 in 2021 without interruption across any wave, counter to what aggregate values would suggest. Cooperation-seeking from eurozone periphery states declines through 2009 and 2012, reaching a minimum of 0.34 in 2015, before recovering substantially to 2.34 in 2021. Cooperation-seeking from Visegrad states rises through 2009, collapses to zero in 2015, and recovers only partially thereafter. The 2015 aggregate nadir is the wave in which both groups reach their minimum in 2015, coinciding with the simultaneous peak of the migration crisis and the political effects of the eurozone conditionality regime, and both recover as those policy salience phases recede. This temporal alignment of the group-level dynamics with identifiable policy crises suggests that the aggregate trajectory conceals a more structured pattern than the size-adjusted residual alone reveals. The pre-2016 decline is not uniform deterioration. It reflects two simultaneous policy-crisis effects suppressing cooperation from two groups whose interests were opposed to Dutch positions on the dominant dossiers of each period, while cooperation from states aligned with Dutch positions continued to grow without interruption. The post-2016 surge reflects the recovery of both suppressed groups combined with acceleration among the aligned group following the United Kingdom's departure.

This observation also offers an alternative reading of the Johansson et al.(2023) finding that the GAL-TAN dimension becomes a statistically significant predictor of cooperative ties in 2018 and 2021 but not in 2015. This seems counterintuitive, if the migration crisis made cultural values maximally salient, why does GAL-TAN not matter most precisely in 2015? The partner-group data suggests this. In 2015 the Visegrad states stopped seeking cooperation with the Netherlands entirely, the incoming score hits zero. A regression can only detect patterns when there is variation to work with. When one group has simply stopped seeking cooperation altogether, there is no variation to detect. The signal disappears not because GAL-TAN was irrelevant in 2015 but because its effect was so extreme it produced a floor rather than a gradient.

After 2015 the Visegrad states resume seeking cooperation but at a lower level than before. Now there is variation, states more distant from the Netherlands on GAL-TAN cooperate somewhat less than states closer to it, and the regression picks this up as a significant coefficient. One possible implication is that the later GAL-TAN effect may partly reflect post-crisis stabilization after an earlier period of more extreme cooperation breakdown.

2.7 The Limits of Structural Explanation: Establishing the Gap

Taken together, the quantitative analysis presented in this chapter establishes three things: First, structural factors, most notably economic size, explain a substantial share of variation in network capital across member states, confirming the established findings of the literature. Second, these structural explanations leave a meaningful and patterned share of variation unaccounted for, with systematic positive and negative outliers that cannot be attributed to measurement error or sampling variation. Third, the Netherlands records a positive size-adjusted residual in every wave, with a distinctive trajectory across the period examined, a finding that is robust across independent measurement instruments and stable across multiple survey waves.

The existing literature acknowledges the limits of its own explanatory reach. Johansson et al. (2023) note that the determinants of cooperative relations likely include factors related to member state characteristics and administrative idiosyncrasies, specifically how member states organize the formulation of positions and their work with EU affairs in national administrations, but that these factors remain unexamined. The R^2 of their structural models confirms this empirically: the identified factors account for approximately thirteen percent of variation in cooperative ties, leaving the large majority of variation, including the Dutch transformation, without a systematic explanation. The present thesis takes this acknowledged gap as its starting point. The puzzle is not only why the Netherlands came to occupy the position it does in the most recent wave, but what could produce the specific pattern visible in the decomposition: continuous growth in cooperation-seeking from one identifiable group of partners independent of political conjuncture, wave-specific suppression of cooperation from other groups tracking identifiable policy periods, and a substantial transformation in the aggregate trajectory across the final two waves. An adequate explanation must account for all three features simultaneously. Whatever produces the continuous growth in the first group must also be consistent with the wave-specific costs in the others and with the post-period shift in the balance between them.

Thus, The central question of this thesis can be decomposed into three sub-questions, each corresponding to a distinct analytical task.

First, what domestic institutional configuration could produce the partner-differentiated pattern revealed by the decomposition: continuous growth among aligned partners alongside wave-specific suppression among opposed partners during periods of crisis salience? This sub-

question is the principal theoretical and process-tracing task of the thesis. Chapter Three develops a candidate configuration drawing on the two-level games literature and the Council cooperation framework. Section 5.1 traces this configuration through the Dutch case via the four-link causal chain.

Second, how does the proposed configuration compare against alternative explanations of the Dutch trajectory? Coalition governance, individual leadership and diplomatic capacity, and strategic agency are the principal alternative candidates suggested by the existing literature. Section 5.2 evaluates each through the within-case evidence and through comparative material drawn from the cross-national panel.

Third, does the institutional relationship implied by the proposed configuration extend across the EU member state population, or is it specific to the Dutch case? This sub-question complements the within-case work with a population-level test of whether parliamentary scrutiny strength predicts Council network capital across the Union. Section 5.3 conducts this test through a cross-country regression.

Chapter 3 - From the EU Level to the Domestic Level: A Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter established a puzzle. Network capital in the Council of the European Union varies systematically across member states in ways that cannot be fully accounted for by the structural factors that dominate the existing literature. The Netherlands emerges as the most pronounced outlier in the most recent survey wave, accumulating substantially higher levels of incoming cooperation ties than its economic size would predict across both in The Negotiations in the Council of the European Union (Naurin et al., 2022) and ECFR datasets. Explaining this pattern requires analytical reorientation. The existing literature has focused primarily on what network capital does: its consequences for bargaining success, its relationship to formal institutional resources, its distribution across member states. What remains underspecified is what network capital is produced by, beyond the structural conditions that govern its baseline distribution. This chapter develops a theoretical framework for addressing that gap.

The framework proposed here rests on a single analytical move: shifting attention from the EU level, where network capital manifests as an observable outcome of Council interaction, to the

domestic level, where the political and institutional conditions that shape governmental behavior are formed. The argument is that member states do not arrive in Brussels as behaviorally identical actors differentiated only by their structural resources and substantive preferences. They arrive with behavioral qualities, position stability, predictability, and credibility, that are shaped by the domestic institutional environments in which their negotiating positions are formed. These qualities are not incidental to Council cooperation. They are the qualities that make a member state attractive as a cooperation partner, and over time they generate the reputation that accumulates as network capital.

Developing this argument requires drawing on several theoretical traditions that have addressed the relationship between domestic politics and international negotiation, and on the specific literature that has theorized informal influence within the Council. The chapter proceeds in four steps. Section 3.2 introduces the two-level games framework, drawing on Putnam's foundational account of how domestic constraints shape international bargaining behavior. Section 3.3 examines the EU-specific application of two-level logic through Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalism, and situates the present argument in relation to its framework. Section 3.4 engages with the literature on informal influence and cooperation in the Council, drawing on Naurin, Wallace, and Häge to establish why network capital is theoretically and empirically consequential and how it is accumulated through repeated interaction. Section 3.5 introduces Tsebelis' veto player theory as an account of how domestic institutional configurations, particularly coalition governance, produce the position stability that the credibility logic requires. Section 3.6 synthesizes these elements into the specific theoretical argument advanced by this thesis and lays out the causal chain that will guide the subsequent empirical analysis.

3.2 Two-Level Games and the Credibility of Domestic Constraint

The foundational framework for understanding the relationship between domestic political conditions and international negotiating behavior is Putnam's (1988) theory of two-level games. Putnam conceptualizes international negotiation as occurring simultaneously at two levels: the domestic level, where governments must secure support for their negotiating positions from constituents and coalition partners, and the international level, where governments bargain with foreign counterparts. The central analytical concept linking these two levels is the win-set, defined as the range of agreements that would be acceptable given domestic political constraints. The size and shape of a government's win-set, Putnam argues, shapes its international bargaining behavior in consequential ways.

Among the several theoretical claims Putnam develops, one is of particular significance for the present argument. Governments operating under tighter and more clearly defined domestic constraints can, paradoxically, occupy a stronger rather than weaker position in international negotiations. The logic is straightforward: Negotiating partners who know that a government faces binding domestic constraints also know what that government cannot credibly commit to. Its signals in negotiations carry greater weight because its scope for maneuver is visible and limited. Commitments made within the bounds of a tightly constrained win-set are more believable than commitments made by an actor whose domestic political situation is fluid and ambiguous. A smaller win-set, in this sense, is not merely a limitation on negotiating flexibility but a source of international credibility.

This insight has direct implications for the argument advanced here. If domestic constraints operate as credibility-enhancing signals in international negotiations, then institutional arrangements that make these constraints visible, predictable, and durable may systematically influence how a government is perceived and engaged with by its negotiating partners over time. Where such constraints are institutionally grounded rather than politically contingent, the signals they produce are stable across changes in government and across the specific substantive content of any given negotiation. Other actors can learn over repeated interactions that certain governments behave in predictable ways, anchored by visible domestic structures rather than ad hoc political calculation.

It is important to acknowledge a specific adaptation in applying Putnam's framework to the Council context. Putnam developed two-level games primarily with reference to discrete international negotiations producing formal agreements requiring domestic ratification, most notably summit diplomacy and treaty making. The Council of the European Union operates differently. Ministers do not typically return from Council meetings with agreements that require formal parliamentary ratification. The accountability relationship runs in the opposite direction: parliaments scrutinize, shape, and constrain ministerial positions before and during negotiations, rather than ratifying them afterward. The two-level logic nonetheless applies, but through an ex ante rather than ex post mechanism. Domestic institutional constraints in the Council context operate by shaping what ministers can commit to before they enter negotiations, and by making those commitments visible to other Council participants. The credibility logic remains intact even as the procedural form differs from Putnam's original cases.

3.3 Liberal Intergovernmentalism and the Domestic Foundations of EU Bargaining

The EU-specific application of the two-level logic is most fully developed in Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalism (1993). Moravcsik argues that European integration can be analyzed through a two-stage framework: national preferences are formed domestically through the interaction of governments with societal interests, and these nationally formed preferences are then aggregated through intergovernmental bargaining at the EU level, where outcomes reflect the relative bargaining power of member states. The framework rests on the premise that governments do not arrive at EU negotiations as unconstrained actors pursuing abstract national interests. They arrive as representatives of domestic political processes that have already shaped and constrained what they can seek and accept.

This premise is foundational to the argument developed here. Whatever domestic conditions shape how governments arrive at EU negotiations must be taken seriously as potential sources of variation in EU-level behavior and outcomes. Moravcsik's framework legitimizes the analytical move upstream from the EU level to the domestic level that the present thesis undertakes. In this respect, liberal intergovernmentalism provides the theoretical foundation on which the subsequent argument is constructed.

At the same time, it is necessary to be clear about where the present argument departs from the liberal intergovernmentalist framework. Moravcsik's focus is on the substantive content of preferences and on the bargaining power that enables governments to realize those preferences in negotiated outcomes. The informal relational dimensions of Council negotiations, trust, reputation, brokerage and the networks of cooperation through which these qualities are produced, are largely absent from the standard liberal intergovernmentalist account. Bargaining power in Moravcsik's framework is understood primarily in terms of asymmetric interdependence and the credibility of threats to exit or block agreement. It is not understood in terms of the reputational and relational capital that accumulates through repeated cooperation.

This silence is not a flaw of liberal intergovernmentalism so much as a reflection of the empirical questions it was designed to address. Moravcsik developed the framework to explain the major intergovernmental bargains that have shaped European integration, episodes in which hard bargaining over substantive preferences is plausibly the dominant analytical lens. The day-to-day negotiation of policy within the Council, where most actual decision-making occurs, involves different dynamics. Here, the capacity to be sought out as a cooperation partner, to be

trusted in compromise brokering and to be relied upon across repeated interactions becomes a form of influence that operates alongside, and sometimes independently of, the substantive preferences and formal bargaining resources that liberal intergovernmentalism emphasizes.

The present thesis therefore sits at a specific intersection. It accepts the liberal intergovernmentalist claim that domestic politics shapes EU bargaining behavior but extends that claim in a direction Moravcsik does not pursue. It asks not what preferences governments bring to the negotiating table but what behavioral qualities they bring, and how those qualities are shaped by the domestic institutional environments in which their positions are formed.

3.4 Informal Influence and Cooperation in the Council

Developing an account of these behavioral qualities requires engaging with the literature that has specifically theorized informal influence in the Council of the European Union. The foundational volume in this area is Naurin and Wallace's (eds) 2008 *Unveiling the Council of the European Union*, which established that Council decision-making cannot be fully understood through analysis of formal voting procedures alone. The editors argue that Council practice consists of a mixture of formal rules and informal practices that evolve through repeated interaction, and that smaller member states can exploit informal resources and contingent coalitions to influence outcomes in ways that formal power indices fail to capture. This observation is theoretically consequential. It implies that there exists a form of influence in Council negotiations that is not reducible to voting weight or institutional position, and that this form of influence is distributed unevenly across member states in patterns that formal models cannot account for.

Häge's (2012) work on coalition building provides a theoretical account of why these perceptions matter. He argues that consensus in the Council emerges not from preference convergence but as a byproduct of coalition-building dynamics in which member states cluster with like-minded partners to form blocking or winning coalitions. Under conditions of bounded rationality and informational complexity, negotiators rely on heuristics, including assessments of which partners are likely to be reliable, predictable, and credible. Member states that have established clear and stable behavioral profiles become cognitively available reference points in these heuristic processes. States whose positions are unpredictable or whose commitments are subject to sudden revision impose higher informational costs on potential partners and are correspondingly less attractive as cooperation partners.

This body of literature establishes the theoretical significance of network capital (as a measure of informal dynamics) but leaves underspecified the mechanism through which it is accumulated differentially across member states. If behavioral qualities, predictability, consistency, credibility, shape perceptions of a state's attractiveness as a cooperation partner, what produces these qualities in the first place? The Council literature has tended to treat these as emergent features of interaction within the Council itself, without systematically tracing them back to the domestic institutional environments from which governmental behavior originates. This is precisely the analytical space the present thesis occupies.

Heisenberg's (2008) methodological reflections on Council research are worth noting in this connection. Among the unanswered questions she identifies is what has been termed the Schelling conjecture, the claim that domestically constrained governments may be more rather than less powerful in international negotiations. This question, which is directly related to the credibility logic drawn from Putnam above, remains empirically underexplored in the Council context. The present thesis offers a partial response to this open question by examining whether domestic institutional constraints correspond to variation in a specific form of influence, informal network capital, that the existing literature on Council bargaining has not systematically connected to domestic accountability structures.

3.5 Veto Players and the Institutional Production of Position Stability

The theoretical framework developed so far identifies position stability as the behavioral quality that, through repeated observation by negotiating partners, generates the reputational judgements that accumulate as network capital. What remains to be specified is the general institutional logic through which position stability is produced. Tsebelis's (1995) veto player theory provides this logic.

A veto player, in Tsebelis's framework, is any individual or collective actor whose agreement is required for a change from the status quo. Political systems differ in the number and ideological dispersion of their veto players, and these differences have systematic consequences for policy behaviour. Systems with multiple veto players, particularly those with significant ideological dispersion among them, produce greater policy stability. The status quo becomes harder to change because more actors, with more divergent preferences, must consent to any proposed change. Decisions that emerge from such systems are therefore more durable and more moderate than decisions produced by systems with fewer effective veto points.

The general analytical claim Tsebelis develops is that this institutional logic operates independently of the specific procedural form through which veto-player effects are channelled. What matters causally is whether an institutional configuration produces the functional consequence of multiple consents being required for changes in committed positions. Different political systems channel this requirement through different procedural forms. Coalition governments are one such form: each party whose defection would bring down the government functions as an effective veto player, and policy positions that survive internal coalition bargaining are by construction positions that have been reconciled across actors with different preferences. Parliamentary accountability for executive positions is another form: where legislatures exercise binding scrutiny over governmental commitments before those commitments are made in external negotiation, the legislature functions as a veto-player-like check on what positions can be advanced.

These configurations are not equivalent in their consequences. They produce position stability through different mechanisms operating at different stages of the policy process, they generate different forms of public visibility, and they may or may not coincide within any given political system. Whether the substantive position stability that other states observe is produced by coalition bargaining, by parliamentary scrutiny, by some combination of the two, or by some institutional configuration outside the veto-player family is an empirical question that the general framework does not adjudicate. Tsebelis's theory establishes the logical relationship between veto-player-like institutional configurations and position stability, but the identification of which specific configuration operates in any particular case requires empirical analysis.

This distinction is consequential for the present argument. The thesis advances parliamentary accountability for Council positions as the specific institutional configuration through which position stability is produced in the Dutch case, distinct from coalition governance per se. The reasoning is developed in detail in section 3.6 below and rests on the observation that the Netherlands exhibits both institutional features simultaneously throughout the period of analysis, requiring the empirical work to distinguish between them rather than treating them as functionally interchangeable. Coalition governance is therefore not the mechanism this thesis defends; it is the principal alternative within the veto-player family against which the parliamentary accountability mechanism must be tested. Chapter Five undertakes this test directly, examining whether variation in coalition characteristics across cases corresponds to variation in network capital outcomes.

A second consequence of the general framework's logic concerns temporal persistence. Tsebelis emphasizes that veto-player effects are not transient. They persist across specific policy episodes because they reflect the structural features of the political system rather than the preferences of particular incumbents. This institutional durability is essential to the accumulation of network capital, which depends on sustained behavioral consistency over repeated interactions across changes of government and across the substantive content of specific negotiations. Whatever institutional configuration produces position stability in a given case must itself be durable enough to sustain that stability across the time horizon over which reputational judgements form.

An important qualification must be noted. Tsebelis developed veto player theory primarily to explain domestic policy stability, specifically the probability and magnitude of legislative change within political systems. Applying his framework to explain international behavioral consistency involves a theoretical extension. The logical bridge is that the same institutional features that produce domestic policy stability, the need for multiple consents across veto-player-like configurations, also produce the behavioral qualities that other states observe and form reputational judgements about. Domestic stability and international behavioral consistency are not identical phenomena, but they are causally connected through a common institutional mechanism: a government whose domestic position cannot easily change is, observably, a government whose international commitments cannot easily change either.

3.6 Synthesis

The puzzle established in Chapter Two specifies what an adequate explanation must account for. The Netherlands records a positive size-adjusted residual in every wave from 2003 to 2021, but the relative magnitude of this overperformance is not constant: a sustained decline in relative rank through 2015, followed by a transformation across the two subsequent waves that brings the Netherlands to the leading position in the dataset. The partner-group decomposition shows that the aggregate trajectory is the net result of at least three simultaneous dynamics: continuous growth in cooperation from one identifiable group of partners independent of political conjuncture, wave-specific suppression of cooperation from other groups tracking identifiable policy periods, and a post-period transformation reflecting the recovery of the suppressed groups combined with continued growth among the aligned group.

These features impose four requirements on the kind of explanation the framework must develop. The explanatory factor must be durable across the full observation window, because

the continuity in the aligned cooperation pattern extends across all seven waves without interruption. It must produce position stability as its behavioral output, because what is being rewarded by aligned partners and suppressed by opposed partners is the same underlying institutional product viewed from different positions in the partner population. It must be domestically grounded enough that the substance of the positions it produces matters to other Council participants in policy-specific ways. And it must be institutionally durable enough to sustain the same behavioral output across changes of government, because the period encompasses multiple governments of different compositions while the aggregate pattern persists.

The theoretical resources developed in the preceding sections specify what an institutional factor satisfying these requirements would look like. Putnam establishes the credibility logic according to which visible and institutionally grounded domestic constraints generate the perceptual conditions under which position stability is read as reliability by aligned partners and as rigidity by opposed ones. The mechanism's double-edged character follows directly from this logic and predicts the partner-differentiated pattern the puzzle documents. Moravcsik authorizes the analytical move from EU level to domestic level, with the modification that the relevant domestic feature shapes behavioral qualities rather than substantive preferences. The Council cooperation literature establishes the empirical significance of position stability for the formation of reputational judgements. Tsebelis establishes the general institutional logic linking veto-player-like configurations to position stability, while leaving the specific configuration in any given case to empirical determination.

Johansson et al. (2023), in concluding their structural analysis of network determinants, they identify member state administrative and institutional characteristics, specifically how member states organize the formulation of positions and their work with EU affairs in national administrations, as the unexamined class of factors most likely to account for variation that their structural framework leaves unexplained. The direction the literature points toward is therefore the domestic-institutional configuration through which Council positions are formed.

This thesis advances parliamentary accountability architecture for Council positions as the institutional configuration that operates in the Dutch case. Parliamentary procedures affect how ministers prepare, commit to, and justify their negotiating positions before entering Council deliberations. They are institutionally durable, persisting across changes of government rather than reflecting the preferences of any particular governing coalition. They produce veto-player-

like effects on subsequent position revision: once a position has been committed to under parliamentary scrutiny, the political cost of departing from it constrains ministerial discretion. And they correspond directly to the class of factors Johansson et al. identify as unexamined in the existing literature. Within the veto-player family, coalition governance is the principal alternative candidate. The two configurations are not mutually exclusive and may coincide within a single political system, which is why the empirical work must distinguish between them rather than treat them as equivalent.

The mechanism specified in this way has a double-edged property that requires explicit theoretical recognition. Domestic accountability obligations make ministerial positions visible, publicly committed, and institutionally anchored. These same properties that produce credibility among partners aligned with the substance of those positions impose costs on partners opposed to it. A government whose positions are fixed by domestic procedural commitments cannot easily concede ground on dossiers where those positions are contested, and partners whose interests depend on such concessions have less reason to cooperate with it on those dossiers. This is the Putnamian small win-set logic operating in both directions: credibility and rigidity are not separate consequences of constraint, but the same consequence viewed by differently positioned observers. The behavioral prediction of the mechanism is therefore not uniform reward across all potential partners but a differentiated pattern. Partners whose policy interests align with the institutionally committed positions experience the constraint as credibility and respond by sustaining and intensifying cooperation. Partners whose interests are opposed experience the same constraint as rigidity and respond by reducing cooperation, particularly during periods when the dossiers in question are most politically salient. The aggregate accumulation of network capital is the net result of these two dynamics operating simultaneously across the partner population. This explains why a continuously operating institutional mechanism is consistent with non-continuous aggregate outcomes: a stable institution produces stable reward to aligned partners and policy-period-dependent costs to opposed partners, and the relative weight of these two dynamics in any given period depends on which dossiers are salient and how the partner population is distributed across them. The partner-group decomposition presented in Chapter Two is the observable implication of this mechanism. The continuous growth among partners aligned with Dutch positions on the dominant dossiers of each period reflects the credibility component. The wave-specific suppression among partners opposed to those positions during the eurozone and migration crisis periods reflects the rigidity component.

The causal chain implied by this argument (illustrated in figure 5) can be specified in four links, each representing a distinct analytical stage in the production of network capital. The first link

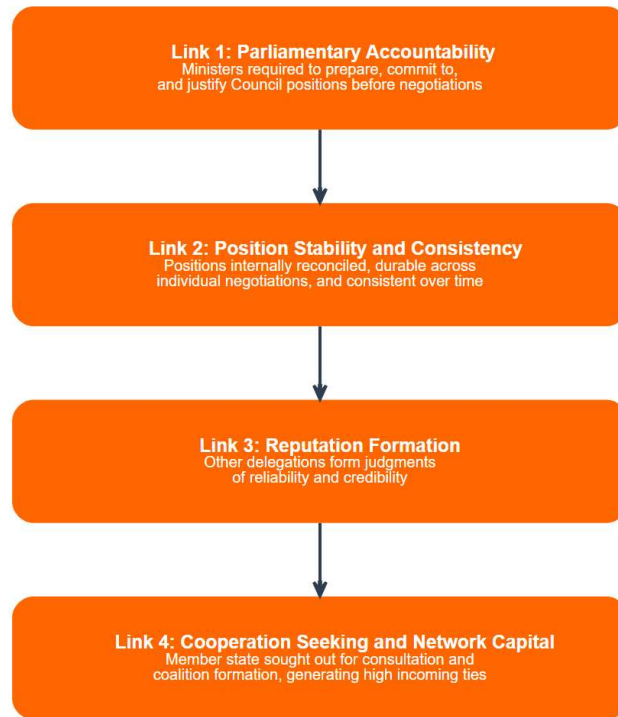


Figure 5: Causal chain

concerns the institutional rules that obligate ministers to prepare, commit to, and justify their Council positions before entering negotiations. The second link concerns the behavioral effect of these rules: positions that are internally reconciled, durable across the course of individual negotiations, and consistent over time. The third link concerns the perceptual translation of this observable behavior into reputational judgements by other delegations, who come to perceive the member state in question as reliable and credible. The fourth link concerns the consequences of these reputational judgements: member states perceived as reliable are actively sought out for consultation, coalition formation, and compromise brokering, and the accumulated pattern of being sought out manifests as the incoming cooperation weights that network capital measures. The same chain (Illustrated in figure 6) operates in mirrored form for partners whose policy interests oppose the institutionally committed positions: visible commitments at link one produce sustained rigidity at link two, which generates reputational judgements of low negotiating flexibility at link three, which reduces cooperation-seeking at link four during periods when the relevant dossiers are politically salient. The credibility and rigidity branches are not separate processes but the same process viewed from different positions in the partner population.

Chapter Four - Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have established an empirical puzzle and developed a theoretical argument intended to explain it. Chapter Two demonstrated that network capital in the Council of the European Union varies systematically across member states in ways that structural models cannot fully account for, with the Netherlands emerging as the most pronounced outlier with a distinct trajectory. Chapter Three developed a theoretical framework that locates the origins of network capital variation in domestic institutional configurations, specifically in the mechanisms through which national parliaments hold governments accountable for their Council positions. This framework implies a specific causal chain linking parliamentary accountability to network capital accumulation through the production of position stability, behavioral consistency, and reputational judgments by other Council participants.

The present chapter specifies the methodological strategy through which this argument is evaluated empirically. It proceeds in eight steps. **Section 4.2** presents the overall logic of the research design, justifying the sequential mixed-methods approach adopted in this study. **Section 4.3** develops the case selection rationale, drawing on Seawright & Gerring's (2008) framework for deviant case analysis to justify the selection of the Netherlands as the primary case. **Section 4.4** elaborates the process tracing methodology applied to the Dutch case,

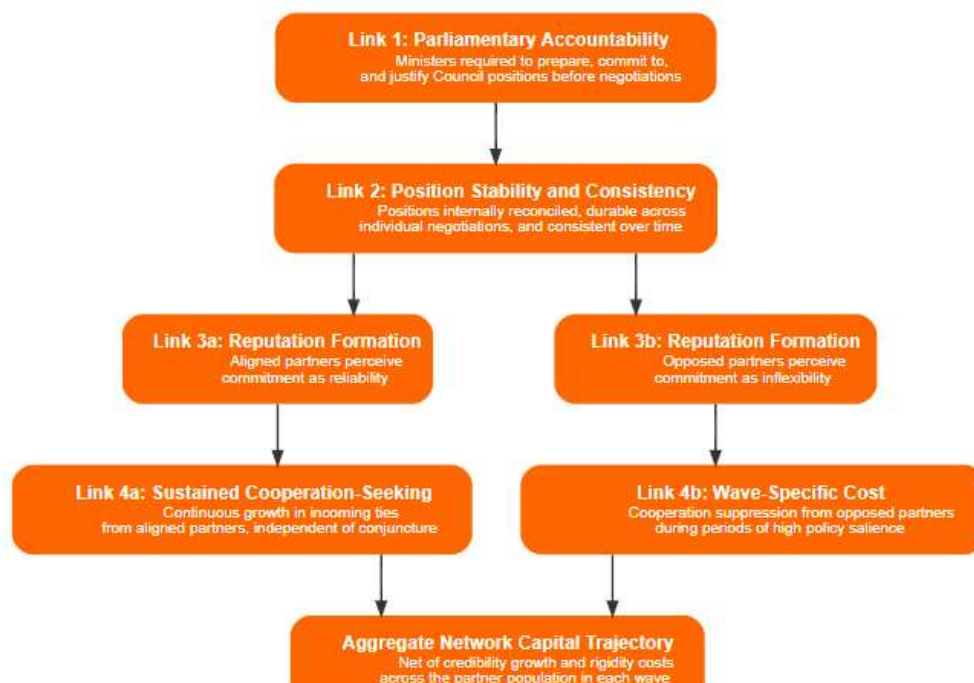


Figure 6: Causal chain with dual-edge branching

situating it within Beach and Pedersen's (2016) typology and specifying how observable implications are derived from the causal chain presented in Chapter Three. **Section 4.5** presents strategy for empirically evaluating the mechanism under endogenous and exogenous shocks and alternative explanations. **Section 4.6** describes the data sources and operationalization choices that underpin the empirical analysis. **Section 4.7** presents design of the cross-country test of the mechanism **Section 4.8** addresses the scope conditions of the design.

4.2 Research Design: A Sequential Mixed-Methods Approach

The research design adopted here is a sequential mixed-methods approach in which quantitative exploratory analysis, theoretical development, qualitative process tracing and cross-country statistical testing each perform a distinct analytical function. This sequencing reflects the inductive logic of explaining-outcome process tracing applied to a deviant case.

The quantitative analysis presented in **Chapter Two** is exploratory rather than confirmatory in character. Its function is to identify and validate a robust empirical puzzle, not to test theoretical hypotheses. The residual analysis and cross-dataset validation establish that structural models leave systematic variation unaccounted for and that one case, the Netherlands, is the most pronounced positive outlier. These findings do not in themselves constitute explanations. They constitute what Heisenberg (2008), in her methodological reflections on Council research, identifies as the appropriate basis for subsequent theoretical and qualitative investigation: a systematically established pattern that demands mechanistic explanation beyond what aggregate statistical analysis can provide.

The theoretical framework developed in Chapter Three then performs an interpretive function. It offers a candidate explanation for the pattern identified, drawing on established frameworks for analyzing the relationship between domestic politics and international negotiation and connecting these frameworks to the specific literature on Council informality and network capital.

The qualitative empirical analysis conducted in Chapter Five serves assessment function. The process tracing evaluates whether the mechanism specified in the causal chain actually operated in the Dutch case by assembling evidence for each link, and cross-country regression attends the question of generalizability.

This also responds to Heisenberg's (2008) observation that the Council context, characterized by a small number of actors, opaque decision-making processes, and limited systematic data on individual negotiation episodes, is particularly well-suited to qualitative empirical methods

that can handle context-specific mechanisms without overreaching into quantitative generalization.

4.3 Case Selection

The selection of the Netherlands as the primary case follows the logic of deviant case analysis as developed by Seawright & Gerring (2008). A deviant case is one whose observed outcome deviates systematically from the predictions of existing theoretical models. Seawright & Gerring argue that deviant cases are particularly valuable for theory-building because the very fact that they cannot be accounted for by existing explanations forces the analyst to identify mechanisms that established frameworks have overlooked. The Netherlands qualifies as a deviant case in the precise methodological sense: across multiple datasets, multiple survey waves, and multiple size-adjusted specifications, it exhibits a level of network capital higher than structural models predict, and the gap between its observed and predicted network capital is larger and more consistent than that of any other member state in the last survey wave (Naurin et al., 2022). The case is selected because it is the most potentially informative anomaly relative to the theoretical predictions that dominate existing literature.

4.4 Process Tracing of the Dutch Case

The within-case analysis of the Netherlands applies process tracing as a qualitative method for evaluating whether a theorized causal mechanism operates in a specific case. Beach and Pedersen (2016) distinguish three variants of process tracing based on the analytical purpose each serves: theory-testing process tracing, theory-building process tracing, and explaining-outcome process tracing. The variant applied here is explaining-outcome process tracing, which is used when the analysis seeks to account for a specific empirically observed outcome, in this case the Dutch trajectory in network capital documented in Chapter Two, by tracing the causal mechanism through which the outcome was produced. Beach and Pedersen (2016:309) explicitly position explaining-outcome process tracing within the broader case study tradition, citing Gerring's framework for single-outcome and extreme case studies. The methodological convergence between explaining-outcome process tracing and Seawright & Gerring's (2008) deviant case logic is therefore recognized within the methodological literature itself. The combination of the two frameworks adopted here, deviant case selection followed by explaining-outcome process tracing of the deviant case, follows a methodologically integrated approach that the literature on case study research treats as a natural pairing rather than as two separately invoked frameworks. The explaining-outcome process tracing is appropriate for the present analysis for two reasons. Firstly, the empirical puzzle that motivates the thesis is case-

specific in the sense that the Netherlands is the most pronounced outlier with a distinct trajectory and the focus of explanatory attention is on why this case deviates from structural expectations. Secondly, the theoretical argument developed in Chapter Three was constructed in response to the Dutch case rather than deductively derived from prior theory. Beach and Pedersen (2016:311) characterize the analytical mode of explaining-outcome process tracing as resembling abduction, in which empirical material and theoretical frameworks are iteratively juxtaposed to converge on the best explanation in a particular case. This abductive logic is not a methodological compromise but the explicit analytical mode of the framework. The causal chain proposed in this thesis, which draws together elements from Putnam, Tsebelis, and the Council cooperation literature into a synthesized mechanism for the Dutch case, is consistent with what Beach and Pedersen (2016:309) describe as the eclectic conglomerate mechanism characteristic of explaining-outcome studies. Schimmelfennig's (2001) analysis of the EU's eastern enlargement, cited by Beach and Pedersen as an exemplar of the method, demonstrates the application of explaining-outcome process tracing within EU studies specifically. The process tracing proceeds by deriving observable implications from each link in the causal chain specified at the end of Chapter Three and then evaluating the available evidence against those implications. Beach and Pedersen argue (2016:157) that each piece of evidence considered in process tracing has two relevant properties: its probative value for the hypothesis in question, meaning the extent to which the evidence discriminates between the hypothesis and alternative explanations, and the certainty of the evidence itself, meaning the confidence the analyst has that the evidence is accurate. Different configurations of these properties produce different tests of the hypothesis. Hoop tests identify evidence whose presence is necessary but not sufficient for the hypothesis to hold. Smoking gun tests identify evidence whose presence is highly unique to the hypothesis and difficult to explain through alternatives. Doubly decisive tests combine both properties, while straw-in-the-wind tests are weaker, consistent with the hypothesis but not diagnostic. The analysis is transparent about which links are more and less directly evidenced and acknowledges where evidence is circumstantial or inferential rather than diagnostic. For the Netherlands, the evidentiary strategy is organized around the observable implications of each link in the four-link causal chain. The first link, parliamentary accountability obligations, is assessed through primary institutional sources documenting the formal rules and procedures through which the Tweede Kamer and Eerste Kamer scrutinize governmental Council behavior. The second link, position stability and consistency, is assessed through multiple converging sources: the institutional artefacts of position formation, annotated agendas and BNC fiches, which function as publicly documented pre-Council commitments

constraining ministerial behavior, survey evidence from the Naurin et al. dataset on the perceived frequency of domestic constraint signaling by Dutch delegations, and official evaluation documents characterizing Dutch position formation. Council voting records are not used as evidence for this link. As the Council scholarship has extensively documented, formal voting behavior is a poor proxy for actual negotiating positions: the Council's consensus culture means states routinely join unanimity even when they disagree, to avoid isolation, making voting records systematically misleading as indicators of position stability (Häge, 2012; Heisenberg, 2008). The third link, reputation formation, is assessed through secondary academic literature and practitioner testimony characterizing how Dutch negotiating behavior is perceived within the Council. The fourth link, cooperation seeking and network capital accumulation, is constituted by the observed outcome itself, as established quantitatively in Chapter Two. The cumulative assessment in Chapter Five evaluates evidence at each link against these standards and reaches an overall judgement about whether the accumulated evidence renders the mechanism the most plausible explanation available.

4.5. Mechanism Evaluation: Endogenous and Exogenous sources of variation and alternative explanations

The empirical evaluation of the mechanism in the Dutch case examines its behavior across two distinct sources of variation. The first is endogenous variation within the mechanism itself: the 2006-2009 decentralization reform of Dutch parliamentary scrutiny, which strengthened sectoral committee engagement with EU dossiers and increased the institutional visibility of pre-Council position formation. The mechanism's predictions about how strengthened parliamentary accountability should affect network capital outcomes are evaluated against the pre-reform and post-reform periods. The pre-reform baseline is limited to two survey waves (2003 and 2006), and thus smaller-n, which constrains the diagnostic weight of this analysis. The endogenous evaluation is therefore exploratory rather than confirmatory, similar in character to the partner-group analysis. The second source of variation is exogenous: Brexit, which redistributed the partner population within which the mechanism operates without changing the mechanism itself. The two analytical moments examine the mechanism's predicted behavior under distinct kinds of variation: endogenous change in the institutional mechanism, and exogenous change in the strategic environment within which it operates. Convergent evidence across both moments would strengthen the mechanism's explanatory plausibility relative to evidence from either moment alone.

Beyond the mechanism's behavior under endogenous and exogenous variation, the empirical evaluation tests the parliamentary accountability argument against three principal alternative explanations of the Dutch case. The first is coalition governance, the principal alternative candidate within the veto-player family established in Chapter Three. If position stability is produced by coalition bargaining rather than parliamentary scrutiny, the parliamentary accountability argument loses its specificity. This alternative is evaluated through regression analysis using Comparative Political Data Set (Armingeon et al. 2025): indicators of coalition characteristics across the panel of EU member states. The second is the actor-based account, in which the Dutch trajectory reflects individual ministerial leadership and diplomatic capacity rather than institutional structure. This alternative is evaluated through examination of whether the Dutch network capital trajectory persists leadership change or diplomatic capacity, over the observation period. The third is the agency-based account, in which the Dutch trajectory reflects strategic coalition-building, policy entrepreneurship, and agenda-shaping capacity rather than institutional features. This alternative is addressed through engagement with recent case study literature on Dutch leadership of the New Hanseatic League and the Frugal Four.

4.6. Cross-country test

To complement the within-case analysis with cross-country evidence, this thesis tests whether parliamentary scrutiny strength predicts Council network capital across the member state population. Three composite measures of parliamentary scrutiny strength have been developed in comparative literature, each constructed independently using different methodological approaches. Karlas (2012) weights multiple dimensions of EU affairs scrutiny into a single index. Winzen (2012) emphasizes the institutionalization of formal scrutiny procedures. Auel et al. (2015) developed the OPAL Institutional Strength Score as the more recent measure, designed to address what the authors identified as limitations in earlier rankings: a focus on formal institutional provisions that misses the behavioral and practical features determining whether formal capabilities translate into actual scrutiny effects. OPAL is used as the main institutional predictor in the cross-country analysis because its three composite dimensions correspond closely to the institutional features the causal chain identifies as operative. The OPAL composite indexes information access, scrutiny infrastructure, and oversight. The cross-country regression therefore tests whether the institutional architecture identified within the Dutch case as operative for credibility production also predicts network capital across the EU member state population.

The cross-country test is a multiple ordinary least squares regression with network capital percentile rank from the 2012 Naurin et al. survey wave as the outcome variable, the OPAL Institutional Strength Score as the predictor of interest, and log GDP as a control for country size. The 2012 wave is chosen to match the period Auel et al. analyze specifically. The bivariate correlation between OPAL and network capital is reported alongside the main multiple regression result. Robustness checks across alternative outcome specifications, alternative size controls and alternative scrutiny measures (Karlas 2012, Winzen 2012) are documented in Appendix F.

4.7 Data Sources and Operationalization

The empirical analysis draws on several data sources, each selected for its appropriateness to a specific analytical task.

The quantitative analysis in Chapter Two uses the Negotiations in the Council of the European Union Dataset developed by Naurin et al. (2022). This dataset, compiled from systematic survey responses of national representatives involved in Council negotiations, provides the operationalization of network capital used in the present study. Incoming cooperation weights are aggregated for each member state in each survey wave, following established practice in the literature. Cross-validation is conducted using the ECFR Coalition Explorer survey. Economic size data used in the residual analysis is drawn from Eurostat national accounts statistics, specifically current prices in euros, consistent across the full panel of observations.

The aggregate residual analysis in Chapter Two is supplemented by a partner-group decomposition that disaggregates Dutch incoming cooperation weights by the policy-economic orientation of source states across all seven survey waves, using the dominant policy cleavages of the observation window: northern liberal-market states, eurozone periphery states, and Visegrad states. The decomposition serves two functions within the design: it specifies the phenomenon to be explained by revealing partner-differentiated dynamics the aggregate residual conceals, and it provides an observable implication of the theoretical mechanism developed in Chapter Three. The dual role reflects the analytical mode of explaining-outcome process tracing of a deviant case, in which, as Beach and Pedersen (2016) and Seawright and Gerring (2008) make explicit, the explanation is constructed abductively to account for a specific outcome that existing theoretical frameworks do not predict. Empirical material and theoretical frameworks are iteratively juxtaposed throughout, and the analytical work consists

of converging on the most plausible explanation of the case rather than testing an externally derived hypothesis.

The process tracing analysis of the Dutch case draws on primary institutional sources and secondary academic literature. The primary institutional sources include the procedural documents of the Tweede Kamer and Eerste Kamer describing parliamentary scrutiny of EU affairs, accessible through the official websites of both chambers. These documents provide direct evidence for the first link in the causal chain, specifying the formal rules and procedures governing the preparation and scrutiny of Council positions. Secondary literature on Dutch EU policy, including work by scholars affiliated with the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael, IOB reports, provide contextual evidence for the behavioral and reputational links in the chain.

4.8 Scope Conditions

The research design adopted in this study has specific scope conditions that follow from the methodological choices made. These define what kind of inferences the design can support and where its boundaries lie.

Firstly, the design operates at two analytical levels: within-case mechanism documentation and cross-country statistical testing. The within-case process tracing of the Dutch case produces inferences specific to that case. Claims about the mechanism's operation in specific member states are therefore limited to the Dutch case. The cross-country regression in Section 5.3 tests whether the relationship the institutional argument predicts is observable across the Union, but does not document the mechanism through which this relationship is produced in cases other than the Netherlands. The two levels of analysis are complementary: the within-case work proposes how the mechanism operates in detail, the cross-country work establishes that the relationship operates broadly. Neither in isolation would be sufficient for the kind of argument this thesis develops.

Secondly, the design does not establish causation in the strictest sense. Process tracing can render a mechanism plausible by assembling evidence for each link in a causal chain, but it cannot fully rule out the possibility that the correspondence between parliamentary accountability and network capital reflects common causation by some third factor rather than the causal pathway specified in the theoretical argument. The cross-country regression similarly establishes a statistical relationship without identifying causal direction, the within-case temporal sequencing partially addresses this concern but does not eliminate it.

Thirdly, the quantitative analysis at both levels has specific scope constraints. The residual analysis in Chapter Two is exploratory and identifies the empirical puzzle without testing the theoretical argument. The cross-country regression in Section 5.3 tests the institutional argument at the population level but operates with $N = 27$, which limits the range of additional controls and the statistical power of diagnostic tests. The design treats these constraints as inherent to small-N cross-country analysis.

Finally, these scope conditions define what the design can establish. The thesis does not aim to resolve the question of what produces network capital variation across all member states. It advances a theoretically grounded and empirically traceable argument about parliamentary accountability, documents the mechanism through detailed within-case analysis, and tests the broader relationship across the Union. The contribution is precise in its claims and modest in its scope, which is the appropriate stance for a thesis seeking to open an analytical direction that the existing literature has underexplored.

Chapter 5 - Empirical Analysis

5.1 The Dutch Case: Process Tracing the Mechanism

This section traces the causal mechanism in the Netherlands as specified in the four-link chain developed in Chapter Three. The analysis proceeds link by link, presenting the evidence for each, characterizing its diagnostic strength following Beach and Pedersen's framework, and assessing the cumulative support the chain provides for the proposed explanation of Dutch network capital overperformance.

5.1.1 Link 1: Parliamentary Accountability Obligations

The first link in the causal chain concerns the institutional configuration that obligates Dutch ministers to prepare, publicly commit to, and justify Council positions before entering negotiations. The Dutch parliamentary system exhibits several institutional features that, taken together, produce a depth of accountability obligations that is exceptional in comparative perspective. The constitutional foundation for parliamentary accountability is established by Article 68 of the Dutch Constitution (Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2023, Art. 68), which obliges ministers and state secretaries to provide parliament with all information requested, unless this would conflict with the interest of the state.

The annotated agenda system constitutes the central operational mechanism through which this constitutional obligation is exercised. Before each Council meeting, ministers submit to

parliament an annotated agenda specifying the items to be discussed, the Dutch position on each item, the reasoning behind that position, and any tactical considerations. This document is publicly available and is debated in parliament prior to the Council meeting through the *algemeen overleg*, the pre-Council debate mechanism that has operated in the Dutch system since 1996 (Högenauer, 2015). After the meeting, ministers are required to report back on the outcomes and explain any deviations from the agreed Dutch position. The annotated agenda system therefore establishes a complete cycle of *ex ante* position formation, parliamentary deliberation, and *ex post* accountability that operates for every Council meeting across every policy formation.

The *Beoordeling Nieuwe Commissievoorstellen* (BNC) system extends accountability obligations to the earliest stages of European policymaking. Within six weeks of any new Commission proposal, the relevant ministry must produce a BNC fiche outlining the substantive content of the proposal, its policy implications for the Netherlands, an initial Dutch position, an assessment of subsidiarity and proportionality, and considerations regarding financial and administrative consequences. Each fiche is transmitted to parliament and forms the basis for subsequent position development. The BNC system has been mandatory since the early 1990s and represents one of the most institutionalized systems of early-stage parliamentary engagement with EU policymaking among member states (Högenauer, 2015).

The parliamentary scrutiny reservation mechanism, introduced in 2009 following the Lisbon Treaty ratification, provides parliament with a formal procedural instrument to constrain ministerial action. When parliament places a scrutiny reservation on a dossier, the minister is institutionally obligated not to consent to a Council decision until parliamentary deliberation has been completed (Högenauer, 2015). This mechanism has been used selectively but its existence creates a binding institutional constraint that operates as a backstop on ministerial discretion.

Scrutiny of Council activity is conducted across the full range of Council formations rather than being concentrated in a single European Affairs Committee. Each sectoral committee in the *Tweede Kamer* and *Eerste Kamer* scrutinises the policy areas under its competence, including the European dimensions of those areas. This decentralized scrutiny model emerged from a series of internal reforms between 2006 and 2009, triggered by the 2005 constitutional referendum rejection, which revealed a gap between political elites and the public on EU affairs and generated domestic pressure for more direct parliamentary engagement with Council

negotiations. Internal Tweede Kamer reforms from 2006 transferred primary responsibility for pre-Council scrutiny from the central European Affairs Committee to sectoral committees, making the Netherlands one of the few parliaments in the European Union where sectoral committees are fully responsible for EU affairs scrutiny in their policy areas (Högenauer, 2015; Gattermann et al., 2013). The reform was consolidated through the parliamentary scrutiny reservation introduced in the Lisbon Treaty ratification law of 2009. Combined with the role of EU rapporteurs within sectoral committees and the active participation of both chambers, the institutional architecture for parliamentary scrutiny of EU policy in the Netherlands is comprehensive in scope and consistent across policy domains.

These institutional features collectively constitute the obligation specified at Link 1. The evidence is directly drawn from primary sources, namely the official documents and procedural rules of the Tweede Kamer and Eerste Kamer, supplemented by peer-reviewed academic documentation of the Dutch parliamentary system. Following Beach and Pedersen's framework, this evidence functions as a hoop test: the existence of these procedures is necessary for the mechanism to operate and their demonstrated existence keeps the hypothesis alive without by itself confirming the behavioral consequences specified at subsequent links. The evidence at Link 1 is strong in the sense that the obligation is established beyond reasonable dispute, but it is necessary rather than sufficient evidence for the chain as a whole.

5.1.2 Link 2: Position Stability and Consistency

The second link concerns the behavioral consequence of these institutional obligations. The theoretical prediction is that positions produced under conditions of constitutionally grounded, procedurally institutionalized parliamentary accountability are observably more internally reconciled, more publicly committed, and more durable across negotiations and over time than positions produced in systems without equivalent constraints. Four forms of evidence support this prediction.

Firstly, the institutional sources identified at Link 1 are themselves partially evidence for Link 2. The annotated agenda system, the BNC system, and the parliamentary scrutiny reservation mechanism do not merely create an obligation in principle, they generate observable artefacts of position formation that are publicly accessible and that demonstrably constrain ministerial action. Each annotated agenda is a public document committing the government to a specified position before negotiations. Each BNC fiche is a public statement of the Dutch position on a proposal. The minister cannot subsequently deviate substantially from these committed

positions without facing parliamentary scrutiny and the political costs that accompany it. The institutional architecture therefore produces position stability not merely as a procedural ideal but as a structural feature of how Dutch positions enter Council negotiations.

Secondly, this accountability constraint operates through a documented institutional cycle that reaches beyond ministerial level to encompass the ministry officials managing Council dossiers at working group level. Ministry officials responsible for Council dossiers attend the *algemeen overleg* pre-Council debates as ministerial support staff, present in the parliamentary chamber when positions are committed publicly, and are the same officials who prepare the annotated agendas, including the detailed assessments of other member states' positions that can only be derived from working group level engagement. As MP Sienot stated explicitly during a pre-Council debate on the Environment Council, the purpose of the debate is to give the Dutch representatives in Brussels the parliamentary message of what the chamber wants achieved in the negotiations (H. Sienot, D66, in *Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal*, Kamerstuk 21 501-08, nr. 793, Vergaderjaar 2019–2020, 25 September 2019). The accountability mechanism therefore encloses working group officials within its institutional logic not through direct parliamentary scrutiny of those officials but through their presence at pre-Council debates and their responsibility for preparing and implementing the positions the minister publicly commits to. Working group officials cannot agree to formulations in Brussels that deviate from positions their minister has publicly committed to without generating accountability exposure that flows back through the ministry to the parliamentary record. The accountability architecture extends further through a post-Council reporting obligation: ministers are expected to report back after Council meetings, typically in writing, detailing how far the previously committed negotiating position was achieved (Högenauer, 2015). The complete cycle, position committed before the meeting and outcome reported after, encloses the entire negotiating process within the parliamentary accountability framework.

Thirdly, external survey evidence corroborates the perception of Dutch position stability among Council practitioners. The frequency of position statements variable in the 2012 wave³ of the Negotiations in the Council of the European Union dataset (Naurin et al., 2022) asks respondents which member states most frequently invoke domestic constraints to explain their positions, explicitly including parliament as one of the domestic actors whose interests might determine a position. Analysis of incoming aggregated scores on this variable shows that the,

³ This variable is only available in the dataset for the 2012 survey wave.

the Netherlands ranks fifth among twenty-six member states on domestic constraint signalling (Naurin et al., 2022, 2012 wave). This is a descriptive finding that contributes to cumulative plausibility rather than serving as a discriminating test, since the variable cannot distinguish between parliamentary accountability and alternative sources of domestic constraint such as interest groups. The pattern is nevertheless consistent with the prediction at Link 2 and indicates that Dutch positions are perceived by other delegations as frequently anchored in domestic political constraints.

Fourthly, two independent evaluations conducted by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs provide official institutional assessment of Dutch position formation. The 2021 evaluation of Dutch EU coordination characterized the system as a well-oiled machine for formulating Dutch positions on EU proposals in good time and explicitly contrasted this with most other member states where coordination works less smoothly, with the result that they do not always have a timely national position (IOB, 2021). The evaluation also observed that the inclusiveness and detail of Dutch position formation may limit the system's agility to respond quickly to changing circumstances in the Brussels negotiations (IOB, 2021). This is precisely the behavioral feature the theory predicts: position stability comes at the cost of negotiating flexibility because positions are extensively pre-committed and constrained from revision. The subsequent IOB evaluation characterized the Netherlands as competent, pragmatic, clear, well-organized, and reliable in EU negotiations across the 2016 to 2023 period (IOB, 2024).

The exceptional depth of this architecture is confirmed in comparative perspective. Until 2000, sectoral committees were effectively sidelined from EU affairs scrutiny across the EU-15, with the Netherlands subsequently becoming one of the few parliaments where sectoral committees hold full rather than partial responsibility for EU scrutiny in their policy areas (Gattermann et al., 2013). The institutional distinctiveness of the Dutch system relative to most other member states is what the mechanism predicts should produce observable differences in behavioral consistency and network capital outcomes.

The evidence at Link 2 functions as a combination of hoop test and straw in the wind evidence. The institutional artefacts of position formation are directly observable and, the survey evidence and official evaluations provide consistent external corroboration. Together they support the prediction that Dutch positions exhibit the behavioral characteristics the theory specifies. The link is plausible and partially evidenced rather than definitively established,

which is the appropriate evidentiary standard for behavioral links in process tracing of mechanisms operating partially within confidential institutional settings.

5.1.3 Link 3: Reputation Formation

The third link concerns the perceptual translation of observable behavioral consistency into reputational judgments by other Council participants. The theoretical prediction is that delegations interacting repeatedly with Dutch counterparts across working parties and COREPER come to perceive the Netherlands as a reliable and credible negotiating partner, and that this reputational accumulation is a precondition for the cooperation patterns documented at Link 4.

This link is the most empirically challenging in the chain. The reputational dynamics it specifies operate within Council working groups whose discussions are not systematically documented in publicly accessible sources. The Council's structural opacity has been widely noted in the academic literature on Council decision-making, and the entire methodological tradition of survey-based research on Council cooperation patterns, including the network capital literature itself, reflects an adaptation to the empirical inaccessibility of these settings. Direct evidence of how Dutch behavior is characterized by non-Dutch delegations in working group interactions is therefore structurally unavailable.

One structural feature of the Dutch institutional architecture partially mitigates this opacity. BNC fiches, annotated agendas, and parliamentary letters are publicly available documents through which Dutch positions are formally transmitted to parliament before negotiations. Foreign delegations have access to these documents through publicly accessible parliamentary records, providing the informational foundation for the reputation formation the mechanism predicts (Högenauer, 2015). Other delegations can read Dutch positions in publicly available documents before negotiations begin, which is the informational precondition for the predictability they describe.

The Clingendael Institute's 2019 perception study provides the strongest available substitute for direct working group evidence. Commissioned by the Dutch parliament's European Affairs Committee with the explicit purpose of examining how foreign practitioners perceive Dutch EU policy, the study surveyed 62 respondents and conducted eleven in-depth interviews with officials drawn from permanent representations, COREPER, the Political and Security Committee, and Council working groups, supplemented by representatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament, and major business associations (Dekker et al., 2019).

The respondents were drawn from Belgium, Germany, France, Estonia, Spain, Poland, Luxembourg, and other member states.

The Clingendael report's findings provide direct external testimony consistent with the theoretical prediction. Foreign experts characterized the Dutch position formation process as transparent, consistent, and predictable, and explicitly attributed these qualities to the parliamentary procedures identified at Link 1. The report quotes foreign practitioners describing the Netherlands in terms conveying that one knows where one stands with the Dutch delegation and locates the source of this predictability in the BNC fiche system, the annotated agendas, the parliamentary letters, and the interaction with the Dutch parliament (Dekker et al., 2019:12). This characterization, attributed to non-Dutch practitioners and drawn from a study conducted independently of academic research on informal influence in the Council, corresponds closely to the Link 1 to Link 3 pathway specified by the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Three.

The report further documents that foreign experts spoke of the long-standing consistency of the Netherlands on policy dossiers and the reliability and predictability of Dutch positions, which they find helpful in coalition formation (Dekker et al., 2019). Survey results showed that 67 per cent of foreign respondents perceived the Netherlands as trustworthy and 84 per cent as steadfast (Dekker et al., 2019). The report also notes that some foreign experts perceived Dutch positions as rigid or inflexible, a characterization the report itself connects to the constraints imposed by domestic accountability, observing that for other member states the Dutch negotiating room is clear but also politically fixed and that the Netherlands has limited room to deviate from its once-taken position (Dekker et al., 2019). This combination of perceived predictability and perceived rigidity is the behavioral fingerprint that Putnam's smaller win-set logic predicts (Putnam, 1988): tighter domestic constraints produce more credible commitments at the cost of negotiating flexibility, and this dual signature appears in the practitioner testimony.

The evidence at Link 3 functions as straw in the wind evidence. It is consistent with the theoretical prediction without being uniquely diagnostic, since alternative explanations of Dutch reputation could in principle account for the same practitioner characterizations. The link is therefore evidenced indirectly and consistently rather than definitively, which is the appropriate evidentiary standard given the structural inaccessibility of the underlying interactions. The combination of independent practitioner testimony, official evaluation

findings, and the cross-case correspondence documented in the comparative analysis below supports the inference that reputational dynamics operate broadly as the theory predicts, while acknowledging that this support falls short of direct mechanistic demonstration.

5.1.4 Link 4: Network Capital Accumulation

The fourth link concerns the cooperation patterns that the accumulated reputation generates and that constitute the observed outcome of the chain. The evidence for this link has been established in Chapter Two and is summarized here for completeness.

Network capital is operationalized as the aggregated incoming cooperation weights received by each member state in the Negotiations in the Council of the European Union dataset (Naurin et al., 2022). Across the seven survey waves from 2003 to 2021, the Netherlands records a positive size-adjusted residual in every wave, indicating consistent overperformance relative to economic size, while the relative magnitude of that overperformance varies substantially across the period: declining in rank from fifth of fifteen in 2003 to eighteenth of twenty-eight in 2015, before rising sharply to fifth of twenty-eight in 2018 and first of twenty-seven in 2021. The pattern is cross-validated against the European Council on Foreign Relations Coalition Explorer dataset (ECFR, 2020), where Pearson and Spearman correlations between the two measures reach 0.90 and 0.91 respectively (authors' calculations based on Naurin et al., 2022, and ECFR, 2020). Chapter Two documented that this aggregate trajectory conceals a partner-group structure in which cooperation from northern liberal-market states rises monotonically across all waves while cooperation from eurozone periphery and Visegrad states fluctuates in ways that track identifiable policy periods. The outcome the causal chain must account for is this full trajectory and its partner-group structure.

The evidence at Link 4 functions as a hoop test in the sense that the outcome must be present and substantial for the explanation developed in the chain to be relevant. The strength of the network capital evidence anchors the outcome end of the chain in the same way that the institutional evidence anchors the obligation end. Together these two strong evidential anchors constrain the inferential space within which the intermediate behavioral and reputational links must operate.

5.1.5 Cumulative Assessment of the Dutch Case

The four-link chain receives differentiated but converging evidential support across its constituent stages.

The evidence is not uniform across the four links. The two ends of the chain rest on the strongest available evidence, the intermediate links rest on more indirect evidence. The two ends of the chain, the institutional obligation at Link 1 and the cooperation outcome at Link 4, rest on the strongest available evidence. The intermediate links, behavioral consistency at Link 2 and reputation formation at Link 3, are supported by progressively more indirect evidence as the analysis moves toward the interior of the chain where the mechanism operates within institutional settings that are least accessible to direct empirical investigation.

At Link 1, the existence and depth of Dutch parliamentary accountability obligations is established beyond reasonable dispute. The constitutional grounding in Article 68, the operational architecture of the annotated agenda system, the mandatory BNC fiche requirement, the parliamentary scrutiny reservation mechanism, and the decentralized sectoral committee structure are all directly documented in primary institutional sources and corroborated by academic literature on the Dutch parliamentary system (Högenauer, 2015; Gattermann et al., 2013). These are not contested claims about Dutch governance. The evidence here functions as a hoop test in the sense that absence of these procedures would falsify the chain at its first link, and their presence is necessary if the mechanism is to operate at all.

At Link 4, the overperformance of the Netherlands on network capital is established with comparable directness, though through quantitative rather than institutional documentation. The residual analysis of the 2022 Naurin et al. dataset's final wave shows the Netherlands as the most pronounced positive outlier among all member states after controlling for economic size. This finding is temporally persistent, with Dutch residuals positive across all seven survey waves from 2003 to 2021, and robust to alternative operationalization, with the ECFR Coalition Explorer dataset independently producing convergent results. The outcome is not a borderline or ambiguous finding. The Netherlands consistently records a positive size-adjusted residual across two decades of survey evidence and two independent measurement instruments, with the magnitude of that residual varying substantially across the period in a manner the partner-group decomposition documented in Chapter Two attributes to the differentiated operation of the same underlying mechanism across aligned and opposed partner groups.

The intermediate links present a more complex evidential picture. At Link 2, four independent sources corroborate the behavioral prediction without definitively establishing it. The institutional artefacts of position formation, the publicly accessible annotated agendas and BNC fiches, themselves constitute observable evidence that Dutch positions are publicly

committed before negotiations rather than formed opportunistically within them. The documented institutional cycle through which ministry officials prepare, commit to, and report on positions encloses the negotiating process, including working group level engagement, within the parliamentary accountability framework. The IOB coordination evaluations explicitly document that the Dutch system produces detailed, consistent positions that constrain the flexibility of negotiators in Brussels and explicitly compare this favorably against most other member states (IOB, 2021; IOB, 2024). The frequency of position statements variable shows that Dutch positions are perceived by other Council delegations as domestically constrained. Taken together, these sources support the claim that Dutch positions exhibit the stability and consistency the theory predicts. The institutional artefacts demonstrate the commitment mechanism exists but cannot show it produces behavioral consistency across all negotiation contexts. The IOB evaluations capture the systematic dimension of Dutch coordination but were designed for policy assessment rather than mechanism testing. The frequency of position statements evidence captures perceptions of domestic constraint but cannot isolate parliamentary accountability from other sources of constraint. The evidence at Link 2 is therefore plausible and partially evidenced, stronger than straw in the wind, weaker than a smoking gun, which is the appropriate characterization of behavioral links in process tracing of mechanisms operating within partially confidential institutional contexts.

At Link 3, the Clingendael report provides evidence that is considerably stronger than the purely inferential account originally anticipated when the research design was developed. The practitioner testimony it documents, foreign officials with direct experience of Council negotiations characterizing Dutch positions as reliable and predictable, attributing this directly to parliamentary procedures, constitutes external testimony from the actor set whose perceptual judgments constitute the mechanism (Dekker et al., 2019). This is practitioner testimony from the people whose perceptions Link 3 requires. The limitation is that the Clingendael study was designed for policy evaluation rather than mechanism testing, and its respondent pool, while substantively appropriate, is not drawn through a procedure that would satisfy the standards of academic survey design. The evidence at Link 3 therefore functions as substantive straw in the wind, multiple independent converging characterizations from relevant actors, rather than as a smoking gun that would definitively discriminate between the proposed mechanism and alternative explanations of Dutch reputation.

Following Beach and Pedersen's explicit statement that the goal of explaining-outcome process tracing is to identify the most plausible available explanation of a specific historical outcome

rather than to confirm a mechanism with certainty, the claim the Dutch case analysis supports can be stated precisely. The institutional architecture of Dutch parliamentary accountability creates binding and publicly visible commitments that structurally constrain ministerial positions before Council negotiations. The operational mechanisms through which this constraint is exercised, particularly the annotated agenda system, the BNC fiche requirement, and the parliamentary scrutiny reservation, are documented in detail and reach beyond ministerial level through the institutional preparation and reporting cycle. External official evaluations characterize Dutch position formation as more consistent and timely than that of most other member states. Council practitioners perceive Dutch positions as domestically anchored and characterize the Netherlands as predictable and reliable in ways they directly attribute to parliamentary transparency. Dutch network capital overperformance is the largest and persistent in the dataset across all seven survey waves. The most parsimonious theoretical explanation connecting these observations, institutional obligation producing behavioral consistency producing reputational judgment producing cooperation-seeking, is specified in the four-link causal chain. Whether the spatial and temporal distribution of this overperformance across Council formations is consistent with the mechanism is the question taken up in the following section.

5.2.1. Endogenous Variation: The 2006-2009 Decentralization Reform and the Formation-Level Trajectory

Parliamentary scrutiny of Dutch Council engagement is not a product of the 2006-2009 reform. The Tweede Kamer has maintained formal oversight of ministerial Council behavior since the early 1990s through the European Affairs Committee, and the *algemeen overleg* pre-Council debate mechanism has existed since 1996 (Högenauer, 2015). What the reform changed was not the existence of parliamentary accountability but its institutional architecture, specifically, who within parliament exercised it and at what level of policy specificity.

Prior to 2006 the AO pre-Council debates were run primarily by the central European Affairs Committee, with the Secretary for European Affairs as the primary government representative. Sectoral committees existed but were effectively sidelined from EU affairs scrutiny, with the EAC acting as the single gateway between parliament and Council negotiations across all policy domains (Gattermann et al., 2013). Following the 2005 constitutional referendum rejection, which revealed a gap between political elites and the public on EU affairs and generated domestic pressure for more direct parliamentary engagement, the Tweede Kamer implemented a series of internal reforms between 2006 and 2009 that transferred primary

responsibility for pre-Council scrutiny to sectoral committees. Each standing committee took on direct oversight of its corresponding Council formation, replacing generalized EAC scrutiny with domain-specific parliamentary expertise (Högenauer, 2015). The reform was formally consolidated through the scrutiny reservation instrument introduced in the Lisbon Treaty ratification law of 2009, giving either chamber the right to require the government to hold a Council position until parliamentary deliberations were concluded.

The institutional consequences of this reform might be observable in the Tweede Kamer's parliamentary record. Parliamentary attention to Commission proposals (Kamerstuk 22112) averaged 49 documents per parliamentary year in the seven years preceding the reform (1998-99 through 2004-05). During the reform implementation period (2005-06 through 2009-10), this rose to 141 documents per year. The first post-reform period (2010-11 through 2014-15) shows a further increase to 196 documents per year, with subsequent periods maintaining this elevated level. Attention to Council preparation (Kamerstuk 21501) shows a comparable pattern: 335 documents per year pre-reform, 399 during the reform period, 703 in the first post-reform period, and continued growth to 872 documents per year in the most recent five-year window. The step-change in parliamentary engagement between the reform implementation period and the first post-reform period is consistent with the reform producing a sustained increase in institutional attention to EU policy formation (Officiële Bekendmakingen, 2026, document series 21501 and 22112)

The significance of this institutional growth for Council behavior operates through the ministry preparation chain. Each AO hearing is an occasion on which ministry officials, including those managing Council dossiers at working group level, present as ministerial support staff, hear parliamentary positions committed publicly and return to Brussels with strengthened mandates to maintain those positions through subsequent negotiations. As one MP participating in a pre-Council AO debate described the function of the mechanism: "I am here as the first speaker to give our messengers in Brussels the message of what we want"⁴ (Tweede Kamer, 2019). The progressive increase in hearing frequency from the reform period onwards represents a progressive increase in the occasions on which those mandates are reinforced, publicly documented and institutionally anchored.

⁴ "ik zit hier ook als eerste spreker om onze boodschappers in Brussel de boodschap mee te geven wat wij willen en dat we Europa daar keihard bij nodig hebben." - H. Sienot (D66), in Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Kamerstuk 21 501-08, nr. 793, Vergaderjaar 2019–2020, 25 september 2019.

This temporal trajectory, gradual deepening of parliamentary engagement across the post-reform period rather than a sharp institutional switch, provides the analytical context for interpreting the formation-level distribution of Dutch cooperation capital in the Naurin et al. (2022) dataset. If parliamentary accountability produces cooperation capital through the mechanism proposed, that cooperation capital should be distributed across Council formations in ways that reflect the institutional architecture of parliamentary scrutiny: concentrated where scrutiny is deepest and most direct, weaker where it was historically thinner.

The pre-reform period in the Naurin et al. (2022) Dataset, covering the 2003 and 2006 survey waves, corresponds to the EAC-dominated scrutiny architecture. The post-reform period, covering waves from 2012 onwards, corresponds to the progressively deepened sectoral committee engagement documented in the parliamentary record.

Network Capital Percentile Rank by Council Formation Type										
Percentile rank among EU member states per wave (lower = stronger performance)										
	Netherlands					Sweden (<i>institutional comparator</i>)				
	Pre	<i>n</i>	Post	<i>n</i>	Δ	Pre	<i>n</i>	Post	<i>n</i>	Δ
COREPER	21.7%	4	26.2%	8	+4.5pp	21.0%	4	19.4%	8	-1.6pp
PSC / PMG	22.7%	4	20.9%	8	-1.7pp	17.0%	4	15.3%	8	-1.7pp
Working Party	36.7%	14	22.5%	28	-14.2pp	24.2%	14	20.1%	28	-4.0pp

Pre = 2003 and 2006 survey waves; Post = 2012–2021 waves. Δ = Post minus Pre in percentile points; negative values indicate improvement. *n* = number of formation-wave observations. Ranks computed among EU members active in each wave. Sweden is included as an institutional comparator: a member state with strong parliamentary scrutiny but operating through a centralised committee model rather than the Dutch decentralised sectoral architecture.

Source: Naurin et al. (2022). Author's calculations.

Table 2: Network Capital Percentile Rank by Council Formation Type

Looking at Table 2, in the pre reform period, The Netherlands occupies the top quintile at COREPER level at 21.7% while sitting below the median at working group level at 42.1%, a gap of 0.634 normalized cooperation score points. The formation-level distribution could be attempted to be mapped onto the pre-reform accountability architecture: cooperation capital concentrated where direct parliamentary scrutiny operated, absent where it did not. Sweden presents the predicted contrast, distributing cooperation capital at 21% at COREPER and 24.2% at working group level, closer to flat across formation types. The gradient is Netherlands-specific and absent in the comparator operating in the same Council environment.

In the post-reform period the Dutch distribution converges substantially, with COREPER at 26.2% and working groups at 24.6%, a gap of essentially zero. Swedens's post-dutch-reform period distribution remains flat at 19.4% COREPER and 20.1% working group, showing no equivalent restructuring. The gradient and subsequent convergence is Netherlands-specific and temporally coincides with the period of deepening parliamentary engagement documented in the Tweede Kamer record.

The Sweden comparison addresses the most immediate confound for the temporal argument. Sweden operates within the same Council institutional environment, subject to the same Lisbon Treaty provisions, the same post-enlargement membership dynamics, has strong parliamentary accountability system (without reform) and shows no equivalent formation-level restructuring between the pre and post-reform periods.

The formation-level evidence does not constitute a causal test of the parliamentary accountability mechanism. The statistical work rests on small formation counts per wave, wide standard deviations, and a pre-reform period covering only two waves with limited observations.

What the formation-level analysis does establish, in combination with the Tweede Kamer parliamentary record, is a temporally ordered picture. Parliamentary scrutiny of Dutch Council engagement deepened progressively following the 2006-2009 reform, as documented in the near doubling of AO hearing frequency and the sustained growth in BNC fiche procedure documentation. The spatial distribution of Dutch cooperation capital across Council formations in the pre-reform period reflects the accountability architecture of that period, concentrated where scrutiny was direct, absent where it was not. The post-reform convergence toward a more uniform distribution reflects the progressive deepening of sectoral committee engagement across all formation types. Sweden's flat distribution throughout confirms these patterns are Netherlands-specific rather than driven by Council-wide institutional evolution.

Following Beach and Pedersen's test typology, this evidence functions collectively as straw-in-the-wind: consistent with the mechanism, temporally coherent with the key observable changes in the causal condition, and difficult to account for simultaneously through the main alternative explanations, but not uniquely diagnostic given the limitations of the underlying statistical work and the multiple confounds operating across individual formation types.

The evidence presented in this section constitutes the endogenous-variation analysis specified in Chapter Four. It examines whether the decentralization of parliamentary accountability through the 2006-2009 reform produced observable effects in the trajectory of Dutch network capital across formations and waves, consistent with the mechanism's prediction that institutional change in the accountability architecture should manifest as corresponding change in the cooperation pattern.

5.2.2. The Exogenous Source of Variation: Brexit and Partner-Population Redistribution

Brexit constitutes the exogenous source of variation against which the mechanism is evaluated in its second analytical moment. Several patterns documented in the dataset are evaluated against the mechanism.

The first is the aggregate pattern of post-2016 cooperation redirection. Outgoing cooperation weights toward the Netherlands were examined for each member state across two periods: the pre-referendum waves of 2009, 2012, and 2015, and the post-referendum waves of 2018 and 2021. Of twenty-seven member states, nineteen increased their outgoing cooperation toward the Netherlands, three showed no change, and five decreased. The largest increases came from Belgium, Portugal, Luxembourg, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Slovakia, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, Germany, and France. The redistribution is broad rather than narrow.

The second is whether the redistribution is concentrated among former UK partners. The mechanism's prediction here is intermediate: the institutional substitution argument does not require that only former UK partners redirect cooperation, but the partner-redirect dynamic should be detectable in the data. The top 10 UK pre-referendum partners increased their outgoing cooperation toward the Netherlands by an average of 0.814, compared with 0.569 among other member states, the median difference is 1.02 against 0.385. The Wilcoxon rank-sum test comparing the two groups produces $W = 64$ and $p = 0.403$. The difference is in the predicted direction but does not reach statistical significance. The evidence is consistent with a partner-redirect dynamic operating alongside broader post-Brexit redistribution, rather than with a narrow substitution effect confined to former UK partners.

The third is the partner-group decomposition documented in Chapter Two. The post-2016 surge reflects accelerated growth in cooperation from the northern liberal-market group whose monotonic increase across all seven waves predates Brexit, combined with substantial recovery in cooperation from the eurozone periphery and Visegrad groups whose pre-2016 suppression coincided with periods of high policy salience on Dutch fixed positions. Brexit's effect on the trajectory therefore should operate through both channels: it removes the incumbent occupying the institutional position the Dutch profile was compatible with, and it coincides with the recession of acute policy crises that had been generating wave-specific rigidity costs against the Netherlands. The post-2016 transformation in the aggregate residual reflect both effects operating simultaneously.

Taken together, the three patterns are consistent with the mechanism's prediction. Brexit operates as an exogenous condition that the institutional argument is required to accommodate. Whether the existence of the mechanism is the reason why precisely Netherlands managed to capture the post-Brexit redistribution of cooperation-seeking is outside the scope of a within-case research and requires comparative approach. The substitution test does not reach statistical significance and is therefore presented as straw-in-the-wind evidence consistent with the mechanism rather than as diagnostic confirmation.

5.2.3. Coalition Governance and Position Centrality

The next alternative explanation for Dutch position stability is coalition governance. Coalition governments require negotiated agreement among multiple parties before a position can be adopted, and the resulting coalition agreement may lock positions in place, producing the consistency and predictability that the parliamentary accountability mechanism also predicts. If coalition structure alone generates the required position stability, the Dutch overperformance could be attributed to the country's consistently coalitional governments rather than to its parliamentary accountability architecture. This alternative was assessed both across member states and within the Dutch case.

The cross-national analysis tested four operationalizations of coalition governance against the GDP-adjusted network capital residual using government composition data from the Comparative Political Data Set (Armingeon et al. 2025): a binary coalition indicator, the full seven-category government typology, a binary indicator for surplus coalitions specifically, and governing parties' total parliamentary support. None of these predicts the overperformance residual at conventional levels of significance, and all explain a trivial proportion of its variation, with R^2 values ranging from 0.004 to 0.042. The surplus coalition specification is the most direct test of the coalition logic, since surplus coalitions involve the most extensive internal negotiation and the tightest position lock-in the argument relies upon, it is among the weakest results in the set. These analyses are descriptive and exploratory rather than causal estimates, given the small number of observations and the matching of government composition to survey waves rather than to negotiation episodes. Their purpose is to assess

whether coalition governance finds empirical support that would rival the parliamentary accountability account, and it does not.

The within-case evidence is more directly probative. The Netherlands governed through a coalition in every survey wave, and through a minimal winning coalition specifically in six of the seven, with parliamentary support concentrated in a narrow band around fifty per cent throughout. Dutch government composition is, for the purposes of this analysis, effectively invariant across two decades. The defining feature of the puzzle, the trajectory in Dutch overperformance across the final waves, occurs while the government configuration remains

Model	Operationalization of coalition governance	Coefficient of interest	SE	p	R ²
1	Coalition government (binary)	32.39	20.26	.112	.013
2	Government type (7-category)	model F-test	-	.253	.042
3	Surplus coalition (binary)	21.59	24.92	.387	.004
4	Government parliamentary support (%)	1.55	0.82	.060	.019

Table 3: Network Capital and Coalition Governance

the same minimal winning coalition with the same parliamentary support the Netherlands maintained in 2003.

Thus, the cross-national and within-case findings converge. Coalition governance is neither associated with network capital overperformance across member states nor capable of explaining its variation within the Dutch case, since the structure is constant while the outcome is not. This does not establish parliamentary accountability as the operative mechanism, but it removes the most plausible competing explanation for the position stability documented at Link 2.

5.2.4 Individual Leadership and Diplomatic Capacity

A third alternative explanation locates Dutch network capital overperformance in individual-level factors, the personal networks and diplomatic influence of senior Dutch officials, and particularly the tenure of Mark Rutte as Prime Minister (IOB, 2024). Rutte developed substantial personal networks within EU institutions during this period and his visibility at the European Council could plausibly generate spillover cooperation-seeking at lower Council levels.

This explanation faces two difficulties. The first is temporal. Dutch network capital overperformance and overall trajectory is documented from the 2003 wave onwards, predating both Rutte's first government in 2010. The pattern that requires explanation is not a post-2010 phenomenon but a durable feature of Dutch Council positioning across multiple governments and multiple senior officials. The second is structural. Individual leadership effects operate most directly at the European Council where personal political relationships are most consequential. The formation-level analysis in section 5.1.6 suggests Dutch network capital operating consistently across technical working groups and sectoral committees, formations where individual prime ministerial character should be largely irrelevant and where behavioral predictability produced through institutional channels matters more than personal diplomatic relationships.

On the note of general diplomatic capacity, its most intuitive proxy, GDP size, is already controlled for in the baseline model (Chapter 2): the Dutch residual overperformance is defined precisely as what remains after GDP is accounted for. Total staff numbers in Brussels permanent representations correspond to member states' GDPs as expected, with no significant cross-national variation in secondment duration that would distinguish the Netherlands from comparably sized member states (Think Tank EUROPA, 2019).

5.2.5. Agency-based explanations

A further alternative explanation might locate Dutch network capital not in institutional features but in strategic agency: policy entrepreneurship, coalition leadership, and agenda-shaping capacity. Recent case study research has emphasized these strategic dimensions of Dutch EU influence, particularly the Netherlands' leadership of the New Hanseatic League in 2018 and the Frugal Four in 2020 (Schoeller, 2021; Verdun, 2021). Schoeller (2021) traces how the Netherlands prevented the eurozone budget through issue replacement, coalition-building, and framing strategies. Verdun (2021) characterizes Dutch strategy in EMU as foot-dragging combined with ad-hoc coalition formation. Both accounts emphasize what the Netherlands does in specific negotiations rather than the structural conditions under which it operates.

These accounts are not displaced by the institutional argument but rather sit on top of it. Strategic agency of the kind documented in these case studies presupposes the position credibility that the parliamentary accountability mechanism produces. The Netherlands can lead a counter-coalition against a Franco-German proposal only if its commitment to the

counter-position is credible to potential coalition partners. Coalition formation around Dutch leadership depends on prior reputational accumulation that other delegations can rely on.

5.3. Beyond the Dutch Case: Does the Mechanism Operate Across the Union?

The within-case analysis documents how the parliamentary accountability mechanism operates in the Dutch case. This cross-country test assesses whether the relationship between parliamentary scrutiny strength and Council network capital might be observed across the Union.

The main specification regresses network capital percentile rank from the 2012 Naurin et al. (2022) wave on the OPAL Institutional Strength Score (Auel et al., 2015) and log GDP. The result is presented in Table 4. The OPAL coefficient is -0.64 (standard error 0.17, $p < 0.001$) and the log GDP coefficient is -0.14 (standard error 0.017, $p < 0.001$), with R-squared of 0.81 across the EU-27 (2012 composition). The institutional coefficient is in the predicted direction, statistically significant at conventional thresholds, and substantively meaningful: a one-unit increase in OPAL score is associated with a 0.64 reduction in percentile rank (Improvement) holding GDP constant. The bivariate correlation between OPAL and network capital is -0.60. Country size and parliamentary scrutiny strength together explain 81% of cross-country variation in network capital.

The relationship is visualized in Figure 8 which plots OPAL and network capital with both variables residualized on log GDP. The slope of the fitted line corresponds to the OPAL coefficient in the controlled regression. The Netherlands sits at the upper middle of the OPAL distribution with strong network capital, fitting the cross-country pattern as the institutional argument predicts.

Cross-Country Regression of Network Capital on Parliamentary Scrutiny Strength: All Specifications

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Network Capital Percentile Rank					
	OPAL, 2012 (1)	OPAL, close years (2)	OPAL, full panel (3)	OPAL + pop. (4)	Karlas (5)	Winzen (6)
Institutional Score	-0.641*** (0.169)	-0.851*** (0.172)	-0.841*** (0.177)	-0.798** (0.223)	-0.036** (0.012)	-0.055 (0.052)
Log GDP	-0.142*** (0.016)	-0.116*** (0.017)	-0.112*** (0.017)		-0.152*** (0.017)	-0.154*** (0.020)
Log Population				-0.135*** (0.024)		
Constant	2.565*** (0.205)	2.356*** (0.211)	2.321*** (0.216)	3.082*** (0.397)	2.541*** (0.220)	2.469*** (0.265)
Observations	27	27	27	27	27	27
R ²	0.811	0.781	0.764	0.661	0.783	0.711
Adjusted R ²	0.795	0.763	0.744	0.633	0.765	0.687
Residual Std. Error (df = 24)	0.133	0.135	0.139	0.178	0.143	0.164
F Statistic (df = 2; 24)	51.461***	42.903***	38.760***	23.434***	43.237***	29.534***

Note: * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
Standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is network capital percentile rank (lower values indicate stronger network capital). All specifications estimated by OLS.
Column 1: 2012 wave (main specification). Column 2: average across 2012, 2015, 2018 waves. Column 3: average across all seven waves (2003-2021). Column 4: 2012 with log population substituting for log GDP. Column 5: Karlas (2012) parliamentary control score. Column 6: Winzen (2012) institutionalisation index.
Sources: Naurin et al. (2022); Auel et al. (2015); Karlas (2012); Winzen (2012); Eurostat; World Bank WDI.
Significance: *** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05.

Table 4: Cross-Country Regression of Network Capital on Parliamentary Scrutiny Strength

The institutional finding is robust across specifications. The OPAL coefficient ranges from -0.64 to -0.85 across alternative outcome specifications (2015, 2012/2015/2018 average, full-panel 2003-2021 average) with statistical significance maintained at $p < 0.001$ in every case.

The relationship holds when log population is substituted for log GDP as the size control. Substituting the Karlas (2012) measure of parliamentary control for OPAL produces a statistically significant coefficient at $p = 0.005$. The Winzen (2012) measure produces the institutional coefficient in the predicted direction but not at conventional significance ($p = 0.30$), with the divergence interpretable through Auel et al. (2015) own methodological argument that earlier measures emphasizing formal institutional provisions miss the behavioral and practical features that determine whether formal capabilities translate into actual scrutiny effects. The full robustness documentation is in Appendix F

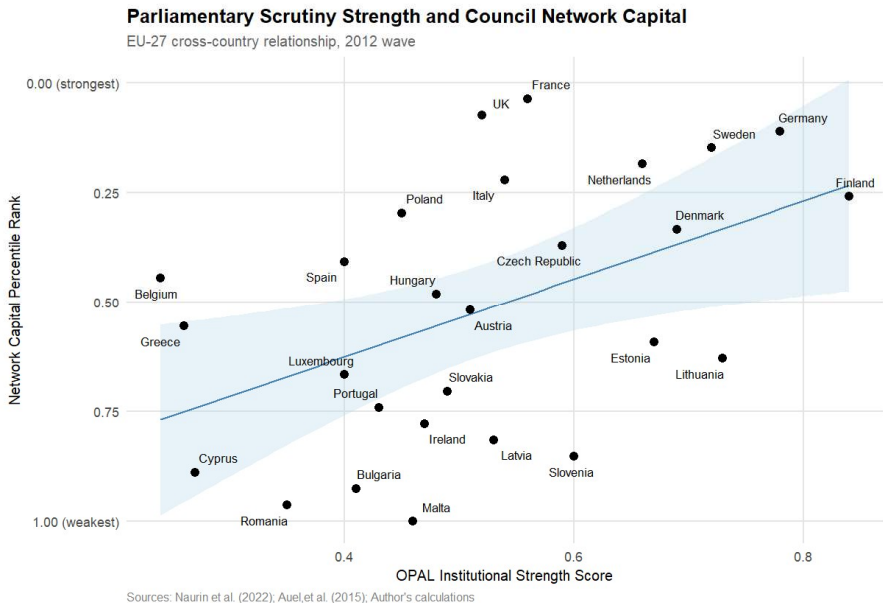


Figure 7: Network Capital and Parliamentary EU Scrutiny Strength Scatterplot

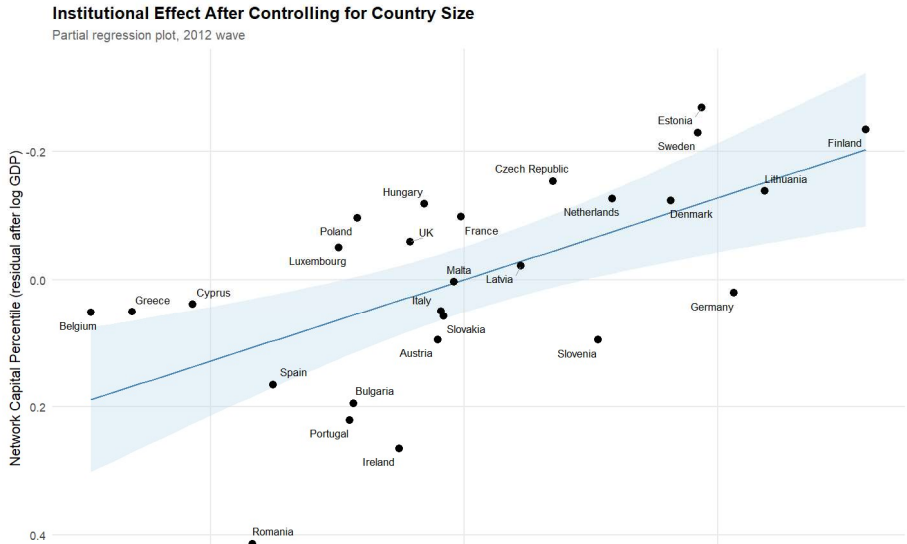


Figure 8: Partial regression scatterplot; OPAL scores effect after controlling for log GDP

Sources: Naurin et al. (2022), Auel, Rozenberg, and Tacea (2015), Author's Calculations

The cross-country regression establishes that parliamentary scrutiny strength predicts network capital across the member state population, supporting the institutional argument as a generalizable relationship rather than a Dutch-specific pattern.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

6.1 Summary of the Argument

This thesis examined the Netherlands as a deviant case within the Council of the European Union's informal cooperation networks. The empirical puzzle, developed in Chapter Two and refined through the partner-group decomposition, was not the simple observation that the Netherlands accumulates more cooperation capital than its economic size would predict. The aggregate trajectory is more complex than that. The Netherlands records a positive size-adjusted residual in every survey wave from 2003 to 2021, but its relative position varies substantially across the period: a sustained decline in rank from fifth of fifteen in 2003 to eighteenth of twenty-eight in 2015, below the median of the member-state distribution, followed by a sharp transformation across the next two waves bringing it to the single largest positive deviation in the dataset by 2021. The partner-group decomposition revealed that this aggregate trajectory conceals three distinct dynamics operating simultaneously: continuous growth in cooperation from northern liberal-market states independent of political conjuncture, wave-specific suppression of cooperation from eurozone periphery and Visegrad states tracking identifiable policy crises, and a post-2016 recovery and acceleration (Brexit) that the literature has noted but not explained.

The theoretical framework developed in Chapter Three identified parliamentary accountability for Council positions as the institutional configuration most consistent with this pattern. Drawing on Putnam's credibility logic, Tsebelis's veto player theory, and the Council cooperation literature, the chapter specified a mechanism in which domestically anchored, publicly committed, institutionally durable positions generate two simultaneous effects: credibility among partners aligned with those positions, and rigidity costs among partners whose interests are opposed. The mechanism's double-edged property explains why a continuously operating institutional condition is consistent with non-continuous aggregate outcomes. A stable institution produces stable reward to aligned partners and policy-period-dependent costs to opposed partners, and the relative weight of these two dynamics in any given period depends on which dossiers are politically salient and how the partner population is distributed across them.

The empirical chapter traced this mechanism through the four-link causal chain. Link 1, the parliamentary accountability obligations, is established beyond reasonable dispute through primary institutional documentation: the annotated agenda system, the BNC fiche requirement, the parliamentary scrutiny reservation, and the 2006-2009 decentralization of scrutiny to sectoral committees. The behavioral output the obligations produce, Link 2's position stability and consistency, is supported by institutional artefacts of position formation, the IOB coordination evaluations, and survey evidence on perceived domestic constraint signaling. Foreign practitioner testimony documented in the Clingendael study establishes the reputational translation at Link 3: foreign experts describe the Netherlands as transparent, consistent, and predictable, attributing these qualities directly to the parliamentary procedures. The outcome at Link 4, Dutch network capital accumulation, is the trajectory the puzzle chapter documented. The principal alternative explanations were evaluated and found less capable of accounting for the full pattern: coalition governance does not predict Dutch overperformance cross-nationally and cannot explain its variation within the Dutch case where coalition structure is effectively invariant; individual leadership cannot account for the pattern's temporal extent or formation-level distribution. Beyond the Dutch case, the cross-country regression shows that parliamentary scrutiny strength is statistically associated with network capital across the EU member-state population, with the institutional coefficient robust across alternative outcome specifications, size controls, and scrutiny measures.

6.2 Contribution

The first contribution of this thesis is methodological. The existing literature on network capital has been overwhelmingly cross-sectional and pooled, treating network capital as an aggregate property of member states explained through structural variables in pooled regression. This thesis approaches the same data through deviant-case process tracing of a single outcome, supplemented by a partner-group decomposition that disaggregates the aggregate trajectory by the policy-economic orientation of source states. The decomposition revealed dynamics the pooled framework cannot detect: structural preference effects operating with different signs in different periods across distinct partner groups. This is a methodological observation about what the dominant analytical approach in the field can and cannot identify, and the partner-group analysis demonstrates the kind of dynamic the existing framework might miss.

The second contribution is theoretical. The credibility-from-constraint logic developed by Putnam is well established. What this thesis develops is the empirical and theoretical articulation of its double-edged structure operating simultaneously across heterogeneous

partner populations. Credibility and rigidity are not separate consequences of constraint to be adjudicated as competing predictions, they are the same consequence viewed from differently positioned observers. The aggregate trajectory of any institutionally constrained negotiator is the net result of these two dynamics operating across its partner population in proportion to the salience of the dossiers on which its positions are committed. This formulation gives the credibility logic a more precise structure than the existing literature articulates and connects it directly to observable cross-temporal variation in cooperation patterns.

The third contribution is empirical. The Dutch case is documented at a level of institutional detail the existing literature has not produced. The Tweede Kamer parliamentary record across the 2006-2020 period, the institutional artefacts of position formation, the IOB and Clingendael evaluations, and the formation-level distribution of cooperation across COREPER and sub-COREPER tiers have not previously been assembled into a single mechanistic account of how parliamentary accountability translates into informal Council influence. The Dutch parliamentary institutional architecture is described and analyzed as a system through which a member state organizes its EU policy work. Beyond the Dutch case, the cross-country regression in Section 5.3 demonstrates that the OPAL Institutional Strength Score predicts network capital across the population ($R^2 = 0.81$) after controlling for size, with the institutional finding robust across alternative outcome specifications, alternative size controls, and alternative scrutiny measures. The institutional argument is shown to operate at the population level alongside the within-case mechanism documentation.

6.3 Limitations

The thesis is honest about what its design cannot establish. Four limitations bear directly on the inferences that can be drawn.

Firstly, the thesis operates at two analytical levels with different scopes. The within-case mechanism documentation is evaluated through detailed analysis of one case. Claims about the mechanism's specific operation in member states are therefore limited to the Dutch case. The cross-country regression in Section 5.3 establishes that the relationship between parliamentary scrutiny strength and Council network capital holds across the EU at the statistical level, but can not document the mechanism through which this relationship is produced in cases other than the Netherlands. Whether the institutional argument operates through the same mechanism across the EU member states as it does in the Dutch case is an open empirical question that the thesis does not resolve. Secondly, the thesis cannot definitively explain why the post-Brexit

redistribution favored the Netherlands specifically rather than other member states with broadly comparable institutional and ideological profiles. The analysis presented in Chapter Two and the methodological argument developed in Chapter Three together support the inference that parliamentary accountability is a necessary condition for the Dutch trajectory but not a sufficient explanation of the specific post-2016 positioning. The interaction between the institutional mechanism and additional structural conditions, including eurozone membership, state size, and position within the existing coalition field, is identified as a determinant of which state could occupy the vacated coalition anchor role, but the thesis does not undertake the comparative work that would isolate the contribution of each factor. Thirdly, the evidentiary basis at certain links in the causal chain is indirect. The reputation formation link is evaluated through inferential combination of practitioner testimony, official evaluations, and structural reasoning rather than through direct observation of how non-Dutch delegations form perceptual judgements about Dutch behavior in working group settings. The Council's structural opacity at the working group level is a general constraint on empirical research about informal Council dynamics that the entire network capital literature reflects in its reliance on survey-based methodology. The thesis is transparent about which links are more directly evidenced and which rely on convergent inference. Fourthly, the cross-country regression establishes the institutional relationship but cannot identify which dimension of parliamentary scrutiny drives the effect. The OPAL Institutional Strength Score is a composite measure aggregating information access, scrutiny infrastructure, and oversight into a single index. The within-case Dutch analysis documents the institutional architecture across all three dimensions, but the cross-country regression cannot disentangle their relative contribution to the broader relationship. A disaggregated cross-country analysis would require institutional measurement at the sub-dimension level. Finally, a more general confounding concern applies to the cross-country regression. The relationship between parliamentary scrutiny strength and network capital could partly reflect an underlying disposition of pro-Integration member states to invest both in deeper parliamentary engagement with EU affairs and in some other variable that produces network capital. The cross-country regression cannot rule out this common-cause interpretation directly. The within-case partner-group decomposition provides partial leverage on this concern: the Dutch cooperation pattern is partner-differentiated in a substantively specific way, tracking the policy salience of dossiers on which Dutch positions are committed rather than operating uniformly across partner types. A pure pro-EU disposition account cannot easily generate the asymmetric pattern the decomposition reveals, in which aligned partners cooperate continuously while opposed partners cooperate less during specific crisis periods.

6.4 Directions for Further Research

The most pressing direction for further research would be comparative case studies network capital's systemic other overperformers and underperformers, particularly examining how their respective parliamentary accountability architectures interact with the degree of them being sought or not sought out within the Council. This would clarify whether the Dutch case identifies a generalizable mechanism that operates differently under different structural conditions or whether the specific Dutch trajectory reflects a combination of conditions met by no other member state in the relevant period. The partner-group decomposition presented here for the Netherlands could be replicated for these states to examine whether the differential operation of the mechanism across partner populations is a general feature of institutionally constrained negotiators or a Netherlands-specific finding.

A related research direction concerns the methodological observation that the present analysis raises. The dominant analytical approach in the network capital literature is cross-sectional and pooled, and the within-case decomposition presented here reveals dynamics that operate with different signs across periods and partner groups. This raises the question of whether other findings in the network capital literature, for example the structural-shift interpretation of the GAL-TAN dimension becoming significant in later waves, might be re-examined through within-case longitudinal decomposition. Whether such reanalysis would yield substantively different findings is a question the present thesis is not positioned to answer, but the analytical approach developed here suggests directions in which the existing literature could be productively extended.

Finally, the thesis raises a more general question for the study of small and medium-sized member states in the European Union. If domestic institutional investment in parliamentary EU-policy scrutiny constitutes a mechanism through which a member state without exceptional structural resources can accumulate informal influence at the Council level, the question of whether comparable institutional investments could enhance other member states' positions is both academically and politically consequential. Whether parliamentary accountability systems produce comparable reputational effects across different institutional and preference contexts, and what other domestic conditions matter, are open empirical questions that the Dutch case has surfaced

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Statement on the use of AI

This project has utilized Anthropic's Claude Sonnet 4.5 in debugging R scripts used for exploratory data analysis and presented in the Annexes: B-F.

DeepL Translator had been used to translate Dutch language material, particularly: IOB 2021 Report, Cingendael Institute's 2019 Report. Tweede Kamer's records have been translated using Google Translate.

Annex A: Partner-group composition and classification rationale.

The partner-group decomposition used throughout the thesis disaggregates Dutch incoming cooperation by three groupings drawn from the Council coalition literature. The northern-liberal market comprises Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Austria, reflecting the northern liberal-market cluster whose positions on fiscal governance and single-market regulation align with Dutch positions and which corresponds substantially to the membership of the New Hanseatic League and Frugal Four coalitions (Schoeller, 2021; Verdun, 2021). The Eurozone Periphery group comprises Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Ireland, corresponding to the states most directly affected by the eurozone sovereign debt crisis conditionality regime during 2009-2015. The Visegrad group comprises Hungary, Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia, corresponding to the V4 coalition that operated as a coordinated bloc opposed to the EU refugee relocation framework during the migration crisis. The Netherlands is excluded from all three groups by construction since the analysis examines incoming cooperation only. The Visegrad cell shows NA for 2003 because the four states acceded to the EU in May 2004. States not assigned to any group, including Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Malta, Croatia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, the Baltic states, and the United Kingdom, are omitted from the decomposition because their cooperation dynamics either reflect bilateral structural relationships outside the three policy-economic clusters or accession timing inconsistent with the seven-wave panel.

Annex B: R script for the residual analysis

```
# =====  
# Appendix B - Residual Analysis Script  
# Produces Figures 1-5 in Chapter Two.  
#  
# Inputs: merged_scores_gdp cross-sectional 2021 dataframe with columns:  
#         country, iso2, GDP, network_capital_2021,  
#         ecfr_incoming, resid_log, std_resid_ecfr.  
#         Prepared from the Naurin et al. (2022) dataset,  
#         the ECFR Coalition Explorer (2020) dataset, and  
#         Eurostat national accounts.  
#  
# councildata_03_21 long-format panel of survey responses across  
#         the seven Naurin et al. waves, with columns  
#         year (1-7 wave index) and one column per  
#         member state coded by ISO2.  
#  
# gdp_panel GDP data matched to councildata_03_21 by iso2  
#         and year, with columns iso2, year, GDP, drawn  
#         from Eurostat national accounts.  
# =====  
  
library(ggplot2)  
library(ggrepel)  
library(dplyr)  
library(tidyr)  
library(purrr)  
  
# -----  
# Figure 1: Network Capital vs Log GDP with regression line (2021 wave)  
# -----  
  
ggplot(merged_scores_gdp, aes(x = log(GDP), y = network_capital_2021)) +  
  geom_smooth(method = "lm", se = TRUE, color = "#2c3e50",  
             fill = "#bdc3c7", linewidth = 0.8) +  
  geom_point(aes(color = ifelse(iso2 == "nl", "Netherlands", "Other"))),
```

```

    size = 3, alpha = 0.85) +
geom_text_repel(aes(label = country), size = 3,
    color = "grey30", max.overlaps = 20) +
scale_color_manual(values = c("Netherlands" = "#FF6600",
    "Other" = "#2c3e50")) +
labs(
  title = "Network Capital and Economic Size in the Council of the EU",
  subtitle = "2021 Survey Wave, Naurin et al. Dataset",
  x = "Log GDP (EUR millions)",
  y = "Network Capital (Incoming Cooperation Weights)",
  caption = "Source: Naurin et al. (2022); Eurostat (GDP, current prices in euros, 2021)"
) +
theme_minimal(base_size = 12) +
theme(legend.position = "none",
  plot.title = element_text(face = "bold", size = 13),
  plot.subtitle = element_text(color = "grey40", size = 10),
  plot.caption = element_text(color = "grey50", size = 8),
  panel.grid.minor = element_blank())

```

```

# -----
# Figure 2: Residual plot - deviation from GDP-predicted network capital
# -----

```

```

ggplot(merged_scores_gdp,
  aes(x = reorder(country, resid_log), y = resid_log,
    fill = ifelse(iso2 == "nl", "Netherlands",
      ifelse(resid_log > 0, "Positive", "Negative")))) +
geom_col(width = 0.7, alpha = 0.85) +
geom_hline(yintercept = 0, linewidth = 0.6, color = "grey20") +
geom_text(aes(label = country,
  hjust = ifelse(resid_log >= 0, -0.1, 1.1)),
  size = 2.8, color = "grey20") +
scale_fill_manual(values = c("Netherlands" = "#FF6600",
  "Positive" = "#95a5a6",
  "Negative" = "#bdc3c7")) +
scale_y_continuous(expand = expansion(mult = 0.15)) +

```

```

coord_flip() +
labs(
  title = "Deviation from GDP-Predicted Network Capital",
  subtitle = "Residuals from baseline OLS regression (log GDP), 2021 Survey Wave",
  x = NULL,
  y = "Residual (Observed minus Predicted Network Capital)",
  caption = "Source: Naurin et al. (2022)"
) +
theme_minimal(base_size = 12) +
theme(legend.position = "none",
      axis.text.y = element_blank(),
      axis.ticks.y = element_blank(),
      plot.title = element_text(face = "bold", size = 13),
      plot.subtitle = element_text(color = "grey40", size = 10),
      plot.caption = element_text(color = "grey50", size = 8),
      panel.grid.minor = element_blank(),
      panel.grid.major.y = element_blank())

# -----
# Figure 3: Cross-dataset validation (Naurin et al. vs ECFR)
# -----

ggplot(merged_scores_gdp, aes(x = ecfr_incoming, y = network_capital_2021)) +
  geom_smooth(method = "lm", se = TRUE, color = "#2c3e50",
             fill = "#bdc3c7", linewidth = 0.8) +
  geom_point(aes(color = ifelse(iso2 == "nl", "Netherlands", "Other")),
            size = 3, alpha = 0.85) +
  geom_text_repel(aes(label = country), size = 3,
                 color = "grey30", max.overlaps = 20) +
  scale_color_manual(values = c("Netherlands" = "#FF6600",
                                "Other" = "#2c3e50")) +
  annotate("text",
         x = max(merged_scores_gdp$ecfr_incoming, na.rm = TRUE) * 0.15,
         y = max(merged_scores_gdp$network_capital_2021, na.rm = TRUE) * 0.95,
         label = "Pearson  $r \approx 0.90$ \nSpearman  $\rho \approx 0.91$ ",
         size = 3.5, color = "grey30", hjust = 0, fontface = "italic") +

```

```

labs(
  title = "Convergence Between Independent Measures of Network Capital",
  subtitle = "Naurin et al. (2022) vs ECFR Coalition Explorer (2020), 2021 wave",
  x = "ECFR Incoming Cooperation Score",
  y = "Network Capital (Incoming Cooperation Weights)",
  caption = "Sources: Naurin et al. (2022); ECFR Coalition Explorer (2020)"
) +
theme_minimal(base_size = 12) +
theme(legend.position = "none",
      plot.title = element_text(face = "bold", size = 13),
      plot.subtitle = element_text(color = "grey40", size = 10),
      plot.caption = element_text(color = "grey50", size = 8),
      panel.grid.minor = element_blank())

# -----
# Figure 4: Dumbbell plot - residual positions across datasets
# -----

merged_scores_gdp <- merged_scores_gdp %>%
  mutate(std_resid_log = scale(resid_log) %>% as.numeric())

dumbbell_data <- merged_scores_gdp %>%
  select(country, iso2, std_resid_log, std_resid_ecfr) %>%
  mutate(is_nl = iso2 == "nl")

ggplot(dumbbell_data) +
  geom_segment(aes(x = std_resid_ecfr, xend = std_resid_log,
                  y = reorder(country, std_resid_log),
                  yend = reorder(country, std_resid_log),
                  color = is_nl),
              linewidth = 0.6, alpha = 0.6) +
  geom_point(aes(x = std_resid_ecfr,
                 y = reorder(country, std_resid_log), color = is_nl),
             shape = 21, fill = "white", size = 3, stroke = 1.2) +
  geom_point(aes(x = std_resid_log,
                 y = reorder(country, std_resid_log), color = is_nl),

```

```

    shape = 19, size = 3) +
geom_vline(xintercept = 0, linewidth = 0.5,
    linetype = "dashed", color = "grey40") +
scale_color_manual(values = c("FALSE" = "#2c3e50", "TRUE" = "#FF6600")) +
labs(
  title = "Dutch Residual Position Across Independent Datasets",
  subtitle = "Standardised residuals from GDP-baseline model, 2021",
  x = "Standardised Residual (Observed minus Predicted Network Capital)",
  y = NULL,
  caption = "Sources: Naurin et al. (2022); ECFR Coalition Explorer (2020)\nFilled circle = Naurin et al. Dataset,
Open circle = ECFR Dataset"
) +
theme_minimal(base_size = 12) +
theme(legend.position = "none",
  plot.title = element_text(face = "bold", size = 13),
  plot.subtitle = element_text(color = "grey40", size = 10),
  plot.caption = element_text(color = "grey50", size = 8),
  panel.grid.minor = element_blank(),
  panel.grid.major.y = element_line(color = "grey92"),
  axis.text.y = element_text(size = 8))

# -----
# Data preparation for Figure 5: seven-wave panel
# -----

year_map <- c("1" = 2003, "2" = 2006, "3" = 2009,
  "4" = 2012, "5" = 2015, "6" = 2018, "7" = 2021)

country_cols <- c("be", "dk", "de", "el", "es", "fr",
  "ie", "it", "lu", "nl", "at", "pt",
  "fi", "se", "uk", "ee", "lv", "lt",
  "pl", "cz", "sk", "hu", "si", "cy",
  "mt", "bg", "ro", "hr")

netcap_waves <- councildata_03_21 %>%
  mutate(year_actual = year_map[as.character(year)]) %>%

```

```

group_by(year_actual) %>%
summarise(across(all_of(country_cols), ~ sum(.x, na.rm = TRUE))) %>%
pivot_longer(cols = all_of(country_cols),
              names_to = "iso2",
              values_to = "network_capital") %>%
rename(year = year_actual)

```

```

panel <- netcap_waves %>%
left_join(gdp_panel, by = c("iso2", "year")) %>%
group_by(year) %>%
mutate(
  fitted = predict(lm(network_capital ~ log(GDP))),
  resid = network_capital - fitted
) %>%
ungroup()

```

```

nl_panel <- panel %>%
filter(iso2 == "nl") %>%
mutate(rank = map_dbl(year, function(y) {
  panel %>%
    filter(year == y) %>%
    arrange(desc(network_capital)) %>%
    mutate(rank = row_number()) %>%
    filter(iso2 == "nl") %>%
    pull(rank)
}))

```

```

# -----
# Figure 5: Dutch overperformance trajectory across survey waves
# -----

```

```

ggplot(nl_panel, aes(x = year)) +
  geom_col(aes(y = resid), fill = "#FF6600", alpha = 0.85, width = 1.8) +
  geom_hline(yintercept = 0, linewidth = 0.5,
            linetype = "dashed", color = "grey40") +
  geom_vline(xintercept = 2016, linewidth = 0.5,

```

```

linetype = "dotted", color = "#2c3e50") +
annotate("text", x = 2016.2, y = max(nl_panel$resid) * 0.9,
label = "Brexit (2016)", size = 3,
color = "#2c3e50", hjust = 0) +
geom_text(aes(y = resid + max(abs(resid)) * 0.05,
label = paste0("Rank: ", rank)),
size = 3, color = "grey30", fontface = "italic") +
scale_x_continuous(breaks = c(2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021)) +
labs(
title = "Dutch Overperformance Relative to GDP Expectations Across Survey Waves",
subtitle = "Residuals from wave-specific OLS regression (log GDP), Netherlands only",
x = "Survey Wave",
y = "Residual (Observed minus Predicted Network Capital)",
caption = "Source: Naurin et al. (2022). Vertical dotted line indicates Brexit referendum (2016)."
) +
theme_minimal(base_size = 12) +
theme(plot.title = element_text(face = "bold", size = 13),
plot.subtitle = element_text(color = "grey40", size = 10),
plot.caption = element_text(color = "grey50", size = 8),
panel.grid.minor = element_blank(),
panel.grid.major.x = element_blank())

```

Annex C: R script for the partner-group decomposition.

```
# =====  
# Table X: Dutch incoming cooperation weights by partner group, 2003-2021  
# =====  
# Purpose: Decompose aggregate Dutch network capital into three partner groups  
# defined by policy-economic orientation, across all seven survey  
# waves of the Naurin et al. (2022) dataset.  
#  
# Inputs: raw_long - long-format dataframe with one row per dyad-wave,  
# containing columns: ms (source member state name),  
# target_iso2 (ISO2 code of cooperation target),  
# year_actual (survey wave), score (cooperation weight).  
# ms_to_iso2 - lookup dataframe mapping the full member-state name  
# in 'ms' to its ISO2 code in 'iso2'.  
#  
# Output: Table Y - wide-format dataframe with one row per wave and one  
# column per partner group, showing the mean cooperation weight  
# the Netherlands receives from each group in each wave.  
# =====  
  
library(dplyr)  
library(tidyr)  
  
# -----  
# Step 1: Define partner groups  
# -----  
# The Netherlands itself is  
# excluded from all groups to avoid self-reference in the source distribution.  
  
hanseatic_states <- c("dk", "se", "fi", "at") # northern liberal-market  
periphery_states <- c("el", "pt", "es", "it", "ie") # eurozone periphery  
visegrad_states <- c("hu", "pl", "cz", "sk") # Central and Eastern European  
  
partner_groups <- c(hanseatic_states, periphery_states, visegrad_states)  
  
# -----  
# Step 2: Filter to Dutch incoming ties and assign source states to groups
```

```

# -----
# We retain only dyads where the Netherlands is the target (receiving
# cooperation), join the ISO2 lookup to identify the source member state,
# restrict to source states in the three partner groups, and assign each
# source state to its group.

nl_partner_groups <- raw_long %>%
  filter(target_iso2 == "nl") %>%
  left_join(
    ms_to_iso2 %>% rename(source_iso2 = iso2),
    by = "ms"
  ) %>%
  filter(source_iso2 %in% partner_groups) %>%
  mutate(
    group = case_when(
      source_iso2 %in% hanseatic_states ~ "Hanseatic",
      source_iso2 %in% periphery_states ~ "Eurozone Periphery",
      source_iso2 %in% visegrad_states ~ "Visegrad"
    )
  )

# -----
# Step 3: Aggregate to wave x group level
# -----
# For each wave and each partner group, compute the mean incoming cooperation
# weight directed toward the Netherlands. NA values are dropped: in 2003 no
# Visegrad states had yet joined the EU, so the corresponding cell is NA.

nl_by_group <- nl_partner_groups %>%
  group_by(year_actual, group) %>%
  summarise(
    mean_cooperation = mean(score, na.rm = TRUE),
    .groups = "drop"
  )

# -----
# Step 4: Pivot to wide format for presentation
# -----

```

One row per wave, one column per group, ordered chronologically.

```
nl_decomposition_table <- nl_by_group %>%  
  pivot_wider(  
    names_from = group,  
    values_from = mean_cooperation  
  ) %>%  
  arrange(year_actual) %>%  
  select(year_actual, Hanseatic, `Eurozone Periphery`, Visegrad)  
# -----  
# Step 5: Display result  
# -----  
  
print(nl_decomposition_table)  
#  
nl_decomposition_table_rounded <- nl_decomposition_table %>%  
  mutate(across(where(is.numeric) & !year_actual, ~ round(.x, 2)))  
  
print(nl_decomposition_table_rounded)
```

Annex D: R script for the formation-level analysis

```
# =====  
# Formation-Level Analysis Script  
# Dutch and Swedish Council Formation Network Capital, Before/After  
# the 2006-2009 Decentralisation Reform  
# =====  
#  
# Inputs:  
# councildata_03_21 Long-format panel of survey responses across  
# the seven Naurin et al. waves, with columns  
# year (1-7 wave index), workgroup, ms, intcond,  
# and one column per member state coded by iso2.  
# Source: Naurin et al. (2022).  
#  
# Outputs:  
# raw_long Pivoted long-format scores at the  
# respondent-target-formation-wave level.  
# incoming_scores Incoming cooperation scores aggregated to  
# formation-wave-target country.  
# ranked_scores Percentile ranks of incoming scores within  
# each formation-wave, restricted to EU  
# members active in that wave.  
# nl_results, se_results  
# Pre-reform vs post-reform percentile means  
# and ranks by formation type for the  
# Netherlands and Sweden.  
# gaps COREPER vs Working Party normalised score  
# gap by country and reform period.  
#  
# =====  
  
library(dplyr)  
library(tidyr)  
library(purrr)  
library(haven)  
  
#  
# SECTION 1: LOOKUP TABLES  
# =====
```

```

# 1a. Year mapping: survey wave integer → calendar year

year_map <- c(
  "1" = 2003,
  "2" = 2006,
  "3" = 2009,
  "4" = 2012,
  "5" = 2015,
  "6" = 2018,
  "7" = 2021
)

# 1b. Reform period classification

# 2003, 2006 = Pre-reform (centralised EAC model)
# 2009 = Transition (reform enacted early 2009,
# survey April-May 2009, effects not yet embedded)
# 2012-2021 = Post-reform (decentralised sectoral model)

reform_period <- tibble(
  year_actual = c(2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, 2021),
  period = c("Pre", "Pre", "Transition",
             "Post", "Post", "Post", "Post")
)

# 1c. EU membership per wave

# 2003: EU-15
# 2006: EU-25
# 2009-2012: EU-27
# 2015-2018: EU-28 (Croatia joins July 2013)
# 2021: EU-27 (Brexit January 2020)

eu_members <- list(
  "2003" = c("be", "dk", "de", "el", "es", "fr", "ie", "it",
             "lu", "nl", "at", "pt", "fi", "se", "uk"),
  "2006" = c("be", "dk", "de", "el", "es", "fr", "ie", "it",
             "lu", "nl", "at", "pt", "fi", "se", "uk",
             "ee", "lv", "lt", "pl", "cz", "sk", "hu",
             "si", "cy", "mt"),
  "2009" = c("be", "dk", "de", "el", "es", "fr", "ie", "it",
             "lu", "nl", "at", "pt", "fi", "se", "uk",
             "ee", "lv", "lt", "pl", "cz", "sk", "hu",
             "si", "cy", "mt", "bg", "ro"),
  "2012" = c("be", "dk", "de", "el", "es", "fr", "ie", "it",
             "lu", "nl", "at", "pt", "fi", "se", "uk",

```

```

      "ee", "lv", "lt", "pl", "cz", "sk", "hu",
      "si", "cy", "mt", "bg", "ro"),
"2015" = c("be", "dk", "de", "el", "es", "fr", "ie", "it",
      "lu", "nl", "at", "pt", "fi", "se", "uk",
      "ee", "lv", "lt", "pl", "cz", "sk", "hu",
      "si", "cy", "mt", "bg", "ro", "hr"),
"2018" = c("be", "dk", "de", "el", "es", "fr", "ie", "it",
      "lu", "nl", "at", "pt", "fi", "se", "uk",
      "ee", "lv", "lt", "pl", "cz", "sk", "hu",
      "si", "cy", "mt", "bg", "ro", "hr"),
"2021" = c("be", "dk", "de", "el", "es", "fr", "ie", "it",
      "lu", "nl", "at", "pt", "fi", "se",
      "ee", "lv", "lt", "pl", "cz", "sk", "hu",
      "si", "cy", "mt", "bg", "ro", "hr")
)

```

```
# 1d. ms integer → iso2 lookup
```

```

ms_to_iso2 <- tibble(
  ms = 1:28,
  iso2 = c("be", "dk", "de", "el", "es", "fr", "ie", "it",
    "lu", "nl", "at", "pt", "fi", "se", "uk", "ee",
    "lv", "lt", "pl", "cz", "sk", "hu", "si", "cy",
    "mt", "bg", "ro", "hr")
)

```

```
# 1e. Formation type classification
```

```

# COREPER:      Coreper I and II (ambassadorial level)
# PSC_PMG:      Political and Security Committee,
#               Politico-Military Group (ambassadorial level)
# Working_Party: SCA, EPC, CATS, Article 36, agricultural attachés,
#               sectoral committees, technical working parties

```

```

formation_types <- tibble::tribble(
  ~workgroup, ~formation_type,

```

```
# COREPER I and II
```

```

6, "COREPER", 7, "COREPER",
18, "COREPER", 19, "COREPER",
29, "COREPER", 30, "COREPER",
40, "COREPER", 41, "COREPER",
45, "COREPER", 46, "COREPER",

```

56, "COREPER", 57, "COREPER",
67, "COREPER", 68, "COREPER",

PSC and PMG

1, "PSC_PMG", 10, "PSC_PMG",
12, "PSC_PMG", 13, "PSC_PMG",
23, "PSC_PMG", 24, "PSC_PMG",
34, "PSC_PMG", 35, "PSC_PMG",
47, "PSC_PMG", 50, "PSC_PMG",
58, "PSC_PMG", 61, "PSC_PMG",
69, "PSC_PMG", 72, "PSC_PMG",

Working Parties (all working-level formations)

SCA

11, "Working_Party", 15, "Working_Party",
26, "Working_Party", 37, "Working_Party",
48, "Working_Party", 59, "Working_Party",
70, "Working_Party",

EPC

8, "Working_Party", 16, "Working_Party",
27, "Working_Party", 38, "Working_Party",
49, "Working_Party", 60, "Working_Party",
71, "Working_Party",

CATS and Article 36

21, "Working_Party", 32, "Working_Party",
43, "Working_Party", 52, "Working_Party",
63, "Working_Party", 74, "Working_Party",

Agricultural attachés

5, "Working_Party", 14, "Working_Party",
36, "Working_Party",

Environment

2, "Working_Party", 20, "Working_Party",
31, "Working_Party", 42, "Working_Party",
55, "Working_Party", 66, "Working_Party",
77, "Working_Party",

Tax

4, "Working_Party", 17, "Working_Party",
28, "Working_Party", 39, "Working_Party",
51, "Working_Party", 62, "Working_Party",
73, "Working_Party",

Competitiveness

```

22, "Working_Party", 33, "Working_Party",
44, "Working_Party", 54, "Working_Party",
65, "Working_Party", 76, "Working_Party",

# Other working parties

3, "Working_Party", # Mashrek-Maghreb 2003

9, "Working_Party", # Enlargement 2003

25, "Working_Party", # Agricultural WP 2009

53, "Working_Party", # Agricultural WP 2015

64, "Working_Party", # Agricultural Horizontal WP 2018

75, "Working_Party" # Chief Veterinary Officers 2021

)

```

```

# Verify: every formation in the codebook is classified

missing_formation <- setdiff(1:77, formation_types$workgroup)

cat("Formations missing from classification:", missing_formation, "\n")

```

```

# -----
# SECTION 2: COMPUTE INCOMING SCORES
# -----

# For each formation-wave-target country combination:

# incoming_raw = sum of target country's column
#               across all non-target respondents

# n_respondents = number of non-target respondents

# incoming_norm = incoming_raw / n_respondents

# -----

```

```

country_cols <- c("be", "dk", "de", "el", "es", "fr", "ie", "it",
                 "lu", "nl", "at", "pt", "fi", "se", "uk", "ee",
                 "lv", "lt", "pl", "cz", "sk", "hu", "si", "cy",
                 "mt", "bg", "ro", "hr")

```

```

# Step 2a: pivot to long format

raw_long <- councildata_03_21 %>%

mutate(across(everything(), zap_labels)) %>%

filter(intcond == 1) %>%

select(year, workgroup, ms, all_of(country_cols)) %>%

pivot_longer(

  cols = all_of(country_cols),

  names_to = "target_iso2",

  values_to = "score"

) %>%

```

```

left_join(ms_to_iso2 %>% rename(respondent_iso2 = iso2),
  by = "ms") %>%
filter(respondent_iso2 != target_iso2) %>%
mutate(year_actual = year_map[as.character(year)])

cat("Rows in raw_long:", nrow(raw_long), "\n")
cat("Unique target countries:", n_distinct(raw_long$target_iso2), "\n")
cat("Unique years:", sort(unique(raw_long$year_actual)), "\n")

```

Step 2b: aggregate to formation level

```

incoming_scores <- raw_long %>%
  group_by(year_actual, workgroup, target_iso2) %>%
  summarise(
    incoming_raw = sum(score, na.rm = TRUE),
    n_respondents = n(),
    incoming_norm = incoming_raw / n_respondents,
    .groups = "drop"
  ) %>%
  left_join(formation_types, by = "workgroup") %>%
  left_join(reform_period, by = "year_actual") %>%
  filter(!is.na(formation_type))

```

```

# SECTION 3: COMPUTE EU-MEMBER-CONTROLLED PERCENTILE RANKS
#
# For each formation-wave:
# 1. Filter to EU members only for that wave
# 2. Rank all EU members by incoming_norm (descending)
# 3. Compute percentile = rank / n_eu_members * 100
# Lower percentile = better performance
#

```

```

ranked_scores <- incoming_scores %>%
  mutate(year_chr = as.character(year_actual)) %>%
  filter(
    map2_lgl(target_iso2, year_chr,
      ~ .x %in% eu_members[.y])
  ) %>%
  group_by(year_actual, workgroup) %>%
  mutate(
    n_eu_ms = n_distinct(target_iso2),

```

```

rank_in_formation = rank(desc(incoming_norm),
                           ties.method = "min"),
percentile      = rank_in_formation / n_eu_ms * 100
) %>%
ungroup()

# -----
# SECTION 4: FORMATION TYPE ANALYSIS BY COUNTRY AND PERIOD
# -----

summarise_by_country_period <- function(iso2_code, label) {
  ranked_scores %>%
  filter(target_iso2 == iso2_code) %>%
  group_by(period, formation_type) %>%
  summarise(
    mean_percentile = mean(percentile, na.rm = TRUE),
    mean_rank       = mean(rank_in_formation, na.rm = TRUE),
    mean_n_eu_ms    = mean(n_eu_ms, na.rm = TRUE),
    n_formation     = n(),
    .groups         = "drop"
  ) %>%
  filter(!is.na(period)) %>%
  mutate(country = label) %>%
  arrange(period, formation_type)
}

nl_results <- summarise_by_country_period("nl", "Netherlands")
se_results <- summarise_by_country_period("se", "Sweden")

cat("\n=== NETHERLANDS ===\n")
print(nl_results %>% select(period, formation_type,
                           mean_percentile, mean_rank,
                           mean_n_eu_ms, n_formation),
      n = 20)

cat("\n=== SWEDEN ===\n")
print(se_results %>% select(period, formation_type,
                           mean_percentile, mean_rank,
                           mean_n_eu_ms, n_formation),
      n = 20)

```

```

# -----
# SECTION 5: GAP ANALYSIS
# COREPER vs Working Party normalised score gap by reform period
# -----

gap_analysis <- function(iso2_code, label) {
  incoming_scores %>%
    mutate(year_chr = as.character(year_actual)) %>%
    filter(
      target_iso2 == iso2_code,
      map2_lgl(target_iso2, year_chr,
        ~.x %in% eu_members[.y])),
      formation_type %in% c("COREPER", "Working_Party"),
      !is.na(period),
      period != "Transition"
    ) %>%
    group_by(period, formation_type) %>%
    summarise(
      mean_norm = mean(incoming_norm, na.rm = TRUE),
      n_formation = n(),
      .groups = "drop"
    ) %>%
    pivot_wider(
      names_from = formation_type,
      values_from = c(mean_norm, n_formation)
    ) %>%
    mutate(
      country = label,
      gap_COREPER_WP = mean_norm_COREPER - mean_norm_Working_Party
    ) %>%
    select(country, period,
      COREPER = mean_norm_COREPER,
      Working_Party = mean_norm_Working_Party,
      gap_COREPER_WP,
      n_COREPER = n_formation_COREPER,
      n_Working_Party = n_formation_Working_Party)
}

gaps <- bind_rows(
  gap_analysis("nl", "Netherlands"),
  gap_analysis("se", "Sweden")
)

```

)

```
cat("\n=== GAP ANALYSIS: COREPER vs Working Party ===\n")
```

```
print(gaps)
```

```
# =====
```

Annex E: R Script for the Coalition Governance Alternative Analysis

```
# =====  
  
# Appendix D - Coalition Governance Alternative Analysis Script  
  
# Produces the four-specification regression table and the within-case Dutch  
# coalition documentation in section 5.2.2.  
  
#  
  
# Inputs: panel_df - seven-wave panel dataframe constructed from the Naurin  
#         et al. (2022) dataset, with columns: iso2, year,  
#         network_capital, resid (GDP-adjusted residual from  
#         wave-specific log GDP regression - see Appendix B).  
  
#  
#         gov_vars - government composition variables drawn from the  
#         Comparative Political Data Set (Armingeon et al., 2025),  
#         with columns: country, year, is_coalition (binary),  
#         gov_type (seven-category typology), is_surplus (binary  
#         indicator for surplus coalitions), gov_sup (governing  
#         parties' total parliamentary support), gov_right1,  
#         gov_left1.  
  
# =====  
  
library(tidyverse)  
  
# -----  
  
# Section 1: Country-name to ISO2 lookup for CPDS data  
# -----  
  
# The CPDS uses full country names; the panel uses ISO2 codes. This lookup  
# joins the two. Note that Greece maps to 'el' rather than 'gr' to match  
# the convention used in the Naurin et al. dataset.  
  
  
cpds_iso2 <- tibble(  
  country = c("Austria", "Belgium", "Bulgaria", "Croatia", "Cyprus",  
              "Czech Republic", "Denmark", "Estonia", "Finland", "France",  
              "Germany", "Greece", "Hungary", "Ireland", "Italy", "Latvia",  
              "Lithuania", "Luxembourg", "Malta", "Netherlands", "Poland",  
              "Portugal", "Romania", "Slovakia", "Slovenia", "Spain", "Sweden"),  
  iso2    = c("at", "be", "bg", "hr", "cy",  
              "cz", "dk", "ee", "fi", "fr",  
              "de", "el", "hu", "ie", "it", "lv",  
              "lt", "lu", "mt", "nl", "pl",  
              "pt", "ro", "sk", "si", "es", "se")  
)
```

```

gov_vars_iso <- gov_vars %>%
  left_join(cpbs_iso2, by = "country")
# -----

# Section 2: Merge overperformance residual with government composition
# -----

reg_data <- panel_df %>%
  inner_join(gov_vars_iso, by = c("iso2", "year"))
# -----

# Section 3: Cross-national regressions
# -----

# Four operationalisations of coalition governance against the GDP-adjusted
# residual. The fifth specification (ideological composition) is included as
# a supplementary check on whether government ideological orientation
# corresponds to network capital variation.

m1 <- lm(resid ~ is_coalition,      data = reg_data)
m2 <- lm(resid ~ factor(gov_type),  data = reg_data)
m3 <- lm(resid ~ is_surplus,        data = reg_data)
m4 <- lm(resid ~ gov_sup,           data = reg_data)
m5 <- lm(resid ~ gov_right1 + gov_left1, data = reg_data)

summary(m1)
summary(m2)
summary(m3)
summary(m4)
summary(m5)
# -----

# Section 4: Within-case Dutch coalition documentation
# -----

# Shows that Dutch coalition composition is effectively invariant across
# survey waves while the overperformance residual varies substantially.

nl_check <- reg_data %>%
  filter(iso2 == "nl") %>%
  select(year, gov_type, is_coalition, is_surplus,
         gov_sup, network_capital, resid) %>%
  arrange(year)
print(nl_check)

```

Appendix F: Data Sources and Variables

This appendix specifies the data sources underpinning all quantitative claims in the thesis, the access dates, and the variable selections used. It enables independent replication of the analyses presented in Chapter Two and the empirical evaluations in Chapter Five.

F.1 Network capital data

The primary network capital data come from the Negotiations in the Council of the European Union Dataset, Version 2 (Naurin et al., 2022). The dataset compiles survey responses from national representatives across seven waves between 2003 and 2021. The 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, and 2015 waves cover EU-15 through EU-28 membership respectively; the 2018 wave covers EU-28; the 2021 wave covers EU-27 following the United Kingdom's withdrawal. The variable used to construct network capital is the ranked cooperation tie nomination, aggregated across respondents to produce incoming cooperation weights for each member state in each wave. `frq_stmnt_m` from 2012 wave is also used.

F.2 Cross-validation data

The European Council on Foreign Relations Coalition Explorer dataset (ECFR, 2020) provides the independent cooperation measure used in the Chapter Two cross-validation. The Coalition Explorer uses unweighted top five cooperation nominations rather than the ranked-tie methodology of the Naurin et al. dataset. Only responses from government representatives were retained for the present analysis to ensure comparability with the Naurin et al. respondent population.

F.3 Size data

Gross domestic product data used in the analyses are drawn from Eurostat national accounts statistics, current prices in euros (variable identifier: `NAMA_10_GDP`, tabular extract for member states 2003-2021). Population data used in the analysis are drawn from the WDI R package from the World Bank.

F.4 Government composition data

The cross-national coalition governance regressions in section 5.2.2 use government composition data from the Comparative Political Data Set (Armingeon et al., 2025). The variables drawn from CPDS are: `gov_party_concentration` (recoded to a binary coalition indicator), `gov_type` (the seven-category government typology), `gov_oversize_concentration` (recoded to a binary indicator for surplus coalitions), `gov_sup` (governing parties' total parliamentary support),).

F.5 Software

All quantitative analyses were conducted in R Studio, version 4.4.2, with the tidyverse package suite, `ggplot2` for graphics, `ggrepel` for label management in scatterplots, `gt` for table formatting, `haven` for SPSS file import, and `purrr` for functional programming utilities, `stargazer` for tables.

Appendix E: Robustness of the regression and R script for replication

The institutional coefficient is robust across alternative specifications of both the outcome variable and the size control. Specifying the outcome as the 2015 wave alone produces an OPAL coefficient of -0.91 (standard error 0.18, $p < 0.001$) with R-squared of 0.78. Specifying it as the average across the three waves closest to the OPAL measurement period (2012, 2015, 2018) produces -0.85 (standard error 0.17, $p < 0.001$) with R-squared of 0.78. Specifying it as the full-panel average across all seven waves (2003-2021) produces -0.84 (standard error 0.18, $p < 0.001$) with R-squared of 0.76. Substituting log population for log GDP as the size control produces an OPAL coefficient of -0.80 (standard error 0.22, $p = 0.002$) with R-squared of 0.66; GDP is retained in the main specification because economic size is the more theoretically operative size dimension for Council cooperation, reflected in the higher R-squared of the GDP specification. Excluding the five Hanseatic states (Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands) to test whether the cross-country relationship is driven by aligned-partner clustering produces an OPAL coefficient of -0.86 (standard error 0.26, $p = 0.003$) with R-squared of 0.69 across the remaining 22 EU member states. The institutional coefficient ranges from -0.64 (main specification) to -0.91 across these alternatives with statistical significance maintained at conventional thresholds in every single case.

Additionally, two earlier composite measures of parliamentary scrutiny strength are available as alternative specifications of the institutional predictor. Karlas (2012) constructs a parliamentary control index across the EU-27 weighted across multiple dimensions of EU affairs scrutiny. Winzen (2012) constructs an institutionalization index focusing more specifically on the formal procedures of EU affairs scrutiny. The three measures correlate at 0.77(OPAL-Karlas), 0.69(OPAL-Winzen) and 0.82(Karlas-Winzen). Substituting the Karlas score for OPAL in the main specification produces an institutional coefficient of -0.036 (standard error 0.012, $p = 0.005$) with R-squared of 0.78, confirming the institutional finding with an independently constructed measure. Substituting with the Winzen score produces a coefficient of -0.055 (standard error 0.052, $p = 0.30$), in the predicted direction but not at conventional significance. This divergence is interpretable through methodological discussion in Auel, Rozenberg, and Tacea (2015), who argue that earlier measures focusing on formal institutional provisions miss the behavioral and practical dimensions that determine whether formal capabilities translate into actual scrutiny effects. The Karlas index includes behavioral elements alongside formal provisions, while the Winzen index emphasizes formal elements.

```
# =====  
# REPLICATION SCRIPT: Cross-Country Regression - OPAL Institutional Strength and Council Network Capital  
# =====  
  
# Inputs:  
# raw_long : Naurin et al. (2022) Council survey data in long format,  
#           containing variables year_actual, target_iso2,  
#           respondent_iso2, workgroup, ms, score  
# gdp_panel : Country-year panel of GDP in current prices (millions  
#           of euros), variables iso2, year, GDP.  
#           Source: Eurostat  
# population_2012 : 2012 population data, variables iso2, population
```

```

#           (thousands of inhabitants).
#           Source: World Bank WDI R package (indicator
#           SP.POP.TOTL)

# Outputs:
# opal_test_2012 : 27-country dataset for main specification
# model_2012     : Main specification regression (OPAL + log GDP, 2012)
# model_2015     : Robustness check (2015 wave only)
# model_aligned  : Robustness check (2012/2015/2018 average)
# model_2012_pop : Robustness check (population substituted for GDP)
# model_non_hanseatic : Robustness check (Hanseatic states excluded)
# =====

library(dplyr)
library(tidyr)

# -----
# OPAL Institutional Strength Scores
# Source: Auel, Rozenberg, and Tacea (2015)
# In bicameral systems, the higher-scoring chamber is used.
# -----

opal_scores <- tibble::tribble(
  ~iso2, ~country,    ~opal_score,
  "fi", "Finland",    0.84,
  "de", "Germany",    0.78,
  "lt", "Lithuania",  0.73,
  "se", "Sweden",     0.72,
  "dk", "Denmark",    0.69,
  "ee", "Estonia",    0.67,
  "nl", "Netherlands", 0.66,
  "si", "Slovenia",   0.60,
  "cz", "Czech Republic", 0.59,
  "fr", "France",     0.56,
  "it", "Italy",      0.54,
  "lv", "Latvia",     0.53,
  "uk", "UK",         0.52,
  "at", "Austria",    0.51,
  "sk", "Slovakia",   0.49,
  "hu", "Hungary",    0.48,
  "ie", "Ireland",    0.47,
  "mt", "Malta",      0.46,

```

```

"pl", "Poland",      0.45,
"pt", "Portugal",    0.43,
"bg", "Bulgaria",    0.41,
"es", "Spain",       0.40,
"lu", "Luxembourg",  0.40,
"ro", "Romania",     0.35,
"cy", "Cyprus",       0.27,
"el", "Greece",      0.26,
"be", "Belgium",     0.24
)
# -----
# MAIN SPECIFICATION: 2012 wave with log GDP as size control
# Rationale: 2012 matches the EU-27 membership period (pre-Croatia accession)
# during which the OPAL scores were constructed.
# -----
country_network_capital_2012 <- raw_long %>%
  filter(!is.na(score), score > 0, year_actual == 2012) %>%
  group_by(target_iso2) %>%
  summarise(
    incoming_score_sum = sum(score, na.rm = TRUE),
    .groups = "drop"
  ) %>%
  mutate(
    percentile = rank(-incoming_score_sum) / n()
  ) %>%
  rename(iso2 = target_iso2)

opal_test_2012 <- country_network_capital_2012 %>%
  inner_join(opal_scores, by = "iso2") %>%
  left_join(
    gdp_panel %>% filter(year == 2012) %>% select(iso2, GDP),
    by = "iso2"
  )
cat("\n==== MAIN SPECIFICATION: 2012 wave with log GDP ====\n")
model_2012 <- lm(percentile ~ opal_score + log(GDP), data = opal_test_2012)
summary(model_2012)
# -----
# ROBUSTNESS CHECK 1: 2015 wave only
# Rationale: Tests whether the result holds with a different single-wave
# outcome variable specification.
# -----

```

```

country_network_capital_2015 <- raw_long %>%
  filter(!is.na(score), score > 0, year_actual == 2015) %>%
  group_by(target_iso2) %>%
  summarise(
    incoming_score_sum = sum(score, na.rm = TRUE),
    .groups = "drop"
  ) %>%
  mutate(
    percentile = rank(-incoming_score_sum) / n()
  ) %>%
  rename(iso2 = target_iso2)
opal_test_2015 <- country_network_capital_2015 %>%
  inner_join(opal_scores, by = "iso2") %>%
  left_join(
    gdp_panel %>% filter(year == 2015) %>% select(iso2, GDP),
    by = "iso2"
  )
cat("\n=== ROBUSTNESS CHECK 1: 2015 wave only ===\n")
model_2015 <- lm(percentile ~ opal_score + log(GDP), data = opal_test_2015)
summary(model_2015)
# -----
# ROBUSTNESS CHECK 2: Average of 2012, 2015, 2018 waves
# Rationale: Tests whether the result holds when network capital is averaged
# across the three waves closest to the OPAL measurement period.
# -----
country_network_capital_aligned <- raw_long %>%
  filter(
    !is.na(score),
    score > 0,
    year_actual %in% c(2012, 2015, 2018)
  ) %>%
  group_by(year_actual, target_iso2) %>%
  summarise(
    incoming_score_sum = sum(score, na.rm = TRUE),
    .groups = "drop"
  ) %>%
  group_by(year_actual) %>%
  mutate(
    percentile = rank(-incoming_score_sum) / n()
  ) %>%
  group_by(target_iso2) %>%

```

```

summarise(
  mean_percentile = mean(percentile, na.rm = TRUE),
  .groups = "drop"
) %>%
rename(iso2 = target_iso2)
opal_test_aligned <- country_network_capital_aligned %>%
  inner_join(opal_scores, by = "iso2") %>%
  left_join(
    gdp_panel %>% filter(year == 2015) %>% select(iso2, GDP),
    by = "iso2"
  )
cat("\n=== ROBUSTNESS CHECK 2: 2012/2015/2018 average ===\n")
model_aligned <- lm(mean_percentile ~ opal_score + log(GDP),
  data = opal_test_aligned)
summary(model_aligned)
# -----
# ROBUSTNESS CHECK 3: Hanseatic states excluded
# Rationale: Tests whether the cross-country relationship is driven by
# clustering of the aligned-partner group rather than operating across the
# broader EU member state population.
# -----
hanseatic_states <- c("de", "se", "dk", "fi", "nl")
opal_test_non_hanseatic <- opal_test_aligned %>%
  filter(!iso2 %in% hanseatic_states)
cat("\n=== ROBUSTNESS CHECK 3: Hanseatic states excluded ===\n")
model_non_hanseatic <- lm(mean_percentile ~ opal_score + log(GDP),
  data = opal_test_non_hanseatic)
summary(model_non_hanseatic)
# -----
# ROBUSTNESS CHECK 4: log Population substituted for log GDP
# Rationale: Tests whether the institutional finding holds with an
# alternative size control. GDP and population are collinear, so they are
# tested as alternatives rather than as joint controls.
# -----
opal_test_2012_pop <- opal_test_2012 %>%
  left_join(population_2012, by = "iso2")

cat("\n=== ROBUSTNESS CHECK 4: 2012 wave with log population ===\n")
model_2012_pop <- lm(percentile ~ opal_score + log(population),
  data = opal_test_2012_pop)
summary(model_2012_pop)

```