The Lisbon Strategy and the Open Method of Coordination:

A New Vision and the Revolutionary Potential of Soft Governance in the European Union

Christopher M. Tucker

University of California at Berkeley

Political Science Department

Abstract: *This paper addresses the Europeanization/EU Integration debates surrounding new modes of governance with a specific focus on the "Open Method of Coordination" (OMC), which was introduced as an official tool of "soft" policy coordination along with the Lisbon Strategy at the European Council Summit in March 2000. In contrast to studies focused on one or two OMCs, this paper's point of departure is to conceptualize the Lisbon Strategy as paradoxically "self-reflexive" political ideology. The Lisbon "ideology" calls for no less than a "great transformation" of Europe's political, economic, and social landscape, and is now being used to legitimate nearly all of the EU's economic, social, and environmental policies in its quest to become "the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion by 2010." European political actors and scholars have highlighted the OMC's potential for achieving common objectives in sensitive issue areas, via its mechanisms (i.e. benchmarking, target-setting, best practice sharing, and multi-level surveillance) intended to enhance deliberative problem-solving, the pooling of knowledge, transparency, accountability and peer pressure, while leaving the decision-making authority with the states.*

This paper argues that Lisbon European Council's call for extending the OMC to several new issue domains (e.g. employment, pensions, social protection, economic policy, education, etc.) has resulted in the emergence of a networked form of governance in which the OMCs have become the institutional "carriers" of the Lisbon ideology. An increasing number of political actors are interacting in an institutional and normative opportunity structure that is "charged" by the Lisbon ideology. This paper argues that there is some evidence that the non-binding coordination processes of the Lisbon Strategy has lead to a further "dis-aggregation" of governmental interests (e.g. Social Ministers have new platforms on the EU stage), while simultaneously putting pressure on governmental actors to improve both horizontal and vertical coordination. Thus, the Lisbon-OMCs have multiplied the combinatorial potential of transnational alliances. Furthermore, there is evidence that the diffusion of the Lisbon-OMC network is gradually nudging the logic of social interaction in the direction of what some call "argumentative rationality," and accelerated the social selection processes required for the emergence of consensual knowledge. Indeed, the abstract ideas of the Lisbon ideology have quickly become more concrete by the emerging network of OMCs, which have lead to a growing body of normative commitments, common policy paradigms, and a growing body of indicators, benchmarks, and targets. Relying on evidence collected in twenty-five in-depth interviews, official documents, and the secondary literature, the author will argue that there is some evidence that Lisbon-OMCs have been causally related to a cognitive & normative "convergence" and that this has lead to certain patterns of institutional and policy change both in the EU and in member states. The tentative conclusions drawn in this paper have emerged from the first phase of research into the question of whether we are witnessing the institutionalization of a paradoxically "self-reflexive" Lisbon ideology.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PUZZLE

It is telling that the monumental Spring European Council Summit in Lisbon (March 2000) was dubbed the "dot-com summit." The European Council called for no less than a fundamental transformation of European society in its presentation of ten-year Lisbon Strategy for "becoming the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy…with greater social cohesion." The Lisbon Strategy is framed by the EU as touching "nearly all economic, social and environmental policies." Interestingly, anti-poverty NGO's, and transnational trade unions and business interests were all clamoring at the European Council's Economic, Social, & Environmental Summit in Brussels (2003) for states to deliver on the promises made in Lisbon.[1] A chief architect said the EU's Lisbon Strategy "entails a re-conceptualization of

the basic conditions of security and citizenship in a knowledge-based society" and that "institutional innovations are emerging and new social rules are being invented."[2] In addition to these substantive goals of the Lisbon Strategy, the leaders at Lisbon affixed a new mode of non-binding governance in the EU's official tool kit called the Open-Method of Coordination (OMC) and called for its application to many issue areas touching near the heart of the welfare state. The OMC was inspired by the perceived success of the "soft" governance tools utilized by European Employment Strategy since 1998 to pursue EU objectives by enhancing state's problem-solving capacity via mutual learning processes and creating peer pressure on states by increasing transparency (e.g. indicators, performance & policy targets) and multilateral surveillance, while leaving decision-making authority with member states. Although the OMC did not begin high on the Constitutional Convention's agenda, it gradually entered into discussions of numerous key working groups, leading some observers to claim that "[t]here is no doubt that the OMC will be a key issue in the discussion leading to the next Inter-Governmental Conference,"[3] which will be discussing the contents of the future EU Constitution.

Welfare state reform, learning, and peer pressure were not invented by the Lisbon-OMC's, and non-compliance with "hard law" is not uncommon, why should we expect much from the Lisbon-OMC's? Indeed, many scholars of EU integration have juxtaposed the high potential of joint gains of market integration against the significant obstacles to a supranational social regulation.[4] EU member states have historically been unwilling to delegate any significant degree of decision-making authority to the EU in policy domains near the heart of their welfare states. While some may argue that the "soft" OMCs are not enough to overcome the obstacles to meaningful regulation of sensitive issue areas, some European policy-makers have expressed opinions that legislation is "outdated" and "too slow" for a fast-moving economy,"[5] and that the OMCs are leading to a cognitive/normative convergence around a new European Social Model.[6] If the Lisbon-OMC's are all that the strongest proponents contend, then we may witness the

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institutional home during the 1st phase of my research, especially Caroline de la Porte for introducing me to the new "soft governance" before the Lisbon-OMCs existed and being kind enough to discuss my first seminar paper on the subject in 2000 when it was virtually unknown amongst many American academics.

[1] In addition to the official publications from the EU reiterating that the Lisbon goals are the top priority, position papers and interviews with transnational social partners, and NGO's indicate that ensuring that the commitments of Lisbon are implemented is their top priority. For example, see position papers from ETUC (trade unions), UNICE (industry), and EAPN (anti-poverty NGO's).

[2] Maria Rodriguez (2002; pg. 5) was an advisor to the Prime Minister of Portugal, former Minister of Labor, and key intellectual architect behind the Lisbon Strategy.

[3] Radaelli (2003) noted that the following working groups formulated proposals on the OMC: Economic Governance, Simplification, Complementary Competencies (renamed 'supporting measures'), and above all Social Europe.

[4] Pierson and Leibfried (1995); Streeck, (1996), Pollack (1997) essentially argue that economic governance through fragmented sovereignty is more suited to market making by way of negative integration and efficiency enhancing regulation, in contrast to institution building and the redistributive intervention necessary for positive integration. Also, the unlikely unanimity needed for positive integration makes a competitive deregulatory situation more likely with most limited attempts at EU social policy being part of the market creation process that increases the mobility of workers.

[5] Heretier (2002, fn. 7) says the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs prefers OMC-like mechanisms to legislation for these reasons. Many of my interviews with this DG indicate that many agreed that the speed of the OMC's was one a strong benefit in its favor. While not being opposed to legislation, some indicated that it is not an option for now because member states would not support it.

[6] For examples of such arguments see, Hemerijk (2002), Delaporte & Pochet, eds. (2002).

"constitutionalization of self-reflexivity." If skeptics are correct, then the lofty rhetoric of the Lisbon Strategy is a toothless defense against unbridled market integration, and a competitive "race to the bottom" of social dumping.[7]

In this paper, I will argue that the Lisbon Strategy can be usefully understood as a paradoxically "self-reflexive" political ideology that is being used to legitimate political reform. By calling for the application of several more OMC's to implement its vision, an emerging form of "networked governance" is serving as the institutional carriers for the Lisbon ideology. I argue that ideological vision that emerged at Lisbon is the result of a complex reconceptualization of the EU's "problem interdependence" in which formerly fragmented issue area "parts" are recast as belonging to a new Lisbon "whole." A core argument to emerge out of this new thinking was that the former contradictions between globalization and domestic pressures on the European welfare states (e.g. aging workforce) can be overcome by Lisbon's holistic strategy that promises Europe that it can have its cake and eat it too.

By getting all the Heads of State and Government to stand behind the Lisbon's comprehensive strategy, European Council set a gigantic "rhetorical trap" for itself. Indeed, these leaders committed to hold an annual Spring Economic and Social Summit, where the Commission- after incorporating the knowledge acquired in some of the on-going OMCs- presents a single document to European leaders, which summarizes their progress towards the Lisbon objectives. In addition to this report card from the Commission, European leaders are being pressured from all sides to "close the delivery gap" between Lisbon's commitments and actions.[8] Consequently, the recently elected leaders of right-leaning governments are now confronted with promises made by social democratic leaders at Lisbon that "raised the expectations of people"[9]

I argue that the Lisbon ideology's reliance on the OMC's to enhance the EU's problem solving capacity makes it auspiciously positioned to force those who disagree with its vision to "argue" against the growing pool of consensual knowledge being produced by the OMCs. The increasing density of interaction and transparency (e.g. benchmarks, indicators, targets) in the network of Lisbon-OMCs may be gradually nudging the logic of social interaction in the direction of what some call "argumentative rationality."[10] Due

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[7] See works by Goetschy (1999, 2002), for some good background on political context that gave rise to the EES, and later other social OMC's.

[8] This was the chief theme in the report issued by UNICE-transnational business organization- to the European Council in Barcelona (Spring 2002), but similar pressures are coming from anti-poverty NGOs and trade unions.

[9] This quote is taken from a recent press release from the transnational NGO- the European Anti-Poverty Network- to express its concerns about the recently announced changes of the changes aimed at improving the meta-coordination of the Lisbon processes. They and many other transnational and national organizations use the commitments made in the name of the Lisbon Strategy to pressure governments.

[10] Risse (2000) defines this logic of "argumentative rationality" as occurring when actors deliberate about the truth, they try to figure out (1) whether their cause-and-effect assumptions about the world are correct, or (2) whether norms of appropriate behavior can be justified, and which norms apply under given circumstances. Arguing implies that actors try to challenge the validity claims inherent in any causal/normative statement and seek a communicative consensus about their understanding of a situation as well as justifications for the principles and norms guiding their action. Argumentative rationality also implies that the participants in a discourse are open to being persuaded by the better argument and that relationships of power and social hierarchies recede in the background.

to the low "sovereignty costs" and the procedural legitimacy of this form of non-binding governance, governmental and societal actors are likely being pressured to either adhere to the prescriptions (OMC guidelines) or provide evidence-based arguments to defend their interests and actions within the normative and cognitive framework being produced by the Lisbon OMCs.

This paper offers an explanation of the mechanisms and "Europeanization" effects of the Lisbon-OMC's. My hunch is that the diffusion of the OMCs network is accelerating the epistemological "social selection" processes that are required for the emergence of consensual knowledge and substantive norms. Thus, increasing levels of social interaction (real and virtual), transparency, and information flows in the Lisbon-OMC network are facilitating the "deepening" of the Lisbon ideology's "genetic" core, while political actors argue about its more ambiguous "adaptive" traits. For example, by creating an OMC to coordinate collective action aimed at increasing social inclusion actors involved in the on-going deliberations implicitly accept that it is necessary, while arguing about what it is (e.g. creating indicators for poverty) and how it fits into Lisbon Agenda. My argument coincides with scholars that have argued that the OMCs are facilitating a cognitive convergence around a new European Social Model, and causing a "subtle transformation of states."[11] Although many of the OMCs are quite young, there is some evidence that this process is manifesting itself in the thoughts, behavior, and institutional developments in the EU and member states.[12]

In contrast to other ideologies, Lisbon is not a rigid blueprint to be dutifully implemented by the member states. Lisbon is an ideology that persuades, argues, and stigmatizes. I fully acknowledge that "power" still matters, and political actors haven't given up their interests to begin learning in the OMC's. I only hypothesize that the social and institutional boundaries in which power and interests collide are increasingly infused with a mode of social interaction that induces them to "play fair."

This paper is organized as follows. First, because the OMC's novelties, the jargon often used is sometimes impenetrable for non-specialists, and because one can discuss the OMC's without reference to the Lisbon Strategy, I will discuss some of the generic properties of the OMC as a form of governance, highlighting the ways it differs across issue domains. Second, I will offer my conceptual framework of the Lisbon ideology's "genetic" features (i.e. its ontological holism, its substantive vision, and its embrace of procedures that facilitate networked self-reflexivity).[13]

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[11] Hemerijk (2002), Jacobsson (2003).

[12] See Hemerijk (2002), and Jacobsson (2002) who argue that the OMCs have the potential for creating cognitive convergence around a European Social Model.

[13] While humans are by nature reflective creatures, I define "self-reflexivity" as requiring an organizational structure (e.g. rules, institutionalized processes) that enhances a collectivity's capacity for "learning to learn." Organizations that channel resources to improving organizational memory, systematically monitoring performance, and facilitating the diffusion of knowledge gained from failures & successes. Self-reflexive organizations may create rules of deliberation that encourage serious non-confrontational discussions about both the organization's goals and procedures/rules, which may be hindering effective problem-solving and coordination between the organization's various units.

Third, I provide a framework for understanding how the Lisbon ideology and its institutional carriers are "steering" the thoughts and actions of political actors on the ground. In order to grapple with the fact (my assumption) that the institutional design of the Lisbon OMC's encourage a disaggregation of governmental interests (EU & national), I employ a network framework composed of key "nodal" actors that coordinate the multiple overlapping OMC "arenas." After laying this groundwork, I will discuss how some of the micro-processes (e.g. elite learning, creation of indicators) of actors involved in the OMC's. In this section, I will discuss a type of learning that has not been discussed (to my knowledge) in the literature on the OMC's called complexification, which I believe may be relevant to these debates. Then I attempt to show how these micro-processes are linked to the macro-processes (e.g. creation & diffusion of causal/moral norms). The iterated nature of the OMCs ensures that these linkages are dynamically interacting (e.g. indicators is created and used in next evaluation cycle, improving information pooling before next round begins).

Finally, I will discuss a few of the conceptual and methodological problems in gauging the Europeanization effects. I will conclude with a birds-eye overview of the evolutionary process of the Lisbon-OMC's and some guarded speculation about the future of the Lisbon ideology. I must clarify that I do not claim that I have a theory that explains the "Europeanization" effects better than existing theories, and I do not engage in systematic hypothesis testing. My argument is bolstered by empirical evidence gathered during the summer of 2002 by conducting twenty-five in-depth interviews with several political players in the Lisbon OMC-network. In addition, during my first year of graduate school, I conducted a telephone interview with a member of a high-level working party on social protection that existed before the Lisbon Summit of 2000, which provides an interesting historical snapshot into the mind of a Finnish diplomat involved in what came to be the OMC-social inclusion. I also rely on the official EU documents, and the burgeoning scholarly work on the OMC's and new governance. To reiterate, this is a work in progress, and I will be leaving this conference for more field research to get me beyond this "theory-building" phase.

WHAT IS THE OMC?

> The OMC is, "both a cognitive and a normative tool. It is a 'cognitive' tool, because it allows us to learn from each other. In my opinion, this learning process is not restricted to the practice of other Member States, but also extends to their underlying views and opinions, an area that is no less important. Open co-ordination is a "normative" tool because, necessarily, common objectives embody substantive views on social justice. Thus open co-ordination gradually creates a European social policy paradigm.[14]
> - Belgian Minister of Social Affairs, Frank Vandenbroucke

Inspired by the perceived success of the experimental modes of "soft governance" that had been applied to economic and employment policy coordination[15], the Lisbon European Council called for extending the OMC to several new issue areas, some of which were close to the heart of the welfare state (i.e.

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[14] Frank Vandenbroucke (2002: 9).
[15] Broad Economic Policy Guidelines (BEPG), and European Employment Strategy (EES)

social protection, pensions, innovation/SME's, education, R&D, and information society).[16] The Lisbon European Council Conclusion (March 2000) introduced the OMC as follows:

The OMC As Defined By the Lisbon European Council

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

- Fixing guidelines for the Union combined with specific timetables for achieving the goals which they set in the **short, medium and long terms**;

- Establishing, where appropriate, **quantitative and qualitative indicators** and **benchmarks against the best in the world** and tailored to the needs of different Member States and sectors as a means of comparing best practice

- Translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies by setting **specific targets** and adopting measures, taking into account national and regional differences;

- Periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review organised as **mutual learning processes.**

Instead of "hard" supranational legislation, the non-binding OMC's are intended to facilitate the convergence on the EU's key goals by enhancing transparency, mutual learning and peer pressure, while leaving decision-making authority with the states. First, importantly the OMC's are an iterated process, repeating every 1-3 years. The OMC's are generally created after the European Council decide that specific areas of problem-interdependence necessitate policy coordination, but are not willing to delegate authority to the EU in that area. After discussions between the Council of Ministers, the social partners, other affected public and private actors, and outside experts, the Commission proposes a common strategy for dealing with the problems that have been identified (e.g. pensions, employment).

In addition to providing a technical analysis of the "problem domain", the Commission submits a series of Guidelines/Objectives to the Council of Ministers, who may amend them before approving them by a qualified majority vote. The Guidelines are usually presented under a few overarching strategic pillars, and are general enough to be adapted to national contexts. For example, the Guidelines for the employment-OMC were originally presented under the pillars of Employability, Entrepreneurship, Equal Opportunities, and Adaptability. In addition to the policy Guidelines the Commission may propose setting quantifiable targets with timetables (e.g. all unemployed youth shall be involved in some form of job training within 12 months). In contrast to the traditional Community Method (i.e. Regulations/Directives, enforcement by ECJ), in which Regulations are passed once by Council and Parliament, the common Guidelines (or Objectives in some

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[16] See Appendix #1 for chart of some of the main features of four OMCs. I have not yet collected all the data for this chart.

OMC's) must be repeatedly reaffirmed at the beginning of each cycle and can be updated or removed in the light of experience. If one counted each individual Objective/Guideline that was produces and reproduced as individual decisions, it might not rival the approximately 500 hard laws produces per year. However, the number thus far is more than several hundred, and probably exceeds a 1000, which is arguably a strong signal of Lisbon's institutionalization, especially if one considers the separate benchmarking devices and "norms" committed to by the European Council.[17]

Second, in addition to these softer forms of regulation, the OMC's produce several new instruments designed to enhance monitoring of policy and performance (i.e. indicators, benchmarks, quantitative targets). Member states are expected to produce National Action Plans (or Reports) that detail the state of affairs in the relevant policy domains, and actions take (or planned) in response to the new Community Objectives. Throughout the process the Commission and the expert committees monitor the progress in each of the states and in the community as a whole. At the end of the annual (or bi/triennial) cycle, the Commission after consultations with the relevant expert committee(s), social partners, Parliament and other Community entities, submits a draft report of the progress made, and in the case of the Employment Strategy and the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, can propose specific Recommendations[18] to member states. The relevant Council formation (or joint Council) must approve the Joint Report and submit it to the European Council.

Third, institutional features have been created to facilitate cross-national learning. One important institutional innovation is the creation of "hybrid" experts committee that "fuses" supranational and intergovernmental experts into a consultative body for the Council and Commission.[19] These committees hold non-public meetings roughly every month, which are supposed to facilitate the mutual learning processes by incorporating expertise into the OMC processes. Although they have no formal power, the de-politicized deliberations encourage a free exchange of ideas, and build trust between the Commission and member state experts. In addition to the technical analysis and monitoring, these committees are responsible for the creation of policy/performance indicators, which are crucial for facilitating the monitoring and exchange of comparable information. Also, in some OMC's the Commission organizes voluntary peer reviews in which member states, social partners, the Commission, and experts (national and independent) engage in a qualitative review of member's "best practices" including site visits and exchange of expert reports, and in-depth discussions.

The Lisbon European Council defined the OMCs as a fully decentralized approach, including regional, local governments, and that the Commission should develop benchmarking exercises for managing change

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[17] Fligstein and Stone-Sweet(2002:21) argue that the quantity of individual pieces of legislation are a good rough measure of the institutionalization of organizational fields in which interest groups increasingly lobby units and thus link their organized interests to that domain, making it "real."

[18] See Chart in Appendix for history of national Recommendations issued by Council for the employment OMC.

[19] The key expert committees are the Employment Committee (EMCO), Social Protection Committee (SPC), Economic Policy Committee (EPC), and the Economic and Finance Committee (EFC).

by "networking with different providers and users, namely the social partners, companies and NGOs."[20] The OMCs are a notoriously flexible governance tool, which have been tweaked to fit the policy logic of different domains (e.g. employment vs. pensions), the level of problem interdependence, and the political sensitivity around the particular issue area. The Belgian Minister of Social Affairs, Frank Vandenbroucke[21] writes that "policy co-ordination and open co-ordination together constitute a cookbook that contains various recipes, lighter and heavier ones."[22]

The OMC: hard vs. soft governance. Is the OMC a type of "soft law" (Kenner 1999), or something else? One way of understanding the "structure" of "soft governance" is by referring to a framework developed by international relations scholars working on the "hard-soft" law debate. In a special issue of *International Organization* on "Legalization and World Politics," "hard [international] law" is defined as "legally binding obligations that are precise…and that delegate authority for interpreting and implementing the law." Soft law is characterized by a weakened configuration of: obligation, precision, and delegation.[23] Although this conceptual framework may be a useful starting point, I will argue that it is of limited utility in the case of the Lisbon-OMCs. However, some OMCs are Treaty-based (BEPG, EES)[24] and exhibit a higher degree of obligation. Some guidelines are more precise than others (e.g. all schools should have internet access by year X); others delegate more jurisdictional control to the influence of the third-party "agent" (e.g. Commission can "shame" states in the economic & employment OMCs by issue specific Recommendations which highlight poor performance). On a spectrum from hard to soft, the typical Community Method is hard law, the Stability & Growth Pact is less hard (e.g. Council must vote for monetary sanctions); all the OMC's are softer in comparison, but some are "less soft" (e.g. non-binding recommendations in the BEPG, EES), while the rest must rely on *even* more subtle forms of peer pressure and learning to facilitate policy coordination.

Although the three variables may be a good heuristic starting point for explaining OMC's, a narrow conceptualization of the OMC's as mere "constraint" overlooks two important issues. First, in addition to their soft constraints, the OMC's were designed as an on-going capacity-building process (e.g. multiple learning mechanisms). Second, I concur with Finnemore & Troope (2001) that to better understand the "generating power" of law (if one considers the OMC's as 'soft law'), it must be contextualized within underlying social practices, which determine legitimacy, and consequently, that "felt sense of obligation." The circular definition provided by Abbott et al. (2000: 409) does not get one very far: "legal obligations

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[20] European Council Conclusions at Lisbon, paragraph 38. March 23-24. 2000.
[21] Frank Vandenbroucke (2002: 9).
[22] The terminology used to describe the various policy coordination instruments can be confusing even for practitioners. While all the non-binding instruments of policy coordination are not officially called OMC's, most of the one's that I'll be referring to are OMC's. In attempt to avoid confusing readers, I will often refer to the, the Broad Policy Economic Guidelines (BEPG's) as the economic-OMC, even though it is not officially an OMC, nor are some of the benchmarking exercises, that seem to have all the same features, but have not been anointed with the OMC label.
[23] Abbott and Snidal (2000:421).
[24] The Broad Policy Economic Guidelines and the European Employment Strategy.

bring into play the established norms, procedures, and forms of discourse for the international legal system." I start from the assumption that the peer pressure emanating from even the "hard" OMC's will not be enough to compel national parliaments to institute policy reform against their better judgment most of the time. Moreover, learning and "steering" do not just happen because political actors are sharing information and discussing common problems. For the OMC's to have a meaningful impact upon member states' policies, political actors incentives, beliefs, knowledge, and/or values must change. I argue that "obligation" in regards to the OMC's must be placed in the broader institutional and normative structure (or organizational fields)[25] of the Lisbon-OMC's. Since Lisbon created several new "organizational fields," has recast existing economic, social and environmental policies in the service of the Lisbon objectives, and is being used by a diverse spectrum of actors to legitimate their interests, a deeper exploration of what the Lisbon Strategy means, is called for.

LISBON: A SELF-REFLEXIVE IDEOLOGY FOR A KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY

> "Against the backdrop of war, any discussion of the Lisbon strategy may appear at first sight a luxury, even slightly out of place. But it is not. In a climate of global uncertainty, flagging business confidence and stubborn unemployment, pushing forward with the agreed Lisbon reforms has never been more relevant and vital. And the strategy can only work if all players play their part to the full, including business and workers." – Speech by Romano Prodi, President of European Commission, on March 20, 2003 on the eve of the European Council's Spring Summit in Brussels.

There are several reasons why conceptualizing the Lisbon Strategy as an ideology is valid and useful.[26] The Lisbon Strategy that was introduced by the European Council in March 2000 was not a typical laundry list of stately declarations, but rather the result of transnational "prolonged and complex interaction between the scientific and the political agenda at the European level." Out of these interactions between elite politicians, and renown academics emerged "new theoretical issues and a long-standing strategy for the European Union."[27] My point here is neither to simply "prove" that that Lisbon satisfies the definitional criteria of an ideology, nor to provide a detailed account of its content. My aim is to identify some its core "genetic" features, which I believe may help explain political phenomena that would otherwise be hard to explain. I will outline some of the core properties that distinguish ideologies from other social phenomena. The properties that I have chosen are intended to be analytical, and not merely descriptive.

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[25] Commonly referred to as "a recognized area of institutional life."
[26] My conceptualization is informed by the official text of Lisbon, official EU documents, subsequent writings by some of its key architects, and interviews with participants.
[27] Maria Rodriguez (2002: xi)

First, there is nearly universal agreement that political ideologies must have <u>coherence</u> (i.e. consistency/constraint).[28] This implies that they must <u>contrast</u> with external ideologies, or the general political culture, and that they have over time shown <u>stability</u>. In contrast to opinions, causal beliefs, norms, or interest group platforms, ideologies are characterized by a <u>hierarchical ordering</u> of thought capped off with higher levels of abstractions concerning politics, power, and the related domains of social life. For example, a cornerstone of Lisbon is that it rejects neo-liberal models of economic growth in the US, which is often used as the benchmarks for what the EU wants (competitiveness) and does not want (social inequality, low quality jobs etc.). Lisbon proffers a synthetic strategic plan that conceptualizes social cohesion, employment, and economic growth as mutually interdependent sides (i.e. the Lisbon triangle) in a knowledge-based economy. From this abstraction, more specific attitudes are derived from higher order abstractions, like e-inclusion policies, and activating social policies.

Ideologies are not purely ideational and have several <u>functions</u>. First, they are <u>located</u> in thought, behavior and language. Unlike general values, they influence political behavior, and can become encoded in formal institutions or organizations. Thus, the Lisbon Strategy exists inside the heads of people aware of it, and gives meaning to the interactions in the institutional processes it has created or re-defined as serving Lisbon. For example, the EES existed before Lisbon, but has been contextualized as one important and interconnected "part" of Lisbon's integrated strategy. And although certainly not everyone is a true believer (some are), it is located in the language and behavior of individuals and groups who justify their interests as being consistent with the fulfillment of the Lisbon objectives, exemplified by the Spring Summits created to discuss the Lisbon's progress. Second, ideologies are more than policies or goals, they <u>explain </u>social reality in a way that reduces its complexity and renders it and one's interaction with it meaningful. Therefore ideologies have ontologies. By this, I mean that they make certain truth claims. Ideologies- like theories- can vary in their ontological complexity (e.g. religious fundamentalism eschews complexity, Lisbon self-consciously embraces it). Third, ideologies <u>integrate</u> individuals into a community bounded by authoritative rules and norms. It is peculiar that it is difficult to find anyone who opposes Lisbon's principles as can be seen by the repeated calls by diverse sets of actors (e.g. poverty NGO's & transnational business, nearly all EU bodies) for delivery of the(ir) "true" Lisbon, while disagreeing over the details. Fourth, in contrast to theories, norms, or belief systems, ideologies are inherently <u>prescriptive</u>, in that they provide roadmaps for action, including specific programs usually with the explicit or implicit goal of reaching the "promised land." These are the more commonly known features of the Lisbon Strategy. Finally, ideologies <u>legitimate</u> certain actions, while de-legitimizing others. Radaelli (2003: 51) concludes that "[The] (OMC) is eminently a legitimizing discourse. It provides a community of policy-makers with a common vocabulary and a

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[28] For an erudite and concise conceptual critique of ideology, see (Gerring (1997). I relied heavily on his piece in my attempt to clarify what ideology is and is not. The purpose of his definitional exercise is to reduce the ambiguity of the abused concept, acknowledging its inherent multi-vocality.

legitimizing project to make Europe the most competitive knowledge society in the world."[29] I argue that there is evidence to suggest that by entering the debate about "which" Lisbon should be pursued, governmental and non-governmental actors have either incorporated some of the beliefs or at least implicitly accepted the legitimacy of the terms of the debate (e.g. yes, we now agree that the EU should have a role in coordinating social inclusion, health care coordination, etc., but we don't like that policy). Thus, silence may occur now where opposition would have otherwise existed; and silence is difficult to measure.

I argue that the Lisbon Strategy- and its institutional carriers (i.e. OMC's) contain both "genetic" and "adaptive" features.[30] Altering the genetic features of either the Lisbon Strategy or the OMC's would remove their essential essence and change them into a "new species" similar to removing elections from democracies would. I argue that Lisbon ideology by three features: 1) its **ontological holism**, 2) **Substantive norms**, and 3) **Procedural norms about the** appropriate functioning of the various governance tools for each part of the Lisbon "whole." For example, the Community Method (i.e. "hard" law) is applied toward the internal market strategy. My focus is on the softer modes of policy coordination processes, which in the case of the BEPGs, overlap with issue-areas under hard law despite being a non-binding process. I argue that the genetic procedural norms of the softer modes of coordination are the "self-reflexive" core of the Lisbon ideology. These procedural norms are generally more difficult to oppose because they entail low "sovereignty costs" and do not require significant resources.

ONTOLOGICAL HOLISM AND COMPLEXIFICATION

The first "genetic" feature of Lisbon can be seen in its ontological complexity, which has implications for the way Lisbon "explains" and how policies, institutions, and polities "fit" in its agenda. In her book outlining the intellectual influences informing the Lisbon Strategy, Maria Rodriguez (2002: 7) notes that in the social sciences a new theoretical paradigm is emerging for "building a conceptual framework based on more realistic assumptions, able to take into account the diversity, complexity and multidimensionality of situations." I contend that Lisbon's vision reflects a type of learning that results from *complexification,* which Ernst Haas and Peter Haas (1993), define as "a re-conceptualization of causal chains and issue linkages that were formerly 'in their separate compartments,'" and implies a redefinition of the problem. Complex causality implies more uncertainty, and necessitates more complex issue linkages into more comprehensive packages. This type of cognitive restructuring results from the incorporation of formerly disconnected policy

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[29] No one during my 25 interviews with key actors in the various Lisbon OMC's opposed Lisbon; almost all agreed with the general principles. Generally, the big division was between those who thought the supply-side social policy was getting too much emphasis in comparison to the more business-friendly market creating components of Lisbon, and vice versa..
[30] The use oft this metaphor was inspired by lectures given by Prof. Ken Jowitt at the University of California-Berkeley.

domains into a more holistic *problematique.*[31] A core principle of the Lisbon Strategy is that political strategies should be coordinated to grapple with the complexity of reality rather than the bureaucratic competencies. The Commission justifies the OMC's "integrated approach" by stating that:

> Reforms cannot be obtained through isolated and dispersed actions or measures, but require consistent and concerted action over a wide range of policies and measures. These measures need to be tailor made to address diverse needs and conditions. Each OMC is not 'owned' by the respective Ministries (e.g. Finance, Labor, Social), but calls for comprehensive policies committing Governments as a whole, as well as a wide range of stakeholders."[32]

Whether an issue becomes linked with other formerly independent issues is determined by the 'scientific consensus' of the relevant actors.**[33]** In the case of Lisbon, it is argued that becoming the most competitive knowledge-based economy is not in antithetical to upholding the European Social Model, but rather they are mutually interdependent. A complex ontology creates uncertainty as more causally connected "parts" are seen as necessary to the relevant problem, the causal interdependency multiplies.[34] Thus, developing means of coordinating the multiple semi-decomposable parts becomes the challenge. In the case of Lisbon, whereas several new issue-area parts were deemed to interdependent with the new "whole" some were perceived as more or less semi-decomposable, and required different forms of governance (i.e. harder vs. softer). It is not likely that everyone "believed" that these interlinkages were real, but those who do have been favored (I argue) in affecting the various policy coordination processes. I will return to the discussion of whether this is actually occurring at the EU & member state level, but the structural indicators included in the Commission's Spring Report on the Lisbon Strategy to the European Council can be seen as one manifestation of this thinking.[35]

One striking feature of the Lisbon discourse and the Lisbon-OMC's is the rise of comprehensive policy paradigms that are justified by being better equipped to grapple with the multidimensionality of shared problems. First, each substantive "pillar" of Lisbon is conceptualized to integrate formally separate policy domains into a coherent semi-decomposable part. For example, OMC-social inclusion is more than reducing poverty, and includes such policy domains as job placement/training, tax issues (e.g. poverty traps), e-

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[31] Ernst Haas and Peter Haas (1993), in their discussion about international organizational learning, define a *problematique* as the 'policy spaces' that involve a given set of interdependent problems, places, acts and policies.

[32] From EU website: www.europa.eu.int

[33] Unless the science has reached the stage of authority to become normative, such linkages will depend on whether the "ins" can convince the 'outs' to link certain issues

[34] The Lisbon Strategy employs both "hard" and "soft" modes of governance. The EU website for the Lisbon Strategy lists the following policy areas: Biotechnology, Economic policy, Education and training, eEurope, eLearning/Lifelong learning, Employment, Enterprise policy , Energy, European Research Area, Financial Services action plan, Internal market strategy, Innovation, Pensions, Social policy agenda, Social inclusion, Single European Sky, Small businesses, Sustainable development. http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/index_en.html.

[35] See Figure 2 in Appendix for chart listing the number of times each countries was one of the best/worst 3 performers against the structural indicators presented to the European Council.

inclusion, social assistance, housing, substance abuse, and family policy. In addition there are several overlapping horizontal objectives that have become integrated into the various OMCs. For example, in the Commission's appraisal of the first five years of the employment OMC, it stated that the EES had:

> "[f]ostered political agreement on *new common paradigms*, such as lifelong learning and quality in work. The need for *lifelong learning*, and the complementarity between education and training systems has become generally accepted and Member States are all in the process of re-designing their education and training policies in a more integrated way" and that "the EES generally strengthened national employment *policy coherence* and framework. Policies under each pillar [employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability, and gender equality] were progressively adjusted and employment priorities were mainstreamed into other policy areas like taxation and social security.[36]

Another core feature of Lisbon's ontological holism is *temporal.* Problems do not always coincide with election cycles or bureaucratic competencies. Thus, the Lisbon Strategy was planned for ten years, and the OMC's objectives include medium to long-term goals that may encourage decision-makers to step outside of the "box of short-term thinking" often exacerbated by electoral incentives. This collective reorientation towards longer-term goals could extend actors time horizons by locking them into iterative deliberations and cycles of monitoring and reporting that may affect their incentives for cooperation. In theory, these longer-term strategic goals may help legitimate necessary changes to domestic "path-dependent" phenomena (e.g. pensions). The OMC's encourage deliberations about long-term problems, but are "soft" enough to allow leaders to avoid punishment at the ballot box.

THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION INTO A KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY?

> "The Union has set itself a new strategic goal for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. Achieving this goal requires an overall strategy aimed at: preparing the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society by better policies for the information society and R&D, as well as by stepping up the process of structural reform for competitiveness and innovation and by completing the internal market…and modernizing the European social model, by investing in people and combating social exclusion"[37]

Building on intellectual currents in the 1990's (e.g. Third Way discourse in the EES[38], Commission documents about 'modernizing social protection, etc.), a "genetic" feature of the Lisbon Strategy is its claim that is that the contradictions of globalization and social protection can be overcome by modernizing the European Social Model[39] sound macro-economic policy, and employment policies would equip workers with

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[36] The building blocks for coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies have been presented in the Communication "Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality" from the Commission COM(2001)678 final

[37] Maria Joao Rodriguez (2002, pg. 18)

[38] Several interviewees mentioned the former head of the Commission DG Employment & Social Affairs, Alan Larsson, as being a crucial "entrepreneur" in selling the principles of the EES. A representative from the transnational trade union organization ETUC said "he was key in selling the four pillars to us being things we should be interested in: job creation, human capital, firm creation, participation, gender gap; essentially ETUC accepted that…" and that we interpreted Lisbon as a real Third Way, not like Blair's." Interview # 7. July 2002.

[39] Trubek and Mosher (2002) state, "Defenders of generous social policies in Europe knew that action was needed both to preserve a commitment to expansive benefits, relative wage and income equality, and coordinated bargaining by organized interest groups

the skills essential for a knowledge-based economy, while capitalizing on the completion of the internal market. Both an essential component of the EES (1997), and then Lisbon is the emphasis on the activating role of the states to provide equitable "re-commodification" for a knowledge-based economy.

A core tension that runs through Lisbon's goals is between <u>competitiveness</u> and <u>social cohesion</u>. Despite patterns of division between "economic" and "social-oriented" actors at the EU and domestic levels on issues such as pensions (De la Porte & Pochet, eds. 2002), there has been agreement on the overarching goals and the governance mechanisms to be used. In addition, to the market-creating vs. social inclusion divide, there are some surprising alliances between state actors who differ in their political-economic philosophy, but agree in their opinions about the proper role of the EU, namely that the OMC was a better "third way" between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. If taken seriously by key political actors, some argue that Lisbon may advantage reformers who are closer to the middle (Trubek and Mosher 2002), or facilitate cross-national learning resulting in innovative "hybrid" welfare states (Hemerijck 2002; Zeitlin 2002).

Many of my interviews confirmed Dehousse (2002: 7) who interprets Lisbon as an important symbolic reaction by the social democratic hegemony in 2000 against the growing dominance of Economic and Finance ministers in the EU and in national ministries. Thus, one important impetus for the creation of Lisbon (and previously the European Employment Strategy in 1998) was desire of the left-of-center leaders to show that they were doing something about social and employment issues when they called for the extension of OMCs to several new issue areas, in addition to institutionalizing the annual Spring Economic and Social Summit.

It appears that by incorporating several new issue-linkages to the EU stage, the Lisbon-OMC's have created an incentive structure conducive to "dis-aggregating" collective governmental actors and multiplying the combinatorial potential of alliance formation between and & within collective actors. Indeed, it is telling that the "godmother" of the Lisbon Strategy refers to Karl Polanyi's, *Great Transformation*, in the title of a section in her recent edited volume on the Lisbon Strategy.[40] Polanyi's famous "double-movement" thesis is that societies will inevitably react to the disruptive forces of market liberalization. I argue that in order to understand the political dynamics within and between the Lisbon-OMC's we must understand that many of these new OMC's provide a platform for "socially-oriented" actors to struggle over the definition of the European Social Model in the context of a globalizing "knowledge-based" economy.

In contrast to the "hard law" available to market liberalizers, these "socially-oriented" actors must rely on developing "knowledge and norms" in the OMC's. The fact that many of the new OMC's create a supranational "policy space" for the social regulation of the EU market may shed light on the fact that certain

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where they existed and to spread these features where they were missing. This three-fold commitment has been described as the "European Social Model."

[40] Maria Rodrigues (2002) was a key interlocutor between the scientific and political community preparing the Lisbon Strategy.

actors are keen on ensuring that this new form of non-binding OMCs "works" However, it would be a great oversimplification to understand the functioning of the newer "social" OMC's in partisan terms. Although it provides a platform for various Ministers and high-level experts to counterbalance the dominance of Finance Ministers & the Commission DG-Economic & Financial Affairs, I argue that the patterns of issue linkage that followed from Lisbon's ontology coupled with the iterated nature of the OMC's are more likely to encourage forms of collaborative governance than to instigate class or intra-/inter-governmental divisiveness. Indeed, the Commission's repeated attempts to push states to include the social partners and "other relevant actors" can be understood as a reflection of the OMC's "integrated approach," described above.

THE EU POLITY AS A SELF-REFLEXIVE NETWORK?

Ideologies entail a vision of the appropriate role of the government and its role vis-à-vis society. I argue that the Lisbon ideology advocates a "networked polity."[41] Thus, a genetic feature of the Lisbon-OMC's is its normative commitment that governments at all levels should be involved in networked "problem-solving." Two examples in the Lisbon Conclusions illustrate this line of thinking:

> [The OMC is] a fully decentralised approach will be applied in line with the principle of subsidiarity in which the Union, the Member States, the regional and local levels, as well as the social partners and civil society, will be actively involved, using variable forms of partnership. A method of benchmarking best practices on managing change will be devised by the European Commission networking with different providers and users, namely the social partners, companies and NGOs.
>
> Develop appropriate mechanisms for networking national and joint research programmes on a voluntary basis around freely chosen objectives, in order to take greater advantage of the concerted resources devoted to R&D (Lisbon Conclusions, para. 13)

Lisbon does more than bring new issue areas to the EU stage. Lisbon's utilization of the OMC's can be understood as normative commitment to an institutionalized learning process designed to overcome the "structural ignorance" resulting from a world of increasing complexity and problem interdependence, in which national diversity makes harmonization unsuitable, and inaction is unacceptable. In a sense the Lisbon OMCs are justified by their potential for mobilizing the "distributed intelligence" via the iterated multi-level, multi-actor deliberations and pooling it into public goods available on the network. There is an *official* faith that the multidimensionality of problems can be better understood through these mechanisms, which facilitate the diffusion of experience and knowledge (e.g. best practices, performance indicators, benchmarks). Although the specific means for improving collective self-reflexivity may differ over time and between different issue domains, the fundamental commitment to this end can be found in the Lisbon ideology and all of the OMC's

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[41] Seen Ansell (2000) for his ideal-type of a "networked polity."

However, a core tension within the Lisbon ideology is the relative balance between what others have called "top-down" and "bottom-up" learning. Radaelli (2003) rightly notes the ambiguity in the amount of "openness" and "coordination" implied in the OMCs. For example, the degree to which local actors, civil society, national parliaments and regional governments *should* be involved is ambiguous. For example, there is an emphasis on "top-down" learning aimed at convergence, reinforced in the EES and BEPGs by the use of Recommendations to "shame" states that haven't adhered to the Community Guidelines. In other OMC's (e.g. social inclusion), the emphasis is more on "bottom-up" learning, the creation of Common "Objectives," and the absence of Recommendations. As a Swedish member of the SPC said:

> The Nice [social inclusion] "Objectives" are importantly different from [Employment] Guidelines, which we do not have in this process. This has lead to some confusion; with the Commission dealing also with the EES…our National Action Plan process is more for us, and to report what we are doing in social welfare sector. There have been discussions or tensions with the Commission and some feelings that the Commission is pushing too far and trying to direct the work and the policy too much. When they were compiling the Joint Conclusion report some thought the assessment of the NAP's was inappropriate…they can assess the NAP, but some thought they were assessing the policy, which it is has no right to assess policy.[42]

I argue that the inherent tension in Lisbon's "genetic" commitments is one important factor that facilitates the institutionalization of the Lisbon ideology. It forces various actors to *argue* about how this tension should be resolved, while implicitly accepting the legitimacy of Lisbon's "genetic" features. My initial research indicated that the fact that the norm exists and is successfully being used by some actors to push for greater inclusion at the EU and national level.[43] For example, the transnational trade union social partner (ETUC) has successfully lobbied the Commission to "shame" UK for not adequately involving ETUC's national affiliate in the UK's NAP process, and there are some indications that the OMCs have led to improved relations between the government, unions, and business. As can be seen in the chart below, despite the short (several months) preparation time for preparing the first round of the National Action Plans for the OMC-social inclusion (2001), *some* of the 15 national network NGOs affiliated with the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) were quite positive about their involvement and results from the process. While this doesn't guarantee policy change, it is evidence that they are getting a place at the table both in the EU and at the national level to discuss issues that have been framed by the Lisbon ideology and its manifestation in the OMC-social inclusion. Nevertheless, even if I can convince the reader that Lisbon resembles an ideology on

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[42] Interview with Swedish Delegate to Social Protection Committee. July 2002.
[43] Several interviewees commented that both the social partners and NGO's were clamoring for more participation and using this norm as a way to pressure states to consider their views. An assistant to Belgium's Minister of Social Affairs said that his government thought they were pretty good at including stakeholders but after the OMC evaluation indicated that they could do more, it caused them to work on being more proactive in integrating various stakeholders into the deliberations surrounding the creation of the National Action Plan for social inclusion. Interview July 2002.

paper, and that some people are fond of the ideas put forth, how is it that the Lisbon-OMC's are actually *governing* collective behavior.

Matrix of network responses to the EAPN Brussels questionnaire on reactions to their countries' NAPsincl

Question Number	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	5
Country	General reaction	Sufficient to meet problem	Content New initiatives	NGO Proposals included.	Gender	Good practice	No major omissions	Participation People in poverty	Participation by NGOs	Implementation: Put into practice	Achieve Nice objectives	Funding clear	Monitoring: Effective indicators for monitoring and evaluation	Mechanism for monitoring and evaluation
Austria	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	2	4	2	4	3	4
Belgium	2	3	2	3	2	2	4	3	3	3	2	4	4	4
Denmark	1	1	3	0	2	4	0	3	2	2	3	3	2	4
Finland	2	4	3	2	4	3	4	4	2	3	0	0	3	3
France	1	1	1	2	4	1	4	4	2	2	1	1	3	2
Germany	2	2	2	2	1	1	4	0	3	2	2	0	0	3
Greece	4	4	3	4	2	3	4	4	2	3	3	4	3	0
Ireland	4	4	4	4	0	4	4	3	3	4	4	0	3	2
Italy	2	0	2	1	0	4	4	4	1	3	0	0	4	4
Luxembourg	1	1	1	1	3	3	0	0	1	4	0	1	3	3
Netherlands	2	2	2	2	4	2	4	1	2	3	2	3	4	3
Portugal	2	2	2	3	4	3	4	4	2	2	2	3	3	3
Spain	2	4	2	1	2	4	4	3	1	3	2	3	4	1
Sweden	1	2	3	3	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
UK	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	2	3	4	4	2	3
Approval Totals yes	11/15	7/14	8/15	7/14	6/14	5/15	1/13	1/12	10/15	5/14	7/10	4/13	2/13	3/13

Key

1	2	3	4	0
Yes	Yes qualified	No qualified	No	Missing by network/don't know

23

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Matrix is taken from the EAPN Synthesis Report on the 2001-2003 National Action Plans on social inclusion. November 2001. It is of interest to note that this EAPN network now includes over 1000 membership organizations and was founded in the late 1989 with funding from the Commission, which still provides it with funding.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF LISBON: STEERING WITH THE OMC'S

How do the OMC's "steer" the thoughts and behavior of public and private actors, or as I argue facilitate a normative and cognitive convergence in the EU? Next I will offer a conceptual map of the Lisbon-OMC network outlining the key players and institutional arenas. (See Figure 1 in Appendix) I argue that in order to understand the political and social dynamics in the OMC's one must eschew treating governmental actors as unitary. I conceptualize the institutional architecture of the OMC's in network terms being comprised of "arenas" and "nodes." While it may be useful in some instances to speak of states or Commission "interests," a conceptual framework that relies on such unitary actors will not likely be able to account for Lisbon-OMC dynamics. I expect that the OMC's multiply the number of potential intra-governmental divisions, and transnational alliances, both in the Commission, and the member states. As previously indicated, there is evidence that the interests of social ministers and "social" bureaucratic units within the Commission will be more similar in some cases when compared to other bureaucratic entities in the same government.[44]

First, I conceive of each OMC constitutes one as one "arena." Within each OMC arena there are two sub-arenas: the EU and the national. The OMC agendas (e.g. common objectives, targets/ timetables, indicators) are agreed upon in the EU arena, and the development of their national action plans (NAP's) occurs in the national arena, which is usually coordinated predominantly by one Ministry, which "should" coordinate the NAP process with other governmental and non-governmental actors (e.g. other ministries, parliament, regions, social partners, and NGO's) that are "relevant" to agenda.

Although their institutional roles differ, *formal* "nodal" actors are crucial to determining the functioning of the OMC. "Nodal" actors may be responsible for coordinating more than one OMC in different arenas (e.g. the Commission DG and Council formation responsible for the Employment OMC is also responsible for the OMC for social inclusion). Also, there are *informal* "nodes" like the transnational organizations social partners (e.g. ETUC & UNICE) & NGOs (e.g. EAPN). These transnational networks of organized interest groups coordinate with each other and share information with their affiliates in multiple arenas.

In network terms, "nodes" may differ in their degree of "network centrality," which refers to the number of ties that a nodal actor sends to other actors (out degree) or receipts from other actors (in degree). High out-degree suggests that an organization is actively networking with other groups. This may show that

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[44] Other observers have commented on the distinction between "socially-oriented" and "finance-oriented" actors when speaking of the OMC's. This assumption is supported by several interviews. Also, in the edited volume by De la Porte & Pochet eds. (2002) on the OMC's role in creating a "social Europe," several actors make this theoretical assumption.

an organization is prominent or powerful (i.e. other organizations seek its advice, resources, or influence). "Nodal" actors with high in/out-degree ties act like "gateways" in a network. "Gatekeepers" are "nodes" that have fewer network ties, and are generally engaged in more hierarchical relationships. For the purposes of this paper, this network framework is meant to be heuristic, equipping me with a language to discuss the various formal and informal relationships that link actors that are not conceived as monolithic. I will next discuss the key formal and informal "nodal" actors.

As I have argued, ambiguity is an important feature of the Lisbon ideology, and is also a key feature of a "networked polity."[45] In contrast to hierarchical "command-and-control" (i.e. one-to-many ordering principle) modes of regulation (e.g. Community regulations), I argue that the Lisbon-OMC's are better characterized by a heterarchical (i.e. many-to-many) ordering principle with various apexes of authority.[46] In "networked polity" state and societal interests are disaggregated vertically and horizontally (as in pluralism), but coordinated in cooperative exchange (as in corporatism).[47] Although there are elements of hierarchy (e.g. the European Council could effectively end meaningful soft cooperation), no one institutional actor "runs" the OMC's. Formally, all decision-making authority resides in the states. Various key "nodal actors" have jurisdiction over coordinating the processes, but these jurisdictional roles of actors can be overlapping and ambiguous, and even when "jurisdiction" is clear, this does not directly translate into "power" in the same sense that it does with legislation (e.g. influence over the creation of indicators may be meaningless if they are not perceived as legitimate). The "brains" of the Lisbon network are decentralized, and cooperative exchange occurs across jurisdictional boundaries, levels of authority, and between governmental and societal actors.

In networks social interaction is diffuse as opposed to discrete (as in markets). The literature on social capital (Putnam 199?) suggests that the social content of networks is likely to become "thick" as shared norms are reinforced by on-going interaction. Thus, political actors from European Council, Ministers, NGO's, social partners, etc. are to varying degrees repeatedly interacting in the Lisbon network and the deliberative processes focused on monitoring or influencing the OMC "parts" of the Lisbon "whole." In addition to the likely increasing connectivity between actors in the Lisbon network, the likelihood of a cognitive & normative convergence may be increased by the information pooling processes, in which governmental actors' commitments & performance are being published on the web. In short, their reputations are becoming "digital public goods." I will return to this topic below.

The ambiguity of each individual OMC's status is another feature of this heterarchy. The individual OMC's are semi-autonomous (e.g. pensions, employment), but conceptually and institutionally linked under

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[45] See Ansell (2000) for an elaboration of a "networked polity" ideal-type.
[46] Much of my thought on network structures in informed by Chris Ansell (2000). Also Hodson and Maher (2001) comment on the OMC heterarchical structure as "radicalizing the principal of subsidiarity."

[47] Ansell (2000).

the overarching Lisbon Strategy. The formal "nodes" with jurisdiction in each of the OMCs differ in their "network centrality." By this, I mean that certain OMCs are institutionally and normatively privileged arenas in the Lisbon network exemplified by the requirement that all other OMC's consistent with the BEPGs (key economic policy coordinating document). Consequently, the "nodal" actors [i.e. Commission DG and Council formation for Economics and Financial Affairs, and expert committees (EPC, EFC)] have a privileged status in the Lisbon network. In network terms, these actors have the capacity to behave like "gatekeepers" compared to the nodal actors in the less influential OMC's, who must behave more like "gateways" to garner influence (e.g. more out-signals to various groups, reliance on persuasion/information).

In practice, since many of the OMC's policy domains overlap, tensions occur between actors in various OMC's, and in the absence of a court of last appeal, disputes "soft disputes" are settled by mutual adjustment. For example, the BEPG's and the OMC-pension both coordinate on pensions, and after the EPC created an expert report on pensions that the SPC criticized for downplaying the social goals of pensions. After attempts at persuasion & peer pressure on other actors in the network to take a side, it was resolved both committees would produce a joint report on pensions, which was more likely to integrate the social cohesion and economic pillars of the Lisbon triangle.

I will briefly outline the roles of the main "nodal actors" in the Lisbon-OMC network. First, the European Council is the "master-coordinator" and "promise maker." The European Council gave birth to the Lisbon Strategy and before that the EES. This could be seen as an attempt to retain control of the policy coordination processes, as they have claimed responsibility for providing the normative leadership in coordinating the OMC agendas. However, the EU leaders at Lisbon also committed themselves to attending a high-level Economic & Social Spring Summit to discuss progress on the Lisbon Strategy. In a sense, they set a "rhetorical trap" for themselves by admitting certain problems existed and were now *European* problems. The accumulation of experience and knowledge that feeds into each Commission's Spring Report may induce learning and/or peer pressure. While it is possible that all members of the European Council could decide to shut down the debate or conclude the problems have been solved, that hasn't happened yet, and it seems more common that they feel the need to respond to the Commission's "updated argument" with Conclusions calling for "upgrades" to the OMC's (e.g. setting targets, pressure their Ministers to stop blocking action, clarifying ambiguities in previous commitments, or request improved coordination b/t OMC's, or more indicators, etc.).

Second, the Commission acts as an information-broker and agenda-setter. The Commission's general ambition is to pursue a *European* agenda.[48] Generally, the Commission is keen to *propose* more ambitious OMC's, but this ambition is constrained by the nature of "soft governance," in which influence is most likely when the agenda is perceived to be consensual and information is perceived to be legitimate (i.e. states are

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[48] De la Porte & Pochet (2002), Jacobsson (2002), and Dehousse (2002) characterize the Commission in a similar fashion.

less likely to feel obliged to support a voluntary agenda that is being imposed by majority coalitions). Although it obviously doesn't have a monopoly, the Commission has an asymmetrical information advantage in the OMC's. Due to their small size the Commission will often rely on allies in the "Brussels complex" of interests groups, think tanks, etc. in order to get expertise, and persuade member states to accept the Commission's agenda.[49] Dehousse says of the Commission's new role "the Commission lacks the formal leadership role it has in the Community method, [so] it must strive to acquire informal influence (Jabko, 2001), based on technical expertise and its knowledge of policy issues." Thus, the Commission DG's responsible have an incentive (esp. those w/ jurisdiction in the softer OMC's) to consult with the social partners, relevant stakeholders, and academic experts to enhance their credibility. In a sense, the softer OMC's may have induced the Commission to sharpen its debating skills and mastery of issues. The Commission has been framing itself in brochures as a "social policy mediator who formulates hypotheses and objectives, invites to discussions and tries to create a consensus," and a quote by Carl Popper tops the EES's peer review website stating that a "policy is a hypothesis, which has to be tested against reality and corrected in the light of experience."[50]

In addition to the European Council, member state representatives are able to influence the Lisbon-OMC's in the relevant formations in the Council of Ministers, and on the new hybrid expert committees. The council must approve each OMC agenda proposed by the Commission (guidelines, targets, indicators, benchmarks). As many of the new OMC's create new "social" arenas, the incentives for national ministers to use the OMC arenas to enhance their bargaining power vis-à-vis other domestic Ministries, or in legitimating domestic reform. While this may create a common cause between the Commission DG's in the relevant arena, they may also provide a check on the Commission's zeal in pushing the OMC agenda in "sensitive" issue areas. In addition, these Ministers are generally in charge of coordinating the production of the National Action Plans in the domestic arena.

The Hybrid Expert Committees are novel because they "fuse" supranational and national actors into one institutional entity. These experts are often close to their Minister and also multi-arena players in two senses. The national members not only cooperate with the Commission members on the committee in providing technical expertise to the Commission and the Council. They are sometimes involved in providing expert reports in various OMC's, either jointly or alone. Another important institutional feature of these committees is that in addition to the Commission having as many seats (2-4) on the committees as states, it was decided (after heated negotiations) that it would also provide the secretariat to the President of the expert

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[49] Other scholars have emphasized the influence of non-governmental actors, COREPER (permanent representatives) in Brussels, and the Commission's creative tactics employed to overcome its small size (Jorges & Neyer 1997; Wendon 1998).
[50] The EES peer review website: http://peerreview.almp.org. The brochure quote was taken from K. Jacobson's "Soft Regulation and the Subtle Transformation of States: The Case of EU Employment Policy."

committee, which has ensured more transparency between the Council and the Commission.[51] National members like their Ministers are generally involved in the domestic ministry in charge of coordinating the NAP's. However, their experience in Brussels is qualitatively different than the Ministers, in that they have frequent insulated meetings with experts from both the Commission and other nations, all of whom have some shared professional norms and common knowledge about their policy domains. Although they have no official voice, Dehousse (2003) says, "The participation of experts in specialized networks tends to appeal to their professional qualities. Their influence in a network is generally dependent on their ability to display a degree of knowledge and the technical skills recognized in their sphere of competence. Possible "breaches" in the common discipline strongly risk weakening their credibility." I will discuss some empirical evidence that suggest that the network-relationships of these expert committees influence the type of deliberations and decision-making occurs within them.

Depending on the OMC, various other EU bodies are formally required to be consulted, but have no formal jurisdiction over the OMC's. Nevertheless, the Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the Economic and Social Committee do attempt to try to influence the debates by holding hearings, publishing opinions, at least according to some of my interviews, EU Parliament can be seen as an important ally in legitimizing the decisions made in the OMCs, or pressuring actors to follow up with their commitments. Others thought that Parliament was too slow to deal with the fast-paced OMC's.[52]

The Social Partners and NGO's are involved to varying degrees across the OMC's and between member states. Although there is some ambiguity in their methodology, a recent report on the EES that at the domestic level the involvement of intermediary actors and civil society, parliament in general fairly low Even negative recommendations were hardly used in inter-party competition (knowledge awareness) in policy coordination has developed but picture differs time between countries. This report concluded that in general the social partners and other groups have not played a major part in the policy coordination process, but there are indications that this varies significantly across the OMC's and cross-nationally. For example, the GOVECORE (2003) report concluded that the involvement of social partners in the employment-OMC has intensified in Sweden, Austria, and Italy.

There are early indications that the OMC-social inclusion may be particularly effective at facilitating new forms of meaningful participation of civil society at the domestic level and possible that this OMC "has partially matched the ambition of the Lisbon [regarding] participatory governance."[53] Interestingly, compared to the OMC-employment, the OMC-social inclusion is "softer" and had less time to develop, indicating that either the preexisting network of NGO's (esp. EAPN) may be more important than the relative

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[51] The secretary of the Employment Committee mentioned this and reported that she has a very good working relationship with the President from the UK (Clive Tucker), whom she contacts nearly every day.
[52] In my interviews there were indications of both sentiments that Parliament was too slow, "full of quacks like Le Pen", and that it provided a potential legitimating purpose as well as linking the OMC's to the domestic polity.
[53] Radaelli (2003: 37).

"hardness" of soft-coordination. While it is possible that the policy logic of the various OMC's are too qualitatively different to make such crude comparisons, or it could indicate that "softer" governance may open states up to more meaningful dialogue with less threat of an embarrassing Recommendation or Regulations to worry about. This could be one reason why the controversial topic of immigration was rejected by virtually the same OMC actors in the employment-OMC who decided this year to incorporate this issue into the OMC-social inclusion.

Now that I have discussed what the OMC is, and introduced my conceptualization of the Lisbon ideology that constitute the normative and institutional sinews in the Lisbon-OMC network, I will discuss how this constellation of factors may be facilitating a normative and cognitive convergence around Lisbon's ideological architecture.

SOCIAL LEARNING IN THE LISBON NETWORK: COGNITIVE & NORMATIVE CONVERGENCE

Since no decision making authority has changed, how does a complex network of deliberations and reporting lead to real political change? Some authors compare the ideal-type OMC to radar that searches for better solutions and useful knowledge.[54] However, it is just as easy to imagine that the Lisbon OMC's are producing a complex exchange of reports that collect dust in bureaucrats' desks, followed by states making more promises that they feel little obligation to fulfill. In addition to the scant empirical evidence on some of the newer OMC's, scholars have had difficulties in agreeing on what the causal effects look like, what the causal mechanisms at work are, and the standards to be used in the evaluation of one of the OMC's most celebrated features: learning. While few would deny the OMCs have had some effects, there have been diametrically opposing interpretations.[55] Since so many discussions about the OMC's center on "learning" and because the concept of learning is central to my argument, I will clarify why I mean by the concept before getting into the specific steering mechanisms of the OMC's.

Several schools of thought converge on the claim that certain institutional environments can facilitation various forms of individual learning, policy learning, organizational learning and the diffusion of knowledge.[56] First, only individuals can learn. Disccusions of organizational, governmental, or social learning can be useful analytic constructions to explain different types of social processes. Individuals can also "learn how to learn." Individuals learn new decision rules, judgmental heuristics, procedures, and skills that facilitate their ability to learn from subsequent experience and, "the results become encoded in

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[54] Radaelli (2003) uses this metaphor in describing Zeitlin, and Cohen & Sabel as scholars who emphasize the "bottom-up" learning potential OMC's.
[55] For example, the recent Govecore (2003) study finds that the Netherlands was one of the states most affected by the EES, and Trubek and Mosher (2002) say just the opposite.
[56] For example, deliberative polyarchy (numerous works by Sabel (1997, 2002), Zeitlin (2002); collaborative governance, Ansell (forthcoming)

individual maps and reflected in organizational learning practice."[57] This can be identified in organizations that enhance the quality of informational searches and analysis, improve organizational memory. Organizations may enhance their learning capacity by incorporating new decision rules that facilitate social interaction that enhances the destabilization of existing understandings by bring together people with diverse viewpoints (e.g. experts, public, private actors) in settings that require sustained face to face deliberation about problem-solving between policy domains and stakeholders. Scholars sometimes refer simply to learning but one is not sure what type of learning or level of analysis they are referring to.

Starting from the highest level of abstraction, my argument is rooted in a *social learning perspective*. Thus, my attempt to explain social learning in the Lisbon-OMC's subsumes individual & organizational learning, out of which shared causal/moral norms emerge and diffuse. While learning must originate at the individual level, it does not only affect individuals. Shared understandings (i.e. norms) can evolve during social interaction and act as external constraints (i.e. silence/peer pressure/shaming) or become internalized. Constructivist scholars argue that norms provide agents/states with understandings of interests ("constitute them"), and do not only constrain behavior. The basic ontological premise of constructivist "social learning" approaches is that the conception of problems, solutions, and thus interests is driven by the continual process of learning. It is only as the end product of this process that norms arise.[58] Jeffrey Checkel defines norms as the "shared expectations about appropriate behavior held by a collectivity of actors."[59] These shared expectations of appropriateness can be based upon shared *causal* or *moral* beliefs. Social learning occurs when individuals are engaged in a social selection process in which flaws in logic and analysis are pointed out and rectified by others.

Evolving bodies of knowledge can be a source of political change by altering political actors' interpretation of their interests. This rethinking provides a new window of opportunity for cooperation on issues that previously seemed to put various interests in conflict. *Norm diffusion* is a process where norms are internalized by an increasing number of community members and achieve what sociological institutionalists call a "taken-for-granted" status over time. The robustness of a norm can be determined by the frequency of behavior that is consistent with the norm.

It should be emphasized that social learning is a political process and mediated by power relations. Therefore, the simple dichotomy between norms and power-based interests may not be at odds with one another because both result from learning. As the state of shared knowledge changes so do interests and norms. I assume that all knowledge and norms are socially constructed, and thus more "powerful" actors influence the definitions of problems, control the dissemination of information, and the ability to influence

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[57] Levy (1994:286).
[58] From this perspective, learning transforms previously unknown information into consensual knowledge, which affects interests and subsequently behavior
[59] (Checkel (1999: 83).

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who participates in social dialogue or learning proces**s.**[60] Although some depictions of the OMC's raise images of truth-seeking philosopher-politicians, the OMC's are politicized. The mere creation of a social inclusion OMC implies a problem exists, and alternative definitions/indicators for poverty could determine whether a member state actually "has" that problem.

I argue that if the OMC's are institutionalizing the Lisbon ideology it is likely to occur via this process of norm diffusion. However, in contrast to a "strong" sociological Institutionalist version, I argue that because of the "genetic" procedural "self-reflexive" norms and the peculiarities of the OMC, the process of norm diffusion that I envision encourages what others have called "argumentative rationality." Essentially, I argue that the leaders at Lisbon started an "argument." As the OMC's began sprouting up, an increasing number of governmental and non-governmental actors have "logged-on" to the Lisbon network. I argue that there is some evidence that this may have accelerated the social selection process out of which norms-causal & normative- emerge. The inherent ambiguity of certain features of the Lisbon ideology encourages "argumentative rationality," whereby actors implicitly accept the particular norms when quibbling over its shade of meaning.

In sum, if the Lisbon ideology is being institutionalized it is likely because the norms embedded in the OMC's are obtaining a 'taken-for-granted' status. The degree to which this happens will likely empower certain actors and interests over others, and affect the normative/cognitive convergence that delimits the zone of legitimate behavior. I will return to this last point, but even a bird's eye view of the developments since Lisbon indicates various forms of convergence on matters that were once rejected, and now taken-for-granted. The repeated reaffirmation of Lisbon's goals, the indisputably larger and more specific package of causal/moral norms attached them, indicates such a convergence. Whether and how this translates into domestic change will depend a number of mediating factors, but the contours of the Lisbon ideology are certainly sharper.

Before I return to discussing some of the macro-processes being caused by the Lisbon-OMC's, I must discuss individual learning. Individual learning varies in important ways, and is necessary for collective learning and norm creation, and most obviously, policy learning, I will briefly address this issue.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING IN THE LISBON NETWORK

I will briefly review two common types of learning mentioned in the OMC and discuss a third that I have not encountered in the literature. Much of the literature on policy learning refers to the levels of learning (e.g. simple, single-loop, or what some call second order learning). First, simple (or technical)

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[60] See Ernst Haas (1990) When Knowledge is Power, for a discussion of the relationship between learning and power.

learning consists[61] of a search for new policy instruments in the context of fixed policy objectives. Change occurs without fundamental discussion of objectives or basic strategies. Policy makers respond to demands for change with "more of the same" kinds of solutions adopted in first responding to problems. In the context of the Lisbon-OMC's, simple learning might occur when a policy maker learns about others' best practices that serve a similar purpose to their own, or simply through improvement in comparable statistics. However, simple learning can bleed into a second type of learning, as happens when improved information accumulates that challenges assumptions about cause-effect relationships. Second, conceptual learning is defined as a process of redefining policy goals, problem definitions and strategies. Policy objectives are questioned, perspectives on issues change, and new strategies are developed. For example, a Belgian civil servant explained that "before our main goal was to reduce unemployment. Now, after Lisbon, we've had to change and start thinking about increasing employment, which are not the same. Now, old solutions [early retirement] are seen as problems."[62]

The third type of individual learning called complexification occurs at the structural level of cognition. [63] Cognitive and social psychologists have produced some fascinating studies on variation in levels of cognitive (integrative complexity).[64] While similar to conceptual learning, this approach to learning involves cognitive changes in the *direction of greater complexity and greater capacity for self-criticism.* Cognitive structural learning consists of increasing complexity along any of the following dimensions:[65] 1) *Cognitive complexity*: the number of distinct arguments underlying a set of beliefs, 2) E*valuative complexity*: the degree of inconsistency among beliefs, 3) *Cognitive integration*: the extent to which these distinct elements are integrated into a larger framework that resolves inconsistencies and value trade-offs, and 4) *Degree of self-reflection* about one's assumptions and causal inferences.

In addition to inherent differences between individual cognitive styles, some situational variables can reduce integrative complexity (e.g. stress, time pressures), and others can facilitate certain aspects of it.[66] This style of thinking is not necessarily "better" (e.g. when quick action is required). However, if problems really are more complex, then institutions that can facilitate higher levels of integrative complexity may enhance organization's problem solving capacity. I have argued that the structure of the Lisbon ideology is

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[61] I think my conceptualization is similar in spirit to others building on Peter Hall (1993), but am not so sure it is very helpful. For example, if is the difference between fine-tuning and modifying policy instruments is ambiguous. See Trubek & Mosher (2002) who say "we distinguish among learning that (1) fine- tunes existing policy instruments; (2) keeps goals intact but modifies instruments; and (3) leads to a change of the goals themselves." .

[62] Interview # 18, Belgian Ministry of Labor. July 2002.

[63] Although my definition draws on and is in the same spirit of Haas & Haas (1993), it incorporates insights from cognitive and social psychology that focus on the variation between individual's cognitive styles, and situational variables that increase self-reflective thought. Haas & Haas argue that organizations can be said to learn when role actors understand/agree on the increasing levels of complex interdependence of problems, which creates more uncertainty.

[64] Suedfeld, P., Tetlock, P. E., & Streufert, S. (1992).

[65] See Levy (1994) for elaboration and critique of such approaches.

[66] Some examples given by Tetlock (1998) are: situations when one is not locked into any prior attitudinal commitments, when one is accountable to external constituency whose judgment one respects; one is accountable multiple constituencies that make contradictory but hopelessly irreconcilable demands, or one is faced with incontrovertible evidence of failure.

characteristic of this type of learning. The numbers of individuals who interact with the Lisbon network has grown along with the diffusion of new OMC's. It is an empirical question if this is affecting their cognitive styles, the longer-term consequences may not be insignificant.[67] I have already discussed the rise of increasingly holistic policy paradigms that have been incorporated into the Lisbon-OMC's. In response to questions about the OMC-pensions, a German civil servant illustrates (in self-reflexive fashion, I might add) the potential of the OMC's for increasing integrative complexity:

> How do you measure raising the uncertainty in bureaucrats heads…Certainly [it has an impact]. It takes time, people need to know about OMC, go to meetings; sometimes maybe they need to get a call from minister asking why they got such a bad mark on this issue and must promise to make it better next year; I think many bureaucracies are lazy and need some push; but I think it is a learning process within the public administration, which needs to overcome the inherent resistance to anything new. Perhaps this triggers a reflection process, which forces people to start asking why things are they are the way they are, they might notice tings. It is a bit like going to a shrink, where all the answers are in your head, but if you are never forced to confront your problems, or talk about them, you can ignore them...Also, I think it is very important that Ministers are forced to come together and explain why they think they are right. My boss here doesn't want to get a call from the Chancellor demanding to know why we look bad.[68]

KNOWLEDGE-BASED GOVERNANCE OR TECHNOCRATIC TYRANNY?

Now that I have outlined the background normative and institutional context, and sketched a model of social and individual learning, I will discuss in more detail how these variables interact with regards to the politics of knowledge creation. It must be reiterated that many of the OMC's were generally created to enhance policy coordination in areas that have traditionally been too sensitive for member states to relinquish to the EU. Depending on how the problem is defined and what "appropriate" solutions are can determine how much "adaptation pressure" a state receives. Indeed there is evidence that national representatives use the OMC's not only to "shame" themselves, but also that this has been effective in justifying reform.[69] Actors who can influence the definition of the problem, common concepts (e.g. social inclusion, "comprehensive approach", employability, etc.), and monitoring tools (e.g. indicators, benchmarks, targets) have the power shape perceptions of reality. In a sense the key nodal actors can as one Commission official said, "Make the abstract ideas of Lisbon or EES more concrete, with less opportunity for manipulation."[70]

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[67] For example, Rosenau in Turbulence and World Politics argues that increasing levels of cognitive complexity at the micro-level as one of the core variables used to explain increasing turbulence in world politics. It is a long complicated argument stating that changes at the micro, meso, macro level are leading to growing turbulence.

[68] German civil servant in the Bundesministeriums fuer Arbeit und Sozialordnung involved in the preparation of Germany's National Report on Pensions. August 2002. Berlin, Germany.

[69] Interview #22 with Dutch representative on Employment Committee said that his government had asked for a harsher Recommendation that he thought was a "crow bar" to legitimate reform and overcome the years of resistance by unions to any requirements that would be tied to the assistance received by unemployed youths. Also said he was trying to push for a Recommendation to deal with the abuse of disability payments, in which companies will put workers on disability leave in order to cut costs. Interview # 17 confirmed that this is a common practice, but that Germany was not known to be the best example of this. Although he would not explicitly give the name of the country, Interview #1 had been in discussions where a member from a country often associated with the image of a "overheated economy & tiger" (Ireland I presume) had explicitly asked for criticism of its pension system because they perceived some painful cuts were needed.

[70] Interview with Commission in DG Employment and Social Affairs. July 2002.

Moreover there has been and an increasing tendency for the rotating Presidencies of the European Council to use these committees to produce reports in order to influence the agenda of the OMC's.[71]

One big difference between reporting exercises like the OECD Jobs Report, is that both the Commission and Hybrid Expert Committees have legitimated the OMC reports before they are voted on in the Council.[72] Asked whether the indicators were ever publicly criticized, a common answer was that "it's hard to disagree when your own experts voted on them."[73] Thus, for the OMC's to move beyond talking shops, these committees of Commission and national experts have to come to some agreement on these sensitive issues. Nearly all of my interviewees who spoke of the expert committees thought they were crucial getting states to go along with more ambitious strategies. A high-level assistant to a Belgian Minister said:

> I think that all these discussions in the SPC...I mean they really are the highest level of public servants and for even psychological reasons like trust built over iterative meetings, and the learning due to understanding others' systems and learning that they do have a number of common problems, and even with the commission and discovering that these are people just like us and want the best for Social Europe; have really changed people's minds and things that were once not legitimate points of discussion are now being discussed, and so the OMC has changed people's mind's[74]

I was lucky enough to interview a Finnish expert to the predecessor of the SPC around the time the ink of the Lisbon Strategy was drying and over a year before the OMC-inclusion officially began. He said that some feared that states like the U.K., and Ireland, might attempt to block indicators that made them look bad.[75] Indeed, member of the SPC's sub-committee on indicators said that "countries with the highest income disparities like the UK, Greece and Portugal, their members refused to accept an absolute measure of poverty, and would only vote for a measure of relative national poverty instead of both, which was proposed by Eurostat.[76] Nevertheless, the OMC-social inclusion has certainly evolved. After the first NAPs were produced without using any common indicators, 18 new indicators have been developed for the round of 2003 NAPs, and most recently the controversial topic of immigration was included as a new common objective after being rejected by the same Council voting on the employment-OMC. Although a few states

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[71] Interview #12 member of the Employment Committee noted the following Presidencies asked the committee to produce reports to legitimate "their contribution" to various OMC's: Sweden (Sustainable Development), Belgium (quality in work indicators), Spain (skills and mobility), and Denmark (future of employment strategy).

[72] In response to questions about the legitimacy of indicators, and objectives several of my interviewees spontaneously referred to the OECD Jobs Report as something that was similar to the advice coming out of the Employment Committee, but was seen as less important or that it had a neoliberal bias. Visser (2002) and Jacobsson (2003)

[73] In my preliminary interviews in Brussels with various national, EU, union, and business actors familiar with the process, the only criticism I encountered about this new language came from UNICE, the transnational employer's association. They admitted some specific concerns that the indicators on "job quality" were to subjective, relying on surveys about feelings about "job satisfaction."

[74] Interview #22.

[75] Interview with member of the Finnish delegation to the European Union, and first chairperson of the High Level Working Party on Social Protection, (4/10/00).

[76] Interview #5 said that the absolute measure would allow cross-national comparisons of standards of living easier. Only having relative measures could have the effect of making the poorest candidate country look better off than the UK, as long as its distribution was smaller.

blocked one of the two indicators for poverty proposed, the implicit acceptance that there had to be poverty indicators was clear. Moreover, the official who had proposed using both indicators said that he would bring it up again at one of the next meetings, illustrating the potential for facilitating "argumentative rationality" in these iterated face-to-face deliberations amongst experts.

EVIDENCE OF VARIANCE IN EXPERT DELIBERATIONS

In this section, I will discuss some empirical evidence about the modes of deliberation in four of the key expert committees. Various scholars[77] converge on four common hypotheses that social learning and "argumentative rationality" are more likely to take place: 1) small groups with common professional backgrounds, 2) group feels itself in a crisis or is faced with clear and incontrovertible evidence of policy failure or uncertainty, 3) group meets repeatedly and high density of interaction 4) when a group is insulated from direct political pressure and exposure. Most (not all) of the expert committees fit these conditions. While many observers of the OMC's highlight the potential of "depoliticizing" issues to encourage more serious deliberation and "problem-solving," insights from social psychology indicate that such institutional arrangements can also encourage "groupthink." The nature of decision-making (crisis vs. long-term planning), internal group norms (e.g. emphasis on solidarity), and the matrix of accountability of relationships are key variables that may push one way or the other.[78] Determining if the OMC's have altered the social interaction between top-level governmental actors is one crucial test for whether the OMC's are enhancing "learning" and "argumentative rationality" or merely a ruse for powerful states to cloak their interests under the mantle of expertise. To reiterate, I do not presume a tri-chotomy between learning vs. bargaining vs. "norm-guided" behavior, but assume that there are important implications for various balances between these three ideal-types of social interaction.[79]

There is some evidence to make some cautious conclusions about certain meaningful distinctions between these expert committees, which are not only significant for those interested in the theoretical relationship between institutions and complex learning, but could be profoundly consequential for those interested in the eventual "shape" of the Lisbon Strategy. I argue that despite having similar formal features (e.g. on-going non-public meetings of high-level civil servants), the nature of these expert deliberations will be significantly affected by their levels of "network connectivity" in the Lisbon OMC-Network. The four committees are: the Employment Committee (EMCO), the Social Protection Committee (SPC), the Economic Policy Committee (EPC), and the Economic and Finance Committee (EFC).

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[77] Drawing on insights from social psychology, constructivists like Checkel and scholars employing the Advocacy Coalition Framework (e.g. Sabatier1998).
[78] See Phil Tetlock (1998) for an erudite analysis of social psychology's contributions (and limitations) to studies of world politics.
[79] See Risse (2000) for argument outlining the relationships between these 3 ideal-types of social interaction.

The methodological difficulties are not insignificant. The meetings are generally closed and an evaluation must rely on the interpretations of members. I will summarize my findings of the most important expert committees. My interpretations rely on interviews[80] with members of the various committees, and on the most intensive analysis of these committees by Jacobson & Vifell (2003).[81]

There appear to be certain similarities amongst all four groups. First, all are characterized by a thicker sense of in-group trust amongst members who share similar professional background, and nearly all members (if not all) believe that the closed meetings are crucial for facilitating open discussions that would otherwise be too politically sensitive. Second, there is some indication that this in-group trust facilitates a collective identity formation. Of course, national and ideological differences do not disappear, but committee members sometimes appear to conceive of their interests in terms of the "social vs. finance/economic" pillars of the Lisbon agenda and "feel more at home" in their respective committee.[82] For example, members of the SPC/EMCO see "their" OMCs as a reaction to dominance of finance and economic actors, which despite national/party differences of the members, seems to provide an incentive for cooperation in order to balance the "economic" actors at the EU level and back in their own government. In the committees responsible for OMC's that allow for member state Recommendations, bargaining over wording is the norm.[83]

There appear to be important differences amongst the four expert committees. First, there was nearly unanimous perception that there is a hierarchy of committees' status, from lowest (SPC, EMCO, EPC, EFC), which has to do with both the expert member's distance from the minister or prime minister. Also, the fact that members of the EPC and EFC are generally much more "power" domestically (i.e. control over the purse) and their influence over the EU's key economic policy coordination document (BEPG's), and other areas of "hard" law (e.g. Stability & Growth Pact) all seemed to be perceived as the reasons why non-members viewed them as being the most important. Generally, the members of the EFC are the heads of Treasury or Central Banks, and the members of the EPC are usually 2nd in charge. Despite Lisbon's emphasis on the "integrated approach" there were fairly unanimous perceptions about how "open" or "cooperative" each was. By most accounts the SPC (pensions, social inclusion) is the most open/accessible, followed by EMCO. A few of my interviewees from the employment and social-OMC's were upset with the fact that the EFC is not only the most important committee (in the EU and in national governments); they are perceived as inexcusably secretive.[84] When asked about the EFC a member of EMCO said, "it's very difficult to get

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[80] I had interviews with members of the following expert committees: EPC (1), SPC (3), EMCO (5).

[81] I must reiterate that I do not consider my findings to be methodologically robust. These committees are relatively small to begin with; I was only able to interview 8 members/alternates. Nevertheless, much of what I found in my discussions is supported by other officials close to the process, and is fairly consistent with Jacobsson & Vifell (2003).

[82] Interview #24 indicated that one other member of the EPC "feels more at home with us here and finds the other committee to be a bit exotic." July 2002.

[83] Member of EMCO said "so they were watered down so much right from the beginning." The real heavy content of Recommendations was so watered down in EMCO and then in political process going right up to the Council right from the beginning." Interview # 23. July 2002.

[84] Interestingly, one otherwise extraordinarily informed Commission official (interview #9) involved with the employment and social OMC's did not know who the EFC was, and went so far as to do a background check on whether they were illegally using

there. I go there sometimes because I know people, but I go to the EPC every time. It's more accessible. They are more the second people [in charge] in the Treasury," and while justifying the EFC's need for secrecy when there was no common currency due to the potential for currency speculation, "now the president's of the central banks are nothing more than caretakers for the boss of the ECB." Apparently their secrecy has been effective enough to elude the detection of one Commission official who is heavily involved with the Lisbon-OMC activities (and quite sharp I might add) who responded, "What is the EFC?" After sharing my limited knowledge, the official continued to perform a background check to make sure they were not inappropriately using Community funding! The EPC is forced to have more contact with EMCO and the SPC in order to produce joint reports (e.g. on pensions with the SPC).

By drawing on insights from political psychology, network theories, and "collaborative governance" approaches, I argue that part of the variation in-group decision-making in these expert committees can be explained by their "network connectivity." By this, I mean that that the nexus of accountability pressures and levels of contact influence the norms of decision-making in these committees with other members in the committees and the Lisbon Network. While the in-group solidarity and trust is present is all committees, the horizontal contact between these expert committees and other actors in the Lisbon network varies considerably. My argument is that while these committees all encourage open deliberations between experts that would not have occurred in a more politicized setting, the degree of network connectivity influences whether these deliberations are better characterized by "argumentative rationality," in which better arguments/expertise determine influence, or "groupthink,"[85] in which in group solidarity is emphasized and power is more influential. Second, if one accepts my argument that Lisbon's ontological complexity and self-reflexivity is likely to encourage more holistic, self-critical thinking as political actors are "socialized" by the Lisbon norms, then actors who interact less within the Lisbon network will be less likely to have internalized such cognitive styles, or face as much social pressure to behave as if they do. I will briefly summarize some of my findings on these expert deliberations.

Gateways vs. Gatekeepers

- EMCO/SPC behave more like "gateways" in a network (more network connectivity (out-signals) with other nodal actors, social partners, with SPC being even more inclusive vis-à-vis NGO's that do not play

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community resources after I inquired about their highly secretive meetings. Jacobsson & Vifell (2003) makes similar conclusions about the EFC

[85] According to Janis (1972) Some symptoms of groupthink are: having an illusion of invulnerability, rationalizing poor decisions, believing in the group's morality, sharing stereotypes which guide the decision, exercising direct pressure on others, not expressing your true feelings, maintaining an illusion of unanimity, and using mind guards to protect the group from negative information.

a role in the EES; the Commission members of these committees belong to the DG Employment & SocialAffairs that has been actively pressuring states to be more inclusive in the "social" OMCs.

- EPC/EFC behaves more like "gatekeepers"; the EFC is virtually inaccessible and highly secretive, and despite being the most important committee has the least contact.
    - o They are "turf" hungry and "worried about the convention talks because they [the EPC] know that any changes would only lead to less power."[86] EPC/EFC strongly opposes any changes in the Convention that would give Parliament (called quacks like Le Pen and communists)
    - o Strongly oppose any type of joint-decisions on the BEPG's, and do not want any changes in the policy coordination processes which would encroach on their autonomy; there were also feelings on EMCO that the EPC/EFC had been using the BEPGs to set an agenda involving their turf as well, with the difference being that EMCO members perceived themselves to having their turf encroached upon by the constitutionally privileged BEPGs.

In-group solidarity

- Clear division between EMCO/SPC (employment/social protection) vs. EPC/EFC (economic/finance). The social side feels that the "finance" side encroaches on their respective issue domains when drafting the BEPG's in a way that the "social" actors feel ignores their opinions. The "finance" side privately does not think highly of the analytic rigor or economic logic of the "social" side.
- In-group solidarity appeared to be higher in EPC/EFC according to inside member and outside members, there was more homogeneity of thought amongst the "economic & finance" committees

Argumentative rationality/Groupthink

- Member of EPC claims that there is a high level of agreement on most issues in EPC/EFC saying as economic experts, "we all went to the same schools, and read the same books" and used words like "exotic" to describe the thinking in EMCO/SPC because it did not match up with normal economic logic;
- EFC is most distant from ideal-type of "argumentative rationality." In this committee power matters, representatives from smaller countries speak less and do not attend some of the informal lunches with the bigger member state representatives.[87]
- On EMCO, the member reported to have the most status was from the Netherlands "whose opinions were really respected by all the members."[88]

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[86] Interview #24 with member of EPC. July 2002.
[87] This finding was reported by Jacobsson & Viffel (2003)

Cognitive/integrative complexity

- Both the member of EPC, and outside members in EMCO suggested that thinking in EPC/EFC was very rigid; Member of EMCO who works closely with members of EFC in his home country said that they had very strict view of Europe as being only about the single market, low inflation, competition, and saw the Lisbon stuff as "pollution."

- To reiterate, integrative/cognitive complexity only slightly correlated with intelligence at the lower end of the IQ scale, and I am not imposing a normative standard on integrative complexity. It is quite possible that both my findings are not representative, and that the lower levels of integrative complexity on the more sequestered expert committees have a "better understanding of reality, which may in fact be more 'strict.'

- A member of the EPC recalled the events that preceded the public dispute over pensions as follows:

> "EPC started out by setting out our views on what needs to be done with pension reforms, kind of a theology"…"to be intellectually rigid is one [reason to take a hard stand on pensions] and one we think is lacking in the output coming from our social friends, and hard to reconcile with normal economic logic…"[89] "we offer this logic that supply must meet demand, they say it doesn't work like that…it is a matter of lifestyle choices…a matter of complex social structure offering choices with tax system, women's place in society, all types of complex issues among which labor supply fits in. Even if this complex view is more accurate, what am I supposed to do with it. You can't analyze it, and if I want to enter in that complex system to increase labor supply, I don't know what to do, nobody does. It's a block box."

There are two potentially very important implications here. First, I must reiterate that although my impressions of the various expert committees' group dynamics was corroborated by multiple actors outside the committees, and may not even be that surprising to some, further investigation is needed to ensure that my sample of experts and their opinions are representative of others on these committees. Second, it appears that the most powerful committee of experts (i.e. the EFC) is farthest away from the Lisbon ideology, both substantively and procedurally. It appears that they think that the other two sides (employment & social) other than the economic side of the Lisbon triangle is "pollution." This may raise doubts that the "softer" sides of Lisbon Strategy are likely to be able to counter the "hard" side of economic integration. Of course, there are many other factors to consider, like the fact that Prime Ministers are not puppets of these financial elites, and according to some reports the closer the process gets to the Prime Minister, he/she will reject the advice of the Finance Ministers near the European Council meetings and get pressured to stay closer to the broader vision of Lisbon.[90] Second, there is some reason to believe that forcing powerful actors to interact and defend their views with other "nodal" actors or in public will more likely silence them silenced into accepting the "genetic" norms of Lisbon, or possibly be more open to ideational change. For example, the two economic/finance committees (EPC/EFC) have similar private views about economic policy and are skeptical of the broader Lisbon vision. However, the EPC-despite its lower levels of network connectivity

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[88] Interview with secretary of EMCO.
[89] Member of (EPC) requested that his remarks be kept off the record.
[90] At least two Commission officials in the DG Employment & Social Affairs claimed that the European Council has been a good ally against some of the more sectoral interests, like the ECOFIN actors.

compared to the SPC/EMCO- feels the pressure to appear more open to the Lisbon ideas, because it has to interact with EMCO/SPC. In response to a question about the differences between the EPC and the EFC, a member of the EPC said "yes, I think so…even having a website…we have to be perceived as being more receptive. The fact that we are being seen at all matters. The EFC is not."

I have tried to illustrate some of the ways institutional design and network relationships can influence the politics of knowledge construction. Moreover, I have provided some limited evidence that the most secretive and powerful committee affecting the Lisbon Strategy has been able to avoid the deliberations, and transparency advocated by the procedural norms of Lisbon. While it may be a leap to say that lower levels of network connectivity are correlated with lower levels of cognitive/integrative flexibility. There are theoretical justifications for why this might be so. If the ontological holism that I argue is central to Lisbon is affecting levels of integrative complexity, it would make sense that actors who do not even "enter the debate" would exhibit lower levels of integrative complexity.[91] In sum, I have tried to illustrate some of the micro-processes involved in the OMC's knowledge production process. Most importantly, I have tried to make a plausible argument that despite their superficial similarities, de-politicized deliberations can differ in important ways. But the Lisbon-OMC's are not merely about elite bureaucratic learning.

Vertical & Horizontal Pooling of Knowledge: empowering learners & shamers

I argue that the OMC's reduce the information costs for political actors and accelerate flow of knowledge through the Lisbon network by making them non-rival/non-excludable public goods. Once the member states and the Commission can agree on the definition of problems, the appropriate "theory" to be applied, and the creation of a common language (i.e. indicators, concepts), the increased transparency and information flows enhances both the learning and shaming *potential* of political actors.

After the general "theory" is generated in the EU arena, decentralized on the ground field-testing of solutions is achieved by multiple local experiments (Dorf & Sable 1998). Which means for example, that national bureaucrats, and politicians, and possibly members of civil society are involved in arguing about what should go into their NAP for social protection, including programs that have solved problems well, information about background conditions, and what they have done (or will do) to respond to the Objectives that are "theorized" to grapple with the multi-dimensional concept captured by the Social Inclusion Strategies.[92] Since the OMC's operate under the principle of "management by objectives" the details of policy implementation is left up to the authorities who are typically responsible at the national and regional levels. While the broader social ends have been set by the EU's political leaders, and further operationalized

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[91] Integrative complexity is not correlated with intelligence in people with I.Q.'s that are slightly above average. Personal communication with Phil Tetlock. Columbus, Ohio. July 2001.
[92] See Appendix for chart on some basic features of some of the OMCs.

by the formal "nodes," the process of knowledge production is supposed to benefit from the variation of policy experiments, and may build consensus about certain ideas, and cast doubt upon other policy paradigms.

The pooling of information is supposed to facilitate the comparison of different experiments, monitor policy effectiveness, and coordinate local re-evaluation. The ability of states to evaluate their own performance and compare it with others is facilitated by the OMC's "language" of: quantifiable targets (e.g. 60% employment rate of women by 2010, % of schools w/ internet access by 2010, etc.), comparable standardized indicators (i.e. conceptualization; measurement standards), and benchmarks (e.g. average of top- 3 performers on specific performance indicator). The fact that some of the information had not existed in some member states, or wasn't previously comparable, indicates that the OMC's are responsible for constructing a new body of knowledge as much as they are "pooling" information that already existed. The knowledge of local experiments is harnessed, which filters back into the deliberations & evaluations of "best practices," which are advertised to the community in a way that can be emulated, or potentially put "peer pressure" on states that that are low achievers in comparison to the new community yardstick, resulting in an incremental upward pressure on standards over time (Sable et al. 2000).

Others have highlighted the dangers of inappropriate use of benchmarking and policy transfer.[93] While there are some strong reasons to conclude that state actors are not blindly mimicking successful practices in other states, my main point is to illustrate the potential for creating some cognitive and normative convergence that the systematic construction and diffusion of knowledge harnessed by the Lisbon-OMC's (e.g. best practices benchmarks, etc.). Indeed, part of the OMC process involves putting pressure on actors to defend why their circumstances are different. Thus, a "de-contextualized" and "bad" benchmark may induce learning because it is *inappropriate* in certain circumstances. Whether states are avid learners or begrudgingly participating in the OMC's, most are dutifully complying with the procedures. Thus, a growing body of national politicians, civil servants, social partners, NGO's, and sub-national actors are minimally sitting down and either directly interacting the language, knowledge, norms that are packaged in the various OMCs. This "social interaction" with the OMC processes may occur during meetings in Brussels, in the creation of their National Action Plans.

In addition to the intensification of information-sharing, the OMC's have illustrated its capacity-building potential in the EES's voluntary peer review program. While states may comply with the information sharing and deliberations without learning, the fact that they have increasingly sent representatives to take part in these more in-depth evaluations of member state's best practices is a strong indication that they are actively pursuing the knowledge diffused through the OMC-network. These discussions are attended by actors from various ministries, employment agencies, social partners, and outside

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[93] Lundvall & Tomlinson (2002)

experts chose by the Commission. Generally, nine or ten states will be asked to host a peer reviews per year and five or six states take part voluntarily. However, eleven other state representatives attended the first peer review of 2003 in Finland. A qualitative survey of participants funded by the Commission suggests that this has lead to greater bi-lateral contact, stimulated discussion within the home ministry, and 82% of key Ministerial actors in the home country were said to have been informed of the participants' evaluations. Interestingly, 38% of the host countries (with best practices) reported alterations to their policy in response to the peer review.[94] A common critique in this survey is that the insights gained had more of an impact on participating countries, but was not adequately fed back into the OMC processes. Following the EES's peer review program, the Commission has set in motion a peer review program for the OMC-social inclusion to begin in 2004.

It should be highlighted that these peer reviews are built upon an OMC infrastructure of knowledge and norms that did not previously exist. The "learning costs" for participants has been lowered, as they were made aware of "best practices." These successful programs are organized around concepts (e.g. life long learning, employability) that are supposed to solve problems, both of which have been developed within the OMC network. For example, eleven member states voluntarily attended a peer review on Finland's program on ageing workers. The peer review program website summarized the event by saying that the "participants defined as one of the keys to the success of the Finnish programme the *holistic* approach to the subject. The close co-operation between different institutions such as the Ministries of Social Affairs and Health, Labour, Education was much discussed among the participating member states. The greater fragmentation of political actors in peer countries was pointed out as an obstacle for implementing a comparable program in their national context."[95] However, new knowledge and increased transparency is not always embraced by some.

REPOLITICIZATION: DIGITAL REPUTATIONS IN THE LISBON NETWORK

> The 'Social Policy Agenda' is the tool which the EU uses to work towards 'more and better jobs' and 'social cohesion', two sides of the Lisbon triangle of economic, employment and social policy reform. Our agenda is on track. But Member States, business and trade unions are too timid with the necessary reforms at present and are *hiding behind each other on the Lisbon targets*. They must keep their end of the bargain if the EU is to meet its declared objectives on time. - Anna Diamantopoulos, Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs

In addition to enhancing collective learning capacity, the OMC's can also enhance the peer pressure and capacity for "shaming acts" (as illustrated by above quote) to be used against "bad learners." First, the EU already exhibits a high level of social capital by most standards. The existing level of complex interdependence makes the EU analogous to long-term iterated game facilitating cooperation, and thus high

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[94] None of the sample sizes are large enough to be statistically significant.http://www.peerreview-employment.org/pdf/evaluation-report-1θ 01.pdf

[95] http://www.peerreview-employment.org/en/finland03/FIN03.htm

levels concern for national reputation. "No minister or bureaucrat wants to show up every week or month and always be the bad guys and stop all the action."[96] Several scholars have argued that such strategic conditions provide an incentive structure to produce credible information.[97] Second, in addition to the preexisting incentives for reputational concerns, I argue that the OMC's are facilitating *the digitalization of reputations*.

As the information pooling process improves, the OMC's preserve the history of commitments (initial and reaffirmed), as well as the delivery gaps between promises-behaviors-results. By publishing all reports on the web, each states reputation becomes a transparent public good available to anyone actor with Internet access. This of course only supplements the more direct knowledge of political actors directly involved with each other. As the Lisbon commitments become concretized in the OMC's, each nugget of information has the *potential* to be used by shaming. While actors in the EU are certainly using this, the extent to which it happens and how it varies across member states, and the effects on behavior are still difficult to gauge. While the overt use of shaming is a clear sign of increased peer pressure, politics is often game characterized by anticipatory pre-emption. By this, I mean that the knowledge that something *could* be used may be enough to elicit a response. In response to a question about trade unions use of the OMC's for peer pressure, a representative of ETUC said, "if we can find words in Guidelines or Recommendations and take them to the government and point out that they aren't doing it, there is an implicit message that if 'you don't [do it], we will mount some type of opposition or campaign at the national level…but [that happens] more behind closed doors."[98]

The OMC's can increase the "supply-side" of peer pressure- or adaptation pressure- in several ways. First, only in the EES and the BEPG's can the Commission propose non-binding recommendations to member states that must be passed by the Council with a qualified majority. This "naming & shaming" of individual states can certainly cause some embarrassment for states.[99] These recommendations are supported by indicators and background information (e.g. 2002 REC to Belgium coupled with benchmark that they have worst performance of employment for aging workers in EU) to bolster the case for reform. Second, the pressure of OMC norms is likely to increase with higher levels of specificity. Therefore, Guidelines/Objectives accompanied by indicators and quantifiable targets- ceteris paribus- create more peer pressure because it "reduces the room for bargaining."[100] Several of my interviews reported that the OMC's provided a "useful whip" in putting pressure on sectoral actors who are perceived to be blocking action that

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[96] Interview #1 with German civil servant involved in producing the National Report in the OMC-pensions. July 2002.

[97] For example Majone (1997) argues that supranational networks may be most effective in producing credible information

[98] Interview with ETUC representative. July 2002.

[99] A diplomat involved in COREPER who wished to remain anonymous said that "by the amount of squealing that occurs here by member states, I presume the Recommendations are putting pressure on them." Interview # 13. An interview with a Dutch representative in the Employment Committee said that the Recommendations can cause pressure because the Minister has to go answer questions in Parliament, but that it depends on whether we think it's a legitimate criticism. He gave one example where it was useful in breaking resistance to reform (tying youth benefits to aid), and one Recommendation that the Dutch thought was inappropriate for their country (e.g. longer working hours), noting that the Dutch already have superior productivity and prefer to use the extra time for leisure, so that one didn't cause any pressure.

[100] Several of my 25 interviews confirmed what is somewhat logical.

was requested by the European Council.[101] After synthesizing the reports produced by the member states on the impact of the first five years of the EES, the Commission (in a potentially self-serving manner) concluded that:

> A recognized strength of the Luxembourg process [EES] is the *multilateral surveillance*. Based on annual reporting and on agreed and comparable indicators, it has stimulated a "stress of convergence" towards the best performers in the EU. The definition of indicators and targets at EU level had a particularly stimulating effect. However, Member States have often resisted setting national targets of their own…"Member States' *political commitment* was reflected in the NAPs and the practice of setting targets was taken over by a significant number of Member States[102]

THE LISBON IDEOLOGY & THE OMCs: AN IMPETUS FOR EUROPEANIZATION?

Is Lisbon a driving force of Europeanization? Before providing a birds-eye view of the Lisbon Strategy's evolutions with regard to my argument, I will first highlight some of the daunting conceptual and methodological difficulties in assessing the effects of the Lisbon-OMCs. Boerzel and Risse (2000) define Europeanization by saying that "Ultimately, adaptation pressures are generated by the fact that the emerging European polity encompasses structures of authoritative decision-making which might clash with national structures of policy-making and that the EU member states have no exit option given that EU law constitutes the law of the land. This is a major difference to other international institutions which are simply based on voluntary intergovernmental arrangements."[103]

Boerzel and Risse (2000) go on to delineate the most common sets of variables and different expectations of both rationalist institutionalists and sociological institutionalists. For rationalist institutionalists the extent to which Europeanization occurs depends on whether the "misfit" coming from Brussels creates an opportunity structures that empower certain actors over others and leads to a redistribution of power. Whether this occurs is mediated by two intervening variables: veto points and institutional structures that give certain actors material or ideational resources that further their interests. For sociological institutionalists, this "misfit" occurs when the policies or norms clash with domestic collective understandings. While high levels of "misfit" or "adaptation pressure" are predicted to face the strong inertial resistance of collective understandings, lower levels of pressure may lead to change if the following two variables intervene: norm entrepreneurs (advocacy/epistemic), or a political culture conducive to consensus-building and cost-sharing.

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[101] Interview with Commission "veteran" of the OMC's having been one of the top-level civil servants to be involved with both the EES and the OMC-inclusion, said "sometimes we have to remind the sectoral actors that their Prime Minister meant what they said." Interview # 19. July 2002.

[102] Commission communication (July 17, 2002) "Taking Stock of the Five Years of the Employment Strategy," Brussels.

[103] Boerzel and Risse (2000:6)

One big difference is that in the case of the OMC's, the exit option is always there. Consequently, the new opportunity structure is somewhat ambiguous. Some scholars try to overcome this by assuming that the "policy distance" from EU standards created by the OMC's creates adaptation pressure.[104] This builds in many assumptions that need to be specified, because there are several reasons to think that there will be significant cross-national variation of the extent to which governments are concerned with their distance from non-binding EU standards. While there is a certain level of reputational concern in all EU members, collectivities vary in how they think about the community. One could imagine that two countries that only differed on their collective levels of Euroskepticism would differ in their responses to the same type of OMC adaptation pressure.[105] Thus, even if political actors could strategically use the OMC-norms to their advantage they might not. Indeed, the most comprehensive study of effects from the BEPGs and the EES, conclude that one common feature of the various adaptation patterns was that countries more concerned with their sovereignty found it more difficult to use these European processes as a stimulus for reform.[106]

Second, in contrast to studies that focus on the effects of one piece of legislation, or one norm[107], the OMC Reports entail a rather comprehensive package of guidelines/objectives that touch on several policy areas and institutional arrangements (e.g. norm of integrated approach). To complicate matters further, each OMC is only one "semi-decomposable" overlapping parts of the Lisbon "whole," and may be getting similar pressures coming from the employment-OMC and the OMC-inclusion since many of their objectives overlap. In addition to specific policy objectives, these reports sometimes comment on the relative "policy mix" of member states (e.g. lopsided action in Employment Strategy's four pillars). In addition, the OMC Joint Reports entail indicators, targets, benchmarks, best practices, or in the case of the Employment Strategy and the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, specific Recommendations to states regarding areas where action is most necessary (i.e. shaming). In a sense, each OMC report could be understood as the most updated "theory" of employment, supported with a body of data and auxiliary hypotheses for each member state. States must at least respond to the theory, knowing that their own "theory" and subsequent behavior will be evaluated in light of new data and experience at the end of the next iteration.

Even if we assume that adaptation pressure increases with distance from the OMC guidelines, it is perhaps misleading to assume that each instance of "adaptation pressure" is additive. If, as I argued earlier, the OMC's are a complex package of "norms and knowledge" it becomes more difficult in tracing out the complex web of adaptation pressures pushing in different directions. It is not difficult to imagine that a country in a single OMC- the EES receives several sources of "policy pressure" (e.g. distance from agreed policy objectives), is criticized for not including the relevant stakeholders (institutional pressure), that its

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[104] Karen M. Anderson "The Europeanization of Pension Arrangements: convergence or divergence?" in De la Porte & Pochet, eds., (2002).

[105] This hypothesis is also made in regard to EU "hard" law, by Peter Haas (1998).

[106] Govecore Interim Report III (2003:13)

[107] See Checkel (1999) for comparative analysis focused on the domestic effects of European norms of citizenship.

employment performance is lagging, (performance pressure) and that while it show progress on two of the four employment pillars, its overall policy mix between all four was severely imbalanced. In addition to objectives related to labor market, objectives related to women, tax-benefit systems, youth, immigration, child care facilities, tax-benefit systems, and work organization issues, many of which of which may be a shared responsibility of different ministries, levels of government, governmental agencies, and the social partners.

Treating each case as a separate "adaptation pressure" may be analytically useful, but stretch the concept. It is quite plausible that political actors do not meticulously evaluate the OMC reports, but use heuristics to simplify the complexity of these issues. For example, there is evidence that the mere *number* of Recommendations a state receives in the EES-OMC is symbolically more important than a thorough analysis might suggest. One (German) official in the Commission said that "now the actual number of Recommendations that is seen as important…last year 6 recommendations went to Greece, and Germany had 5 official ones, but if you look deeper Germany has 13 sub-recommendations that are not as obvious and thus less harmful, so in effect Germany was the worst, but it is unthinkable that Germany would receive the most Recommendations. It wouldn't accept being worst."[108]

To summarize, by focusing on single cases of adaptation pressure, we may overlook the possibility that actors may perceive these packages as "belonging together." And "what they belong to" may be perceived to be part of the Lisbon "whole" or more narrowly, as part of a semi-decomposable OMC "part." As one social partner representative put it, "the guidelines are the sorts of things often dealt with in the social pacts as a sort of added checklist, and in a whole range of things add some impetus; so the guidelines and recommendations help set an agenda."[109] So where do these checklists come from? In short, people or peoples' rarely have simple and stable beliefs in isolation from each other values and beliefs; values and norms are often in uneasy tension with others.[110] Thus, my argument is that the Lisbon ideology may "frame" the package of norms in new ways increases cognitive dissonance in that it forces people to argue over the appropriate balance between norms in ways they had not had to before. Moreover, if it is accurate to say that entering deliberations/negotiations about the OMC's is an implicit acceptance of certain "genetic" norms (i.e. social cohesion, activating employment policy, de-regulation), then social pressures may be more complicated in the sense that certain arguments have gradually become rhetorical non-options. Consequently, explanations that focus on single cases of misfit- or single OMC's- while being potentially useful, must be cautious that they are not extracting "parts" from the Lisbon-OMC "whole" that is pressuring individuals and governmental actors.

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[108] Interview # 17 had previously worked in the German government and was working at DG V-Employment & Social Affairs.
[109] Interview # 7 with representative from European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).
[110] In studying the effects of shared American values, Zaller (1997?) finds evidence that liberal defenders of the welfare state exhibit a higher degree of cognitive dissonance than conservatives when discussing the welfare state issues.

One last confounding effect of the OMC's is that in addition to the learning and peer pressure mechanisms, the Commission simultaneously attempts to mobilize that network capacity of some of the OMC's, which it is likely affecting two variables favored by sociological institutionalists: epistemic communities and advocacy coalitions. One clear example of this is the funding giving to the transnational NGO called the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) discussed above. While it started as being a key player in the OMC-social inclusion, it has recently begun trying to influence the development of other OMC's. In addition, one could argue that the Commission has facilitated a growing epistemic network of academics and think tanks. It is telling that the most systematic study of EU's policy coordination (fiscal and employment) has been carried out by a transnational network of academics, which was funded by the Commission.[111] Furthermore, the mutual interpenetration of academia and politics is rampant in the OMC's.[112]

After highlight the theoretical obstacles to conceptualizing causal forces of the OMC's, it is not surprising that there have been contradictory interpretations of their effects. For example, in evaluating the effects of the OMC-employment, Trubek and Mosher (2002) point to the Netherlands and France as being at opposite ends of the spectrum, with France being significantly affected in contrast to the Netherlands. In contrast, the most comprehensive comparative study of the OMC-employment found that policies in France and the Netherlands were the most affected, while also acknowledging policy effects Germany, Italy, and Austria.[113]

Trubek and Mosher (2002) highlight several effects found in the French impact evaluation organized by the Commission for the five year evaluations of the EES and states that:

> The EES led to numerous specific policy reforms, reshaped the policy-making process, affected the relations with the social partners, and even goes so far as to claim that the EES could be traced to real improvements in employment. The report specifically highlights the guidelines and recommendations having made a difference. In addition, the annual iterations of producing the French NAPs have created pressure for greater coherence in employment policy. The French report acknowledges that the indicators have helped monitor performance, and the alignment of the Structural Funds with the EES helped reshape priorities, especially at regional level. Finally, the report indicates that France has learned from the good practices of others, citing specifically what was learned from the Finnish program for "active aging."[114]

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[111] See www.Govecore.org.

[112] In addition to the academic contributions by government officials like the Belgian Minister Vandenbroucke, EU parliamentarian Herman Schmid, and the Lisbon-OMC godmother, Maria Rodriguez, Dr. Anastasios Bisopoulos (Commission offical in charge of setting up the first EES Peer Review program), academics like Jonathon Zeitlin have made several contributions to EU bodies discussing the OMC, he has written extensively on the subject, while coordinating a transatlantic network of specialists through the OMC Research Forum at Univ. Wisconsin-Madison.

[113] Govecore Interim Report III. Also, it should be noted that Trubek & Mosher (2002) were interpreting an "independent" study of the Netherlands that a Dutch diplomat informed me was "mostly independent." Nevertheless, in my opinion, one could easily interpret the Dutch report as indicating significant effects, which merely emphasizes the need for clear standards of evaluation.

[114] These highlights of the French report rely on the translations in Trubek and Mosher (2002).

Both the Govecore Interim Report III and Trubek and Mosher (2002) make extremely valuable contributions to the study of the OMC's, but now that the debate on the OMC's has moved beyond abstract conceptualizations and a-theoretical descriptions, the problem that still plagues this literature on the OMCs is inadequately specified conceptual frameworks and epistemological ambiguity.[115]

In sum, simple (e.g. comparing four ideal-type welfare states) is perhaps a good starting point for some questions, but not accounting for some of these multiple variables, may explain why scholars are struggling to account for an "adaptation pressure" that is qualitatively different on many levels. One fairly consistent finding in the Europeanization literature is that even with similar adaptation pressures, we should only expect partial or clustered convergence.[116] Until we can account for why some states "feel" the non-binding multiple pressures more than others, and why some states appear to be better "learners," it is possibly that any causal claims risk overlooking endogenous variables that are central to the underlying causal dynamics. Since this is a daunting task, and not the purpose of this paper, I will move on to discuss some of the macro-level changes that have occurred.

CONSOLIDATION OF THE LISBON TRIANGLE?

I have tried to illustrate how the Lisbon-OMC's despite their fundamental differences- have the theoretical capacity to "steer" political reform by facilitating the production of "norms and knowledge" and accelerating its diffusion in ways that would not have otherwise existed. So which beliefs, norms, tactics, institutions, and policies would not have existed in a world without Lisbon?

First, a bird's-eye view of the Lisbon-OMC's reveals a deepening of normative and cognitive convergence. Since the Lisbon Strategy was announced, more OMC's have begun, as have some benchmarking exercises that do not officially call themselves OMC's.[117] In most of the OMC's that have undergone at least one iteration, obligation, precision, and participation/awareness has increased. Most OMC's have to one degree or another produced an increasing number of indicators, targets, guidelines/objectives, and despite some gaps in data, National Reports have generally improved. In the case of the EES, the Commission's ability to pressure states has increased. After the first few iterations of the EES, the Commission (much to the outrage of member states) starting including Recommendations to individual member states. Although the Council could have blocked this, there was fear that they would appear like they were hiding from "information," and this practice is now taken for granted. It is unclear whether it is being taken for granted because nobody

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[115] For example, although the Govecore Interim Report (2003) is an impressive study, their coding scheme leaves room for too much subjectivity and is arguably preordained to underestimate EES effects. For example, in order to be scored 'high' on ideational change induced by the EES, a country must exhibit a _full_ transfer of core ideas/policy frames from policy coordination cycles into administrative discourse. Even here, the Netherlands is coded as having a full transfer. The fact that this coding scheme was used by a transnational group of scholars likely increases the room for measurement bias. I must confess to not having read the entire 390 pg. report, and it's possible they employed some methodological tools to overcome these problems that were not included in their coding scheme in the Appendix.

[116] Boerzel and Risse (2000).

[117] See Radaelli (2003) for argument that the procedures for dealing with harmful tax competition are similar in form to the OMC.

cares, or because member state actors have accepted the normalization of criticism, as long as they can water it down or spice it when bargaining with the Commission. However, the fact that they have to bargain implies that they don't feel they can unilaterally refuse Recommendations. The fact that they do use them for "self-shaming" indicates that they are not as "soft" as some may think. Because this bargaining occurs in the expert groups discussed above, there is reason to believe while member states have some "do not cross" lines, there are some social pressures and professional norms that make prevent them from behaving to disingenuously in front of there peers.

After reviewing the national impact evaluations of the first five years of the EES, the Commission acknowledged that proving both a direct link from the EES to policy changes to changes in the real world, it was quite sanguine in its interpretation, stating that:

> [T]he general perception is that the EES strengthened the national policy framework. The annual review and monitoring mechanism, based on indicators, has stimulated Member States to confirm their political commitment in the form of targets…It could be concluded that, over the years, the EES triggered a shift in approach from curative thinking towards longer-term thinking[118].

> The majority of Member States have made considerable efforts to improve the coverage of the unemployed by the preventive approach, both for youth and adults, but the approach has not yet reached all persons at risk in each of the Member States…the share of active measures in labour market expenditure followed an overall upward trend. The target set in the Employment Guidelines to offer active measures such as training and subsidised employment to 20% of the unemployed was generally reached and the benchmark of the three most advanced Member States even increased from 20% to about 50% in recent years. Beyond the convergence effect, the focus on quantitative targets has also been effective in promoting a modernisation of public employment services and in reorienting their placement and reintegration activities.[119]

Although some states have blocked certain indicators, the body of indicators has increased and achieving a taken-for-granted status as elements of the reporting processes. While none of this automatically translated into political reform, it is fair to say there is much more meat on the Lisbon ideological skeleton, and more specific "meat-hooks" on which actors can hang their arguments in the OMC arenas. As can be seen in Appendix II, the Commission's inclusion of structural indicators in its Spring Report to the European Council provides a codified snapshot of how states compare to those closest/farthest to/from the Lisbon ideal-type.[120] In addition, a recent institutional invention may serve to add even more "charge" to Lisbon's organizational field. The first meeting of the Tripartite Social Summit for Growth and Employment took place in March 2003, on the eve of the European Council's Spring Summit in Brussels. The summit, co-chaired by Presidents European Council and the Commission was organized to discuss the Lisbon Strategy with the peak social partner organizations and their role in achieving Lisbon's goals.

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[118] This quote from the Commission is taken from Trubek and Mosher (2002).
[119] Commission communication (2002), "Taking Stock of Five Years of the Employment Strategy."
[120] The Commission's Spring Report includes several key structural indicators for: general economic background, employment, economic reform, innovation & research, social cohesion, environmental policy

As argued previously, this may indicate a maturing of a "networked polity," in which, governmental and societal actors' interests are disaggregated (as in pluralism), but coordinated (as in corporatism). Indeed, participation of the social partners has been fairly strong at the European level and some indications that their attitudes have become more positive towards the OMC.[121] Influencing the Lisbon Agenda has become a top priority. A representative from UNICE said, "One important thing, or the most important thing for us is the Lisbon Strategy…we believe there is a delivery gap between the political commitments and implementation at the national level on some issues; we want states to live up to their commitments."[122] A representative from ETUC noted that the "key process has become the Lisbon strategy, so trying to affect that is key," and "that the unions and business bought into two different interpretations of Lisbon…and this ambiguity keeps the show on the road, allowing others to try to get in and mold it" and that "we have started publishing indicators to fill in the gaps of Lisbon…like benchmarks for income distribution, poverty, working time, representation of workers in workplace…we think some of these things will get into Lisbon…that's why the SPC is good…improving the statistical infrastructure is improving comparisons."[123] Although NGO's have been much more prevalent in the OMC-social inclusion, one of the most visible (EAPN) has become more interested in influencing the Employment and Economic OMC's.[124] All three of these organizations are constantly producing opinions and reports on the various developments within Lisbon, and diffusion information through their transnational network.

Increasing Network Connectivity

I have argued that two key components of the Lisbon ideology its ontological complexity, and the norm of networked self-reflexivity. In cases of complexification uncertainty increases and comprehensive issue packages are necessary for effective solutions. In such circumstances coordinating all the affected actors becomes the challenge. Second, "networked self-reflexivity" is the label that I have chosen for the "integrated approach" of the OMC ideal-type. Horizontal and vertical coordination are not inherently good. It can reduce the efficiency that can be obtained by organizational specialization. However, if problems really are (or actors believe they are) inter-linked, then such form of coordination can enhance problem-solving

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[121] Interviews # (7, 10, and 11) with representative of UNICE (business) and ETUC (unions), and press releases from each.
[122] This is also expressed in UNICE's position paper before the Spring Summit in Barcelona, March 2002, and their webpage for the Lisbon Strategy, which includes their synthetic position paper and one from each national peak business organization (including Turkey & Norway) all of which share the same or similar theme that "Time is Running Out" in reference to their demands that the Lisbon promises are followed by action.
[123] Interview #7 with researcher at ETUC.
[124] European Anti-poverty network, "EAPN response to the revised European employment guidelines. Press Release, PR07-03, Brussels, 22 April 2003.

capacity. Whether actors really believe that this is the case, this norm exists in the Lisbon ideology, and actors are using it to pressure for more participation and horizontal/vertical coordination. There are several indications that this is increasing at the EU and national level as a result of the Lisbon-OMC's. In its synthesis of the studies that reviewed the effects of the EES on member states, the Commission opinioned that:

> "*Institutional co-operation was intensified at EU level* between different Council formations (notably EcoFin and Employment/Social Affairs ministers) and their corresponding committees[125], as well as between Commission services in charge of designing and monitoring various employment related policy processes (e.g. in the fields of education/training, economic policy, taxation or entrepreneurship). Co-operation between the Commission and the Council, notably via the Employment Committee, has been strengthened. The *European Parliament* was closely involved in the annual review process and thereby contributed to the development of the strategy, while the other institutions also made valuable contributions."[126]

There is also evidence that the level of horizontal coordination between Ministries and agencies related to employment has increased in reaction to the EES (Govecore Interim Report). The Commission concurs noting that "The emphasis on employment rather than labour market policies has meant that the annual preparation of the National Action Plans (NAPs) *at national level* has stimulated closer co-operation between ministerial departments. Public employment services, represented in an active EU level network, have been strongly mobilised around EU priorities."[127] In addition, there are indications of vertical coordination in the member states in response to the OMC's. Both the Commission and the Govecore Report have identified the nascent use of a sub-national dimension *to employment policies*. For example Local and regional governmental authorities, in Sweden have been producing regional or local action plans (RAPs and LAPs), which get some funding from the Commission in this regard.[128] While this is certainly not the norm, the alignment of the European Social Fund with the priorities of the EES in 2000 could possibly encourage such networking building over time. In my own research, I discovered that the mere fact that Belgium had to produce a Social Inclusion NAP was enough to get the Vice Prime Minister to organize a meeting that brought the various levels of government to discuss poverty and exclusion for the first time ever and that:

> The pressure came from fact we had to do it. Everyone felt pressure at all the levels. If we wanted to look serious to our colleagues in EU then we would have to coordinate our actions or else we would have 4 different plans. This meeting happened with federal ministers and regional ministers (3), in total 6 governmental levels, with roughly 50 ministers at the table."[129]

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[125] E.g. the Employment Committee, the Economic Policy Committee and the Social Protection Committee
[126] Commission communication, "Taking Stock of the First Five Years of the Employment Strategy." COM (2002) 416.
[127] Commission communication, "Taking Stock of the First Five Years of the Employment Strategy." COM (2002) 416.
[128] Govecore Interim Report III (2003) pg. 277.
[129] Interview with assistant to Belgian Minister of Social Affairs & Pensions.

Recently, there are some strong signs that the meta-coordination of the Lisbon processes will be improved. First, the EES has been synchronized with the timing and content of the BEPG's with the intent of ensuring better coherence and coordination between these processes. This is seen by some as putting the Employment Strategy on more of an equal footing with the Economic and Finance Ministers in charge of producing the BEPG's. Although there has always been a significant amount of overlap between the OMC-employment and the OMC-social inclusion, the updated EES structure is framed by the Commission and seen by NGO's heavily involved with the OMC-inclusion a positive development in placing social, employment, and economic policy on more equal footing.[130]

Second, the European Council concluded in 2003 that the various social protection OMC processes will be streamlined. The hope is that this improvement makes more transparent the work of the EU in coordinating states' social protection policies in the areas of: pensions; social inclusion and fighting poverty; healthcare and care for the elderly; and social security systems. As mentioned, the emphasis of "activating" people to seek work runs is a cornerstone of the Lisbon ideology. By using the OMC will have synthesized these policy areas into one single framework and be synchronized with the new three-year cycles of the EES and BEPG's by 2006. In all processes, the *annual* update reports will be smaller. Even if this streamlining is perceived to be strengthening the 3 pillars of the Lisbon triangle, it must be reiterated that all OMC's are not created equal. It remains to be seen whether the "softer" social OMC's are able to secure meaningful change in the member states, which are facing much strong pressures from EMU and maybe facing competition with cheap labor after enlargement. Nevertheless, it is fairly clear that the Lisbon package of "norms and knowledge" has created an institutional and normative opportunity structure that is more favorable than it was a few years ago, now that certain issues have been reframed as being *European* problems central to the Lisbon Strategy.

Another institutional change that may facilitate this inter-institutional cooperation is the recent reduction in the number of Council formations. From now on the Ministers in six of the nine Councils will be dealing with components of the Lisbon Strategy. The General Affairs and External Relations Councils will maintain their coordinating role in preparation for Spring Summit, which will remain the central coordinating role of the Spring European Council's coordination of economic, employment, and environmental policies. This may weaken the historically dominant influence of Finance Ministers at the European Council Summits. A Commission official in DG Employment & Social Affairs who has been involved in some of the strategic aspects of the Lisbon processes claimed that there has been increasing pressure on Prime Ministers to take a

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[130] In EAPN's response to the revised European employment guidelines, they said "the new employment guidelines make clear headway on some fronts. Civil society gets a bigger role; the need to mobilize all relevant actors is stressed. They also emphasize the interlinkages between the European employment strategy, the European strategy on social inclusion and the broad economic policy guidelines published the same day. The European employment strategy now incorporates the Nice objectives: "*strengthening social cohesion and inclusion*" is one of the three overarching objectives on an equal footing with "*full employment*" and "*improving quality and productivity at work*". EAPN press release *Brussels, 22 April 2003 – PR07-03*

position on Lisbon and not just following the advice of the Finance Ministers as much, and with this talk of reorganizing the Council, he said, "it is quite a big deal, as finance ministers are getting a bit scared that their privileged role during the time building the Economic and Monetary Union is being diminished."[131]

Thus, if the learning and socialization mechanisms discussed are at work, these recent institutional changes may accelerate this process as more Ministers will be involved in Lisbon's "organizational fields." I have no evidence that the new Council formations were at all influenced by the Lisbon ideology, but such findings would lend support to the argument that political actors at the EU stage have begun to interpret problem inter-linkages and normative aspirations of Lisbon, as natural.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to studies that have focus on the particular features of the OMC's as a form of "new governance," my point of departure was treating the Lisbon Strategy as a paradoxically "self-reflexive" political ideology. I have attempted to define what the Lisbon ideologies "genetic" features were and how its institutional carriers (OMCs) may be facilitating a cognitive and normative convergence in a "networked polity." I have stressed both the ontological holism and the inherent "self-reflexive" idiom of the Lisbon ideology. I have tried to make a plausible argument about how the marriage of a unique substantive vision with novel OMC procedures may be altering the mode of social interaction that takes place in the increasingly larger and denser organizational field that is "charged" by the Lisbon ideology. In order to link the micro-processes with the macro-outcomes I have provided a "sketch" of a theory of social and individual learning that is mediated by the normative and institutional opportunity structure that I have conceptualized as a "network" of arenas and nodes.

I have not provided conclusive evidence to support my argument, but rather provided a plausible case that I am on the right track supported only by an incomplete data set and some research conducted by others. I have tried to show that the Lisbon ideology is "real" and that the OMC's are facilitating the learning & shaming capacity of governmental and non-governmental actors. Moreover, I have tried to illustrate how the politics of "knowledge production" can be influenced by the broader normative and institutional structure within which "experts" deliberate about "what the facts are." In particular, I emphasized the effects of institutional design on facilitating group decision-making styles that may affect levels integrative complexity, self-reflective thought, or conversely "groupthink." Lastly, I have tried to highlight some of the conceptual and methodological obstacles in trying to establish whether the Lisbon ideology and the OMCs may be causing Europeanization, especially when extracting one "part" of the Lisbon "whole."

Many observers of the "new governance" acknowledge the "learning" potential of the OMCs, but lament the mediocre levels of participation, especially in the member states. While I share these concerns, if

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[131] Interview with Commission official in DG Employment & Social Affairs, July 2002.

the broader thrust of my argument is correct, then the procedural legitimacy of the Lisbon-OMCs may be the "genetic" trait that ensures the Lisbon ideologies "adaptive" survival beyond the preordained termination date of 2010 (under a new name I presume). There are theoretical reasons and some tentative evidence that political actors have a difficult time "arguing" against the OMCs. The "sovereignty costs" are low for states, and it's hard to find a politician who will take a dogged stance against "learning." Most of the academic and official criticism of the OMCs centers on the fact that they have not reached their true potential. In addition to the Commission's attempts to build the network capacity of the Lisbon-OMC's, there appears to be a growing number of actors who are keen to participate in the processes. As noted before, Lisbon has "raised the expectations of people."[132] I imagine that the combination of the OMCs procedural legitimacy, the repeated affirmation of the Lisbon vision, and the incentives for existing participants to mobilizing potential allies into participating may further accelerate the diffusion and deepening of the Lisbon ideology.

It is possible that Enlargement may put a halt to such developments and the diversity of states will be too great for the OMCs to accommodate. My hunch is that the OMCs flexibility and procedural legitimacy will allow the EU to adjust to the new state of affairs. If one has the same bias that I do, this would be a positive outcome. Although I have argued that Lisbon's ontological holism and the OMCs hypothesized tendency to induce greater cognitive/integrative complexity are not necessarily "better," I truly believe that they are in most instances. I may be wrong, but I believe that institutional procedures that facilitate "argumentative rationality" and complexification (i.e. the learning process in which people/organizations begin to understand collective problems in a more holistic manner) are indications of moral progress.[133] In short, I believe that institutional innovations can facilitate cognitive evolution. I thought that before I had to witness the President of the United States' denial of the existence of consensual knowledge on global warming. Perhaps he was correct, but the fact that such a powerful man can shamelessly take such stands without much public outcry, makes me believe that Europe's new procedural revolution is a step in the right direction, regardless of how realistic Lisbon's substantive "promises" turn out to be.

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[132] Quote taken from press release issued by the European Anti-Poverty Network. July 2002.
[133] Although it is hard to say where my own thinking started and my late dissertation advisor's stopped, Ernst Haas (1990) made a similar argument in his book, *When Knowledge is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations*.

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	Employment		Broad Economic Policy Guidelines	Social Inclusion	Pensions
Treaty Base	Y- Articles 125-30		Y – Article 104 TEC	Art. 136-37	ART. 140?
Overarching Objectives	4 Pillars (1998-2002) Employability Adaptability, Entrepreneurship, Gender Equality (2003-) -Full employment, quality and productivity at work, and social cohesion and inclusion.		-Provide policy guidance for growth and stability oriented macroeconomic policies, particularly budgetary policies -The structural reform process in product, capital and labour markets, -Raising the growth potential through the transition to a knowledge-based economy -Promoting sustainable development through the integration of environmental aspects into economic policy	-To facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services - Facilitating participation in employment - - To prevent the risks of exclusion - To help the most vulnerable - To mobilize all relevant bodies	- Adequacy of pensions. - Financial sustainability of pension systems - Modernization of pension systems in response to changing needs of the economy, society and individuals.
OBJECTIVES/ GUIDELINES	1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003	9 19 90+ 10 Commandments + # sub-objectives)	Y	2000-Nice Council, 4 2001 2003	11 Objectives. (2002)
Targets (EU/national)	Y		Y	*N*	*N*
Benchmarking -Top 3 performers	Y		Y	Y	Weaker version w/o EU objectives;
Indicators	1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003	9 60 99	Y	Y -No common indicators In 1st round (2001-03) -18 total for 2nd round (2003-05):	N
Recommendations	Y- 1st Time 1999		Y- 2001 1st Time	N	N

Figure 1: Nodes & Arenas

European Council = OMC Leadership

Arenas & Nodes for OMC X

Commission-Node for X

Expert Committee node for X

Council of Ministers for X

EU Arena

Transnational Social Partners &-NGO's

National Arena

Social Partners -NGO

National Ministry-node X

Social Partners -NGO

National Ministry-node X

Country A- National Action Plan X

Country B- National Action Plan X

CHART 2: Overview of Employment Recommendations 1999-2003

POLICY PRIORITIES	BE	DK	DE	EL	ES	FR	IR	IT	LU	NL	A	PT	FI	SW	UK	EU
PREVENTION-ACTIVATION	1		1			1							1		1	5
JOB CREATION IN REGIONS							1	1								2
CHANGE-ADAPTABILITY			1	1	1			1						1		5
LIFELONG LEARNING			1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1				9
LABOUR SUPPLY/AGEING	1	1				1		1	1		1		1	1	1	9
GENDER EQUALITY			1	1	1		1		1	1	1	1	1		1	10
DISADVANTAGED		1														1
MAKING WORK PAY	1	1	1	1							1			1		6
UNDECLARED WORK			1					1								2
JOB MOBILITY	1				1											2
SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP						1						1			1	3
DELIVERY SERVICES				1	1			1								3
TOTAL	4	3	5	6	4	4	3	6	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	57
(For reference, recommendations in 2002	5	2	5	6	5	5	3	5	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	57
2001	5	2	5	6	5	5	3	5	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	57
2000	5	3	5	6	5	5	2	5	3	2	3	4	3	3	4	58
1999	4	2	5	6	4	4	3	5	3	2	3	3	3	2	4	53

* Note: the Recommendations preceding 2003 were not categorized under the same conceptual headings. This information can be found at the EU Commission's website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_

Figure 2-National Totals Benchmarks On Structural