

European Cohesion Policy in two Regions of Spain: The configuration of policy networks and social capital*

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Abstract: This paper focuses on European Cohesion Policy at regional level at its programming stage. It argues that Structural Funds have been very influential in shaping regional development policy-making. The Europeanization of regional policy in Spain has involved an increasing role for regional governments, which have adopted a set of homogeneous practices and procedures with regard to cohesion policy programming and implementation. However, empirical evidence drawn from the regions of Murcia and Galicia related to programming for the financial period 2007-2013 (ROPs) highlights the configuration of different regional policy networks to deal with such programming tasks. Also, different features of social capital amongst the network's actors arise for both regions. These findings suggest that their policy processes are quite different -in spite of similar formal procedures- and raise new questions about the sources of such variations.

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1. REGIONAL POLICY IN SPAIN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Since joining the European Union in 1986, Spanish regional policy has been gradually adjusting to the multi-level logic which characterises the European process of public policy-making. We have observed multiple governmental levels involved in the definition and implementation of regional development policies, shaping a complex political structure incorporating both public and non-public actors, and which entails the channelling of significant amounts of financial resources towards less developed regions. Within this process significant spaces have been generated to allow national and sub-national governments to define specific structures for the drawing up of policies and planning procedures.

In this study we examine regional policy-making based on European structural funds, paying particular attention to the process of definition and programming corresponding to Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) for the period 2007 – 2013. In particular, we have studied the role played by various actors in its development and the real participation dynamics involved, beyond the formally established committees and councils. Our main objective is to analyse the networks of actors involved in this process by identifying, first of all, the links between the actors concerned and their mutual perceptions, and secondly, the actors' characteristics with regard to social capital, in order to discuss how these could affect the general policy-making process.

Empirical research has been carried out in two Spanish regions: Galicia and Murcia. Both show a very similar level of socio-economic development (for example, in terms of their GDP per capita and the level of social capital of the population.) These similarities allow us to control a priori the influence of this type of factor in the emergence of different models of regional development policy-making in Spain, and to focus on the interaction patterns of the actors involved. Despite the inherent homogeneity of the European Cohesion Policy procedures, our research confirms the existence of different models of regional policy formation, to which different policy network structures also correspond.

The data used in the study come from different sources. Firstly, we have analysed the main official documents of the various institutional actors (at different governmental levels), such as the Community Support Framework (2000–2006), the National Strategic Reference Framework (2007–2013), the Regional Development Strategies, the Operational Programmes or the Intermediate Evaluations of the programmes. Secondly, information has been obtained by means of in-depth interviews and structured questionnaires aimed at the main regional actors (civil servants, members of ROP Monitoring Committees, local government representatives, business associations, trade unions, NGOs, etc.). These interviews provided us with information for analysing the networks and on the characteristics of the social capital of the actors involved in them. The subjects of the interviews were selected according to two criteria: their *position* and their *reputation* within the public policy network. Given that our interest is focused on the regional policy-making process at autonomous region level, we did not include national-level actors in the network analysis. We started to

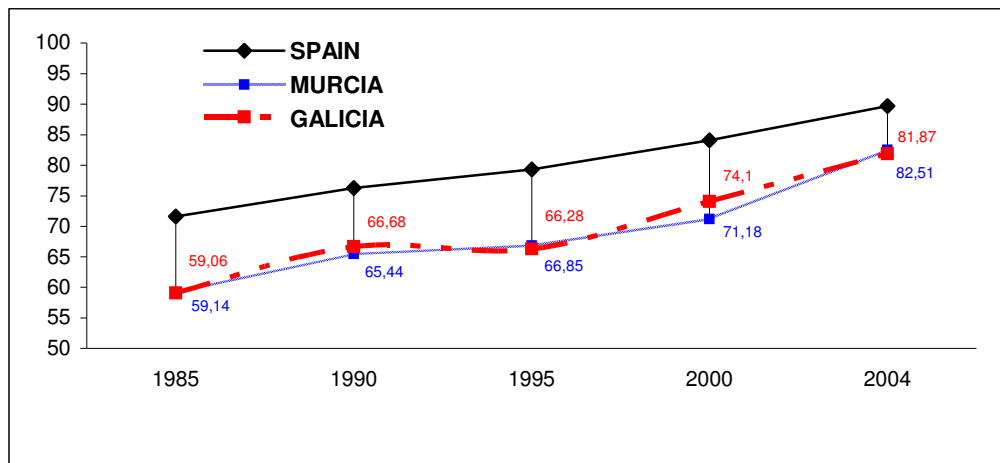
identify actors by selecting those occupying official posts in the Cohesion Policy 2007–2013 planning process, and those which through prior interviews with experts were identified as important actors in certain policy areas in each region. A second step led us to identify those actors who, according to their reputation- although they lacked official responsibilities- had played a significant role in any stage of the policy definition process. Particular attention was also paid to relations between different administrative units within each region, and also to the relationships between these and third parties.

1.2 Selection of the regions: Galicia and Murcia

The regions of Galicia and Murcia have in common their respective peripheral locations within Spanish territory as well as relatively underdeveloped economic backgrounds, compared with the Spanish, and of course the European, regional average. However, thanks to the patterns of sustained economic growth experienced by the Spanish economy over the past two decades, Galicia and Murcia have partially converged towards the European regional average. In 1986 both regions showed levels of GDP per capita approaching 60% of the average for the 15 EU members. Currently, Galicia and Murcia have reached 84.2% and 87.7% respectively of the levels of GDP per capita of the 27 EU members (Eurostat 2008).

During the last two decades, Galicia and Murcia have undergone a profound process of economic restructuring which has opened the door for modernisation (Alcaide y Alcaide 2003, Serrano 2005). Of particular note is the transformation of their traditional economic structures -strongly dependent on the agricultural sector- into more modern, industrialised economies. However, the patterns of growth followed various paths. Murcia, in particular, has shown an extremely successful performance with annual growth rates higher than the Spanish average throughout 1995–2004. Galicia, on the other hand, has grown more moderately and always remained below national parameters (Figure 1). Nonetheless, and as a result of the industrialisation process, in both regions the relative weight of the primary sector has significantly diminished, while the services sector has shown remarkable growth. Of the two regions, Murcia is more obviously orientated towards exports, having a strong agroalimentary industry (a sector which employs 31% of the industrial workforce) which contributes in great measure to the regional wealth (Región de Murcia 2004).

FIGURE 1 –REGIONAL CONVERGENCE, 1985-2005 (EU-15=100)



Source: Piedrafita, Steinberg and Torreblanca (2007). Own design.

On the political side, the two regions have shown similar degrees of political stability, under lasting regional governments which have generally repeated more than one term of office. Since the first regional elections in 1981, the Council of Galicia has been governed for over twenty-one years by the main Spanish conservative party (first the UCD and then the PP.) In 2005, after fourteen years of uninterrupted government by the *Partido Popular*, a new majority coalition formed by the PSdG-PSOE and the BNG came into power. In Murcia, the political scene has been even more stable. Since the first regional elections in 1983 Murcia has held seven regional elections. The first part of this period was dominated by a succession of local governments composed of the PSOE and from 1995 by PP governments. In general, regional politics in Murcia have reflected the evolution of Spanish national politics (the absence of exclusively regional political parties has favoured this coincidence), although the last regional elections in 2007 reinforced the governing position of the *Partido Popular* despite the presence of the PSOE in central government.

1.3 Cohesion Policy in Galicia and the Region of Murcia

When Spain joined the EC, both Galicia and Murcia were eligible for receipt of structural funds as Objective 1 regions. Since then, both regions have undergone and now completed three financial periods (1989-1993; 1994-1999; 2000-2006). Under the new regulations for the period 2007–2013, Murcia exceeded (statistically) the ceiling of 75% GDP per capita and is now classified as a Phase-Out region with regard to the Convergence Objective. However, Galicia still remains eligible for this Objective.

In Murcia, Cohesion Policy is generally regarded as one of the main factors which explain its economic growth. During the period 1989–2006, while classified as one of the least favoured regions, the Region of Murcia received approximately 3000 million Euro through the structural funds. This flow of funds from Europe was basically aimed at two targets: transport infrastructure and the modernisation of the agricultural sector. With regard to the former, before joining the EU Murcia had absolutely no communication routes, while now 500 kilometres of dual carriageway cross its territory thanks to money from Brussels. The main consequence has been a notable increase in internal and external regional mobility. The second objective sought to transform the

traditional agricultural sector and to design a new, modern agricultural sector. Economic deregulation and the pressure on competitiveness led the regional financial elites to invest in sectors oriented towards exportation. It should be emphasised that the European financial aid for the Murcia region also helped to mitigate the social cost of industrial restructuring: the structural funds were used to maintain and/or create 5000 new jobs every year in the labour market (Región de Murcia 2004). The enlargement of the EU has profoundly affected the region, especially taking into account that for the financial period 2007–2013 it will receive nearly 826 million Euro, with a reduction of approximately 35% of the structural aid¹.

The structural funds have been a key factor for development in Galicia as well. The classification of Galicia as an Objective 1 region since 1986 meant an increase in the amount of funds available for development programmes. The total amount allocated over the period 1989–2006 came to some 8000 million Euro, which were invested mainly in the transportation infrastructure and other productive investments (energy, the electricity grid, fibre optics, gas, etc.). The greater part of the initial Objective 1 funds were dedicated to infrastructure projects and to the construction of motorways linking the main cities of the region. During the financial period 2007–2013, as an eligible region within the Convergence Objective, European financial aid (including the R+D Cohesion Fund administrated at national level) will amount to about 4000 million Euro, which represents a reduction of 20% compared to the previous period.

1.4 How the Structural Funds work: essential aspects of the programming stage

Regional policy in Spain was strengthened at the end of the eighties by the interrelation of two important political phenomena: the end of the process establishing the State of the Autonomous Regions and joining the EC. Politico-territorial decentralisation and the implementation of an active European regional policy led the local, regional, national and supranational levels of government to become deeply involved in the promotion of regional development (Zaragoza 1990, Correa and Manzanedo 2002).

With regard to European Cohesion Policy, and as generally happens with the main EU economic policies, we find two channels of representation. On the one hand, we can confirm the political intention of governments to be actively present in the key moments of European policy-making. This intention is reflected in the institutional and political representation of the executive powers (regional and national), either directly, through the President's Office, or via the Ministry of Exterior Affairs or Secretariat of Exterior Action. The economic responsibilities and those for programming are borne, however, by the public bodies specialised in the subject such as the Ministry or Department of Economy (national and regional). This structure reflects the classic dual perspective linking politics and economics (Closa y Heywood 2004, Cienfuegos 2000, Molina 1999, Morata y Muñoz 1996). With respect to the Objective 1 regions (or Convergence Regions according to the new 2007–2013 classification) it can be stated that the structural funds are basically channelled through the Ministry of the Economy and the Treasury, which actively cooperates with the Departments of Economy (*Consejerías de Economía*) of the Autonomous Regions².

¹ The definitive official statistics were not available while this study was being written, so the data presented is based on the latest estimations received. The same applies to Galicia.

² The predominance of the Ministry of the Economy regarding the Objective 1 region funds is particularly obvious to the ERDF. Of course, other ministries can be involved in some sectoral activities financed by

Spain has already experienced four financial periods of Cohesion Policy, during which the role of the regional governments has been progressively reinforced with regard to regional policy-making. In fact, the definition of regional development strategy is today the domain of the regional executives. Long-term strategic programming has also become common practice for any Spanish regional administration. Despite its complexity, the process of European Cohesion Policy has been appropriately absorbed by the regional administrations. In fact, the Operational Programmes normally form part of a wider regional strategy and are not considered solely as obligatory documents which must be submitted –through central government– to the Commission.

Figure 2 illustrates the process of strategic regional programming. The autonomous governments draw up extensive regional strategic plans which contain the long-term regional policy lines. These strategic plans receive external input which comes from both the national arena and EU policy, and are combined with demands at regional and local level. In this way, the strategy and regional contributions in their entirety are both included in the regional strategic plan.

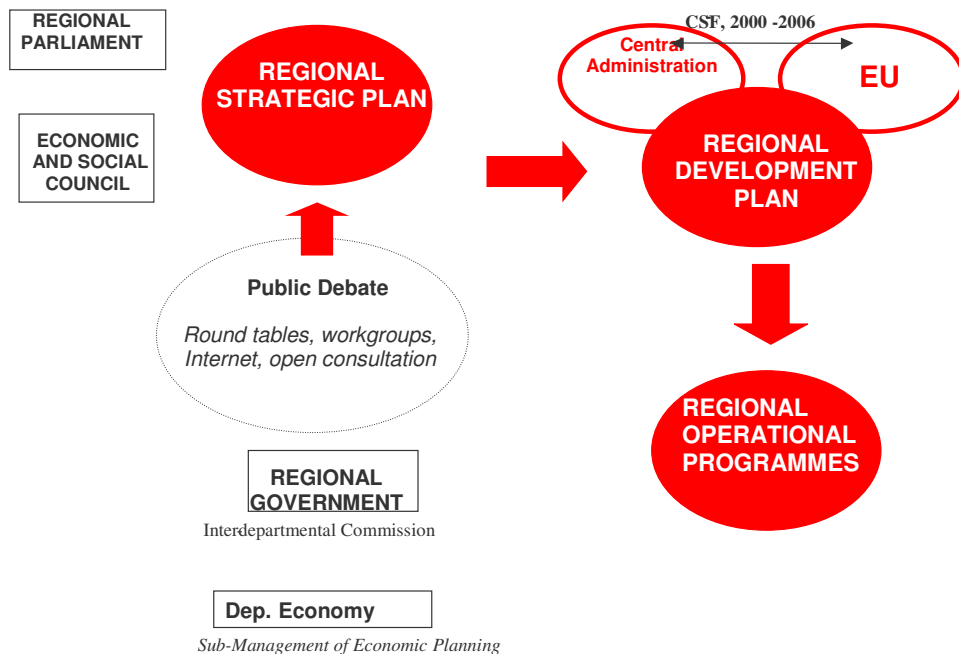
The autonomous administrations can finance their strategies in several different ways. Evidently, budgetary limits are often severe and additional funds always well received. As well as fiscal revenues, the regional administrations are well aware that they can receive transfers of capital from the State and the EU. But in order to access these sources of funding some formal documents have to be written as an essential requirement. Normally, the regional programming activity begins by drawing up a first, general draft in which the autonomous administration describes the strategy on a several-year basis. To be precise, the document is written by the Department of Economy and is then subjected to an open process of public debate and review. Today, the main autonomous departments, local government, the universities, the Economic and Social Council, the trade unions, business associations, NGOs and professional groups can all participate in the debate, presenting their comments on the draft. Finally, the regional strategic plan (revised) is submitted for the approval of the autonomous parliament. Once approved, this represents the official strategy for regional development and becomes a binding document for the regional executive. Subsequently, the document is turned into a Regional Development Plan (RDP), i.e. a document which also provides for actions which are co-financed by the State and the EU. Only in this way can regional development strategy receive European structural aid. Finally, the Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) define this strategy in more operational terms. As a result, many of the actions included in the regional development plan coincide with those contained in the regional operational programmes.

the structural funds. For example, the Ministry of Employment is an important actor in the administration of the ESF.

FIGURE 2 – REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INTERNAL/EXTERNAL COHERENCE



FIGURE 3 – REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING AND OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES



Although the main actors of civil society participate in the debate on the regional strategic documents, the effectiveness of their participation can vary. One of the main concerns which arise from previous programming experiences refers to the real value of the participation of these actors in the formation of regional strategy. However,

subsequent regional programming experience has progressively led to greater effective participation by social actors. Over the years, both in Murcia and Galicia, the autonomous governments have expanded the formal participation mechanisms. Amongst the main mechanisms used, we find open interviews with regional experts, round tables and workgroups on strategic sectors and related subjects, discussion groups and the launch of a web page where citizens can express their opinions regarding the plan. The regional government of Murcia, for example, presented a very ambitious initiative in July 2004, called *Horizonte 2010*, through which all the participating citizens were asked to contribute, either personally or as a group, in defining the policy priorities for the Region's social and economic development. The result of the initiative was the *PERM 2007-2013*, the Strategic Plan for the Region of Murcia. It should be stressed that the two regional operational programmes (ERDF and ESF) for the period 2007-2013 were taken directly from the *PERM 2007-2013*. A similar process took place in Galicia, where the new strategic plan was called *MECEGA 2007-2013* ("Strategic Framework for Economic Convergence of Galicia, 2007-2013".) In accordance with this plan the two operational programmes (ERDF and ESF) were drawn up for Galicia.

2. COMPARISON OF THE POLICY NETWORKS IN GALICIA AND MURCIA

The reform of the Structural Funds, in 1988, introduced four fundamental principles for European Cohesion Policy: programming, concentration, additionality and, especially, "partnership". This last principle is considered to be the main mechanism for the involvement of the policy networks in European public policy-making. In particular, the principle of partnership institutionalises direct contact between the Commission and non-central government actors, especially regional and local authorities, businesspeople and local action groups (Thielemann 1998:19). The building of multi-level governing in Europe has been strongly supported by the application of this principle which consequently has become a key element for the Europeanisation of regional policy in the EU member states (Leonardi 2005).

On the one hand, the concept of "policy networks" refers to a structure or complex of organisations connected to each other by interdependent relationships, including authorities corresponding to different levels of government as well as public and non-public actors (Marsh and Rhodes 1992:13). An approach focused on the observation of the policy networks is quite effective for analysing the variations in the models of interest intermediation and, consequently, helps to trace the relationships between the private and public actors (Jordana 1995). In particular, the study of policy networks turns out to be extremely useful for recognising the importance of the non-state actors in the formation of European policies.

On the other hand, it is possible to distinguish different types of policy network involved in different stages of the public policy-making process, going from one extreme: tightly-knit policy communities, to the other: pressure group networks (issue networks, lobbying networks and exchange networks) (Marsh 1998, Marsh and Rhodes 1992, Ward and Williams 1997). While the policy community category describes a kind of network clearly dominated by governmental actors (with restricted participation, shared common values, long duration, and mutually beneficial for all), to the extent that this could refer to a model of intergovernmental relations, the lobbying network or issue network, however, refers rather to wide networks made up of actors whose participation

may be erratic, whose participatory relations are mainly focused on making enquiries; in which consensus is limited and therefore competitive and conflicting relationships are more common.

The observation and analysis of the policy networks established in the programming stage of regional policy 2007-2013 in the Region of Murcia and Galicia, serve to identify the distribution of power, influence and status between the various interests connected to the specific area of regional policy. The application of the partnership principle can produce various types of policy networks, depending both on the strategic action of the actors participating in the network and on the distribution of power, status and influence between them, as well as the institutional norms and specific characteristics of the regional social structure (especially its social capital resources.)

2.1. Identification of centrality in regional networks

In this section our aim is to compare the structure of the regional public policy networks of each region, using relational data obtained from the interviews carried out. These interviews, done in March and April 2007 and personally conducted, were performed according to a script and a questionnaire especially designed to obtain related data and to assess the opinions and attitudes of the individuals representing the organisation concerned (Oppenheim 1992).

From a general point of view, the policy networks are fairly similar in both regions. On observing the networks, on the basis of the contacts declared to take place between the actors, we find that the networks are relatively dense and that all the nodes form a single block. The degree of density is quite similar for both explicit inter-actor contact networks. Galicia has a density of 3,263 (DE of 1.21) and Murcia of 3,291 (DE of 1.59). However, significant differences emerge when comparing the networks in detail.

We have calculated the degree centrality of each actor (the links inward and outward from the vertex) taking into consideration the replies of the actors about the frequency of the contacts between them³. The differences between the inward and outward links are rather disconcerting: the matrices are not completely symmetrical, which means that some actors identify contacts which their counterparts do not. Furthermore, the intensity of the contacts is valued differently between pairs of actors. An initial overview of these differences can be seen in Tables 1a and 1b which show the degree centrality of each actor, from their point of view and from that of others.

In Galicia, the governmental actors have greater centrality than non-governmental actors. However, the externally perceived centrality is less than that which they themselves perceived, and there are even some cases showing a great discrepancy, which means that probably many actors do not value such contacts. In the case of the non-governmental actors we also find autoperception of high centrality degree which does not correspond to the visions of other actors belonging to the network (clear examples of this would be the CC.OO. trade union and the University of Santiago).

³ As the data are valued, the degrees (inward and outward) are composed of the sums of the values of the contacts received by a determined vertex (entry degree) and the number of links originating from the same vertex (exit degree).

TABLE 1a. DEGREE CENTRALITY OF THE ACTORS. GALICIA

	1	2
	Entry degree	Exit degree
	-----	-----
1 ConsPres	17.000	37.000
2 Fund G-E	21.000	17.000
3 ConsEco	37.000	42.000
4 ConsInov	27.000	30.000
5 ConsTra	32.000	28.000
6 ConsEdu	10.000	11.000
7 DipACo	5.000	8.000
8 FEGAMP	3.000	0.000
9 ZonaFra	6.000	3.000
10 CCOO	21.000	1.000
11 UGT	17.000	25.000
12 CIG	16.000	31.000
13 CEG	19.000	22.000
14 IGAPE	26.000	6.000
15 EixoAtl	6.000	1.000
16 IGADI	14.000	6.000
17 USC	24.000	0.000
18 CES-G	12.000	33.000
19 Camara	2.000	14.000
Average	16.579	16.579
Std dev.	9.675	13.585

TABLE 1b. DEGREE CENTRALITY OF THE ACTORS. MURCIA

	1	2
	Entry degree	Exit degree
	-----	-----
1 DelegGob	8.000	10.000
2 ConsPres	37.000	25.000
3 RepBrus	9.000	0.000
4 ConsEco	42.000	28.000
5 ConsInd	31.000	19.000
6 ConsTrab	22.000	16.000
7 ConsAgri	21.000	30.000
8 INFO	37.000	36.000
9 FedMuni	10.000	4.000
10 AyuMur	12.000	4.000
11 Camara	11.000	27.000
12 CCOO	20.000	18.000
13 UGT	22.000	35.000
14 CROEM	31.000	19.000
15 InstMuj	8.000	43.000
16 AMUSAL	1.000	6.000
17 UnivM	25.000	7.000
18 UnivPC	15.000	27.000
19 ANSE	7.000	6.000
20 Foro	0.000	9.000
Average	18.450	18.450
Std. dev.	12.039	12.176

In the case of Murcia, the governmental actors also show higher centrality than the non-governmental actors, although the differences between them are not as wide. At the same time, there is not such a marked imbalance between the contacts as perceived by others (entry degree) and as identified by each actor (exit degree), although there are some cases of great imbalance, like the Institute for Women (*InstMuj*).

On comparing both regions we find a higher density of contacts in Murcia than in Galicia (average of 18.45 versus 16.58), while the differences between “entry degree” and “exit degree” are smaller in Murcia (which shows closer standard deviations.) Furthermore, the social and economic actors in Murcia show a higher level of centrality than in Galicia – although the difference is not very large in global terms.

In order to identify the basic structure of the network, we used the question about contacts between its members (excluding the frequency measure.) We converted the data into a binary network, to avoid valued data, and discovered that the network centralization index (Freeman Degree) for Galicia was 51.85%, while in the case of Murcia it was 39.89%. So, as the difference between the two is quite wide, we can infer that the Galicia network is much more centralised than that of Murcia. In particular, as we observed previously, the different governmental units in Galicia show a highly important central position in the network, unlike in Murcia, where the governmental units are not so central, with the sole exception of the Department of Economy (*ConsEco*) – the actor with the highest level of centrality in the network.

Taking into account the three-member cliques, we found 27 cliques in Murcia and 22 in Galicia. It is possible to observe significant differences between the regions with regard to the concentration of the cliques and the role of the different actors composing these cliques. While in the Region of Murcia the actors making up the largest number of cliques are mainly non-governmental, in Galicia the opposite is true; it is the governmental actors which have a greater pre-eminence among the network members. In other words, we could expect that in Galicia the role of the governmental actors in clique formation would be more important than in the case of Murcia, where many of the cliques created are composed only of non-governmental actors. These differences suggest that the ways in which collective action on regional policy is developed involve greater presence of, and interaction between, private actors in Murcia than in Galicia, which presupposes conditions of social capital which are more favourable towards collective action and policy-making participation amongst the actors participating in the regional policy network of Murcia.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 measure the degree of *betweenness* or intermediation between the actors of the policy network of each region based on the information on contact frequency. This is a measure of the centrality of the actors which aims to identify how many times other actors contact a particular actor in order to access a third party. In this way, we could suggest that the degree of intermediation measures the strategic positions of the actors within the network. Bearing these figures in mind, we were able to identify the great importance the Department of Economy has in both regions. This department turned out to be a key actor in both cases, with an important position in the network. Widening the perspective, we can see that the Presidency is also a relatively central actor in both regions. In the case of Galicia, we observe a close proximity between the following three actors: the Economy, the Presidency and the Galicia-Europe Foundation (formally affiliated to the latter); and a similar structure can be found in the Region of Murcia: ConsEco, Cons.Pres, and INFO (Institute of Development and Promotion). These institutional triangles contribute evidence towards the classic double perspective argument according to which the Europeanisation process has generated two different channels of representation. In regional policy (as well as at national level) institutional representation is delegated to the President's Office while economic representation is channelled through the Department of Economy.

FIGURE 4.1. MURCIA: INTERMEDIATION OF NODES FOR CONTACTS MATRIX “inward” and “outward” (measured by node size.)

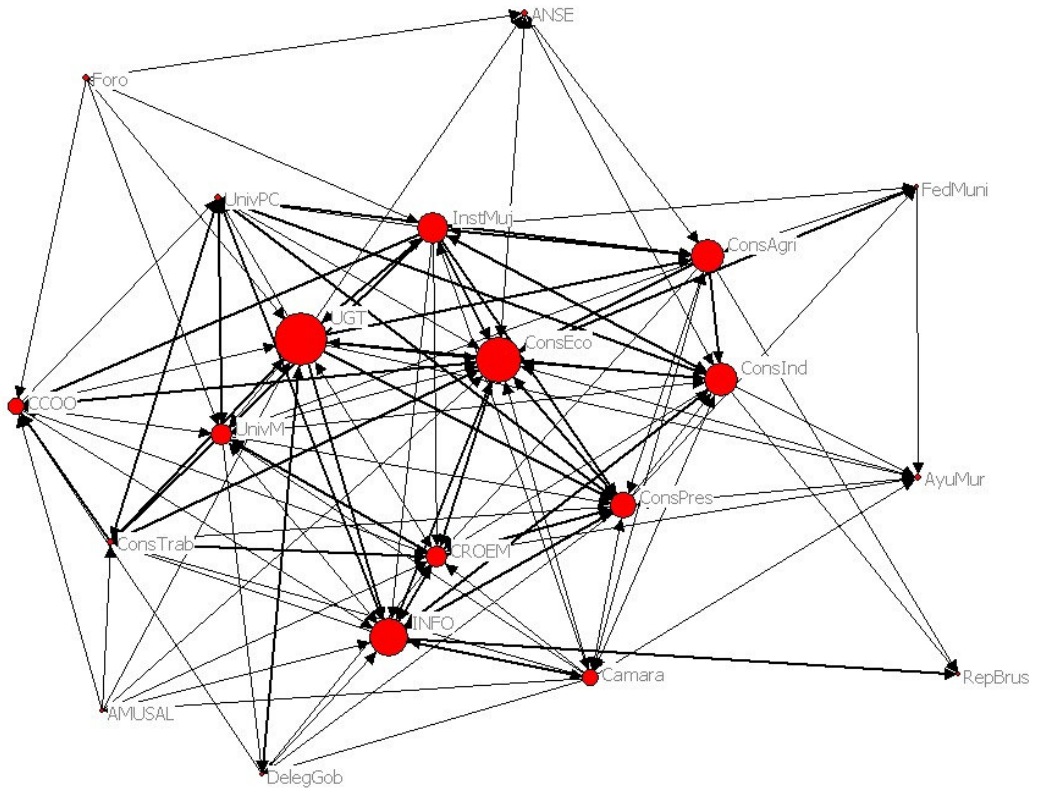
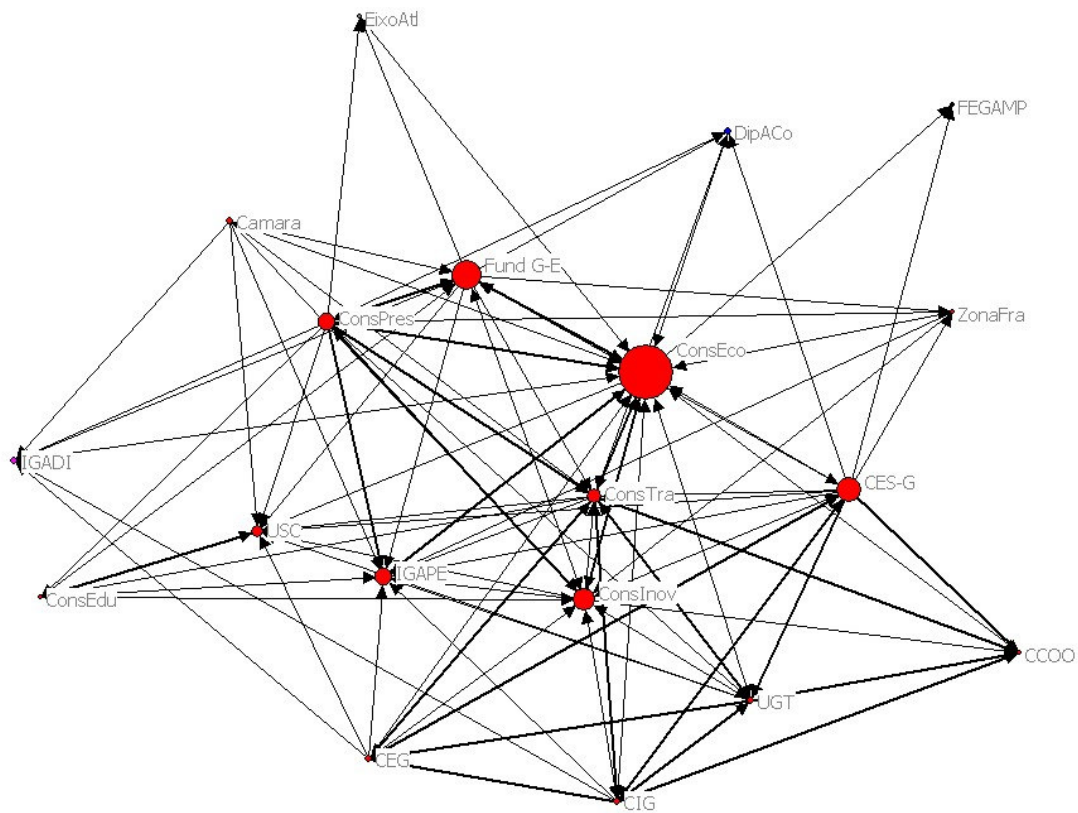


FIGURE 4.2. GALICIA: INTERMEDIATION OF NODES FOR CONTACTS MATRIX “inward” and “outward” (measured by node size.)



However, a comparison of the networks reveals an important difference with regard to the actors. In the case of Murcia, we find a number of actors with a relatively high degree of intermediation (for example, the UGT trade union, other departments, and also the public agency INFO); while in the case of Galicia, almost all the other actors have a fairly low degree of intermediation. This difference reinforces the idea that the Department for Economy in Galicia has an important centrality and a strategic capacity greater than any other actor, which allows it to concentrate considerable power resources (which is not the same in the case of Murcia.)

Finally it should be noted that the regional representation offices in Brussels (the Galicia-Europe Foundation, and the Permanent Representation of the Region of Murcia in Brussels) belong to the network, but do not occupy important positions in it. The regional institutions located in Brussels can transmit important information to the regional arena, but do not participate directly in economic planning activities and, as we have already mentioned, the programming stage is strictly the responsibility of the Department of Economy.

Another characteristic shaping the regional policy networks concerns the receivers of the contacts in each network. In Figures 5.1 and 5.2 we can see that in the Region of Murcia the number of relations initiated by the “second party” or counterpart of the informant actor of the relationship (rather than by the informant actor themselves or a third party) is relatively high, whereas in Galicia this kind of initiative within the contacts stated is quite rare. The network having a less hierarchical structure could

explain this tendency in the case of Murcia, given that many contacts arise from relatively peripheral actors towards more centrally located actors.

It should be emphasised that the interviews were focused on identifying the structure of the network during the programming phase of the financial period 2001-2013, and in Murcia we observe that the public consultation mechanisms promoted by the regional government resulted in agreements which included a plurality of actors with greater equality. In the first place, *Horizonte 2010* and *PERM 2007-2013* were officially signed by the President of the Region, the trade unions (CC.OO. and UGT) and the regional business association (CROEM.) Secondly, the degree of institutionalisation of the agreement was reinforced by the presence of an Executive Commission (presided over by the President of the Region with the participation of the CC.OO., the UGT and the CROEM) and by the implementation of a regional monitoring committee (PERM 2007-2013 Monitoring Committee), composed of the main Regional Departments (Presidency, Industry, Employment, Economy, Education, etc.) and also by the INFO, the regional environmental authority and the Institute for Gender Equality (Institute of Women.)

FIGURE 5.1. MURCIA. RECEIVERS OF CONTACTS (initiated by the counterpart).

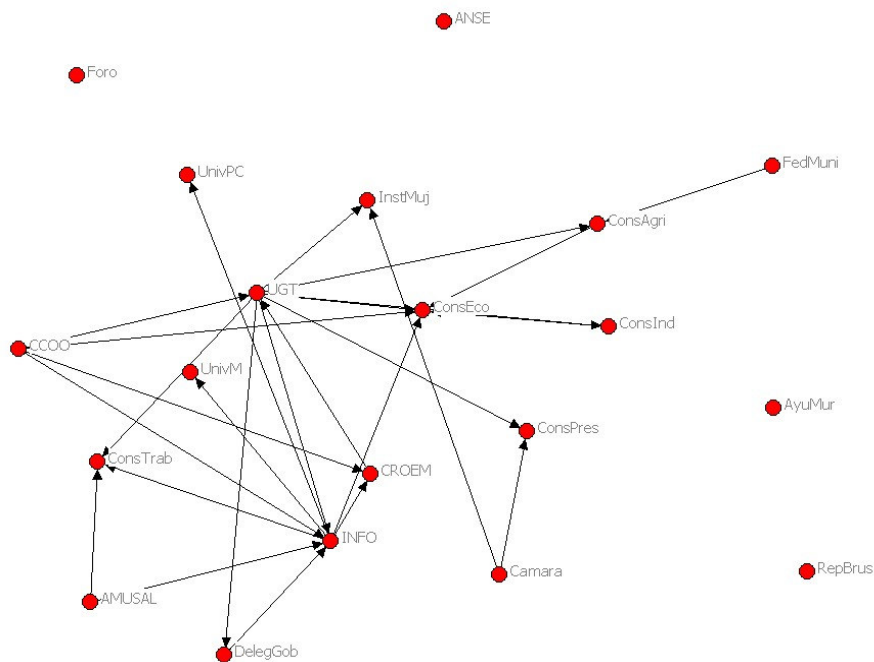
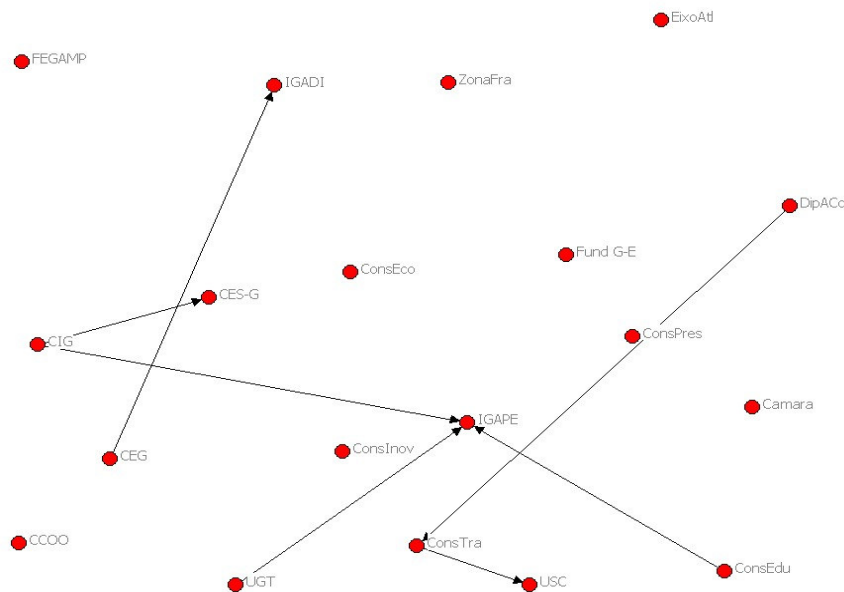


FIGURE 5.2. GALICIA. RECEIVERS OF CONTACTS (initiated by the counterpart).



2.2. Policy networks in action: positions and perceptions of the actors

The conflicts and tensions between the actors belonging to the network also show different patterns when the two regions are compared (figures 6.1 and 6.2). In the case of Galicia no important conflicts are apparent, the only area of tension being that regarding the trade unions and employers' associations, which also involves some departments. However, in the case of Murcia the extent of the conflict is more complex. We find more competition between the non-governmental actors, probably due to attempts to control the representation of different areas of interest; there is also the traditional tension between employers and trade unions, and we see some degree of competition within the government, between different departments. In short, in Murcia there exists a more pluralist pattern of tensions, spread over various dimensions, compared to Galicia, where the conflict is less visible and is mainly concentrated in the traditional management/worker question. These differences back up previous comments made on the degree of centrality and the participation of the actors in the regional policy network in both regions. In particular, they indicate that the policy network pattern formed in Galician regional politics is closer to the kind of relations seen in intergovernmental structure and policy communities, whereas in the Region of Murcia a more open, pluralist and consequently conflictive policy network has developed.

One significant difference regarding the positions of the actors in each regional network, and which seems to be associated with the conflict dynamic in the heart of each, refers to the role played by the Economic and Social Councils (ESCs) of each community. While the Economic and Social Council of Galicia is a permanent member of the Monitoring Committee 2000-2006 *POI*, the ESC of the Region of Murcia is not formally included in its respective monitoring committee. This difference is also reflected in our analysis of the network in that the ESC of Murcia does not figure in the dispersion graph. Nonetheless, the differences have to be analysed cautiously as they

can generate certain confusion. In Murcia, the main social organisations (CC.OO., UGT and the business association CROEM) participate directly in the strategic programming activity managed by the regional government. In Galicia, on the contrary, as the network is more centralised, we find the dominating presence of just one organisation, the ESC, which itself centralises the regional representation of the social and economic interest groups.

FIGURE 6.1. MURCIA. CONFLICTS WITHIN THE POLICY NETWORK (Perception of competitive or conflictive relations)

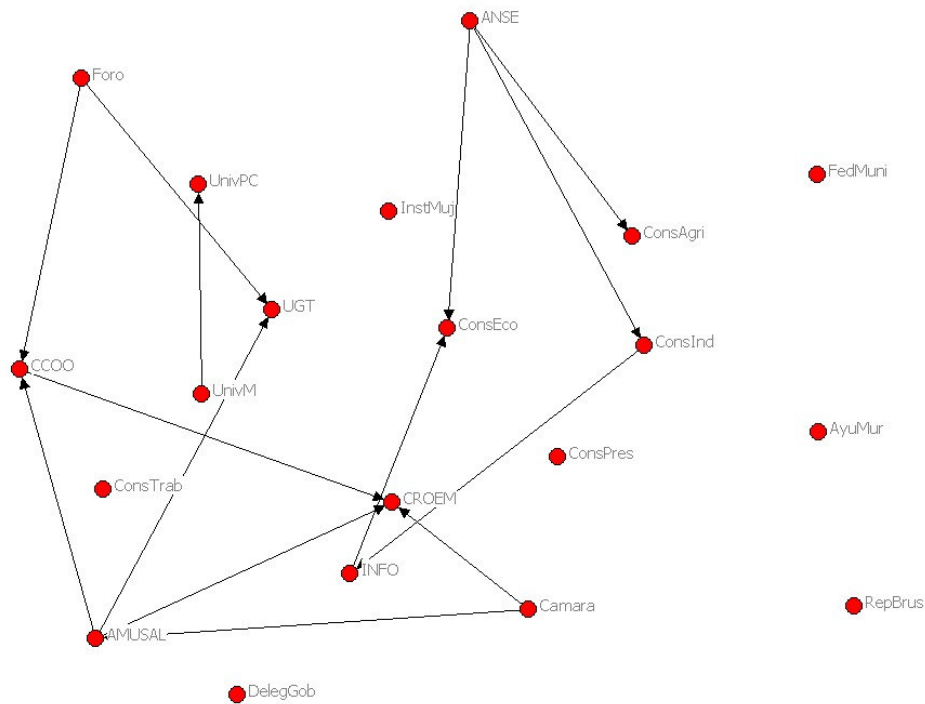
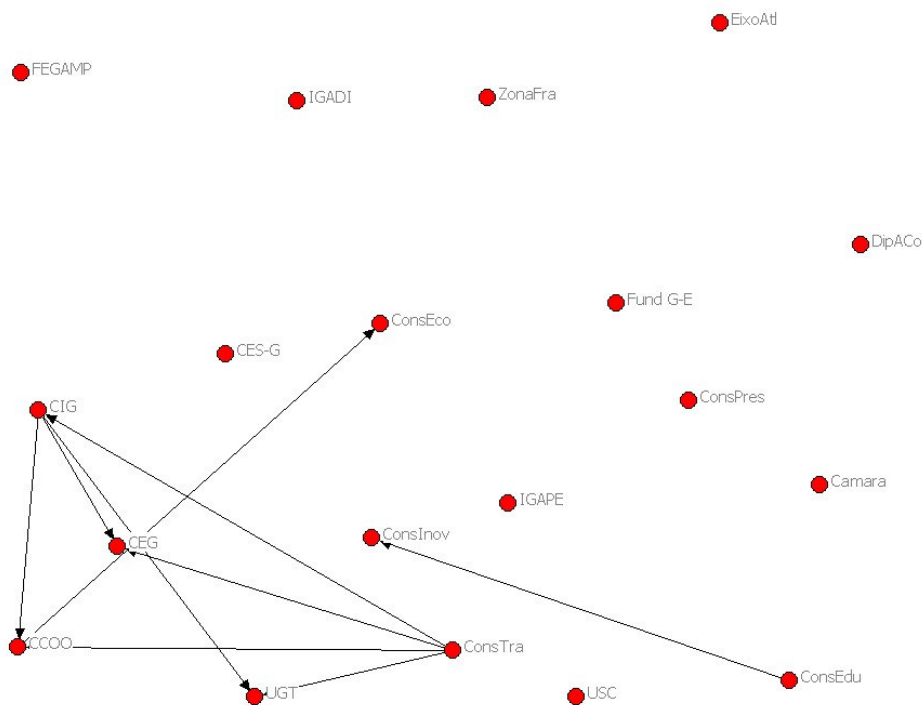


FIGURE 6.2. GALICIA. CONFLICTS WITHIN THE POLICY NETWORK (Perception of competitive or conflictive relations)



In both regions, it appears that a small number of actors are the focus of the perceptions of many others with respect to their positive influence on the formulation of regional policy. This is the case for the development agencies and the departments of economy. Although the role of the agencies in the planning stage is less important than in the implementation phase, (in which they normally act as an intermediary for channelling European financial aid towards the end beneficiaries), both INFO (Institute of Development and Promotion) and IGAPE may be considered as central actors in this process. The Galician Institute of Economic Promotion (IGAPE) was set up in 1993 and directly linked to the Department of Economy. This institution offers information, help and advice to businesses in all stages of development and runs various support programmes for companies with strategies for improving their performance. The IGAPE, together with other regional institutions and central government, is also a central source of aid through new viable investment projects. As for the Institute of Development and Promotion of the Region of Murcia (INFO), which forms an integral part of the Department of Industry and the Environment, its main objective is to promote the development of small and medium-sized companies by means of financial promotion, the search for investments, the elimination of obstacles to business development and the establishment of an environment favourable to competition. Since the financial period 1989-1994, the INFO has been the beneficiary of a Global Subsidy funded by the ERDF.

3. FORMATION OF POLICY AND THE SOCIAL CAPITAL OF THE ACTORS

In this section we examine the social capital conditions which the regional policy networks studied in Murcia and Galicia possess. While empirical evidence exists which indicates a very similar level of social capital corresponding to the populations of both regions, for the specific group of actors involved in the regional policy network, we note significant differences between the two regions. It is important to remember that social capital does not belong to an individual or a group; it is more a question of a relational concept which refers to “the characteristics of social organisation, such as trust, the norms and networks which can enhance the efficiency of the society by facilitating coordinated action” (Putnam 1993:167). Social capital, as public property, tends to be undervalued and little offered by private agents (Herrerros 2004), and so the role of public institutions becomes crucial - especially that of public policy-forming structures, with the aim of generating and promoting social capital amongst the actors involved.

3.1. Regional distribution of social capital in Spain

Social capital in Spain is comparatively inferior to that of other advanced democracies but similar to that of other south-European countries with which she shares the so-called “southern syndrome” (Maravall 1995; Monterio, Font y Torcal 2006). As in other European countries, social capital in Spain is also unequally distributed between the autonomous regions. Firstly, studies on social capital have revealed a strong positive association between the regional level of social capital⁴ and the degree of socioeconomic development (Mota 2000, 2008): the richer and more prosperous regions are those which have a higher degree of social capital, and vice versa. This result coincides with that obtained by Putnam in his study on the Italian regions, which reinforces the theory that social capital favours economic achievement. In fact, the regional distribution of social capital in Spain forms a map on which the river Ebro and the Mediterranean coast (not to mention the Madrid Region) harbour the regions with the greatest reserve of social capital, and which are also the most prosperous communities. Thus, the social capital indexes for the two regions covered by our study are to be found among the lowest of the autonomous regions; to be precise, on a scale of 0 to 1, the Region of Murcia shows a social capital level of 0.19 and Galicia of 0.18.

Therefore, at the beginning of the decade, Murcia and Galicia presented particularly homogenous levels of social capital, considering the regional population in its entirety, and both regions are located among the least favourable Spanish territories in terms of social capital. Next we will analyse the variables with regard to the social capital of the main actors involved in regional policy-making. Our proposed objective is to analyse to what extent the similarities at aggregate level of the two regions are

⁴ The evaluation of social capital carried out by Mota (2000, 2008,) involved three analytical dimensions and a set of variables: i) Civic attitudes and behaviours: citizens’ interest in regional policy and information on the activities of the regional government, and newspaper readership; ii) Characteristics of the associative structure (firstly, the proportion of professional and economic associations out of the total associations, and secondly, the proportion of philanthropic and social assistance associations out of the total associations); iii) voluntary membership of associations (political parties, trade unions, sports clubs and leisure/social clubs, support groups, etc.).

confirmed by the attitudes of the actors involved in the regional policy network, as well as by their opinions and beliefs about regional development policy.

3.2. Social capital and European Cohesion Policy

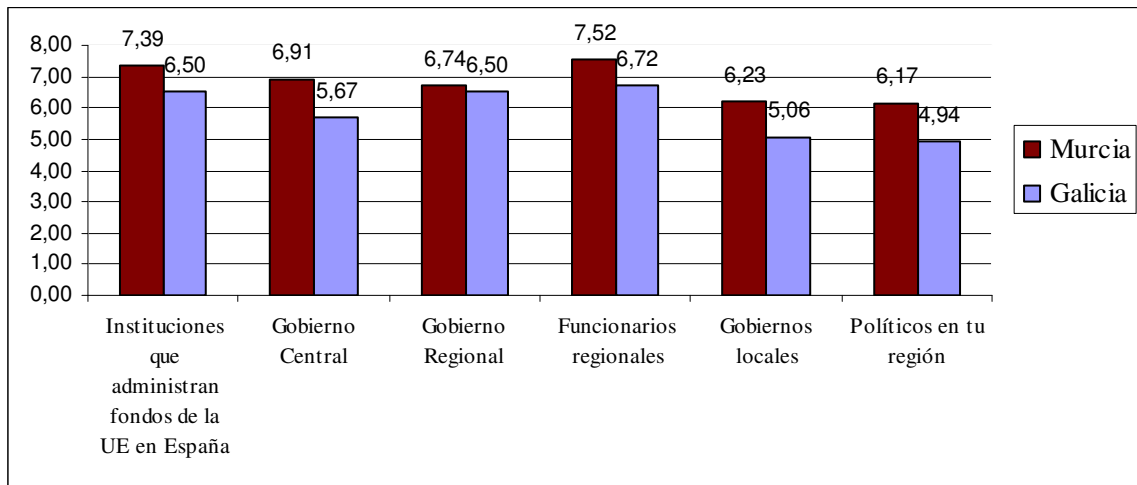
In our interviews with the actors participating in the regional policy network we included various specific questions with the aim of measuring their characteristics regarding social capital. It is important to take into account the fact that our data do not come from a statistically representative sample, so they are by no means representative of the regional population in its entirety nor of the regional political elite. The answers we obtained enabled us to measure various dimensions of social capital exclusively for those individuals. It should be remembered that they were selected according to “position identification” and “reputation identification”, so they adequately represent the actors involved in the regional policy programming process.

First of all, let us consider the level of *trust*. Trust is the most important element of social capital. It is the key conceptual mechanism for resolving uncertainty in relationships between equals and for facilitating collective action. Currently, trust is generally considered to be a necessary requirement for competitive success and the improvement of institutional performance. In particular, we have considered two aspects of trust: institutional trust and social trust.

Firstly, institutional trust refers to the degree of trust in public institutions, which, measured on a scale of 0 to 1, reveals higher scores amongst the actors in Murcia (0.69) than those in Galicia (0.59). In both regions, the institutions which administrate the EU funds in Spain and the regional civil servants are the most *trustworthy* institutions, especially in comparison with the local institutions, but also in relation to the regional and central levels of government (figure 7). These results, similar in both regions, appear to indicate that it is a question of public trust essentially founded on the competence of the public institutions and actors to perform efficiently, rather than on belief in their political will to respond to policy-related demands. In some way the public trust shown by the actors involved in regional policy networks seems to reflect the characteristic legitimacy resulting from the policies of the European Union (Scharpf 1999: 38).

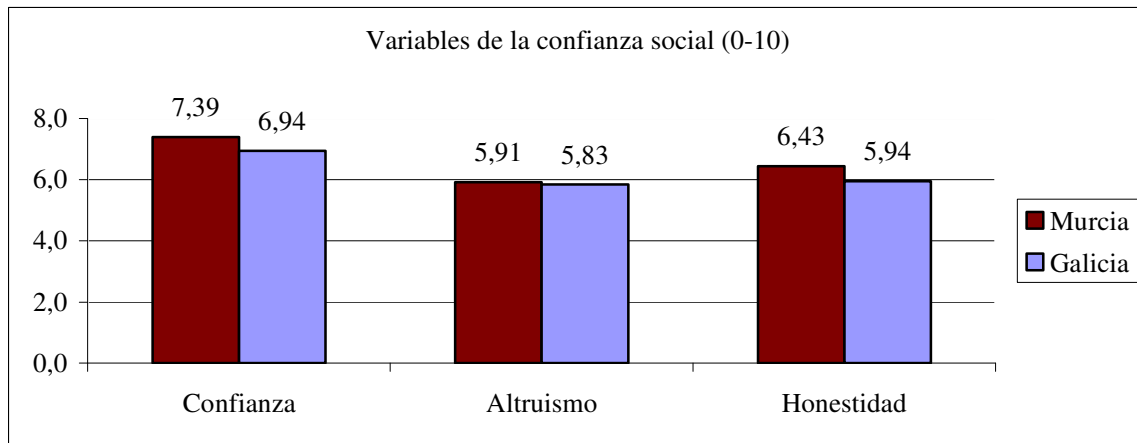
Secondly, social trust refers to generalised trust between individuals and the social norms governing interaction between them. The three variables which make up social trust (trust, altruism and honesty) show higher values in Murcia than in Galicia (Figure 8). Creating an additive index of social trust makes it possible to sum up these results on a scale of 0 to 1, in which the actors in the policy network in the region of Murcia scored 0.66 and their counterparts in Galicia scored 0.62. This smaller difference separating the regional policy actors of each region with regard to social trust is congruous with the almost identical level of social capital observed in the populations of these autonomous regions.

FIGURE 7. TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN MURCIA AND GALICIA (scale 0-10).



[Institutions which administrate EU funds in Spain / Central Government / Regional Government / Regional civil servants / Local government / Politicians in your region]

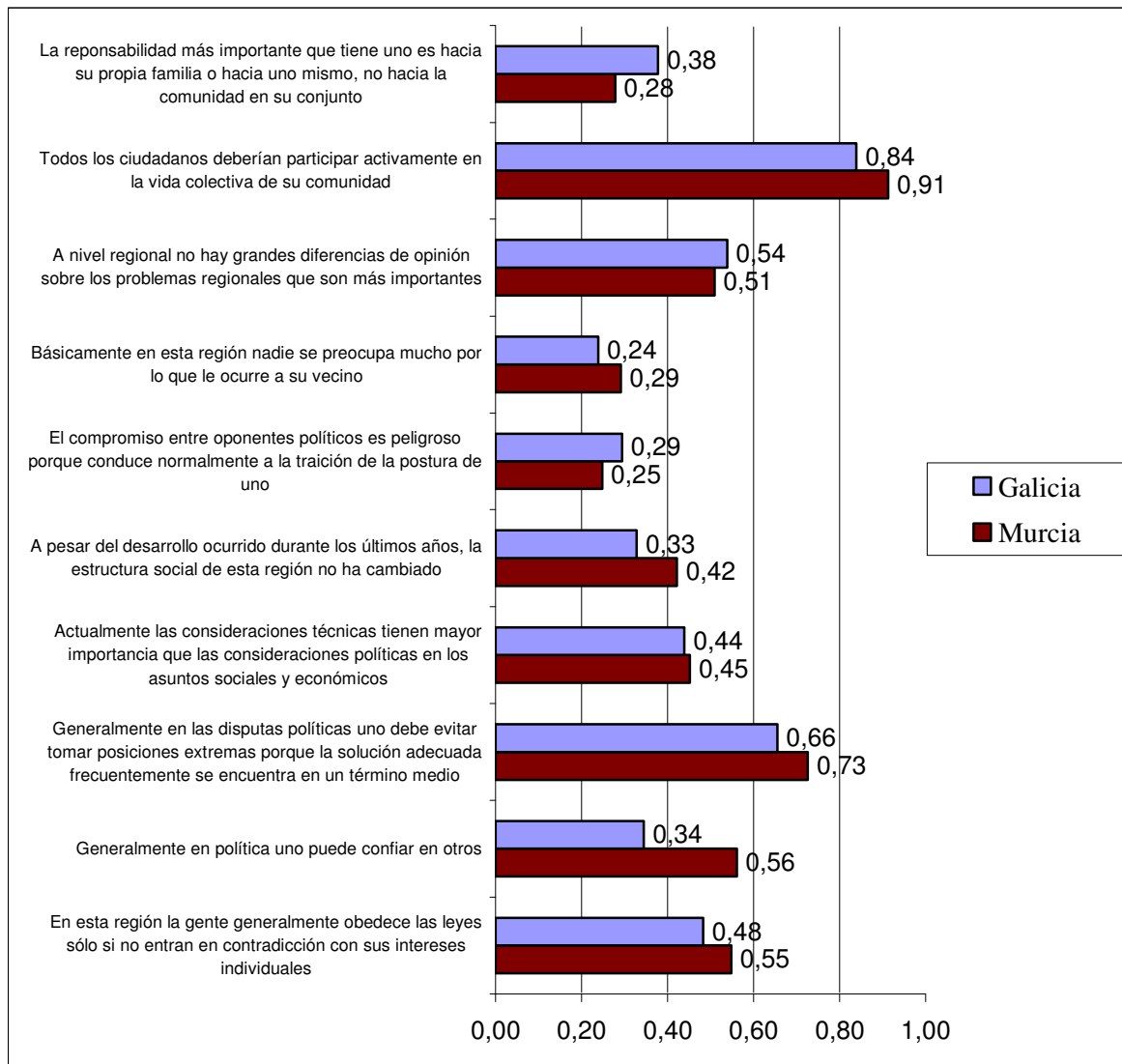
FIGURE 8. LEVEL OF SOCIAL TRUST IN MURCIA AND GALICIA.



[Social trust variables (0-10) / Trust / Altruism / Honesty]

The attitudes, social values and orientations connected to politics and society define the political culture of a community and make it possible to identify the forms taken by social capital at the same time. We asked the regional actors to what extent they agreed with different opinions about politics and society in their region. The average values (which range between 0 and 1) are shown in figure 9. It is interesting to observe how the interviewees of the two regions described a variety of regional scenarios. Given the small size of our sample it is difficult to reach any conclusion, although different opinions appear to support the existence in each region of a specific way of perceiving social trust and values, as well as a predominant interaction pattern.

FIGURE 9. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL OPINIONS IN MURCIA AND GALICIA (degree of agreement 0- 1)



[One's greatest responsibility is towards one's own family or oneself, not towards the community as a whole

All citizens should participate actively in the collective life of their community

At regional level there are no great differences of opinion about the more important regional problems

Basically, in this region no-one cares much about what happens to their neighbour

Agreement between political opponents is dangerous because it normally leads to one of them betraying their position

Despite the development which has occurred over the last few years, the social structure of this region has not changed

Currently technical considerations are more important than political ones in social and economic affairs

Generally, in political arguments, one should avoid adopting an extreme position because the best solution is often a happy medium

Generally, in politics, you can trust other people

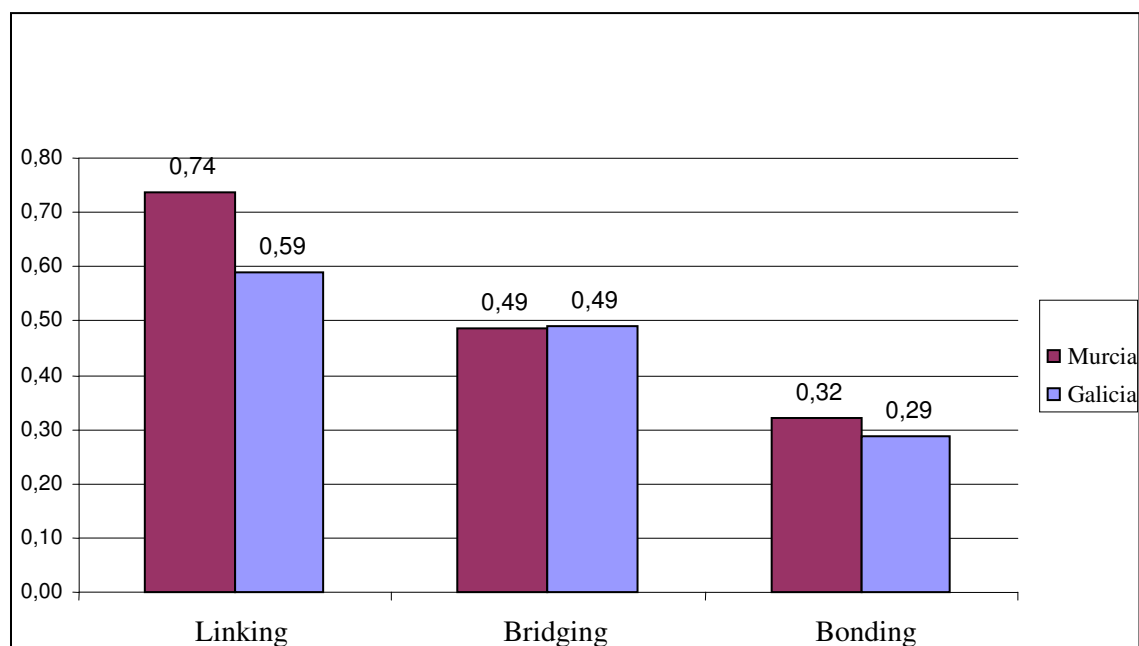
In this region people normally obey the law only if it does not conflict with their personal interests]

On applying a factor analysis to reduce the results obtained, we find that these beliefs and opinions are combined in such a way that they produce three underlying

dimensions. The third component (which explains 14.5% of the variance) may be considered as a *proxy* variable of the social capital, connected to the idea of *bonding* social capital - which refers to the strong inner ties of primary social groups such as families, clans and the neighbours of a community when defending the interests of the group and, in particular, as mechanisms enabling individuals to face vicissitudes in moments of great difficulty and without help from institutions (Narayan 1999, Putnam 2000). It includes perceptions of the absence of solidarity: “the neighbours don’t care about each other,” (factor loading 0.807), the survival of traditional social structures: “in spite of the development seen over the last few years,” (factor loading 0.568) and positions opposed to political commitment: “which will lead to betrayal on the part of one of the parties” (factor loading 0.488). The second component (which explains 17% of the variance) is associated with *bridging* social capital, which refers to the association capacity of a community and is expressed in dense social interchange networks. These networks are considered antagonistic to *bonding* forces (Putnam 2000). This component includes attitudes and opinions which, to a certain degree, can facilitate cooperation between social groups; like political moderation: “the best solution is often a happy medium”, (factor 0.688), individualism: “one’s main responsibility is towards one’s family or oneself” (factor 0.738) and the relevance of a technical perspective before an ideological one: “currently technical considerations are more important than political ones with regard to social and economic affairs” (factor 0.7676). Finally, the first and most important component (which explains almost 19% of the total variance) can be associated with *linking* social capital, which refers to particular characteristics and mechanisms of social structure which enable the *bridging* social capital or the association capacity of a community to express itself through political behaviours, so that it interacts with institutions and contributes to the production of public goods and results (Cote and Healy 2001, Woolcock 2001). Therefore, this component implies trust within the political sphere: “in politics one can generally trust the others” (factor loading 0.726) and the involvement of citizens in politics: “all citizens should participate actively in the collective life of their community”, (factor loading 0.741). It should be stressed that this type of social capital is essential in the context of the economic development associated with management of European cohesion policy, as it provides the links between the “institutions” (the political and organisational structures officially responsible for implementing policies) and “civil society” (the economic and social regional actors who have the capacity to transform the programmes into forms of sustainable development).

Figure 10 represents the average values of each component of social capital in each region. First of all, the values and social perceptions of the actors involved in regional policy are mainly related with linking social capital. While in Murcia and Galicia there exist fairly similar levels of bonding social capital, and especially bridging social capital, the most obvious difference between these two regions is their level of linking social capital, which is ten points higher in the case of the Region of Murcia. In accordance with the theoretical social capital model, this result appears to be coherent with the previous results, in that the values supporting social trust and especially institutional trust, as well as civic commitment, are greater amongst the actors involved in regional politics in Murcia than in Galicia.

FIGURE 10. DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL: BONDING, BRIDGING AND LINKING (Range: 0 to 1).



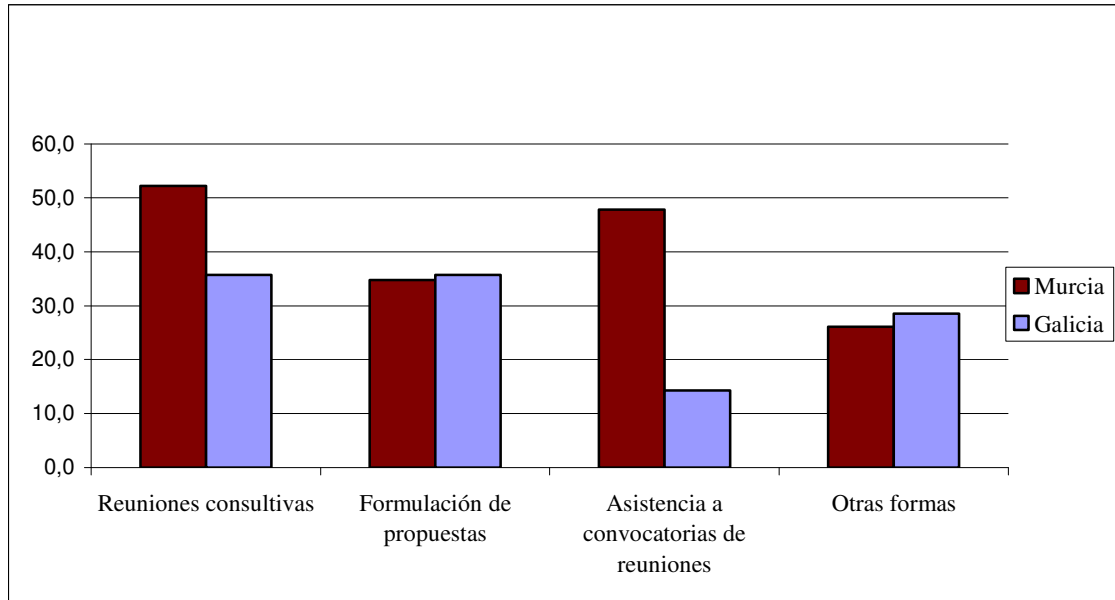
3.3. Opinions and perceptions of regional policy-making and EU funding

We have attempted to examine the formation process of Cohesion Policy in both regions through the opinions and perceptions of the main participating actors. Firstly, in response to the question about how much influence social groups have in the regional decision-making process, a clear division of opinion emerges between those interviewed in the Region of Murcia and in the Galician region. While 68% of the former consider that the regional social organisations and interest groups exert an influence, this same opinion does not even score 30% in the case of the latter. Furthermore, over half of those interviewed in Galicia consider that social organisations have only a weak influence over the decision-making process. These opinions confirm some aspects of our network analysis, in which we found that the network is more centralised (and dominated by regional public institutions) in Galicia. On the other hand, the greater active participation of interest groups in Murcia, such as unions and employers' associations, is reflected in the actors' perception of the influence wielded by social organisations in the formation of regional policy.

Figure 11 presents the main participation channels through which the social organizations could have participated in the formation of regional policy. In general terms we can see that a larger number of actors in Murcia than in Galicia state that they have used various kinds of social participation in the programming stage 2007-2013. Consultations and attendance at meetings are the most common mechanisms of participation. The result is congruous with the process which has evolved in Spain as a consequence of the Europeanisation of regional policy-making. The programming stage normally includes some consulting procedures during which the actors are asked to express their opinions and make comments on the regional strategy. However, the

effectiveness of the different social actors' participation can vary considerably. The differences observed between the cases of Murcia and Galicia indicate how very different, in practice, these participation experiences can be.

FIGURE 11. FORMS OF PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITY PROGRAMMING (2007-2013)

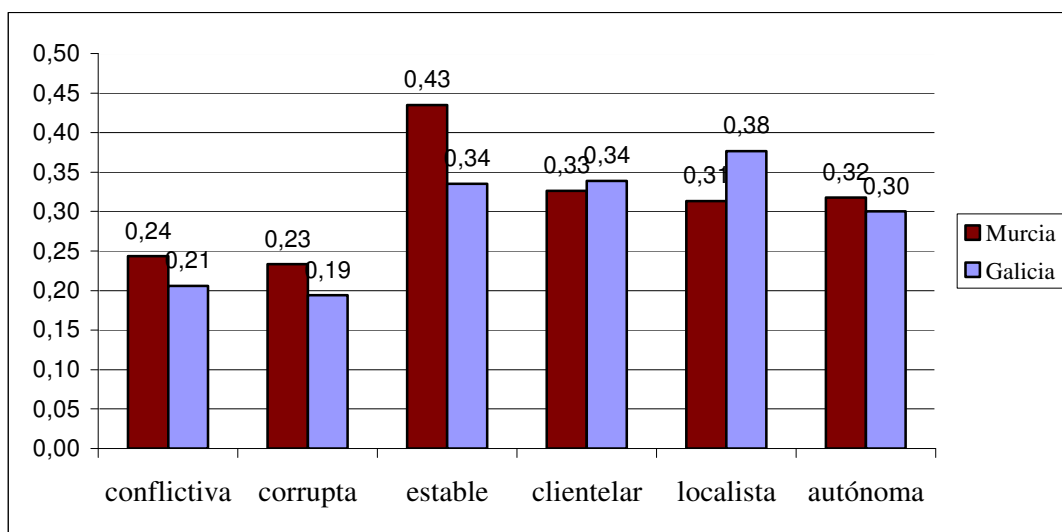


[Consultations / Formulation of proposals / Attendance at meetings / Other forms]

With regard to the nature of political conflict within the regional sphere, we found no significant variations between the two regions. In both Galicia and in Murcia political agreement is a costly commodity which it is not always possible for the participants to attain. In fact, one half of the interviewees in both regions stated that *compromise is not often used* to resolve important regional problems. However, the actors in Murcia consider that crucial problems are resolved through compromise more frequently than their counterparts in Galicia do.

We also asked how the interviewees would define political life in their region, proposing six different characteristics which had to be assigned an appropriate value on a scale from 1 to 10: *conflictive*, *corrupt*, *stable*, *biased*, *local* and *autonomous*. In both regions none of these characteristics received much support amongst those interviewed (the highest score didn't reach five.) In both regions bias or favouritism scored highest amongst the characteristics of regional politics, although slightly higher in Galicia, which suggests the persistence of traditional social structures and political practices underlying the inherited social capital. On the other hand, perception of the existence of conflict and corruption is higher in Murcia than in Galicia. As the network analysis showed, the more plural and active participation of the social actors in Murcia could explain the higher level of conflict perceived by the interviewees. The importance of the water issue in the Region of Murcia should also be stressed; this has become a key question with regard to political confrontation about the region's future (very frequently arising in the interviews conducted.) In Galicia, however, the conflict is basically concentrated within the labour sector, in accordance with the classic division between the unions and the employers' associations. Also, in Murcia -as on most of the Mediterranean coast- corruption is mainly associated with the construction industry and local property developing policy.

FIGURE 12. PERCEPTIONS OF REGIONAL POLITICAL STYLE (0- 10)



[conflictive / corrupt / stable /biased / local / autonomous]

Finally, the actors participating in regional policy-making in Murcia and Galicia share very similar opinions regarding regional policy on European financing. Perception of the activities performed by the autonomous governments with regard to European structural policies is as positive in Murcia as it is in Galicia. In fact, in both regions almost 70% of those interviewed assessed the work done by regional government positively. It is interesting to observe the larger number of actors in Galicia who stated that they lacked sufficient information to evaluate all of the ROPs, which seems to support the lesser impact of the real participation of the civil society actors in regional policy formation in that autonomous community. Likewise, while the actors interviewed in Galicia hardly expressed any anti-governmental opinions, the majority showing approval of the work carried out during the last two operational programmes, in Murcia various actors judged some of the ROP financial periods negatively. Evaluations which must be associated with the higher level of conflict and social participation we observed in the regional policy network in Murcia in comparison to that of Galicia.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Entry into the European Union and the consolidation of the Autonomous Regions have caused great changes in regional politics in Spain. Currently, the Spanish regions enjoy greater autonomy than they did two decades ago. However, their autonomy is limited by two fundamental factors. Firstly, the Constitution establishes limits to the regional government's activities regarding economic policy-making; and secondly, by increasing their responsibilities, budgetary restrictions have created regional governments which are more dependent on national and European transfers of funds.

One change we consider particularly significant is related to the programming phase of regional policy-making. The Europeanisation of the policy-making process has made it possible for regional actors to take part in the drawing up of regional strategy. Currently, regional strategic documents are subject to open, participative procedures within a process managed by the regional government. As we have seen in the cases Galicia and the Region of Murcia, the autonomous governments have taken advantage

of this opportunity and have gradually become the main actors even though the central level still plays a part of considerable importance.

We have demonstrated that the formal processes of regional policy-making are the same in both regions studied. After experiencing four financial periods of European Cohesion Policy, the procedures are repeated and the tasks have been properly assimilated by each autonomous public administration. However, the network of regional policy actors of the two regions show significantly different structures: the network centralisation index indicates that the network formed in Galicia is much more centralised than in Murcia. In particular, while in Galicia the different governmental units occupy a very important central position in the network, in the case of Murcia, on the contrary, the governmental units are not so central, with the single exception of the Department of Economy. The horizontal interactions between the social actors and upwards vertical dynamics are more frequent in Murcia than in Galicia, which indicates a more pluralist policy-making pattern in the case of Murcia.

Based on these differential characteristics, we can conclude that the network structure in Galician regional politics is dominated by the position and relations of the governmental actors, which define a policy community with a strong state-oriented base. A fundamental consensus between the actors making up the network is predominant, and these coordinate a pattern of intergovernmental relations mostly determined by the formal rules of power distribution. In contrast, in the case of the Region of Murcia, a network has been formed in which the participation of non-governmental actors appears more horizontal, with a more pluralist structure of relations, which results in the perception of conflict and competition between the actors being more characteristic of a kind of lobbying network. A certain diversity of cores of influence and decision-making capacity promotes the high intensity of relations between all the important actors.

The greater institutionalisation which can be attributed to the Galician autonomous government compared to that of Murcia, mainly due to its having reached, since the beginning, the maximum competence ceiling and therefore having a large amount of bureaucratic machinery, can explain at least in part the policy network pattern so closely linked to intergovernmental relations which we find in Galicia. The relatively weak institutionalisation of the government of Murcia and the resulting lower concentration of power and influence wielded by the governmental actors would explain the creation of a more plural, open and competitive regional policy network in this autonomous region.

We have noted that, in line with the structural characteristics of each network, perception of the influence the social actors have also varies in the two regions. While most of the actors interviewed in the Region of Murcia considered that the regional social organisations and interest groups exerted some influence in regional politics, more than half of those interviewed in Galicia thought that regional social organisations had hardly any influence over the decision-making process at all. Furthermore, the analysis of the social capital components of the actors participating in regional policy-making reveals significant differences between the two autonomous regions, suggesting different interaction patterns between the actors. In Murcia the interviewees show more trust in public institutions and also, although to a lesser extent, more social trust than in Galicia, as well as achieving better results with regard to linking social capital; i.e. that which favours exchange and cooperation in the democratic public sphere. Given that we started out with the observation that, at the beginning of the decade, the social capital of the population in general was very similar in both regions, it could be concluded that the different configuration of the regional development policy network in Galicia and in the

region of Murcia has stimulated the social capital resources between the political elites and the social organisations of each region with varying degrees of success.

In short, although the process of the Europeanisation of regional development policies has led to the adoption of some homogenous practices and procedures with regard to the formation and implementation of the Cohesion Policy, the specific conditions of each regional policy arena have promoted a specific configuration of the policy networks in the programming phase of the Regional Operational Programmes. The structure and configuration of the regional development policy network, the way in which it manifests the political principle of “partnership”, has had an impact on regional policy-related decision-making and one of the mechanisms which definitely have an effect is the social capital of the actors involved, a crucial resource for political cooperation and democratic performance.

ANNEX 1: MAIN ACTORS

Region of Murcia

DelegGob	Delegación del Gobierno Central en Murcia: “Delegation of Central Government in Murcia”
ConsPres OfRepM	Consejería de la Presidencia: “Department of the Presidency” Oficina de la Representación Regional en Bruselas: “Regional Representation Office in Brussels”
ConsEco ConsInd	Consejería de Economía: “Department of Economy” Consejería de Industria y Medioambiente: Department of Industry and the Environment”
ConsTrab	Consejería de Trabajo, Consumo y Política Social: “Department of Employment, Consumption and Social Policy”
INFO	Instituto de Fomento (dependiente de la Consejería de Industria y Medioambiente): “Institute of Development and Promotion” (affiliated to the Department of Industry and the Environment)
FedMuni	Federación de Municipios de la Región de Murcia: “Federation of Municipalities of the Region of Murcia”
AyuMur Camara	Ayuntamiento de Murcia: “District Council of Murcia” Cámara de Comercio de la Ciudad de Murcia: “Chamber of Commerce of the City of Murcia”
CC.OO UGT	Sindicato: Trade Union Sindicato: Trade Union
CROEM	Asociación de empresarios regional: “Regional Association of Employers”
InstMuj AMUSAL	Instituto de la Mujer: “Institute of Women” Asociación de empresarios cooperativistas: “Association of Co-operative Employers”
UnivM UnivPC	Universidad de Murcia: “University of Murcia” Universidad de Cartagena: “University of Cartagena”
Foro Fund SM	Ong: NGO Ong: NGO

Region of Galicia

ConsPres ConsEco ConsIndu	Consejería de la Presidencia: “Department of the Presidency” Consejería de Economía: “Department of Economy” Consejería de Industria e Innovación: “Department of Industry and Innovation”
ConsTra RelExts	Consejería de Trabajo: “Department of Employment” Secretaría de Acción Exterior (Consejería de la Presidencia): “Secretariat of Exterior Action” (Department of the Presidency)
ConsEdu IGAPE	Consejería de Educación: “Department of Education” <i>Instituto Gallego para la Promoción Económica</i> /Agencia de Desarrollo Regional: “Galician Institute for Economic Promotion / Regional Development Agency”
Fund G-E FEGAMP	Fundación Galicia-Europa: “Galicia/Europe Foundation” Federación Gallega de Municipios y Provincias: “Galician Federation of Municipalities and Provinces”

Eixo Atl	Asociación Translimítrofe de las Municipalidades Portuguesas y Gallegas: “Transborder Association of Portuguese and Galician Municipalities”
Zona Fra	Consortio Público/Agencia de Desarrollo Local (<i>Zona de Libre Comercio de Vigo</i>): “Public Consortium /Local Development Agency (<i>Free Commerce Zone of Vigo</i>)”
Camara	Cámara de Comercio de Santiago de Compostela: “Chamber of Commerce of Santiago de Compostela”
DipACo	Diputación de A Coruña: “A Coruña Provincial Council”
CES	Consejo Social y Económico de Galicia: “Economic and Social Council of Galicia”
CCOO	Sindicato: Trade Union
UGT	Sindicato: Trade Union
CIG	Sindicato (regional): Regional Trade Union
CEG	Asociación Empresaria Regional: “Regional Employers’ Association”
IGADI	<i>Instituto Gallego de Análisis y Documentación Internacional: “Galician Institute of International Analysis and Documentation”</i>
USC	Universidad de Santiago de Compostela: “University of Santiago de Compostela”

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