EU ACCESSION AND CIVIL SOCIETY EMPOWERMENT:

THE CASE OF MALTESE ENGOs

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A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Arts in fulfilment of the requirements of the Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of Malta.
Declaration

I hereby declare that the work in the dissertation entitled “EU Accession and Civil Society Empowerment: The case of Maltese ENGOs”, presented to the Faculty of Arts at the University of Malta for the degree of Ph.D. in Sociology, during July 2013, is my own original work.

Michael Briguglio
To my son David, for his unconditional love.
Abstract

This thesis investigates whether European Union (EU) Accession has influenced civil society empowerment in Malta, with specific reference to Environmental NGOs (ENGOs). In particular, the study will examine whether Maltese ENGOs have experienced empowerment in the first years following EU accession.

This study verifies (1) whether EU accession has effected lobbying of ENGOs; (2) whether EU accession has enhanced the empowerment of ENGOs; and (3) whether EU accession has led to the institutionalisation of ENGOs.

This study analyzes the construction of environmental politics in relation to Malta’s EU accession. For this scope, discourse analysis was applied to engage with respondents from ENGOs and with specific case studies involving ENGOs in particular.

A major conclusion that can be derived from this thesis is that EU accession has generally enhanced the empowerment of Maltese ENGOs, but this process was uneven, was combined with other overdetermining factors and depended on different issues and on different types of ENGO.

ENGOs had greater access to opportunities that were unavailable prior to Malta’s EU accession. The construction or otherwise of hegemonic formations related to the
Empowerment of ENGOs was related to sensitizing, procedural, structural and substantive impacts.

Empowerment through hegemonic formations was not common, but ENGOs were successful in constructing nodal points and in benefiting from different types of impacts, especially sensitizing and procedural ones.

Another important conclusion is that even though ENGO empowerment could also be related to their institutionalisation, this process is not pre-determined and does not exclude antagonism of such ENGOs to State structures and other social agents. Besides, the environmental movement remains characterised by both moderate and radical ideologies.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Objective

The aim of this thesis is to analyse whether EU Accession has influenced civil society empowerment in Malta, with specific reference to Environmental NGOs (ENGOs). The thesis will investigate whether, and to what extent, through EU accession, the demands of Maltese ENGOs have become more influential. The analysis will focus on factors such as environmental legislation and policy; institutionalisation of ENGO participation in decision-making structures; as well as lobbying of Maltese ENGOs with Maltese and EU institutions. In particular, the study will examine whether Maltese ENGOs have experienced empowerment in the first years following EU accession.

The empowerment of ENGOs will be analysed through the construction or otherwise of hegemonic formations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Howarth, 2000; Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000) and this will be substantiated through the analysis of impacts of ENGOs (Giugni, 1995; van der Heijden, 1999; Carter, 2001; Rootes 2007a).

This study investigates whether empowerment may also result in institutionalisation. ENGOs become enrolled within State structures, thus resulting in their ideologies and strategies becoming increasingly regularised within the existing social order. As Philip W. Sutton (2007) puts it, ‘Greens change societies, but societies also change the Greens’¹ (122). Such issues are investigated with respect to Maltese ENGOs in the context of Malta’s EU accession.

¹ Sutton is referring to Green Parties, but I feel that this statement is applicable to ENGOs.
1.2 Background

The European Union is frequently dubbed as being a major global player in the protection of the environment. The EU has taken centre stage in the drawing up of the Kyoto Protocol and in various United Nations’ conferences such as World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 and various Conferences of the Parties (CoP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC), including the one held in Bali in 2007, even though its position was arguably weaker in subsequent conferences such as the Copenhagen Conference on climate change in 2009. Nevertheless, compared to other blocs and global powers, the EU remains the most committed global political force on environmental protection. At the same time, within the EU, calls for environmental protection frequently have to compete with other calls, such as those which prioritize economic growth.

Prior to Malta’s accession to the European Union in 2004, one major argument that was put forward by the pro-accession movement was that Malta would make great improvements in environmental matters through EU membership. Frequent reference was made to areas such as waste management, hunting and trapping of birds, air and marine pollution, access to environmental information, and proper assessment of the environmental impacts of development. In this regard, an analysis of the empowerment of ENGOs can shed light on whether such changes were brought about. In turn, this can be of benefit for policy purposes and academic enquiry, especially since ‘so far the contribution of the EU to the consolidation of democracy and civil society in the Southern and Eastern European member states is little explored’ (Eising, 2008: 177).
One such analysis is that of Mark Harwood (2009), who considers Europeanization as ‘work in progress’ (353), whilst arguing that within the first 5 years of EU accession, Malta had not yet experienced a ‘cultural change in the norms which underpin the political system’ (ibid: iii). EU accession brought about greater planning and regulatory controls (ibid: 309), which contrasted with ad hoc and ‘highly partisan’ (ibid: ii) arrangements in Maltese policy-making. This resulted in increased opportunities for civil society within a context of continued dominance of Malta’s political class. In contrast, Malta’s public service was not deemed as playing a dominant role in policy making (ibid: 308).

Before proceeding further, it is important to describe the rise of ENGOs and to discuss why the environment is an important area of sociological study.

1.3 The Rise of ENGOs

Environmental movements are ‘broad networks of people and organisations engaged in collective action in the pursuit of environmental benefits’ (Rootes, 1999: 2). This thesis will focus on movement organisations which do not seek formal government representation, namely ENGOs. Such organisations have gained considerable influence in contemporary political processes, capturing the attention of various sociologists who emphasise their high degree of influence around the world in the past few decades (Beck, 1995; Dalton, 1994, 2005; Giddens, 1994a; Garner, 1996; Castells, 1997; Sutton, 2004; DeSombre, 2005; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Doherty and Doyle, 2006; Rootes, 1999, 2007a, b,c).
Environmental concerns and activism in Western Europe can be traced back to the 1800s, when local communities, trade unions and environmental organisations were concerned with issues such as pollution and health and safety standards at work (Benton, 2002; Sutton, 2004). However, environmentalism became politically influential by the mid-1970s, when it became articulated as a distinct ideology, thus resulting in the birth and/or growth of various ENGOs (Dalton, 1994; Sutton, 2004). The influence of environmental issues has been confirmed by Eurobarometer surveys since 1973 and even by World Values Surveys (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). As regards the latter, the 1999–2002 surveys clearly show that membership levels in environmental movements are increasing on a global scale. Membership levels vary across different societies, where percentages of respondents who state that they are members of an environmental group vary from 45.1 in the Netherlands to 0.2 in Turkey. Malta’s percentage is 2.0. Other EU examples include Denmark 13.2; Greece 11.0; Belgium 10.5. Luxembourg 9.7; Italy 3.8; Ireland 3.2; West Germany 2.8; France 2.1; UK 1.5; Poland 1.4; Portugal 0.9; Latvia 0.7 (ibid.).

Whilst 400 NGOs participated in the parallel NGO meeting to the United Nations Convention on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, 7,000 NGOs participated in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992 (DeSombre, 2005). Influential and established ENGOs such as WWF, FoE, Greenpeace, Birdlife and others have gone global, making up 17% of all transnational social movement organisations, being surpassed only by human rights groups at 26%, and increasing in number from 17 in 1973 to 167 in 2000 (Doherty and Doyle, 2006).
A number of factors have contributed to the development of environmentalism. These include industrial developments such as those associated with nuclear power, the production and distribution of oil, and the utilization of large scale transportation systems, the intensification of global environmental problems such as climate change and the rapid extinction of species. The emergence of political institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union, and the social construction of environmental problems through articulation of specific concerns and demands were also instrumental in highlighting the importance of environmental issues.

The articulation of environmental concerns should not be underestimated. Indeed, environmental problems do not automatically result in environmental consciousness – if this were the case, environmental awareness would be highest in societies with the most environmental problems. Indeed, as Melucci (1989) puts it, the rise in environmentalism ‘does not only lie in increasing pollution or the gradual worsening of environmental decay. The real reason is that we are beginning to perceive reality in different terms; our definition of individual and collective needs is changing’ (175).

1.4 Research questions
In view of the above, this research will seek to answer the following research questions.

(1) Has EU accession effected the lobbying of ENGOs?

(2) Has EU accession enhanced the empowerment of ENGOs?

(3) Has EU accession led to the institutionalisation of ENGOs?
1.5 Theoretical Foundations

This thesis utilises post-Marxist Discourse Theory (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 2005; Howarth, 2000; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000; Torfing, 2005) in attempting to answer the research questions above. In turn, the study also makes use of certain concepts from Althusserian Marxism and the Strategic-Relational Approach (Althusser, 1977, 1984; Poulantzas, 2000; Jessop, 2008), as well as of theories of environmental politics (Carter, 2001, 2007; Rootes 2007a,b,c; Van der Heijden, 1999; 2006; 2010) as influenced by Political Process Theory (Giugni, 1995), and theories of Europeanization (Börzel, T.A., 2008; Knill and Liefferlink, 2007)

In this respect, environmental politics will be considered as being discursively constructed through processes of articulation involving antagonistic relations and hegemonic practices. ENGO activism is seen as being related to various overdetermining factors and State power, which in turn represents the condensation of conflicting and antagonistic forces on different levels, from the local to the global. Malta’s EU membership is situated accordingly. ENGO empowerment is conceptualised in terms of the construction of hegemonic formations, which can be substantiated through the analysis of specific impacts.

1.6 Methodological Foundations

In order to apply the theoretical setting just described to the research questions, two research methods are adopted through the ‘Essex school of discourse analysis’ (Howarth

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2 In this study, the terms ‘conflict’ and ‘antagonism’ are used interchangeably.
Qualitative interviewing (Silverman, 1997, Berg, 2004) in the form of elite interviewing (Burnham, P., Gilland, K, Grant, W., Layton-Henry, Z., 2004) will be carried out to analyse perceptions of empowerment among different ENGOs. This form of interviewing makes use of a convenience (or purposive) sample of the best-informed members of the social groups in question, who may enjoy more influence than others in decision-making processes (ibid: 205). Such persons, apart from possessing technical knowledge, are also involved in direct activism such as lobbying, protesting and negotiating. They can speak from direct experience, thus providing valuable data. In this study, interviews will therefore be carried out with elite representatives of the effected social actors themselves, namely ENGOs, who will be asked to give their own views regarding the subject matter of this thesis.

A case-study approach (Hamel, Dufor and Fortin, 1993) mainly through the analysis of newspaper content will be made use of to analyse the construction of hegemonic formations on specific issues. It is acknowledged that the review of newspaper content can present problems regarding reliability and accuracy, and is consequently ‘most effectively employed in combination with elite interviewing’ (Burnham, P., Gilland, K, Grant, W., Layton-Henry, Z., 2004: 172). The combination of this research method with qualitative interviewing is one of the possible combinations suggested by discourse theorists (Howarth, 2000, 2005).
1.7 Layout of the Thesis

The thesis will be organised as follows: Chapter 2, which follows this introductory chapter, will present the major sociological theories used in this thesis. Chapter 3 will present a description of environmental politics in Malta. The methodology and research methods used in this thesis are explained in Chapter 4. Through qualitative interviewing, Chapter 5 will discuss and analyse the empowerment of Maltese ENGOs in the context of Malta’s EU accession, as perceived by the ENGOs in question. Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 will deal with different case studies involving on specific issues relating to environmental politics within the context of Malta’s EU accession, namely development projects, hunting and trapping, fishing of bluefin tuna and climate change. Chapter 10 will analyse the empowerment of ENGOs with regard to the issues dealt with in the case studies in question. Chapter 11, the concluding chapter, will bring together key findings from Chapters 5 and 10 and will present a number of sociological implications.
2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical background to the subject matter of this thesis. The first section will discuss the relationship between sociology and the environment, and will explain the constructivist orientation of this study. This will lead to the main theoretical direction of this thesis, namely post-Marxist discourse theory. The chapter will then engage with concepts such as State power, social movements, empowerment and institutionalisation. These will consequently be considered within a European Union context, with particular emphasis on environmental politics. The final section of this chapter proposes a theory of ENGO empowerment in the EU.

2.2 Sociology and the Environment

2.2.1 Introduction

This section will explain why the environment has become an important subject of study for sociologists. Consequently, the ontological divide between realists and constructivists will be discussed, leading to my decision to adopt the latter for the purpose of this study.

2.2.2 Environmental Consciousness

Across the world, major concerns are being put forward regarding the dangers to the environment in general and to human societies in particular, with strong focus currently being put on issues such as climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was set up in 1988 by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization to provide governments with
scientific advice about climate change, unequivocally states that ‘most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations’ (IPCC, 2007: 10).

Along the same lines, Jane Lubchenco, President of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science, states that

‘we are modifying physical, chemical and biological systems in new ways, at faster rates, and over larger spatial scales than ever recorded on Earth. Humans have unwittingly embarked upon a grand experiment with our planet. The outcome of this experiment is unknown, but has profound implications for all of life’ (cited by Ellwood, 2000: 10).

The global environmental situation is already characterised by facts such as the extinction of a large number of species and ecosystems, chronic water shortages and a rise of temperatures. Consumption and human impact on the environment and natural resources vary on a global level from one social class to another (Dickens, 2004: 122-3). For example, by the turn of the century, annual emissions per person in North America averaged 19 tonnes, five times the world average and ten times the developing-world average (New Internationalist, 2000).

Environmental consciousness is increasing worldwide, as witnessed by the global UN summits such as the Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. Within the EU, environmental issues are at present being given much more importance than in the past. Surveys such as

\[3\] Emphasis in original.
Eurobarometer show that most Europeans are of the opinion that the state of the environment is having a harmful effect on their life. Eurobarometer surveys have shown that many Europeans want policy-makers to give as much importance to the environment as to economic and social policies. After the 2004 enlargement of the EU, the first survey that examined attitudes towards the environment found out that the environmental issues that worry citizens the most are water pollution, man-made disasters, climate change, air pollution and the impact of chemicals. At the same time, significant differences in perceptions were found between citizens of the old and the new member states. For example, whilst climate change was ranked first within the old member states, it was only ranked seventh among the new member states (European Commission, 2005). Besides, a rift between environmental consciousness and taking concrete action on an individual level was in place (Eurobarometer, 2008).

The majority of Europeans also agree that there should be joint jurisdiction between the national authorities and the EU Commission on environmental protection (ibid: 3), with the Maltese population being more willing than other EU27 respondents to accept this. Maltese respondents also trust ENGOs on environmental issues more than they trust the EU and national governments, (ibid: 4). Respondents did not seem very optimistic about the degree of influence they have in decision-making on the environment, indeed, whilst 39 per cent were not favourable, only 9 per cent had a response which was higher than average (ibid: 24). 48 per cent agreed that their environmental complaints were being addressed at least ‘acceptably’, 19 per cent thought that this was poor, whilst 33 per cent did not have an opinion, possibly because they never submitted a complaint. 71 per cent
disagreed that environmental legislation was being enforced adequately (ibid: 33). Besides, whereas the first environmental issues that the average European thought about were pollution and climate change, the average Maltese thought about the state of the environment to be inherited by future generations (ibid: 1). The most pressing environmental issues according to Maltese respondents were air pollution, an increase the waste generated and urban problems, whilst for the EU27 these were natural disasters and depletion of natural resources (ibid: 2).

2.2.3 Sociology and Ecology

Increased consciousness of environmental crises and the development of sociology in general are resulting in an ‘ecological turn’ (Sutton, 2004: 174). This means that sociology is becoming more sensitive to the environment. This has resulted in an ‘environmental sociology’ or the ‘the study of interaction between the environment and society’ (Catton and Dunlap, 1978a: 44)

Besides increased environmental awareness and sensitivity, there is on-going sociological discussion concerning a ‘risk society’ – theorised in the first instance by Ulrich Beck. Here, ‘unknown and unintended consequences come to be a dominant force in history and society’ (Beck, 1992: 22). Ecological consequences stretch across time and space in an epoch in which the dark sides of progress increasingly come to dominate social debate. In turn, new counter-politics come about, whereby the political, economic, scientific and industrial hierarchy become subject to political conflict from the ‘courageous Davids’ who ‘get their chance against this Goliath’ (ibid: 110).
Thus, sociology has an important role to play in the analysis of environmental problems. Indeed, such problems are not merely ‘natural’ or ‘technical’, but they are also products of social change and subject to various forms of interpretation. Climate change is a problem not just because it really exists, and not only because human beings are major culprits in its creation and victims to its consequences, but also because it has captured the public imagination as an important issue which deserves attention. Thus, ‘environmental attitudes are not simply free-floating (as if waiting for the sociological researcher to come along and “collect” them) but are discursively formed within particular social settings and contexts’ (Irwin, 2001: 176). Politics play a key role in this regard. Relations of power, both on a macro-basis as well as on a micro-basis, exist within any society, and different groups may have different demands and interests in a myriad of areas including the environment. It is through politics that these are articulated.

2.2.4 Realism and Constructivism

The sociological analysis of ecological matters is subject to the ontological question regarding social constructions and nature. Is ecology a social construction, interpreted according to one’s beliefs and views, or is there an ecology “out there”, despite what one makes out of it? Is Lovelock (2007) correct when he says that the world - “Gaia” - can well adapt to climate change, irrespective of whether human beings might do so too.

As early as the 19th century, Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels argued that social realities are formed in the process of working on nature’s powers to produce commodities. This ultimately brings about social and environmental change, whereby man changes himself in the process (Marx, 1973; 1976), In Engels’ (1972) words,
At every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature – but that we, with flesh, blood and brain belong to nature, and exist in its midst’ (13).

Such realism has a strong sociological inheritance up to this day. For example, Anthony Giddens (2009) states that

‘since the dangers posed by global warming aren’t tangible, immediate or visible in the course of day-to-day life, however awesome they appear, many will sit on their hands and do nothing of a concrete nature about them. Yet waiting until they become visible and acute before being stirred to serious action will, by definition, be too late’ (2)

Along similar lines, critical realists such as Dickens (2004) emphasize that human interventions in the natural world have their limits, and should the latter be exceeded, there may be tragic consequences for human beings and their societies. In short, there is a dialectical interplay between society and nature which goes beyond social constructions. Giddens (1979) argues that human beings are both ‘in and of nature’ (161), as they exist in material environments yet have their own nature which cannot be reduced to physical objects or events. Consequently, the natural and social sciences have separate characteristics which can be brought together and compared (259). Hence sociology based on such ontology believes that social constructions are ‘constrained by the possibilities and limitations inherent in the material world’ (Sims-Schouten, Riley and Willing 2007: 101), even though we give meaning to the real world through culture and language.

On the other hand, those who argue that ecology is itself a social construction attempt to analyse how social, political and cultural processes through which certain environmental issues are defined in certain ways (Hannigan, 2006: 29). Indeed, as Dryzek puts it
‘Just because something is socially interpreted does not mean it is unreal. Pollution does cause illness, species do become extinct, ecosystems cannot absorb stress indefinitely, tropical forests are disappearing. But people can make very different things of these phenomena and – especially – their interconnections, providing a gist for political dispute’ (cited in Hannigan, 2006: 31).

One way as to how social constructionists carry out such analysis, according to John Hannigan, is by looking at how certain discourses become hegemonic (ibid: 33). Nevertheless, he acknowledges that ‘coming to grips with this nature-society dualism is an especially daunting labour’ (ibid: 152).

The post-Marxist approach to discourse theory can be situated within such an ontology. Its analysis is not restricted to pure linguistic phenomena, but rather, considers all social practices and relations as “‘worlds” of related objects and practices that form the identities of social actors’ (Howarth, 200: 101). These are characterised by discursive structures, which, in turn are social and political constructions. They provide “subject positions” with which social agents can identify (for example: environmentalists). In turn, “hegemonic projects” bring different discourses together to ‘dominate or structure a field of meaning, thus fixing the identities of objects and practices in a particular way’ (ibid: 102). David Howarth asserts that such fixation of meaning is always partial because of what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) define as the ‘openness of the social’ (113). Within such a theoretical framework, objects are not denied their real existence, but the same cannot be said for ““extra-discursive” meaning” (Howarth, 2000: 104). Hence, all objects are discursively constructed. In this regard, Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000: 3) refer to Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) famous quote:
‘The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether that specificity as objects is constructed in terms of “natural phenomena” or “expressions of the wrath of God”, depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive conditions of emergence’ (108).

Hence, the Essex approach to discourse theory (Laclau, 2000; Howarth and Griggs, 2012: 317), rejects distinctions between the material and the real, or the discursive and the symbolic, as proposed by critical realists (Howarth and Griggs: 317). It also rejects empiricist criticism which contends that theorization within the Althusserian tradition that downplays the importance of human experience, and, consequently cannot be proven empirically (Thompson, 1978). As shown above the “reality out there” is interpreted and actively constructed through discourse. Particular interpretations and theories and represent one “truth” amongst a plurality of truths (Callari and Ruccio, 1996: 176).

For theorists such as Laclau, Mouffe and Howarth, discourse is the ‘structured totality’ resulting from articulatory practices (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 7). They are ‘systems of meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects’ (ibid: 4), and they are political as they draw frontiers between insiders and outsiders. Hence, power is an inherent characteristic of discourses. They are also contingent and historical constructions and can be subject to forces and effects beyond their control through dislocation (ibid).
This study, which adopts post-Marxist discourse theory as its main theoretical focus, adopts a materialist approach in the sense that discourse is seen as not being external to a “reality out there”, but rather, as being vital in the way how reality is defined. Given the nature of this study, politics is given primacy in the sense that hegemonic struggles are analysed in relation to ENGOs and specific environmental issues. The next section will consequently discuss post-Marxist discourse theory.

2.3 Discourse Theory and Hegemony

2.3.1 Introduction

Major concepts of Discourse Theory will be introduced in this section. Consequently, such concepts will be related to key themes in this chapter, and will be applied to reply the research questions.

2.3.2 Articulation, Antagonism, Equivalence and Dislocation

As stated above, this thesis adopts an ontology which is not after objective casual explanations, but rather, which aims to understand and interpret socially produced meanings. This can be done through the analysis of discourse though a post-Marxist framework. Hence, the analysis of empowerment of Maltese ENGOs following Malta’s EU accession will focus on the discursive constructions and hegemonic struggles of such social agents.

By means of discourse, social agents are involved in “articulatory practice”. This constructs nodal points which partially fix meaning (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 113)

In this respect, society should not be seen as a closed system, but rather one which is overflowed by a surplus of meaning, which, in turn, makes up “the social”. As Howarth (2000) puts it,

‘no matter how successful a political project’s discourse might be in dominating a discursive field, it can never in principle completely articulate all elements, as there will always be forces against which it is defined.... a discourse always requires a discursive “outside” to constitute itself (103).

In such a context, social agents (ENGOs, in the case of this study) are seen as constructing an enemy who prohibits the former from fully attaining their identities and interests. Here, antagonism takes place (Howarth, 2000: 105). This external identity is seen as a discursive threat which is ‘shared negatively by those interpellated by the discourse’ (ibid: 106).

Through the “the logic of equivalence”, (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), equivalental identities express a negation of a discursive system, wherein, those within it are characterised by particular differences and face a universal threat by the ‘discursive exterior’ (ibid: 107). Discourse coalitions are formed, having boundaries between insiders and outsiders, yet also covering-over the differences that exist between the former. Internal differences are thus minimised in opposition to the exterior enemy (Griggs, 2005: 116).
Conversely, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) also create a “logic of difference”, where antagonisms are weakened and excluded to the margins of society. Instead of having two antagonistic poles – as is the case with the logic of equivalence – here one finds an expanding formation which incorporates disarticulated elements (Howarth, 2000: 107). In this respect, Howarth and Stavrakakis (2000) assert that the task of the discourse analyst is to analyse how social agents construct antagonisms to deal with the blockage of identity (10-11). They add that the logics of equivalence and difference are not mutually exclusive, but rather, are characterised by a complex interaction (ibid: 12).

Another important concept which can be used to analyse the activism of ENGOs is, “dislocation”. This can bring about “extra-discursive” disruption to social formations. Laclau (cited in Howarth, 2000: 111) argues that in late modern societies such experiences are becoming more common due to processes such as globalisation and commodification, in a context of ‘accelerated tempo’ and ‘combined and uneven development’. For the purpose of this study, Malta’s EU accession will be analysed accordingly, as discussed later on in this chapter.

For the purpose of this study, the articulatory practices and antagonisms of ENGOs will be analysed. The construction of discourse coalitions will be given specific attention, as these can lead to hegemonic formations.

2.3.3 Hegemonic Formations

In Gramscian terminology, “hegemony” can be defined as a situation where a historic bloc exerts social authority and leadership over subordinate classes and groups through
force and consent, and where unity exists in a social formation (Gramsci, 1971). Post-Marxist Discourse Theory deconstructs this conceptualization beyond class-centric essentialism. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) thus define hegemony as follows:

‘A situation of hegemony would be one in which the management of the positivity of the social and the articulation of diverse democratic demands had achieved a maximum of integration – the opposition situation, in which social negativity brings about the disintegration of every stable system of differences, would correspond to an organic crisis’ (189).

Consequently, hegemonic formations are characterised by the construction and stabilization of systems of meaning, which are articulated through nodal points that organize social orders by means of hegemonic practices. In Howarth’s (2000) words, ‘these privileged condensations of meaning confer partially fixed meaning on a particular set of signifiers’ (110). An element of ‘ideological totalization’ takes place in hegemonic practices, as ‘ideology constructs reality as a part of a totalizing horizon of meaning that denies the contingent, precarious, and paradoxical character of social identity’ (Torfing, 2005: 15).

Citing Andrew Gamble and Stuart Hall, Howarth (2004) says that an example of a hegemonic formation was the 1980s Thatcherite hegemony, organized around the nodal points of “free economy” and “strong state” (259). Thus, the British Conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher formed a hegemonic formation which was signified by neo-liberal demands coupled with traditional, authoritarian, individualistic and nationalistic ideology. The trade-union movement was an adversary of this hegemonic formation, as exemplified by the defeat of miners led by Arthur Scargill in the controversial downsizing of the coalmine industry. On the other hand, the Maltese
Labour government led by Dom Mintoff in the 1970s formed a hegemonic formation through the usage of socialism and nationalism in a workerist ideological set-up, together with ideological strands heavily focusing on popular traditional values such as patronage. Malta’s largest trade union – the General Workers’ Union - formed a key part of this hegemonic formation, behind the signifier of the ‘Labour Movement’ (Briguglio, Michael 2001).

Hegemonic discourse can be dislocated when new events come about which cannot be explained, represented or domesticated. In this case, a ‘structural, or organic, crisis in which there is a proliferation of floating signifiers’ (Torfing, 2005: 16) takes place. Hegemonic struggles take place with the intention of fixing floating signifiers within new nodal points. ‘Empty universals’ such as ‘Revolution, Modernization, the Nation, or the People’ are utilised within such struggles (ibid), and the possibility for radical change of the meaning of a discourse would be possible (Stephan, 2012: 624) EU membership can be discursively situated accordingly.

In sum, hegemonic formations are characterised by unstable equilibrium and antagonistic relations, meaning that they are contingent and partial. A successful hegemonic project is one where there is relative stability and a widely shared common sense of universalistic ideological representation.

Hegemonic formations are therefore characterised by popular identities, which become signifiers of a demand that is more universal than the particular demands that constitute
them. Yet, every hegemonic formation must have some form of exclusion, which in turn can result in the creation of counter-hegemonic practices (Mouffe, 2005). In this regard, the State can be seen as an important site of hegemonic struggles.

2.4 The State and Overdetermination

2.4.1 Introduction

The concept of the State will hereby be discussed by engaging with various sociological theories, with the scope of enabling a holistic analysis of the empowerment of ENGOs.

2.4.2 Sociological Theories of the State

The State in modern societies has been widely discussed within sociology, with various theoretical traditions making different emphases on its make-up and/or role in society. For Functionalists, for instance, the State is a sub-system within a social structure with functions contributing to cohesion within the social system (Parsons, 1967; Holton and Turner, 1986). Pluralists discuss the State in terms of brokerage between a plurality of interests (Dahl, 1961; Birch, 1964), whilst neo-Pluralists complement this analysis by acknowledging that due to the complexity of modern societies, certain groups may be more influential than others (Dahl, 1982; Galbraith, 1974), thus resulting in a theoretical stance which is similar to that of conflict theorists (Dahrendorf, 1959). The various forms of Elite theory, on the other hand, discuss the State in terms of the ruling minority who exert power on the majority (Pareto, 1966; Mosca, 1939; Michels, 1962; Mills, 1956; Chomsky, 1999), whilst the New Right adopts a normative position in favour of neo-liberal economies and conservative values respectively (Olson, 1982; Hayek, 1944, 1976; Scruton, 1986). Foucauldian analysis looks at the State in terms of productive techniques
of power which are interwoven through discourse and disciplinary practices such as surveillance and bio-politics (Foucault, 1984; 2004). The Weberian tradition, on the other hand, considers the modern State to be a bureaucratic structure which dominates social life (Weber, 1948). Weber himself defines the State as ‘a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory’ (ibid: 78).

Various theories referred to above tend to either be too rigid in their approach, considering the state to be a monolithic uni-directional structure (Functionalisits and the structural role of the state as an agent of social cohesion; Weberians through the iron cage of bureaucracy), or else are too liberal in their approach, thus downplaying the possibility of having dominant groups within existing structures (Pluralists and competing interests in a political market which is coordinated by the neutral state; the New Right and its neo-liberal methodological individualism). When power is addressed (Neo-Pluralists, Conflict theorists, Elite theorists, Foucauldians), the analysis lacks the necessary tools through which power is systematically analysed as being influenced both by structures such as the capitalist mode of production as well as by social relations such as class conflict. For example, Dahrendorf speaks of a plurality of antagonistic quasi groups and interest groups in industrial society (180), yet is not entirely convincing in explaining why conflicts take place.

Marxist theories of the State, on the other hand, look at the relationship of the State with the economy. In capitalism, the State is seen either as an organizing committee in the
interests of the bourgeoisie (Marx and Engels, 1975: 44) or as a coordinator of an increasingly complex society, which ultimately functions in the interest of the same class in question (ibid, 1967: 384).

Consequently, more refined Marxist analyses include those of Antonio Gramsci (1971), who relates State power to hegemony and historic blocs, and Louis Althusser (1984), who relates State power to ideological and repressive state apparatuses. Despite their differences, Gramsci and Althusser conceptualized the State as having a political function of bringing about cohesion amongst the different classes and groups within a particular social formation. However, both fail to give a clear theoretical explanation of the dominance of economic factors or otherwise. Building on such conceptualization, Nicos Poulantzas (2000) considers the State as being characterised by ‘the condensation of a relationship of forces defined precisely by struggle’ (151). It is made up of internal contradictions and compromises at various level, both within the state and beyond it. Hence,

‘rather than facing a corps of state functionaries and personnel united and cemented around a univocal political will, we are dealing with fiefs, clans and factions: a multiplicity of diversified micro-policies. However coherent each of these may appear in isolation, they are nevertheless mutually contradictory; and the policy of the State essentially consists in the outcome of their collision, rather than in the (more or less successful) application of the global objective of the state apex. Hence the striking and recurrent phenomenon of the volte-face: governmental policy is continually constructed out of accelerations and brakings, about-turns, hesitations, and changes of course. This is not due to a native incapacity of the bourgeois representatives and top-level personnel, but is the necessary expression of the structure of the State’ (136).

Bob Jessop (2002a, 2008) elaborates through the strategic-relational approach. The State is conceptualized as a relatively autonomous site of conflict, within which power is
relational. The capitalist State regulates capitalism, yet this takes place through ‘local, regional, national and supranational levels of economic and political organisation’ (Jessop, 2002a: 213). Yet, in a capitalist social formation, the balance of power tilts towards the dominant class interests, especially through their economic, political and ideological influence. What is important in this regard is not merely the class background of those who exert state power (as, for example, proposed by Milband (1970)), but rather, the effects of state power in terms of class.

Noting the contributions of Marxist sociologists such as Miliband and Poulantzas on the theorization of the State, Howarth (2000) notes the need for discourse theorists to conduct research on such ‘precise organizational outcomes and logics, and pinpointing the constraints they exert on social actors and agencies’ (120).

In this regard, both class and non-class factors will be taken into consideration when analysing state power and hegemonic formations. Rather than reverting to a ‘pluralism except in its vocabulary’ (Dunleavy and O’Leary, 1987: 256), this analysis will look at how ENGOs engage with the State in their attempts to create discursive coalitions and hegemonic formations. Whilst avoiding class reductionism, the metaphorical stick of this study will not be bent to the opposite direction where class and economic factors are deemed in advance as influential as other factors which are less influential in a specific situation. To give an example of various contemporary capitalist societies – which however cannot be predicted a priori through some sociological law – employers’ and workers’ unions remain key actors in political processes and, in various instances, tend to
have more influence on the State than other civil society actors. Bending the metaphorical stick too far can result in its snapping. Along the same lines, analysis of transformative politics cannot ignore the power of States in capitalist contexts (Stewart, 2001: 239-240). The State is a ‘major site of social reproduction, struggle and collective agency’ (ibid: 126). It can be seen as being relatively autonomous from different interests and groups, depending

‘on the balance of political forces in a given historical period, as well as the political projects that manage to institutionalize and sediment key organizations of society’ (Howarth, 2000: 120).

In this study, such forces and projects are analysed in terms of discursive coalitions and hegemonic formations. In turn, these are influenced by overdetermining factors which represent ‘privileged condensations of meaning [that] confer partially fixed meaning on a particular set of signifiers’ (Howarth, 2000: 110).

**2.4.3 Overdetermination**

Each social formation is characterised by various determinations and influences from different levels within a particular moment. This is defined as overdetermination, or, the description

‘of the effects of the contradictions in each practice constituting the social formation on the social formation as a whole, and hence back on each practice and each contradiction, defining the pattern of dominance and subordination, antagonism and non-antagonism of the contradictions in the structure in dominance at the given moment’ (Althusser, 1977: 253).

In this regard, different social formations are characterised by particular circumstances, in situations which are generally more complex than a simple capital-labour relationship, thus also including other factors which can derive from contexts such as the economic,
political, ideological and cultural. Every social formation has complex contradictions, and all processes are subject to change within a context of uneven development. In turn, this can be related to the concept of dislocation, where, extra-discursive factors can disrupt existing social arrangements.

Hence, it would be mistaken to assume that all social processes are simply determined by economic factors. This is also acknowledged by Marxists such as Engels (1966), who elaborates as follows:

‘The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure – political forms of class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and then even the reflexes of all these actual conflicts in the brains of these participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas – also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical conflicts, and in many cases preponderate in determining their form’ (in Marx and Engels: 487).

Althusser (1977) adds that

‘the economic dialectic is never active in the pure state; in History, these instances, the superstructures, etc. – are never seen to step respectfully aside when their work is done or, when the Time comes, as his pure phenomena, to scatter before His Majesty the Economy as he strides along the royal road of the Dialectic. From the first moment to the last, the lonely hour of the ‘last instance’ never comes’ (113).

Thus, an analysis of any issue in a social formation should not be reduced to any form of singular determinism, and this does not only refer to economic determinism, but also to other forms of determinism based on culture, politics and other factors. In this sense, ‘no site of process – human agency, enterprise, state or household – could be conceived to exist as a cause without being itself caused. All, whether human agent or social structure,
became defined within a web of mutual overdeterminations’ (Resnick and Wolff, 1993: 65). A problem with this perspective is that it is unclear whether economic, political and ideological factors are autonomous or not from each other, and whether it is possible to identify primary determining causes (Hindess, 1977: 104; Smith, 1984: 165-6). Yet, as Callari and Ruccio (1996) put it,

‘action, movement, praxis, process cannot be reduced to any one (simple or complex) idea, cannot be motivated by a posited end, but is rather characterised by contingency, by ‘history’ ……… History cannot have ‘a subject’ (real, potential, organised or spontaneous) because it is not bound by any necessary trajectory. It is rather a process shaped by the interaction (which are always both accidental and structured) of the many identities that…… populate the pristine narrative of Marxism’ (24).

In any social situation, there are factors at play which are more influential than others, but they are never established in advance through some teleological mechanism (Althusser, 1977; Althusser and Balibar, 1997). Overdetermining characteristics in a social formation can change, and may thus vary from one historical moment to another. This can be explained through the concept of conjuncture, which refers to a singular, contingent, aleatory case. It can be seen as an encounter, which might, or might not, take place. Nothing is taken for granted, nothing is guaranteed and nothing is determined in advance. Every encounter is provisional rather than eternal (Althusser, 1999; 2006).

The Althusserian concept of overdetermination is applied in this study as an analytical tool. Yet, in line with post-Marxist discourse theory, the concept will be freed from any economic reductionism, including “structure in dominance”, or from pre-determined regions, such as the economic, political and ideological. Instead, it is argued that
‘all practices are discursive and that no system of practice is completely immune from the effects of others, which means that ultimate determinacy is impossible’ (Howarth, 2000: 100).

Here, the ‘field of identities which never manage to be fully fixed, is the field of overdetermination’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 111).

Yet this does not mean that categorizations of specific hegemonic formations are prohibited. Indeed, distinctions between, for example, political, economic and ideological practices may take place, not as some pre-determined conceptualization, but within the category of discourse, in a pragmatic and analytical manner (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 4). Curiously, the later Althusser’s “aleatory materialism” points towards this direction. In his last interview, to Fernando Navarro in 1988, he asserted that ‘everything can be determinant “in the last instance”, that is, everything can dominate. Marx stated as much with respect to politics in Athens and religion in Rome, without articulated an explicit theory of the displacement of domination (which is what Balibar and I tried to produce in Reading Capital). But in the superstructure itself what is determinant is also its materiality. That is the reason why I became so interested in demonstrating the materiality, de facto, of all superstructures and of all ideologies... as I did in the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). That is where it is necessary to find the concept of the “last instance”, the displacement of materiality, always determinant in the last instance in each concrete conjuncture’ (cited in Callari and Ruccio, 1996: 25).

Along these lines, Stephen Cullenberg (1996) speaks of an ‘overdetermined, decentred Marxist totality’, where ‘each society and each discourse sutures the surplus of determinations that constitute it’ (147).

In relation to the above each analysis in this study will be seen as a singular case. At the same time it should be pointed out that Laclau and Mouffe’s post-Marxism does not rely
on concepts such as randomness, total contingency and unifixity of meaning. What they do is speak in terms of partial fixations through nodal points, which, however, are not predetermined. In this regard, Laclau and Mouffe do not clarify the historical specificity of different types of society (Howarth, 2000: 118). This makes the task of discourse theorists even more challenging.

2.4.4 The State and Civil Society

A sociological analysis of the State would be incomplete if it ignores the importance of civil society. There is no consensus on the meaning of “civil society” (Edwards, 2009: 123; Ahrne, 1998: 85), however civil society is frequently seen as having some form of relationship with the State.

Social movements form part of civil society, and they are often involved in attempts to have a greater role therein. Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper (2003) substantiate this argument.

‘Civil society encompasses the dialogues and interactions through which political views are formed and through which groups come to understand their interests vis-à-vis those of other groups and the state. Civil society includes voluntary associations, friendship networks, religious groups, independent newspapers, and the like. Social movements generally emerge out of civil society and often attempt to expand it, and movements are themselves an important component of civil society’ (222).

For neo-functionalist Jeffrey C. Alexander (1998), civil society is relatively autonomous from capitalism and other social constructs such as bureaucracy and secularism. It is related to solidarity, through a ‘universalizing community’ with its own ‘cultural codes and narratives in a democratic idiom’ (7). It is involved in interactional practices such as
equality, respect and criticism and is patterned by institutions such as legal and journalistic ones (ibid). In such a context, actors who, for example, face economic inequality, can organize themselves to win concessions through negotiations, or through regulatory institutions (ibid: 10).

Michael Edwards (2009) relates values such as love, compassion, non-violence and solidarity to civil society (125). He notes the recent increase of civic organizing, often through the internet, which could bring about a counterweight to government control and privatization (ix). From his perspective, civil society networks are essentially pluralistic, and they can result in social movements if they bring about fundamental change (30-31). In this regard social movements form part of normal political processes (Johnston, 2011: 66).

The Gramscian definition of civil society, on the other hand, comprises private associations and institutions involved in a variety of antagonisms, ranging from class conflict to conflicts such as those involving gender, race, local community, and nation. It is contrasted with political society and the state. Achieving hegemony in civil society is seen as essential for winning state power (Gramsci, 1971). Seen from this perspective, civil society is the

‘sphere where capitalists, workers and others engage in political and ideological conflicts and where political parties, trade unions, religious bodies and a great variety of other organisations come into existence’ (Simon, 1991: 70).

The Gramsian perspective of civil society is adopted by this study, where, from a post-Marxist perspective, civil society can be seen as involved in the construction of
hegemonic formations through antagonistic relations. Such an analysis, however, does away with any reductionism. Indeed,

‘civil society cannot be reduced to the structure of either capital or the state. It also evolves in accordance with its own impenetrable logic of social action’ (O’Connor, 1998: 153).

Such analysis also goes beyond neo-functionalism or conflict theory of the Dahrendorf type. The same can be said as regards other theories speaking in terms of pluralism within a political market, where State apparatuses are theoretically downplayed (Dahl, 1961). Hence, this study disagrees that government simply becomes a business of compromise (Aron, 1968). Though compromise and consensus can take place in the interaction between State and civil society – for example through ideological consent (Althusser, 1984), this has to be seen in the theoretical context of hegemonic and overdetermining factors.

Besides, as stated in the previous section, any hegemonic formation must involve some form of exclusion. In this regard, any involvement of civil society organisations, including social movements and NGOs, in any hegemonic formation, is always partial and provisional, as any form of consensus ultimately leads to some form of exclusion. In short, every ‘us’ requires a ‘them’. Inclusion and exclusion are in this way part and parcel of a ‘contingent and temporary hegemonic articulation of ‘the people’ (Mouffe, 1999: 46). In such a context,

‘conflict and division are inherent to politics and […] there is no place where reconciliation could be definitively achieved as the full actualization of the unity of “the people”. To imagine that pluralist democracy could ever be perfectly instantiated is to transform it into a self-refuting ideal, since the condition of possibility of a pluralist democracy is at the same time the condition of
impossibility of its perfect implementation. Hence the importance of acknowledging its paradoxical nature’ (Mouffe, 2000: 15-16).

‘Consensus in a liberal-democratic society is – and will always be – the expression of a hegemony and the crystallization of power relations. The frontier that it establishes between what is and what is not legitimate is a political one, and for that reason, it should remain contestable’ (ibid: 49).

Mouffe adds that adversaries can cease to disagree, but this does not mean that antagonism ceases to exist. As she puts it, compromises are possible in politics, yet they are ‘temporary respites in an on-going confrontation’ (ibid: 102), in what can be dubbed as ‘conflictual consensus’ (ibid: 103).

Therefore, while the State might incorporate civil society organisations in hegemonic formations (which will be discussed later on in this chapter), at the same time, novel forms of popular conflict may come about. These may include both class-based antagonisms, but also other antagonisms associated with movements involved in areas related to the ecology, women, race, ethnicity, peace, and others. If characterised by dissident ideologies, such antagonisms can bring about a lack of consensus. As is the case with dislocation, this can threaten the legitimacy of a hegemonic formation, and possibly resulting in hegemonic crisis and the rapture of a hegemonic formation. Ultimately, social change takes place, and this can result in the construction of new hegemonic formations.

Therefore, contemporary capitalist States fuel ‘a veritable explosion of democratic demands’ (Poulantzas, 2000: 8). The outcome of such conflicts cannot be pre-determined. At the same time, a realistic contemporary sociological theory of the State and civil society must also take account of globalisation.
2.4.5 The State in a Globalised Context

Politics is becoming increasingly complex, characterised by multiple layers of power (Held and McGrew, 2002). State power moves in different directions which go beyond the confines of the nation. Political regulatory systems are becoming internationalised, thus resulting in situations where the State transfers certain decision-making facilities to supranational powers such as the European Union. This results in governance across different territorial levels with the involvement of States, international organisations, commercial entities and NGOs, amongst others. International policy regimes are created, within which the State negotiates and interacts with the various types of institutions and organisations referred to in the previous paragraph. Such negotiation does not take place on a level-playing field (Hirsch, 2003).

The State also forms part of horizontal networks of global governance (Castells, 2000a; Beck, 2005), whereby political power is exerted through transnational and trans-sovereign cooperation, and whereby solutions to certain risks and problems are doomed to fail if not dealt with in such a manner (Beck, ibid: 174). This is the case with the cooperation amongst member-states in the European Union in areas such as the environment and immigration. However, globalisation is not merely a case of cosmopolitan practices (Beck, 2005, Giddens, 2002), as such cooperation is once again often characterised by hegemonic practices, which in turn, also comprise antagonistic relationships. It would be difficult to believe that, in general, new EU member states Malta and Cyprus have as much influence as Germany or France on a European level. In
fact within the EU itself, antagonistic relations are alive and kicking. The process concerning the ratification or otherwise of the Lisbon Treaty was a case in point.

Notwithstanding the fact that States operate in globalised contexts, this should not lead one to believe that the national State is on the verge of extinction, as seems to be implied by Toni Negri and Michael Hardt (2001), who speak of a global power without a centre. Besides, there are no signs of a global super-State. To succeed, such an institution would have to be powerful and legitimate on a global level and would have to be characterised by international citizenship. Though the State may be less able to control economic life, it effectively keeps providing certain goods and services whilst cooperating with different groups on various levels (Giddens, 1994a). Within this context, it should be kept in mind that ‘since power relations are constitutive of the social, every order is by necessity a hegemonic order’ (Mouffe, 2005: 106). The State has power within clear geographical borders, yet it also operates globally, often resulting in decision-making which goes beyond its national structures. Thus, the national State, through its apparatuses and relations, ‘is uniquely charged with overall responsibility for maintaining the cohesion of the class-divided social formation of which it is but a part’ (Jessop, 2002b: 15), even though ‘it is no longer self-evident that the national state is the primary scale of economic, political and ideological conflicts’ (ibid. 2008: 137). In turn, this involves political actors such as NGOs on various levels (Beck, 2005; Hirsch, 2003).
2.5 Social Movements and Empowerment

2.5.1 Introduction

In the previous section it was shown how sociological theories of the State can be adopted in this study together with the concept of overdetermination, in the analysis of the construction of hegemonic formations. The State was also respectively analysed in relation to civil society and globalisation. In order to analyse the empowerment of NGOs, it is also necessary to construct a sociological theory of social movements. Social movements will be theorised as social actors that push forward demands through collective action, thus being involved in social antagonism. In turn, this can lead to the empowerment of such movements, as well as to institutionalisation.

2.5.2 Sociological Theories of Social Movements

Various sociological theories on social movements have been produced, including the Collective Behaviour Approach; Resource Mobilisation Theory; Political Process Theory and New Social Movement Theory.

The Collective Behaviour Approach analyses movements in relation to social processes such as social breakdown. Rather than analysing characteristics of movements such as composition or ideology, this approach is interested in analysing social factors which lead to movement activism such as protest (Lofland, 1985; Smelser, 1968). Resource Mobilisation Theory, on the other hand, considers movements as being involved in rational actions in order to pursue their interests (McCarthy and Zald, 2003; Olson, 1965).
Political Process Theory places social movement action within the context of political opportunities and constraints (Jenkins and Perrow, 2003; Tilly, 1978). The State is seen as a major influence on such action, which can also include the emergence of a movement itself (Goodwin and Jasper, 2003: 12, 257). According to Marco Giugni (1995) - who theorizes the interplay of movement mobilization and political opportunity structures - social movements can be successful if they capitalize on weaknesses of opponents such as the State. Yet political opportunities in this regard vary according to policy and type of movement. Building on the heritage of various social movement theorists, Giugni distinguishes between internal and external impacts of social movements. The former relate to changes within movements, whilst the latter deal with impacts of social movements, for example on political structures and public opinion. These will be elaborated upon later on in this chapter.

New Social Movement Theory analyses social movements in terms of the identities and issues which characterise them, in contrast to the characteristics of class-based politics (Touraine, 1981; Melucci, 1989). Hence, new social movements are seen in relation to feminism, ecologism, peace movements, youth politics, anti-racist movements, and cultural politics, amongst others. Their respective organisations are generally more informal than established movements such as trade unions, and they are more fragmented. New-middle class background of most members is seen as a key characteristic of, for example, environmental movements (Cotgrove and Duff, 2003: 76). In this respect, post-materialist values, education and income have influence over one’s membership, and where, ‘ironically, those who benefit most from industrialization and its corresponding economic growth may be some of its most ardent critics’ (Gillham, 2008:
In relation to this study, and as regards social background of ENGO activists, Rootes (2007a) refers to the fact that most research associates environmental activism with persons employed in teaching, caring and creative professions or who come from highly educated families, thus resulting in a “new class” of traffickers in culture and symbols. However, he emphasizes that by this, one should not conclude that environmental activists, or those with pro-environment attitudes hail exclusively from such backgrounds, as there is a wider social distribution of environmentalism in society (617). Rootes also concludes that the post-materialist thesis cannot really predict support for environmentalism, as apart from post-materialist ecologists one also finds many persons who face immediate environmental threats to their own security who may support environmentalism. Hence post-materialism can be better applied to environmental activism (618-9). This is discussed further later on in this chapter.

Variants on New Social Movement Theory have been proposed, through the conceptualisation of ‘life politics’ (Giddens, 1990) and ‘sub-politics’ (Beck, 1997) respectively. This conceptualisation is concerned with self-actualisation, lifestyle and choice, and includes movements representing groups which are excluded and marginalised by existing interest group and governmental structures. This is due to technological developments and industrial growth (Offe, 1985).

Given that this study will analyse whether a new political context, namely EU membership, has influenced the empowerment of ENGOs, various concepts referred to above are of interest. Of particular importance is Giugni’s (1995) conceptualisation of
impacts of social movements, which will be elaborated upon below. On the other hand, this study will not adopt theories proposed by the Collective Behaviour Approach and the Resources Mobilisation Theory. For example, in the former case, it is difficult to envisage that all social movements become increasingly active basically in times of social strain.

At the same time, however, this should not mean that social strain should be ruled out as a factor which influences movement activism. It should be emphasised that social actors do not act in a vacuum, and that methodological individualism, though having its analytical strengths, might have shortcomings in explaining the social opportunities and constraints which influence, at least partially, the activism of such movements. From a post-Marxist perspective, the dislocatory effect of Malta’s EU membership may have brought about new discursive articulations.

Indeed, this perspective considers social movements in terms of the articulation and contestation of social practices through discourse. In turn these are contingent and historical constructions (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000). This goes beyond Marxist approaches which emphasise the dialectical relationship between structure and agency, albeit in different ways, whilst giving a central role to the concept of social class and economic factors on a global level (Callinicos, 2003; Wallerstein, 2004). Indeed, various antagonisms which cannot be reduced to class, though the latter can play an important overdetermining role, albeit not through an \textit{a priori} essentialism.
2.5.3 Characteristics of Social Movements

Social movements may be identified by various characteristics, both broadly as well as with regard to specific social movement organisations. For example the latter may take different forms, including that of professional movement organisations, grassroots organisations and mass protest organisations.

Professional movement organisations are characterised by a bureaucratised structure with full-time leadership. This means that ordinary members and supporters have little say in decision-making. These organisations may include international NGOs such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth (FoE), World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Oxfam. Grassroots organisations tend to focus on strong participation amongst members and supporters within a structure that is not so formalised. Residents’ associations, single-issue groups and independent women’s’ groups may be found under this category. Mass protest organisations, on the other hand, attempt to combine participatory democracy with a certain degree of organisational formalization. Whilst on the one hand they may become increasingly centralised, as is the case with Green parties and trade unions, on the other hand, at times they may also be characterised by informal leadership processes, such as during spontaneous demonstrations, in which charismatic leadership plays an important role. Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani (2006) substantiate on the development of social movement organisations, stating that such organisations may evolve in different directions, including institutionalisation, radicalisation, commercialisation and turning inward.
As discussed previously, a key development of social movements in contemporary capitalist societies has been that of the formation of New Social Movements. Such movements, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, challenge cultural, economic and political orders of advanced capitalist societies by focusing on demands such as feminism, anti-racism, environmentalism, peace and civil rights. These demands cannot simply be reduced to social class issues. In this regard, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) state the following:

“What interests us about these new social movements, then, is not the idea of arbitrarily grouping them into a category opposed to that of class, but the novel role they play into articulating that rapid diffusion of social conflictuality to more and more numerous relations which is characteristic today of advanced industrial societies… these movements … [are] an extension of the democratic revolution to a whole new series of social relations. As for their novelty, that is conferred upon them by the fact that they call into question new forms of subordination’ (159-60).

Movements may have overlaps which may result in the joining of forces. At the same time, however, conflicts may take place within movements themselves, resulting from different factors. Dieter Rucht (2007) vividly portrays this by referring to

‘differences in ideology, goal priorities, strategy, and political styles as well as personal rivalries among leaders, organizational patriotism, and struggles for hegemony within the alliance sector. Clearly, conditions external to the movement groups may have a profound impact on the extent, kind, and outcome of conflicts within movements. For example, agents provocateurs sent by a governmental agency can contribute to deepen a gap between the moderates and the radicals within a movement organization. Similarly, unjust governmental repression may suddenly unite a movement that was on the brink of breaking apart’ (206).

During recent years, various social movement conflicts have become globalised, and therefore active across borders beyond the nation-state. Likewise, members and supporters have been recruited at a global level. An example of this is the growth of international ENGOs such as Greenpeace, FoE and WWF within the context of issues
such as climate change. Such NGOs may not possess the economic wealth of transnational corporations. Yet the same cannot be said as regards ideological and political, and at times economic, influence. As Beck puts it, ‘they are very good at embodying a “global conscience” and putting it to use against the “overwhelming power of the corporations”, as people throughout the world view it’ (2005: 176-7). Given that many transnational corporations depend on consumers to purchase their products, the influence of such NGOs should not be dismissed.

Social movement organisations can be seen as playing a key role in the democratisation of society, because they form part of civil society antagonisms in relation to hegemony. Their influence may help increase the transparency of political processes and power. They may also work to improve decision-making processes (Demirovic, 2003). On the other hand, even though such social movement organisations can help influence political processes, their power should never be overestimated. They must be analysed in relationship to other social actors and agents, even on a global level. In the first instance, this requires an analysis of key social conflicts in the past decades, with both global and local repercussions.

2.5.4 Social Contradictions of Our Times

Social movements have been active within different social contexts. There is no such thing as one uniform global process of change with identical repercussions. Overdetermining factors and specific conjunctures are what ultimately characterise specific social formations, even within a globalised context. In turn, each social formation witnesses the construction of specific hegemonic formations and multiple
conflicts, wherein social movements have an important role. Hence, as Engels (1966) puts it, ‘we make history ourselves, but, in the first place, under very definite assumptions and conditions’ (in Marx and Engels, 1966: 487).

Contemporary capitalist societies are characterised not only by homogeneous factors such as class, gender, nationality and ethnicity, but also by differences and fragmentation in the economic, political and cultural spheres. These can be symbolised by the mobilisations of 1968, which have led to a ‘proliferation of antagonisms’ (Laclau, 1990: 214), not all of which can be reduced to the economy. Kai Hildebrandt and Russel J. Dalton elaborate by saying that the social changes of the past decades have resulted in great changes in the political sphere.

‘Evidence is growing … that economic cleavages are declining in importance. In the highly industrialized societies the structural determinants of political behaviour become much more complex and heterogeneous. New social groups arise which do not have a clear and predetermined place in the socio-political space; traditional forces which had shaped past cleavages may weaken; and increasing geographic as well as social and occupational mobility may further weaken traditional ties’ (1978: 69).

Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005), who have analysed such matters through their ‘world values survey’, add that such changes reflect socioeconomic modernisation, which, in turn brings about a cultural shift towards post-materialist values, more prominent self-expression values, and increased democratisation. However, they also go on to say that other cultural heritage such as religious belief has, likewise, a high degree of influence on peoples’ values.
As already implied previously, in no way should it be interpreted that contradictions related to the economy are to be dismissed, or that economic inequality is no longer in evidence. To the contrary, material and redistributive issues are still present in contemporary capitalist societies – the global economic crises that snowballed from 2008 to date, sending leading economies in recession, is a case in point. Besides, contemporary workers’ issues feature prominently not only in trade-union conflicts (as was the case of the escalation of such activism in France under the Sarkozy government and in Greece during its economic meltdown in 2011), but also in other forms of activism of movement organisations within the World Social Forum and the European Social Forum. These organisations highlight the plight of workers and the exploitative practices of transnational corporations in all corners of the world. As Della Porta and Diani put it, ‘at the beginning of the new millennium … conflict on labour issues again seems to be on the rise, although in new forms’ (2006: 40).

What can be said to be happening is that a plurality of issues characterise the political sphere within civil society, sometimes having effects on State practices. Amongst others, these may include issues on local, national and global levels which are promoted by a variety of social movements and other civil society groups, both well-established ones as well as new ones. So for example one hears about localised issues which reflect residents’ demands, as well as a myriad of ethical issues. Issue-oriented politics and calls for more direct democracy have expanded, as an increasing number of people tend to be more concerned with self-expression rather than submission to traditional forms of authority. As Beck puts it, ‘great power and small legitimacy is opposed by small power and great legitimacy’ (Beck and Willms, 2004: 148)
In various instances, immediate concerns such as environmental threats become more important than long-lasting political affiliations (Van der Heijden, 2006). Hence, it would not be strange to see an environmental movement organisation team up with a residents’ organisation on a particular local issue, even if, among the people involved there would be clear ideological differences. Yet, once again, this should not be interpreted as meaning that more ‘traditional’ concerns such as work-related issues are passé. Indeed, various neo-liberal practices, which are being pushed by the European Union through the Lisbon Agenda, are resulting in increased concern on workers’ rights. The controversial ‘Vaxholm case’ in Sweden was a case in point, where precarious work conditions were being experienced in a country otherwise known for its strong social model.

Thus, the analysis of social contradictions, antagonisms and conflicts cannot simply be reduced through one factor, irrespective of whether it is economic, cultural or individual. They should be seen in terms of the specific articulation of antagonisms and hegemonic struggles, which, in turn are characterised by overdetermining factors. In this regard, the agency of social movements requires theorization.

2.5.5 Ideology, Agency and Identity

Within the context of contemporary capitalist societies, one can notice a proliferation of particularistic identities, in terms of factors such as gender, race, and age. From a post-Marxist perspective, each identity is never “pure” and closed ended. Moreover, each identity can never become universalised, as there are other identities existing within a
social formation. Rather, identities are unstable and subject to social and historical variations.

Besides incorporating class background, one’s identity is also constructed through social relations from various spheres such as the cultural and the political. One might be a “white”, “Catholic”, “married”, “male”, “worker”, yet someone else’s identity may differ in one or more of such factors. This means that there is no such thing as an abstract subject with an already determined identity, in advance of social factors. To the contrary, a plurality of subjects and subject positions come to being, meaning that, theoretically, one should speak in terms of ‘the death of the Subject (with a capital ‘S’)’ (Laclau, 1996: 20).

Identity is not simply imposed automatically on individuals and groups by some monolithic social structure, ideology or discourse. If that were so, it would be difficult to explain why some people pick up certain identities and why others pick up other ones, if at all. It would also be difficult to explain why some social movement organisations representing certain demands exist, whilst others do not, especially in a globalised context which is characterised by various contradictions, stratifications, and situations. In this regard Giddens (1984) believes that

‘all human beings are knowledgeable agents… [yet]… the knowledgeability of human actors is always bounded on the one hand by the unconscious and on the other by unacknowledged conditions/unintended consequences of action’ (282-3).

Similarly, Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff (2008), from a Marxist position, state that
'individuals are both determined and determining, passive and active. They are acted upon and they act upon; they are both effects and causes/agents of their social contexts' (566).

Thus, one cannot speak of identity simply in terms of choice and individuality – the latter is in itself an ideology within wealthy Western and industrialised countries, where new lifestyles and identities emerge alongside ascribed differences and inequalities, and where, according to Giddens and Beck respectively, social actors and agents reflexively discover, construct and sustain their identities (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991).

From this standpoint, agents and structures represent a duality, where ‘the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organise’ (Giddens, 1984: 25). This dialectical reasoning has been compared to Marx’s conceptualisation of structure and agency (Ritzer and Goodman, 2003: 509).

Here, social structures are seen as both constraining and enabling, being reproduced and/or transformed through people’s actions (Giddens, 1984). As Giddens (1979) puts it, ‘structure is thus not to be conceptualised as a barrier to action, but as essentially involved in its production’ (69-70). In such a context, individual action can be complex and at times contradictory. For example, Michael Cahill (1994) shows how the role of the individual consumer may not tally with that of a citizen within a society, particularly if the former has immediate demands which may be in contradiction with the civic duties of the latter.
Thus, individuals can shift from one position to another, whilst also acting within social structures. The problem here is that structuration theory as proposed by Giddens seems to be favouring agency over structure and subjectivity over objectivity, in what Stewart dubs as an ‘illusory soup of an evanescent duality’ (ibid: 17). Instead authors such as Angus Stewart (2001) gives primacy to political struggle, which is considered as the key for successful political mobilisation of social movements through concerted action (ibid: 112, 234, 241). This is conceptually similar to the post-Marxist position of “primacy of politics” (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 9).

Consequently, and in relation to this study, one can ask, what is the role of agency in hegemonic struggles? This will be replied by critically engaging with the Althusserian concept of ideology.

According to Althusserian Marxism, ideology is considered to be a system of representations which ‘expresses a will (conservative, conformist, reformist or revolutionary), a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality’ (Althusser, 1977: 234). Its existence is material, being situated within apparatuses and social practices. It ‘is concretely embodied in a whole series of practices, know-how, modes and rituals to do with the economic sphere as well’ (Poulantzas, 2008: 241). Here, individuals are seen as being interpellated by ideologies through a number of State apparatuses. In turn, this enables the reproduction of the dominant structures of any social formation. When individuals do not conform to dominant ideologies, the repressive state apparatuses may intervene (Althusser, 1984).
The Althusserian theory of ideology may appear too deterministic (Callinicos, 1993: 42), giving too little importance to agency (Giddens, 1984: 30, 192), along the same lines of the Parsonian concept of socialisation (Holton and Turner, 1986: 195) or the Foucauldian concept of docile bodies (Foucault, 1984: 182). Nevertheless, a less rigid reading of the Althusserian position can be adopted, in the first instance by referring to the later Louis Althusser. As he puts it,

‘What results is a play and a space of multiple interpellations in which the subject is caught up, but which (as contradictory play and as space) constitutes the “freedom” of the individual subject, who is simultaneously interpellated by several ideologies that are neither of the same kind nor at the same level; this multiplicity explains the “free” development of the positions adopted by the subject-individual’ (2006: 241).

A less rigid conceptualisation of ideology can also be adopted by referring to Alex Callinicos (2006), who states that social actions are carried out through ideological representation, where ideologies are ‘sets of widely held beliefs whose acceptance is socially caused, and in that sense connected to structures’ (190). In relation to the State, Jessop (2008) adds that ‘actors always act in specific action contexts that depend on the coupling between specific institutional materialities and the interaction of other social actors’ (43).

Post-Marxist Discourse Theory, as adopted in this study, deconstructs the Althusserian concept of ideology. In the first instance, it disagrees that subjects are constituted through ideological practices which represent underlying structures. On the other hand it takes up the Althusserian claim that ‘identities of subjects are discursively constructed through ideological practices’ (Howarth, 2000: 108) through interpellation.
Thus, discourse theorists argue that the subject must identify with political discourses or take decisions when social identities need to be recreated. Through dislocation, political subjectivities are also involved in identification. Here subject positions are formed (ibid: 109). Thus, political subjectivity refers to the way social actors act, whilst subject position refers to the plural forms through which agents are produced as social actors (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 13). For the purpose of this study, therefore, agency is seen in terms of the subject positions taken up by ENGOs through their discursive articulations in hegemonic struggles. Such articulations take place through mobilization strategies.

2.5.6 Mobilization of Social Movements

Social movement organisations make tactical choices during their interaction processes with their allies, opponents, legislators, the media and others, and this within specific contexts. Different tactics may be used, depending on the social context and on factors such as resources, political and media opportunities and alliances. There are cases where such organisations compete with each other, and in the process they give rise to factional relationships in what turns out to be a sectarian conflict for the same constituency. On the other hand, such organisations may collaborate with each other and form networks and alliances. This is required for large-scale social movement action, wherein allies would be found from various parts of the state and civil society, originating not only from other social movement organisations, but also from the public administration sphere, political parties, the media and the general public. An example of this is the myriad of global
movements that, since the late 1990s have been involved in anti-capitalist conflict, albeit through a variety of demands, ideologies and strategies (Callinicos, 2003).

The activism of social movement organisations may take various forms, including actions based on the ‘logic of numbers’ such as voting behaviour in elections, petitions, referendums, netstriking and so forth. Protests, boycotts, striking and similar forms of action may also be resorted to. All these options have their strengths and shortcomings. Violence can also be employed, but it has various limitations and constraints such as resultant escalation of repression, alienation of sympathizers and likely failure due to the state’s monopoly of violence (Della Porta and Diani, 2006).

The mass media plays an important role in the proliferation of messages of social movements. It is seen by various sociologists as being an important facilitator of civil society empowerment. Here, social movement demands can be communicated to exert presser on politicians and policy makers (Johnston, 2011: 85). Citing McAdam, Hank Johnston refers to the strategic dramaturgy of movements, whereby tactics dramatize messages, for example through interviews, websites, public statements and so forth (ibid: 86-87).

It is very difficult to the view articulation of social movement discourse in isolation from the role of the media. In Goodwin and Jaspers’ words, ‘modern social movements can hardly be imagined without the media to amplify their messages’ (2003: 258). Due to questions of ownership, ideology and/or political factors, the opponents of social
movements – for example large state or business organisations - can have more access to
certain news media, and the media itself may portray the message of movements in a way
that does not fully conform to the movement’s intention. Therefore, social movements
risk marginalisation if they are ignorant of, or hostile to, the media’s codes. Thus,

‘the more closely the concerns and values of social movements coincide with the
concerns and values of elites in politics and in media, the more likely they are to
become incorporated in the prevailing news frames’ (Gitlin, 2003: 308).

On the other hand, various forms of media such as alternative media and radical media
can give increased coverage to social movements, even though, in relation to access to
the general public, such media are unlikely to have the same effect as mass media, due to
lack of access to the masses. New communication technologies such as the internet,
however, can have considerable effect for example in accessing specific groups and can
be used to mobilize movements, as is the case with those opposing capitalist globalization
(Kellner, 2002). The empowerment potential of new communication technologies will be
theorized in the following section.

Factors related to economic policy are also important for social movement mobilisation
and empowerment. In this regard, attention should be given to the fact that though most
contemporary capitalist societies are based on democratic systems, neo-liberalism is
making direct political intervention more difficult to carry out. This is due to factors such
as privatisation of public services and the deregulation of labour markets, which ‘have in
fact limited the possibilities for citizens and workers to exert pressures via political
channels’ (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 204).
Yet, various centres of power such as the State and supranational blocs and organisations such as the EU and the World Trade Organisation respectively, are themselves characterised by power relations and conflicts. The activism of business interests on one hand, and, on the other hand social movement organisations in areas such as labour, development, environment, and human rights is a case in point. Through protests, lobbying and/or interaction with public administration, movements attempt to obtain increased access to decision-making structures. An example of this is the lobbying of social movements within EU structures such as the European Parliament and the European Commission. Consequently,

‘social movements have produced a change in political culture, in the whole set of norms and reference schemes which define the issues and means of action that are politically legitimate. Repertoires of collective action, which were once condemned and dealt with simply as public order problems, have slowly become acceptable’ (ibid: 234).

The global context of social movement mobilization can also be related to Keck’s and Sikkink’s ‘boomerang effect’, which is defined by Johnston (2011) as:

‘the loop by which cosmopolitan locals (a) establish ties with transnational organizations, which then (b) activate external, international pressures on state policy, producing both bottom-up and top-down pressures on national elites. The point is that, in Southern states, which are frequently repressive and/or nonresponsive to popular mobilizations, local mobilizations may not be able to force concessions themselves, and the top-down pressures from other states, transnational organizations, and international opinion are often crucial’ (186-7).

This type of mobilization is of particular interest for this thesis, in view of ENGO activism on a European level, where the EU shall be conceptualized as a possible gateway for empowerment of ENGOs. On the other hand, the boomerang effect may also have drawbacks such as misunderstandings and lack of trust in coalition building and uneven access to resources and access to technology (ibid: 187).
The discursive articulations of social movements may be at odds with existing hegemonic formations. For example, within societies with strong consumerist ideologies, the demands of environmental movements that demand radical political changes and radical reductions in people’s consumption patterns would be a case in point. Yet, social movements cannot bring about substantial social changes unless their demands become hegemonic. Indeed, ‘it is the masses which make history’ (Althusser, 1984: 93). Consequently, the next section will discuss the empowerment of social movements, in relation to hegemony and institutionalisation.

### 2.5.7 Social Movement Empowerment

The understanding of empowerment of social movements comprises various theoretical, conceptual and methodological problems. For example, in relation to their impact on the State, movements depend on a myriad of actors and institutions, and plural factors are connected to such outcomes (Amenta and Caren, 2007). Hence, simplified and reductionist analyses should be avoided.

Some sociologists look at the interplay of structure and action to explain the empowerment of social movements. For example, Edwards (2009) speaks in terms of a diverse and interdependent ‘civil society ecosystem’ (104). In this respect, both individual and structural changes are required, as the former requires the latter to support changes and provide space. Here, what is required is

‘an inclusive associational ecosystem matched by a strong and democratic state, in which a multiplicity of independent public spheres enable equal participation in setting the rules of the game’ (ibid: 108).
Along similar lines, Johnston (2011) identifies a symbiotic relationship between the state and social movements, as the latter push the former towards more democratic governance.

A persuasive contemporary sociological understanding of social movements has been provided by Manuel Castells (2009). He considers power to be embedded in social institutions, in particular with the State, and is exercised through both coercion and construction of meaning in people’s minds. The latter, which has at least some form of resemblance with concepts such as hegemony and ideology as discussed in this study, is considered by Castells as being more effective, and is therefore fundamental in power struggles. These take place as power co-exists with counterpower.

Contemporary societies are deemed by Castells as network societies, and in this respect, communication networks such as the media are seen as decisive sources of power-making (Castells, 2012: 7). Here, social movements construct a hybrid public space of internet social networks and occupied public space, which act as communities of transformative practice (ibid: 11). Social movements are at the same time global and local, and they are viral, in line with the logic of the internet. Castells adds that social movements in the internet age are usually leaderless, horizontally organized in terms of networks, and highly self-reflective. They are political, in the sense that they aim of changing social values. In such a context, the internet enables movements to create space and challenge domination (ibid: 221-229).
Referring to recent examples such as the political insurgencies in Tunisia and Iceland, Castells argues that through such social movement activism, ‘powerlessness was turned into empowerment’ (ibid: 45), even though he adds that this does is not reflected through elections. Referring to the Spanish 2011 elections, he argues that

‘what the elections show is that the new politics, present in the movement, and the old politics, present in the institutions, are disconnected in the minds of citizens who will ultimately have to decide if they dare to reconcile their feelings with their vote’ (ibid: 140).

One may query whether Castells is too optimistic in his conceptualization of empowerment. Indeed, the Tunisian revolution has a long way to go in terms of radical democratization. In Iceland, the radical democratic changes which Castells praises, such as profound constitutional changes, were basically rejected by the electoral in the 2013 general elections which brought back to power the same political forces which helped fuel the financial crisis a few years earlier. Nevertheless, various characteristics of empowerment of social movements, as highlighted by the same Castells, are endorsed in this study. These include influencing political parties or leaders to take up themes and demands of movements, and, more importantly, winning people’s minds, which, in turn, could activate social change (ibid: 236-7).

Angus Stewart (2001), on the other hand, looks into the empowerment of social movements by identifying two forms of power. The first, “power over”, refers to domination, or ‘the strategic capacity to achieve goals’ (6). In this respect, structures of domination are sites of struggle (ibid: 7). The second, “power to”, refers to ‘the expression of collective autonomy, conceived as the intersubjective generation of specific
forms of solidarity’ (ibid: 6). Stewart distinguishes his theorizing from others such as Giddens’, whose structuration theory, as already shown previously, is deemed as vaguely favouring agency over structure.

Instead, Stewart gives primacy to political struggle, which is considered as the key for successful political mobilisation of social movements through concerted action (ibid: 112, 234, 241). This approach is adopted in this study through the post-Marxist conceptualisation of hegemonic struggles. This avoids both structural determinism that makes it difficult to explain conflict, as well as pluralistic accounts of agency which make it difficult to locate and theorize power.

Indeed, for Laclau and Mouffe (1985), some groups are more powerful than others due to the construction of hegemonic formations, which, in turn are characterised by various overdetermining factors. Empowerment through radical democracy takes place by means of liberty and equality in increased spheres of social life. In this sense, society is never complete, due to the proliferation of new demands.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, hegemonic formations can be formed through chains of equivalence, where the particularities of each specific socio-political demand are partially surrendered, and where stress is made on what each particular demand has in common. Different antagonisms and conflicts may result in different chains of equivalence, and this process might affect the identity of the subjects involved in it (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Thus, as Laclau (2005) emphasises,
‘Equivalence and difference are ultimately incompatible with each other; none the less, they require each other as necessary conditions for the construction of the social’ (80).

It was also explained that when a chain of equivalence is formed, this takes place through an empty signifier, which ‘concerns the construction of a popular identity once the presence of a stable frontier is taken for granted’ (Laclau, 2005: 133). This makes partial social order, and ultimately, hegemony possible. On the other hand, floating signifiers characterise a plurality of demands, between different possible chains of equivalence. Once a chain of equivalence is formed, this functions as a nodal point within a hegemonic formation (Butler, Laclau, Zizek, 2000). Therefore, it can be said that

> ‘every conflict implies a conflict between convictions, beliefs and representations of the world. Economic conflict and political conflict also imply these ideological conflicts’ (Althusser, 1990: 36).

Thus, social movements, which are involved in such conflicts, depend on the formation of chains of equivalence, resulting in hegemonic formations within specific social formations that are characterised by overdetermining factors.

In order to substantiate the conceptualization of ENGO empowerment and possible hegemonic formations, this study will apply the conceptualization of external impacts of social movements as proposed by Giugni (1995), which, in turn, influenced environmental politics theorists such as Van der Heijden (1999), Carter (2001) and Rootes (2007a), as seen later on this chapter. As regards sensitising impacts, these refer to

> ‘the possibility that a movement will provoke a sensitizing of some social actor in the political arena or in the public arena, which goes in the direction of the goals of the movement’ (Giugni, 1995: 211).
These may include changes in public opinion, as well as changes in the political agenda of political elites, and which otherwise may have not been so visible. Procedural impacts, on the other hand, refer to

‘access to the system by challengers. This may occur by establishing consultation procedures, by undertaking negotiations, through formal recognition, or through general inclusion of challengers’ (Giugni, 1995: 210).

Here, democratisation could be enhanced through increased participation of civil society actors in State structures. Access to decision-making structures may be achieved by both an entire social movement as well as by some of its organisations (Van der Heijden, 1999: 202), and it may be both occasional and permanent (Giugni, 1995: 210). Structural impacts deal with

‘the possibility that a movement will produce some changes in certain aspects of the political context of protest itself, that is, in the political opportunity structure’ (Giugni, 1995: 210).

This could refer to the changes in political institutions and alliances, for example through the setting up of new structures such as Government agencies. Substantive impacts can range from

‘challengers ...[ability] ... to exert a veto against a policy or against a decision taken by political authorities... [to the ability to] ... obtain substantive concessions by political authorities. In this case, they acquire policy-making power’ (Giugni, 1995: 210).

Impacts in this regard could include decisive decisions by the State, the setting up of legislation and enforcement measures. However, it is difficult to evaluate such impacts (Carter 2001: 152).
Civil society empowerment can therefore be analysed through these impacts, which, in turn could characterise in hegemonic formations. Yet, empowerment could also be characterised by institutionalisation. The following section elaborates. Besides, in both cases, specific theoretical application will be made to ENGOs later on in this chapter.

Before moving to the next section, it is important to note that Giugni also conceptualizes internal impacts of social movements. These relate both to identity, at individual and collective levels, as well as changes in internal organisational structure (Giugni, 1995: 209). This could involve the politicisation of members and supporters (Carter, 2001: 150-1), which is not of prime interest to this study, given that empowerment is theorized in terms of hegemonic formations. On the other hand, changes in internal organisational structure could be seen as an example of institutionalisation, which is theorized below.

2.5.8 The Institutionalisation of Social Movements

A major concern of sociologists who study social movement empowerment is institutionalisation. Basically, concern is shown on how social movements can be co-opted and thus losing their transformative potential.

Institutionalisation has been defined as ‘social activities [which] become regularised and routinized as stable, social-structural features’ (Jary, D. and Jary, J, 2000: 303). In relation to social movements, this has often been described as having too much closeness between the State and civil society. For example, whilst asserting that civil society and the State are different institutions, Edwards (2009) notes the perils of having both too much disconnection between them, resulting in the negation of positive effects on each
other, and of becoming too close. In the latter case governments might end up being caught up within particular interests from within civil society, and civil society might lose its critical edge (25). Edwards also notes that the promotion of stronger ties between civil and political activity can have negative repercussions on civil society, given the risk of co-optation and the potential loss of independence. At the same time, however ‘democratization cannot occur without real politics’ (ibid: 116).

According to Edwards, the various possible routes for civil society in this regard may include “non-party politics” and the appointment of civil society representatives in government positions without supporting political parties (ibid). He also argues that having diversified sources of revenue can help avoid too much pressure from governments and business (ibid: 122). These routes are discussed with ENGOs in this thesis. Along similar lines, other sociologists relate civil society to voluntary action through associations, and moral conviction, which can be threatened if there is too much political interference (Ahrne, 1998: 84).

Within social movements themselves, actions of radical organisations can help give legitimacy to more moderate organisations, which are deemed as being more reasonable (Johnston, 2011: 70). In turn the latter receive more institutional support, including from political parties. This accentuates differences between ‘pacified and institutionalized moderates, and marginalized and increasingly sectarian radicals’ (Koopman, 2008: 29). At the same time, less ‘legitimate’ groups may gain credibility if they are accompanied by established groups and political elites (Rucht, 2007: 208). This is of particular
significance in alliance-building through discursive coalitions. Citing various sociologists including McCarthy, Zald and Michels, Johnston refers to the professionalization of social movements. This results in more moderate, institutionalized organisations which deploy techniques such as marketing, planning and management (ibid: 72-3).

Increased linkages with the State can strengthen moderate movements and exclude radical ones. The former can be seen as selling-out, but they may be providing their services to those in need (ibid: 95). As Touraine (1981) puts it, ‘once relations become institutionalised, social movements degenerate into political pressure’ (100). In this respect, following Michels’ “iron law of oligarchy” (1962), sociologists such as Verta Taylor and Nella Van Dyke (2007: 275) argue that leaders of large organisations end up putting their personal interests and security above those of the organisation.

At the same time, others note that when movements are not institutionalized, they can aim to bring about change through extra-institutional means, which, paradoxically, can result in institutional change (Fantasia and Stephan-Norris, 2007: 558). Besides, a movement may maintain various aspects of non-institutionalized movements whilst enjoying benefits through a certain degree of institutionalisation. Indeed, according to Rootes (2007a) - who disputes Michels’ iron law of oligarchy - the latter is not a barrier to the mobilization of protest. Rootes notes how the environmental movement is diverse, with various organisations being institutionalized whilst others ‘remain vital and resist the complete co-optation that would render them toothless’ (ibid: 625, 633). Rootes adds that institutionalisation can be seen both as a sign of success of movements but also as a sign of weakness which causes discontent (Rootes, 2007a: 624).
This study engages with such dynamics of institutionalisation. Through a post-Marxist perspective, the discursive proximity between ENGOs and the State will be put into focus. Rather than adopting a rigid and deterministic account of institutionalisation – such as that of Michels – this study will be analysing whether the articulations of ENGOs result in hegemonic formations. This could mean that sensitising, procedural, structural and substantive impacts of ENGOs have taken place, or that ENGOs have benefitted from proximity with State structures without having effective impacts. This could also represent an interplay of both dimensions, as suggested by Rootes, and could also result in impacts on organisational structure, as theorised by Giugni. Here, ENGOs could be forming part of hegemonic formations, with various impacts, and would be in close proximity with State structures, for example through ideological consent. Hegemonic nodal points would be in place.

2.6 ENGOs

2.6.1 Introduction

The following section will now focus on the area which is of direct concern for the subject of this thesis, namely ENGOs. In turn, such organisations will be considered within an EU context. In the coming section, ENGOs will be analysed by discussing their ideological characteristics. The activism of environmental movements shall then be analysed, leading to an analysis of their effectiveness in terms of empowerment, in relation to the theoretical orientation of this study.
2.6.2 Ideologies of ENGOs

This section will present different ideologies present in the environmental movement. It is important to note that these are theoretical ideal types. The same holds for ENGO activism, which will be discussed in the subsequent section. In this regard, Rootes (2007a: 611) highlights the existence of different realities in different societies with respect to networks, identities and collective action of environmental movements.

ENGOs adopt ideologies which, though emphasising the environment, differ in the meaning attached to it and in the way it is constructed in terms of antagonistic relations. The most basic difference is between moderate and radical NGOs.

Moderate ENGOs adopt ideologies such as those of sustainable development, ecological modernisation and conservationism. These are frequently considered to be moderate when compared to other ideologies that promote radical social change (Dalton, 1994; Dickens, 1996, Van der Heijden, 1999; Williams and Ford, 1999; Carter, 2001, 2007).

Sustainable development attempts to reconcile economic, social and environmental factors through the involvement of the State and civil society by means of cooperation at international, national and local levels (Sutton 2004). It tends to accept the capitalist economic system, yet, in some instances, some of its goals may be radical, as in the case with shifts away from consumerism, elimination of poverty, and democratisation. Sustainable development is a dominant ideology with regard to environment policy worldwide, being endorsed by institutions such as the United Nations and the EU. This
does not mean that all these social actors accept or apply the ideology of sustainable development in an equivalent manner. For example, in many instances business is a major obstacle to such development. This is even the case when green consumerism is promoted – ultimately ‘there is no incentive for businesses to persuade people to consume less’, as this contradicts the logic of capitalism towards capital accumulation and maximisation of profits (Carter, 2001: 321).

Ecological modernisation also tends to have high levels of support, especially by policymakers and politicians. It promotes environmentally sound technological development within highly industrialised societies having democratic institutions. Ecological modernisers argue that economic growth can take place without damaging the environment. Market-based instruments such as emission trading schemes (which are being promoted by the EU) play a key role in this ‘green’ version of capitalism, with ENGOs using co-operative forms of activism (Mol and Sonnenfeld, 2000; Carter, 2001; Sutton 2004; Milanez and Buhrs, 2007).

Conservationism promotes consensual reforms within the existing socio-economic structure, focusing on the preservation of what is considered to be threatened by society (Dalton, 1994). This may include a myriad of activities, ranging from habitat protection to eco-labelling, and usually involves partnerships between State agencies and ENGOs, the latter including mass-membership groups who employ professionals (Carter, 2007: 148-9).
Radical environmental ideologies adopted by ENGOs include eco-socialism, environmental justice, ecologism, deep ecology and eco-feminism. Eco-socialism (which is also referred to as green socialism or ecological Marxism) relates the impending ecological crisis to the global capitalist mode of production, arguing that only radical social change can do away with the twin perils of environmental catastrophe and mass inequality. Thus,

‘capitalism is unsustainable as a total system, not simply because it overproduces, but because the whole world it makes is incompatible with ecological balance’ (Kovel, 2007: 262).

In this regard, class politics are considered to remain an important source of conflict,

‘first because of growing economic oppression and exploitation, and second, because ecological degradation is increasingly a class issue (but rarely only a class issue)’ (O’Connor, 1998: 267).

Like eco-socialism, environmental justice holds that issues of class, poverty, race and gender are related to environmental issues. Basically

‘it holds that, because environmental hazards are inextricably related to inequality, solutions will not be found in the middle-class issues of conservation and preservation, but in transforming entrenched economic and political structures’ (Carter, 2001: 144).

Environmental justice ideology involves the intersection of specific economic, social and environmental concerns. In some cases this has resulted in the articulation of ‘climate justice’ (Di Chiro, 2008: 291), comprising global-scale environmental problems and the everyday impacts on people’s lives.

Ecologism goes beyond what it considers to be anthropocentric ideologies, and, through its ecocentric philosophy, argues instead that human beings are just one species amongst
many. Ecologism argues that there are limits to growth, and believes in holistic radical political, social and environmental changes through which society will be characterised by fewer material objects, less reliance on technology, and more labour-intensive work (Dobson, 2007).

Ecologism is also related to other ideologies such as Eco-Feminism, Deep Ecology and Gaia theory. Eco-feminism celebrates the relationship between women and nature, arguing that patriarchal culture both dominates and undervalues the feminine knowledge in practices such as agriculture (Shiva, 1988). Deep Ecology can be considered a more radical variant of ecologism, considering human life as just one part of the eco-system, and promoting a return to what it deems authentic nature made up of simpler lifestyles (Devall, 1990). Similarly, Gaia theory argues that nature – or ‘gaia’ is self-regulating and ultimately in control, surviving and adapting to change even without human beings (Lovelock, 1979). In recent writings, the prominent Gaia theorist James Lovelock speaks about a sustainable retreat, where he argues that it is now too late to avoid the drastic changes brought about by climate change. To the fury of other ecologists, Lovelock says that nuclear energy is the only short-term and realistic solution, given that alternative energy cannot meet current global energy demand (Lovelock, 2007).

In addition to the above, grassroots groups such as local community groups, which focus on ‘not in my backyard’ (NIMBY) concerns, are common in various societies, often forming coalitions with other ENGOs on issues related to overdevelopment, local pollution and so forth (Carter, 2001: 144).
ENGOs are not necessarily confined to just one of these ideologies outlined above, which are ideal types. Besides, there are other ways in which environmentalism can be categorized – Tony Fitzpatrick’s (2011) proposal is a case in point. In this regard, he adapts Dryzek’s (2005) typology and proposes the following varieties of green thought: Survivalism; modernisation; social radicalism; deep ecology; democratic pragmatism; market liberalism and conservationist conservatives (Fitzpatrick, 2011: 8-10).

Within the same ENGO, different tendencies might exist. Some ENGOs might actually shift from one ideology to another, and some ideologies tend to be more influential than others. In this regard, Neil Carter (2001) observes that the environmental movement has become

‘so reconciled to the continuation of capitalism that it is now positively enthusiastic about the role of the market as a tool to protect the environment’ (315).

Similarly, Anton van der Heijden (1999) notes that environmental discourse is moving away from radical social change towards ecological modernisation. Together with the hegemonic status of neo-liberalism and the fading influence of grand narratives, many Western European ENGOs have become increasingly pragmatic, and their discursive articulations are for changes within industrial capitalism (203-4). Yet, on the other side of the same coin one encounters the ‘emergence of a radical countercurrent’ (ibid: 204), which comprises a plurality of counter-discourses relating to radical ideologies such as those referred to above, and which are united in their resistance towards neo-liberal
environmentalism (ibid). The next section elaborates, where the methods of activism used by ENGOs will be theorised.

2.6.3 Environmental Activism

‘Ecological protest does not issue “naturally” from despoliation. Dying forests and songbirds do not metamorphose, in accordance with the laws of incarnation, into protesting humans. Despoliation and protest, rather, are isolated from or related to one another through cultural symbols, whose effectiveness today has its origin and basis in human traditions and living conditions. In other words, people who protest do so against a perceived threat, not to the environment, but to their social habitus’ (Beck, 1995: 159).

ENGOs are active both domestically and globally. Their activism takes place in a myriad of ways, including raising public awareness, lobbying governments, leading consumer boycotts, working with ministries, participating in government commissions, engaging in protest, and media contact. As discussed previously, the development of new communications technologies such as the internet have provided ENGOs with a power resource through which the access and dissemination of information and the forming of networks can take place. They may participate within networks, alliances and coalitions that tackle environmental problems on various levels. Alliances may be formed not only with other ENGOs but also with other movement organisations such as trade-unions, women’s movements and peace movements.

Such alliance-forming, however takes place in a contextual basis, whereby articulation ‘is produced by diverse social actors through engaging situation knowledges about the world and creating new collective eco-political entities in the hope of surviving together’ (Di Chiro, 2008: 280), which, in turn, can enhance the efficacy of ENGO activism (Carmin
and Bast, 2009), though there is no guarantee of success. Seen from the perspective of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), antagonism based on a particular issue can become more popular and effective if the specific social demand in question is linked to other social demands, thus creating a relation of equivalence through an empty signifier (Laclau, 1996: 53).

Thus, in Europe, for example, ENGOs have been quite prone to form alliances with leftist groups (also including trade unions), combining ecological concerns (which can be localised) with issues related to class and inequality. In various instances, Green Parties have influenced such articulations, bringing together green and leftist activists (Bomberg, 1998).

Political parties (with some exceptions, such as Green Parties, as stated above) and Government ministries are not usually considered to be potential allies by ENGOs, even though some institutions – such as the media and ministries of the environment - may be seen as relatively supportive of their cause (Dalton, 1994). Indeed, certain ENGOs – especially of the moderate type – are more likely to work with Government ministries than radical ENGOs. Thus,

‘Strange bedfellows appear from the centre as well as from the extremes of the traditional left/right political continuum in multifarious situations. Not only this; social movement environmentalism strikes new identities, some for a fleeting moment but others more lasting. Globally mobile activists possess the “cultural capital” of higher education (often inclusive on English language skills), “and the social capital inherent in their transnational connections and access to resources and knowledge” [citing Routledge, Nativel and Cumbers]. The ability of emancipatory environmental movements to drift through barriers can create tremendously broad coalitions of support, which can be utilised to build linkages
of solidarity: the only true power resource of the powerless’ (Doyle and Doherty, 2006: 884).

Environmental activism extends into global civil society. Transnational environment NGOs such as WWF, FoE, Greenpeace and Birdlife act on issues that have consequences that go beyond fixed state boundaries, such as climate change and species extinction. Here it is not only national States that are targeted, but also transnational corporations and institutions (the EU being a case in point) (DeSombre, 2005). Notwithstanding the global effect of environmental activism, most environmental activism in Western Europe in general and in the European Union in particular is focused locally and nationally. Environmental protest tends to be influenced more by national political developments than by global or European influences (Rootes, 2007c).

Hence, for example, Southern European environmentalism has tended to be more concerned with immediate threats rather than ‘distant’ global issues, when compared to Northern European environmentalism. This is related to specific contexts in such societies, like, for instance, relatively late industrialisation and relatively late introduction of regimes of environmental protection, when compared to the case in Northern countries. At the same time, however, this split has declined in the past years due to factors such as the stabilisation of national democratic politics and the impact of the European Union (ibid.).

In certain cases, Southern European environmentalism has also been characterised by alliances between local concerns and broader structures, as is the case of the Bergama
movement in non-EU Turkey. Here, the movement successfully managed to ‘both equivalently articulate and unify different particular grievances and demands of different social groups’ (Özen, 2009). In social contexts characterised by poverty, from North to South, certain ENGOs have amalgamated environmental and social justice concerns through the Environmental Justice Movement, thus constructing an ‘environmentalism of everyday life’ (Pena, 2005: 153).

At the same time, however, one should not assume in advance that environmental alliances necessarily take place. Indeed, activists may feel a sense of unity and solidarity within the same organisation but not within the broader movement, which might be characterised by an ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality (Saunders, 2008).

Therefore, the analysis of overdetermining factors is essential in order to distinguish between the specific forms of activism of ENGOs. Such an analysis can delve into processes such as appropriation and exploitation of land, privatisation, marginalisation of communities and related conflicts. In this regard, environmentalism can also have a class-based dimension. Consequently

‘it is a class struggle because it involves those whose ways of life and labour are increasingly proletarianised by the expansion of capital and its form of social relations. It is a class struggle because it is concerned with the control of, access to and reproduction of material conditions of life…. The actors in the environmental class struggle are not only industrial workers in the traditional sense, but those whose ways of life and labour are increasingly proletarianised. That is, their lives are increasingly and forcibly disciplined and disrupted by market relations (Layfield, 2008: 4, 8).
Whilst objective ecological realities can lead to ENGO activism, this is not an automatic process as implied, for example, by Collective Behaviour theorists. As discussed earlier in this chapter, social construction and articulation of a specific environmental problem is required. As Beck puts it,

‘cultural indignation chooses between matters of the highest “objective” urgency, and this choice is not guided by the issues themselves, but by cultural symbols and experiences that govern the way people think and act, having their origin in their history and societal living conditions… Thus ecological protest is a matter not of natural, but of cultural, fact; a phenomenon of cultural sensibility and of the attentiveness of institutions. Against this background, natural devastation is experienced as cultural and political alarm, and then becomes the subject of social actions and protests…Nature appears to cry out and somehow we manage to hear its muted voice’ (1995: 47-8).

In turn, different ENGOs may give different meanings to ecological issues. Whilst moderates operate within an understanding that environmental improvements can take place within the existing socio-economic order, radicals see ecological problems as resulting from the socio-economic structure of advanced industrial societies, thus requiring radical change. The ideological differences between ENGOs can also influence their activism in that while moderate ENGOs are more likely to participate in conventional politics such as engaging in government commissions and promoting environmental reform through formal procedures, radical ENGOs are more likely to balance such activities with more radical action such as protests and demonstrations.

2.6.4 Empowerment and Institutionalisation of ENGOs

As shown previously, empowerment could be conceptualisation in terms of the formation of hegemonic formations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). These could be substantiated
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through the conceptualisation of impacts, which were theorized earlier in this chapter. Such impacts can be applied to ENGOs as follows.

As regards sensitizing impacts, there is a high level of support for environmental protection in most countries, and environmental matters constantly feature on the political agenda (Van der Heijden, 1999: 202). In this respect, the environment could be articulated in novel ways, for example as a global responsibility. Carter (2001) notes the importance of both ‘educative and persuasive pressure on policy elites to consider the environment’ (151), as well as ‘confrontational actions that capture media attention have repeatedly succeeded in pushing environmental issues into the public gaze’ (151).

With respect to procedural impacts, the environmental movement is regularly consulted particularly in some countries as well as at international level (including the EU) (Van der Heijden, 1999: 202-3). Yet, this does not necessarily mean that such access results in influence. In Carter’s (2001) words,

‘environmental groups have achieved only limited access to the policy networks that shape core economic decisions – in finance, industry, trade, energy and agriculture – which are still dominated by corporate and producer interests. Where regular access is gained, there is a price to being an insider group which involves compromise, obedience to the rules of the game and doing business with interests whose values and actions may be anathema to most environmentalists’ (152).

Structural impacts may include the creation of structures such as Environmental Ministries, Departments and Green Parties. Yet, such structures and organisations may lack power, for example as regards enforcement, implementation and change of the political system (Van der Heijden, 1999: 202-3).
This leads to substantive impacts, or ‘material results, for instance the closing down of a nuclear plant’, ‘preservation of important nature reserves’ (Van der Heijden, 1999: 202-3), ‘or new pollution legislation’ (Carter, 2001: 150). In this respect, environmental movements have not had so many substantive impacts (Van der Heijden, 1999: 203). Yet, despite various defeats, they have also made achievements (Rootes, 2007a: 633-4), such as local victories. But these ‘have rarely proved decisive in the wider policy arena’ (Carter, 2001: 152). Besides, Carter makes it clear that the mainstream environmental movement has benefitted primarily from a ‘negative’ substantive impact. Thus,

‘a powerful, united green lobby can frequently repulse undesirable policy initiatives and block environmentally damaging development projects. It has had less success in building support for its own reforms or changing the policy discourse’ (ibid).

In relation to the above, van der Heijden (1999) asserts that ‘impacts are increasingly sensitising and procedural and less substantive and structural’ (202). These theoretical concepts are being applied in this study. In this regard, Rootes defines the empowerment of environmental movements as follows:

‘Western governments may sometimes speak with forked tongues about their commitment to environmental protection, but none now dares to refuse to at least pay lip service to environmental concerns. The power of environmental movements may be mainly counterveiling power, but it is power nonetheless’ (634).

An observable trend amongst various ENGOs is their institutionalisation, whereby professional and conventional methods replace more radical strategies, and reform is chosen over revolution, albeit in different degrees amongst different NGOs. FoE, WWF and Greenpeace are cases in point (Van der Heijden, 1999; Carter, 2001; Rootes, 1999,
co-optation of ENGOs becomes an important feature of environmental politics, for example through provision of resources, ideological cohesion, and strategic alliances.

WWF, never one of the more radical ENGOs, endorses the mantra of corporate responsibility, for example recently teaming up with Coca-Cola (erstwhile criticised by human rights movements for endorsing the murders of trade-unionists in Colombia) to conserve and protect fresh water (Worth, 2007). Greenpeace, which is characterised by authoritarian leadership due to its elitist and hierarchical structure, still makes use of direct action and media stunts, yet it has also incorporated ‘rational’ debate with industry, hence using science as a weapon for environmental change (Carter, 2001). FoE has transformed itself from an informal social movement to a professional organisation with a centralised structure. Like other institutionalised ENGOs, it engages in technical and rational debate. Thus,

‘Today FoE is regularly consulted by government and its representatives are frequently found on official committees. Consequently, it eschews the grand confrontational gestures which helped build its reputation but that might now lose it the respectability needed for regular insider status Where FoE once relished direct action, it is now hesitant to use it because as a large “protest business” it cannot afford to break the law for fear of having its financial assets sequestered by the courts’ (ibid: 139).

However, unlike Greenpeace and WWF, FoE has formed alliances with the global justice movement and has joined the chorus of critique of neo-liberalism (Doherty and Doyle, 2006; Carmin and Bast, 2009). Therefore, whilst various ENGOs have become institutionalised or are moving towards institutionalisation, this should not lead one to conclude that radical activism is dead, even within established NGOs such as FoE and
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Greenpeace. Indeed, the combined use of moderate and radical activism is an important feature of ENGOs, which gives them strength in view of the availability of different strategic options to reach their goals. Hence, as already discussed earlier, institutionalisation is not a simple one-way process which simply co-opts ENGOs into state structures.

The moderate and radical wings of the environmental movement may thus be considered to be symbiotically related, resulting in ‘creative tension’ (Carter, 2001: 147). However, this may result in dilemmas for environmental movements, where they have to choose between pragmatic strategies and loyalty to their fundamental beliefs. In this regard, some ENGOs may moderate their strategies, especially if they are professionally organised and have access to resources that enhance their operations. Yet on the other hand, informally organised ENGOs such as local ones can be more confrontational with authorities and hence less institutionalised. In a Southern European context, the formally organised ENGOs might appear to be less strong than their Northern European counterparts, and may be more involved in alliance-forming with other NGOs. Yet, they are quickly growing, especially due to pressures of institutionalisation from their national governments and the EU (Kousis, della Porta, Jimenez, 2008).

Even various radical ENGOs can end up emphasising modest reformist goals in most of their activities. Indeed, as discussed earlier, ‘Radical and anarchic elements within the movement are scarce, even if they are visible in the media. Rather, most environmentalists are products of Western affluence and strong advocates for the democratic creed. The green movement, and other NSMs, primarily represent a reformist challenge to contemporary
political systems. They press for political change across a wide front, often asking simply that European societies continue the political and social thinking that initially spawned these movements’ (Dalton, 1994: 256).

If various ENGOs are becoming institutionalised, this can be considered as an element of empowerment. Through such NGOs, the voices of certain people would never have been heard in environmental politics, and certain political changes might have never been made. Indeed, it is only when such movements manage to form part of hegemonic nodal points (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 112; Howarth and Stravakakis, 2000: 8), that these changes become possible.

In view of the above, there are various factors which may enhance the effectiveness, and, consequently, the empowerment of ENGOs. In the first instance, activists within such organisations may possess significant amounts of cultural and social capital. Besides, such organisations may benefit from higher levels of public trust than governments or corporations. Institutionalised ENGOs may also have access to restricted information and to the decision-making arena (Carter, 2001; Rootes, 2007b). This enables them to form broad coalitions involving business, science, and politics. For this to take place, at best, it is more likely that the reformist ideologies are made use of as signifiers. Yet, this is not likely to result in radical social change as demanded by radical ecologists and scientists who demand changes such as massive reduction in carbon emissions (Kovel, 2007, Lovelock, 2007). Giovanna Di Chiro (2008) goes as far as saying that institutionalised ENGOs have ‘joined the global campaign to keep socio-economic development patterns in rich countries and limit it in poor ones’ (285-6). Along similar lines, O’Connor (1998) adds,
‘mainstream environmentalists might be called “fictitious Greens”. These environmentalists support environmental regulations consistent with profitability and the expansion of global capitalism, for example, resource conservation for long-run profitability and profit-oriented regulation or abolition of pollution. They are typically allied with national and international interests’ (270)

This is a far cry from radical environmentalism and, for example, from the environmental class conflict referred to previously. Hence, institutionalisation may result in an empowerment within existing hegemonic formations, which, in turn, is not out of tune with the aims of moderate ENGOs.

2.6.5 The State and ENGOs

In order to be empowered, ENGOs require influence over State power, which, in turn, is characterised by the condensation of a relationship of antagonistic forces. In this regard both State institutions and ENGOs can form nodal points with hegemonic influence over environmental matters. As discussed earlier, ENGOs may be effective through sensitising impacts, procedural impacts, structural impacts and substantive impacts. Hegemonic formations may be formed, and institutionalisation may take place. This shows that environmental decision-making is not simply a technical matter but is very much connected to related social processes:

‘Institutions do not simply follow broad and established principles, but must instead tread a sensitive path between scientific evidence, social pressures and commercial anxieties’ (Irwin, 2001: 116).

The political impact of ENGOs should therefore be put into perspective, as they are just one actor out of many. Their demands frequently contrast with those of others, especially those demands that emphasise economic growth. This should be seen within the context of the power of the business interests of producer groups, who ‘have retained a privileged
position within the policy process despite the increasingly large, vocal and professional environmental lobby’ (Carter, 2001: 173).

Indeed, in certain environmental issues, the State and the economy can be seen as being symbiotically related within hegemonic formations, whereby the State promotes capitalist interests so as to ensure economic growth, whilst economic actors such as businesses require the mechanisms of State apparatuses so as to ensure stability and the smooth-running of operations. Notwithstanding this, in the recent years, various governments have introduced new policies and legislation to protect the environment, and ENGOs have to be credited in this regard (Frank, Hironaka and Schofer, 2000). For example, many governments, including those of all EU member states, now have a Ministry for the Environment. Momentarily putting aside the high degree of influence of big business interests on state decision making on environmental matters, other influential factors – including dislocatory ones - may include the influence of external factors such as EU membership; internal structural factors such as the State’s budgetary situation; the influence of social movements and other civil society actors such as the media; public consciousness; and the emergence of sudden crises and problems such as oil spills and nuclear disasters. Carter (2001) situates this within ‘the ‘interdependent relationship between the state, business and the citizen within the wider structure of global capitalism’ (322). It is in this context that environmental conflicts related to economic matters can be discursively conceptualised as ‘environmental class conflict’ (Layfield, 2008). However, this should not result in economic reductionism, as environmental antagonisms may be articulated in which there are no economic signifiers.
2.7 ENGOs in a European Union context

2.7.1 Introduction
Given that this thesis analyses whether Maltese ENGOs have experienced empowerment through Malta’s EU accession, it is important to consider ENGOs not only in relation to the national state, but also in relation to the European Union. This will be carried out in this section, with the aim of providing the basis for further theorization on EU environmental politics and the role of ENGOs in this regard.

2.7.2 The European Union
The European Union has received its fair share of theorization, supporters and critics. Functionalists speak in terms of reaching a balance between common and particular interests, (Mitrany, 1966), whilst Neo-Functionalists conceptualise the European integration through ‘functional spill-over’, whereby integration in various sectors would result in the integration of other sectors, even if unintended. This would result in the creation of a new political European entity (Haas, 1961; George, 1991). Some have gone as far as speaking in terms of a ‘United States of Europe’ (Verhofstadt, 2006). By contrast, Intergovernmentalists and their liberal counterparts respectively argue that the nation-state still has a strong role in the EU, especially through their bargaining techniques and cooperation guided by rational values (Hoffmann, 1995; Moravcsik, 1998). Rational-choice theorists add that even EU rules, institutions and decision-making structures influence its policy-making process (Sharpf, 1998).

On the other hand, Constructivists argue that the EU is more influential than it is theorised by others, as it also shapes identities, both of individuals and national
governments (Christiansen, Jorgensen and Wiener, 1999). In this respect, globalisation is seen by some as having a profound impact, beyond the borders of both the EU and its constituent nation-states. This results in cosmopolitanism, where, ‘communities and loyalties are therefore not an either/or choice but inherently pluralistic’ (Delanty and Rumford, 2005: 194).

Within such a framework, the EU can also be seen as a network, whereby national sovereignty in various areas is transferred from the national to the supranational level and wherein policy-making takes place within a complex network of institutions at various levels, including supranational, European, national and sub-national. Hence the EU represents a new form of multi-layered State within a globalised context, and not a super-state (Castells, 2000b; Giddens, 2007). Paradoxically, national States must reduce their national autonomy if they are to extend their political sovereignty and control (Beck, 2005). Yet at the same time, the same states proactively shape EU policies, institutions and processes to which they will then adapt (Börzel, 2008: 237).

The European Union exerts power over its member-states by offering positive sanctions such as access to markets and funding to those member-states which reform in accordance to its policies and offering negative sanctions in the form of legal procedures to those which do not. In this regard Mark Leonard (2005) says that ‘politicians, civil servants and citizens internalize European power and become agents of European integration’ (42). He adds that

‘Like Visa, it [the European Union] is a decentralised network that exists to serve its member-states. The EU is a skeletal organisation that leaves the real power to
its member-states, which are responsible for implementing and overseeing the vast majority of the European Union’s activities. This revolutionary structure has allowed the European Union to grow with the support of its members. But it has also fundamentally changed the nature of global politics’ (ibid: 25).

‘Europeanization’ can therefore be observed within the EU, especially in terms of constraints on national options and in the shaping of new norms, identities and preferences (Börzel and Risse, 2000).

Hence, whilst some theorists speak, albeit in different degrees, in terms of the influence of the EU (and according to some theorists, of the influence of globalisation) on nation states and individuals, others speak of the resilience and interests of the nation state. In this study, the EU is not considered as being a static or unidirectional structure. Europeanization, or ‘the domestic adaptation to European regional integration’ (Vink and Graziano, 2008: 7) does take place only in certain instances, but in multi-directional levels and at different speeds (Delanty and Rumford, 2005: 49). Homogeneous and heterogeneous factors co-exist. Different member states do share common characteristics such as conformity to various EU directives and regulations, yet each country has its own national characteristics. As Andrea Lenschow (2006) puts it,

‘while we may have already suspected that the national state is not withering away, we are now gaining additional clarity that we are not facing a process of harmonisation or convergence of national policy, politics and polity structures either’ (67).

At the same time, however, it has to be emphasised that this does not mean that the status-quo prevails in European societies. ‘Europe has widened the political and discursive context of national policy-makers and societal actors’ (ibid: 68), in a wide
range of bottom-up, horizontal and top-down interactive processes. In this sense, Europeanization can involve not only Governments, but also interest groups, social movements, new ‘institutional opportunity structures and also the normative consequences in terms of substantial political issues’ (Vink and Graziano, 2008: 8). Formal and informal networks of both public and private actors facilitate EU policymaking (Börzel and Heard-Laurote, 2009).

The European Union can therefore be seen as a supranational system of governance with its own apparatuses, within which, economic, political and national actors are involved in antagonistic relations, thus shaping the characteristics of the EU alongside other overdetermining factors. In turn, the EU is involved in complex relations on global and national levels. It can be seen as a ‘social complex’ in terms of structure and change, characterised by commonalities and differences (Roche, 2010).

The EU’s multi-levelled form of power is characterised by hegemonic struggles, as is the case with the national State. In this regard, the European Commission and other influential bodies are attempting to make the EU the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, through neo-liberal modernisation and related changes to its social model (Schmitter, 2000; Hermann and Hofbauer, 2007). Yet, this is not a one-way process. Indeed, ‘Brussels has become more like Washington than most national European capitals in terms of the volume and intensity of private lobbying of the political process. The bulk of this activity is by individual firms and national and European associations representing business interests. However, fostered by the EU institutions, public interests, old and new social movements and subnational government bodies have begun to fight back (Hix, 1999: 201).
European integration, though characterised by a plurality of processes at various levels, is thus a hegemonic project (Jessop, 2004). It does not have a unique direction, and its processes cannot be entirely reduced to a single determining essence, yet this does not exclude the influence of powerful groups and interests. EU accession could have a dislocatory effect within new member states. Disruption in this regard can result in discursive opportunities for new hegemonic formations. Consequently, the next section will focus on the dynamics of policy-making and governance within the EU.

2.7.3 EU Policy Making and Governance

Antagonism and conflict are key elements of EU policy processes, taking place at different levels.

The European Commission has an important role in EU governance. It is armed by its own activism (such as proposing new directions, policies, directives and regulations for the EU) and by its legal framework. This is legitimised through the regulatory power assigned to it by national States; its role in dealing with regulatory difficulties within the EU; and its role in dealing with demands arising from civil society. In turn, its legal power is legitimised by means of the decisions of the European Court of Justice. Yet, the European Commission itself is subject to international regulation such as that of the World Trade Organisation. This results in controversies such as the one concerning genetically modified food, where interests such as those of US multinational corporations oppose the Commission’s concerns and standards on health and safety.
At the same time, the European Commission – which shares legislative power with the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament - suffers from problems of legitimacy as well as constraints regarding the impact of its regulations. Hence, regulation within the EU is produced and/or implemented at the European, national and international levels, in a multi-tiered regulatory system (Thatcher, 2001).

In this regard, the national State maintains a key role in EU power and governance. Due to the fact that the EU is frequently criticised over its democratic deficit (as is the case with the EU Treaty), the EU depends very much on nation states both for legitimacy and assistance (Jessop, 2002a). Hence, the latter have a vital role in the formulation and implementation of EU policy. National States transpose most of EU law by using the power assigned to them by their national parliament, and, in having various means at their disposal in this regard. Due to their role within the European Council of Ministers, national governments have a better understanding of the objectives and processes of EU policy-making than sub-national authorities and other executive bodies. Besides, national States do not always act in conformity with EU policies. National States may take unilateral decisions to opt out from certain EU policies, or may choose to implement specific directives in particular ways. Yet, at the same time, EU courts seem to have adopted a stronger role as regards jurisprudence on the obligations and rights of governments in the implementation of EU policy (Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson 2001).
EU policy-making can therefore be conceptualised as being made up of decisions that cut across multiple levels of power, where policies are not decided upon and adopted by merely one institution within the EU. Such policy-making is more akin to both ‘push and pull factors’ (Eising, 2008: 167). Once a policy is finally adopted and transposed into a directive, individual member-states (and even regional and local authorities) may adopt an interpretation of such a directive in a way which may differ from that of other member-states. Thus, EU policy processes might have differentiated outcomes (Wallace, Wallace and Pollack, 2005; Steunenberg, 2006). Processes involving Governmental and civil society stakeholders in specific sectors, rather than generic structures, tend to influence the transposition of directives (Steunenberg and Rhinhard, 2010).

EU policy-making and governance should therefore be seen as a complex and fluid process, involving actors that are relatively autonomous though related to each other, such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers, the European Court of Justice, national States and transnational institutions. None of these actors has exclusive power, and none can be defined to be the ultimate form of State. Hence, there is no such thing as a European super-State, but at the same time, the national State does not have a monopoly of power in its territory. State power is multi-levelled, as are popular hegemonic conflicts across local, national, European and global borders. The next section will focus on the role of civil society in EU governance, thus providing a theoretical framework through which the role and possible empowerment of ENGOs can be conceptualised.
2.7.4 Civil Society and EU Governance

The EU has been described as being ‘incredibly open and permeable to interest group lobbying compared even with the more pluralistic member states’ (Mazey and Richardson, 2006: 251). Civil society has a key role in EU Governance. Civil society actors are active in antagonistic processes, thus exerting their pressure on EU structures whilst also working within an EU framework. A plurality of civil society actors representing various demands participate in EU policy-making processes. In these last recent years the activism of such actors has increased in importance due to the fact that national States have ceded sovereignty to the EU in various aspects of policy-making. Thus, supranational activism can be observed, in which civil society actors such as social movements in general and ENGOs in particular participate not only in trying to resolve local and national issues, but also issues which go beyond national boundaries.

Civil society actors such as NGOs lobby different institutions within the EU, including the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Court of Justice and the Council of Ministers, through different mechanisms and strategies. National Governments still play an important role, especially in relation to the Council of Ministers, but their importance varies in terms of issues, policies, interest groups, and type of national governments themselves. Yet, it should be emphasised that none of these institutions are necessarily stable or neutral – ‘All institutions have a bias and create winners and losers’ (ibid: 265). Nonetheless, the existence of a plurality of venues for lobbying results in a ‘disjointed policy process’ within the EU (ibid.). The EU, like the
national State, is hereby being considered to be made up of the condensation of a relationship of antagonistic forces in the construction of hegemonic formations.

Civil society actors have a crucial role in the implementation of EU policy. Apart from benefiting from EU funding for this purpose, such actors may also empowered through EU legislation, whereby they can take public authorities to court for failing to implement EU policy. Besides, civil society actors use links with the European Commission to promote their own interests when they feel that they reached have a dead-end with national authorities (Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001: 344-5). The ‘boomerang effect’ (Johnston, 2011: 186-7) may take place, through which EU accession is used as a gateway for empowerment.

Notwithstanding the above, the influence of civil society has to be put into perspective. A report published by transparency group Alter-EU, which represents 160 organisations within the EU, has stated that the European commission is over-represented by industry lobbyists in its advisory groups. The climate change panel, for example, was composed of 30 representatives of industry, 13 officials from the commission and seven members coming from NGOs, universities and a regional member (Mahony, 2008). Besides, research has also shown that European integration has reaffirmed the power of ‘those organizations that had already build up capacities to articulate, aggregate and represent the interests of their constituencies’ (Eising, 2008: 180).
It is clear that civil society actors such as NGOs are working within contexts which are characterised by hegemonic struggles. This does not mean that all civil society antagonisms and conflicts within the EU member-states have shifted to an EU-level. Relations of power are articulated in various specific configurations, including the local, the national, the regional and the global. Local and national political alliances are still of great importance. Hence, ‘The multiplicity of nodal points calls for a variety of strategies, and the conflict cannot simply be envisaged at the global level’ (Mouffe, 2005: 114).

Following the above theorisation on EU-policy making and the role of civil society in this regard, the next section will focus on EU environmental policy, which is of direct interest in this thesis in order that the role of ENGOs, and their possible empowerment, may be put into perspective.

2.7.5 EU Environmental Policy

Around 80% of national environmental legislation in EU member states originates at EU level (Dimas, 2005). The European Union is also a major world player in environmental policy, and has exerted much pressure for the introduction of global frameworks to tackle issues such as climate change.

Within the EU, environmental policy gained EC treaty recognition in 1987 when the Single European Act was adopted, so as to accelerate European economic integration - in order that its common market could be fully achieved (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007) However, environmental legislation and policy-making in the EU were well in existence before that, and have now become major spheres of policy in the EU, with a growing
expansion of regulatory activities since the early 1970s. In this regard, whilst environmental policy can be seen as a ‘by-product’ of European economic integration, such policy has become increasingly autonomous, albeit still related (and in various instances subdued) to economic factors and motivations (ibid.). The development of EU environmental policy has also been related to environmental problems, increased environmental consciousness and politicisation on a cross-border level (Liefferlink, Lowe and Mol, 1993).

EU policy decisions on the environment have actually been taking place since 1967, with directives, frameworks, programmes and ratifications covering areas such as air pollution from motor vehicles; emissions from large combustion plants; reduction of hazardous waste; limit on volume and increased recovery of packaging waste; control of pollution from urban waste water; minimum standards for drinking water; protection of the ozone layer; standards against climate change; greenhouse gas emissions; classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances; protection of birds; environment impact assessments; public access to environmental information; integrated pollution prevention and control; taxation of energy products and electricity; and establishment of polluters-pay principle (Lenschow, 2005). Such policy activities can basically be grouped into six individual areas, namely nature protection; water protection; air pollution control; noise control; waste management; and chemicals control. Development of policy and legislation in such areas is characterised by continuity rather than change, yet it has not been linear (Hey, 2005: 18). Such unevenness can be exemplified through waste management, water protection and chemical control, which are characterised by early
development; whilst air pollution and nature protection are characterised by late development, commencing on a notable level during the 1980s and 1990s respectively (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 52).

The EU Treaty (also known as the Lisbon Treaty), which was signed in 2007 and enforced in 2009, built upon existing EU legislation embedded in the Single European Act and the Treaty on EU. According to David Benson and Andrew Jordan (2010), this treaty earmarks sustainable development as a specific policy goal in EU external relations (469), and does not propose radical environmental change, especially since environmental policy is a ‘relatively mature area of EU competence’ (ibid: 474). At the same time, however, Benson and Jordan predict that environmental policy is facing a new political landscape characterised by declining support for European integration. Thus in spite of its institutional standing, environmental policy is subject to different pressures in a context of political antagonism.

EU policy is characterised by both legally binding limits of the command-and-control type, which aim to bring uniformity in areas such as that of pollution emissions, as well as more flexible approaches which give greater freedom to member states to implement EU policies. Instruments of the latter type are becoming increasingly common within the EU (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 23), and an underlying trend within such policies is to adopt an environmental impact approach which is based on quality standards (Scheuer, 2005b: 34). Such instruments emphasize mechanisms like economic incentives, voluntary self-regulation and public participation. This is in line with the subsidiarity principle in
the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty. Thus, authority on a European level should be exerted if it is more effective than on other levels, including member-state level. Whilst this has advantages such as increased flexibility and less rigid forms of adaptability, on the other hand, such flexibility might result in vagueness, thus providing too few incentives for conformity amongst actors such as national governments and private companies. However, the shift towards more flexible approaches does not seem to have had a significant impact on effectiveness of measures (ibid: 165).

The European Union has institutionalised environmental issues in its Directorate General for the Environment, which, in turn, was also followed by the creation of a Directorate General for Climate Action in 2010 (European Commission Climate Action, 2011), but such issues have also been taken up by other Directorates, by the Council of Ministers, by the European Parliament and by the European Court of Justice. The pressure of the European Commission has been effective in helping give more importance to environmental issues in member states’ policy agendas, especially since the Commission enjoys various powers such as agenda-setting, monitoring, and executive functions. The Commission has particularly made use of agenda-setting powers in environmental policy, thus initiating legislation processes for such matters (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 58).

The Council of Ministers, which is ‘still the most important institution in the decision-making structure of the EU’ (ibid: 61), takes decisions on various EU legislative measures such as directives and regulations on environmental policy. On the other hand, the European Parliament has comparably less authority in legislative terms, even though
it does participate in the legislative process, where its interventions tend to be reflected in resultant policy (ibid: 65). Its power lies mostly in its role as a monitoring authority which can give a vote of no-confidence to the Commission and also appoint Commission members. Yet it should be emphasised that as regards the Environment sector, the European Parliament has the power of co-decision making together with the Council of Ministers. In this regard, the Parliament’s Committee on Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection is responsible for environmental policy matters. On its part, the European Court of Justice is responsible for interpreting EU law and for ensuring compliance therewith. It is not directly involved in policy-making, but ‘it has decisive influence over the regulation of the environmental policy in the EU’ (ibid: 67).

The European Union also carried out institutional developments such as the establishment of the European Environment Agency in 1994, the aim of which is to compile information on the European state of the environment. In addition, the EU has also ratified international protocols such as the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change in 2002, whereby the Union has tended to have much influence in such spheres (ibid: 73).

Funding for environmental purposes is given much importance in the EU, with structural and cohesion funds being the main source of direct environmental funding. Besides, the development of national ministries of the environment, environment protection agencies, and also the development of Green Parties and ENGOs are also amongst the important factors in this regard. This shows that there is a clear political dimension to the development of EU environmental policy (Rootes, 2007b,c).
This political dimension is multi-levelled and is subject to hegemonic struggles and several overdetermining factors and relations from various directions, also including international environmental regimes (Gehring and Oberthur, 2006). Since the 1990s, the EU has on the one hand further institutionalised this area in terms of policy and legislation, but has on the other hand cooled down such activism when compared to the 1980s. Reasons for this include a general slow-down in economic growth and increased international economic competition (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 23).

Whilst an EU ‘environmental model’ can arguably be identified due to factors like development of legislation that aims to create a level playing-field (Lönnroth, 2006), the impact of Europeanization is limited to areas such as legislation in traditional elements of environmental policy, for example quality standards. In some member states the impact has been stronger than in others (Jordan and Liefferink, 2004). Moreover, the environment tops the EC list of complaints under investigation, ahead of other sectors such as the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 156).

In this regard, there are regional differences regarding implementation and compliance to EU policy. Carter (2001) gives an example by referring to the so called ‘Mediterranean syndrome’, whereby southern member states ‘are generally slower at transposing EU environmental directives into national legislation, and more importantly, are rather lax about enforcing them’ (289). Not everyone agrees with this analysis, however, and some actually believe that civil society in Southern Europe is stronger than explained by the
proponents of the Mediterranean syndrome (Kousis, della Porta, Jimenez, 2008). Others argue that the EU has had a differential impact on Southern European member states, depending not only on the influence of the EU but also on domestic institutional pathways (Fernandez, Font and Koutalakis, 2010). Hence, national responses to EU pressure have been differentiated. Fernandez, Font and Koutalakis argue that one important factor that encourages Europeanization is the usage of a plurality of decision-making processes in decentralised political systems, as ultimately promoted by the EU itself (ibid: 573).

Another important factor related to environmental policy in the EU has to do with islands. EU policy does not have a coherent set of policies related to the sustainability challenges facing islands. Existing policies are fragmented and incremental, dealing mostly with issues related to cohesion, agriculture and fisheries. The EU accession of Malta and Cyprus in 2004 has made this lag even more apparent (Moncada, Camilleri, Formosa and Galea, 2009). Indeed, small islands tend to be vulnerable in structural and institutional terms. This has been acknowledged by the United Nations through the development of an Economic Vulnerability Index. As Lino Briguglio (who created this index) puts it, the index measures ‘the lack of economic resilience arising from the relative inability of a small island state to shelter itself from forces outside its control’ (1993: 1-2).

Thus, whilst the EU has made much environmental progress, at the same time, it cannot yet be called an ‘environmental union’ (Scheuer, 2005a). Indeed, most environmental
protection takes place at a national level, and the EU tends to leave it to the discretion of member states to implement EU policy and achieve targets. Thus, “‘Brussels” is … a trading and negotiating place for policies rather than the “real” initiator’ (Scheuer, 2005b: 8), even though much EU policy originates at European level by institutions such as the Commission. In other words,

‘Europeanization has affected the policy, polity and the politics of the environment. But the degree of change differs significantly from country to country’ (Börzel, 2008: 229).

The compliance with EU policy tends to be influenced by various factors, even though existing empirical data does not allow for a fully comprehensive assessment of effectiveness of implementation (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 157). However, it can be said that such factors may include the institutional design of the EU; homogeneity of member states; economic compliance costs; domestic support; characteristics of domestic structures; experience of policy sector and member state; communication issues; instrument type and content; (Etherington, 2006); pre-existing institutional set-ups in member states (Paraskevopolous, Getimis and Rees, 2006), ecological conditions; level of public awareness; and political factors (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 212). As regards the latter, the role of organisations (both governmental and non) who negotiate on behalf of the environment constitutes an important factor (Hey, 2005: 28).

In turn, the EU as a bloc is facing various environmental hegemonic struggles, in issues such as climate change and energy use. At the same time, EU environmental policy has
been attacked from various quarters, not least due to factors such as the EU enlargement process, economic slow-down, and unemployment (Scheuer, 2005b: 8)

As regards the ideological orientation of EU environmental policy, it is important to highlight that institutions within the EU are not characterised by a uniform, monolithic ideology. Antagonism exists at all levels. Even the Commission itself is often characterised by conflicts of interests, different administrative cultures, and divergent ideals (Page, 1997). Yet this does not mean that all positions are equal. Ideological trends can be identified in this respect. For example, the European Council agreed upon an EU strategy for sustainable development on Gothenburg in June 2001. This strategy was reviewed by the European Commission in 2005, whereby according to Commission President Barroso, ‘the Sustainable Development Strategy and the Lisbon Strategy are mutually reinforcing’, meaning that any new environmental legislation ‘will be double-checked by the Commission to ensure that it does not impose unnecessary burdens on businesses, growth, and job creation’ (http://www.euractiv.com/en/sustainability/sustainable-development-eu-strategy/article-117544Euractiv.com, June 19th, 2006). Thus, the Gothenburg strategy became marginalised by the hegemonic Lisbon strategy, and the Commission ‘has been reluctant to make proposals for new environmental laws, emphasising the need to focus on increasing competitiveness of Europe’s economy and simplifying existing EU legislation’ (Scheuer, 2005b: 8).

Hence it is evident that though environmental policy features prominently in EU discourse, EU policies are situated within a capitalist framework with neo-liberal
tendencies (Pesendorfer, 2006). At best, the ideological slant of the EU with regard to environmental policies revolves around ideologies such as ecological modernisation, sustainable development and conservationism. Hence, as a hegemonic formation, the EU is organized around nodal points of “economic competitiveness” and “environmental sustainability and protection”, which are often signified by neo-liberal demands, though the economic logic does not feature in all environmental policies (conservationist policies being a case in point).

Jordan (1999) and Baker (2007) elaborate on EU environmental ideology. Jordan states that sustainable development acts as a guideline for policy-making within the EU. Baker adds that whilst the EU has a symbolic commitment to sustainable development in terms of the articulation and construction of its identity, EU environmental policy is very much influenced by the ideology of ecological modernisation, where economic interests often subordinate ecological ones. Janicke (2008), agrees that ecological modernisation is a key guideline for EU policy-making, yet goes a step further than Baker, stating that its approach is far more comprehensive than traditional ones, as it focuses on ‘environmental improvements through resource efficient innovation’

Thus, an analysis of environmental regulation within the EU should take account of overdetermining factors. Dislocatory effects relating to economic and ecological crises and accession of new members states; the different discursive emphasis of particular EU presidencies; and the hegemonic influence of different ideologies are other important factors worth consideration in this regard. The influence and empowerment of ENGOs
should be seen in such a perspective, whereby the environment is a political matter, and not merely a technical problematic.

2.7.6 ENGOs in the EU

As seen in the previous section, environmental politics in the EU is alive and kicking, with the European Commission facing continuous tension between environmental and economic pressures. The Commission itself is not a homogenous bloc – as regards the environment, one can witness clashes between ‘competitiveness-first’ commissioners and the Commissioner responsible for the Environment (Euractiv.com, July 20th, 2005).

ENGOs are key players in EU environmental politics, and, in many instances many such organisations have been supported by the European Commission through financing and provision of information. Christoph Knill and Duncan Liefferlink (2007) argue that since the adoption of the Single European Act and the realization of the Common Market Programme, the EU has been characterised by a ‘dramatic increase’ in the number of civil society actors that include ENGOs (69-72). Such interest groups are frequently consulted by the Commission, which, in turn, tends to prefer organisations that are organised at a European level. Such groups are increasingly carrying out lobbying with the European Parliament. Such activism also takes place with National Governments and ministries which are represented in the Council of Ministers. In this case, however, lobbying is mostly carried out through the ‘national route’ (ibid).
Most environmentalists see the EU as an ally, and the structure itself of the EU encourages lobbying rather than public protest. The latter is also less likely to take place at a European level because of the lack of an EU-wide mass media. In this regard, behind-the-scenes lobbying and networking of ENGOs within the EU should not be underestimated (Carmin and Fagan, 2010: 700). Tanja Börzel and Arnon Buzogany (2010) argue that ENGOs strive to “‘pull down’ […] EU policy to the domestic level by pressuring public administration to legally incorporate, practically apply and enforce it” (712). In this regard, together with the media, they can shame national Governments by using the EU as a watchdog. Natura 2000, which is based on the Habitats Directive and on the Wild Birds Directive, exemplifies EU policy which enables ENGOs to make use of such strategies (ibid).

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB - the largest ENGO in the EU, acting as an umbrella organisation of 140 ENGOs) highlights various areas which should concern ENGOs, and recommendations are put forward accordingly. In the area of nature protection, for example, recommendations include the successful proposal of Natura 2000 sites; the launching of court cases and complaints at national and European levels; ensuring that Environment Impact Assessment and Strategic Impact Assessment directives are implemented; and the proper financing of nature protection (Falter and Scheuer, 2005: 43). The EEB has also created alliances with trade unions, social and consumer bodies and specific industries. In particular, it has formed alliances with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), since the mid-1990s and the Social Platform since 2001, and together they have lobbied to link the EU Lisbon process to
sustainable development (European Environmental Bureau, 2007b: 2). More recently, CONCORD (the European Confederation for Relief and Development) joined forces with this trio, and the ‘Spring Alliance’ (2011) was set up in 2009, which is therefore managed by the European Environmental Bureau, the European Trade Union Confederation, Social Platform and Concord. The Spring Alliance also comprises various civil society organisations, including ENGOs such as Friends of the Earth International, Greenpeace and Birdlife International; and various other stakeholders, including some Green and Left Members of the European Parliament. EEB also forms part of the ‘Green 10 (G10)’, a group of leading ENGOs active at the EU level, which also comprises BirdLife International; CAN Europe; CEE Bankwatch Network; Friends of the Earth Europe; Greenpeace; Health and Environment Alliance; Friends of Nature; European Federation for Transport and Environment; and WWF.

As regards air, ENGOs are recommended by the EEB to participate in the Clean Air For Europe (CAFE) process, whilst also ensuring that EU directives in connection with this are implemented on a national level. ENGOs are also recommended ‘to promote a sustainable urban transport policy that reduces traffic, traffic congestion and pollution’ (Meyer, 2005: 59). Besides, ENGOs are recommended to support proposals for car emission standards; to propose the creation of more low-emission zones in urban areas (ibid: 70); and to insist on strong emission limit values for large combustion plants (ibid: 75).
In the Waste sector, ENGOs are recommended to take action such as using the complaint procedure to ensure that EU law is applied, as well as to ensure that waste is prevented or recycled as much as possible. Waste management plans and standards are encouraged (Shinn, 2005: 116-119). When it comes to Water, recommendations for ENGO empowerment include the highlighting of various environmental and socio-economic benefits through water management, such as increase in water security; avoiding future costs for treatment; having good quality water; and enhancing fishing and tourism. ENGOs are also encouraged not to shy away from the technical complexity of various water issues, but rather, to ‘encourage and get involved in a public discourse about “good ecological status” and setting specific objectives’ (Scheuer, 2005c: 152-153).

According to the EEB, ENGOs are more likely to be empowered also through public participation rights, whereby access to information and to justice would be guaranteed (Taylor, 2005: 162-165). However, in both cases, further bottlenecks may result due to incomprehensible documents and short deadlines in the case of the former, and costly court fees in the case of the latter (Scheuer, 2005d: 180). Other sources of empowerment are active participation in permit-granting processes in pollution prevention and control (ibid: 193); ensuring national implementation of directives (Scheuer, 2005) and the forming of coalitions at various levels to help ensure the proper implementation of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (Duwe, 2005: 223). In sum, the EEB promotes methods of empowerment that are more synonymous with moderate ideology, and which, therefore, is more likely to be obtainable within an EU context.
Besides the EEB, the largest ENGOs within the EU – FoE, Greenpeace, WWF, Birdlife International, Climate Network Europe and Transport and Environment Federation are all based in Brussels, even though they collectively employ fewer than 30 people in their Brussels offices. This shows that resource-wise they are relatively poorer than other civil society actors such as business groups. This imbalance is also reflected in terms of financial resources and in terms of ingrained position within the EU, whereby economic interests have been longer established on a European level (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 71).

As regards access to EC funds, it is only Greenpeace that does not accept this source of funding (Hunold, 2005). Conversely, the EEB, which was founded in 1974, is the ENGO that depends the most on EC funding, and is also the most politically moderate organisation of the four (Rootes, 2007b). At the same time it is considered to be ‘the most comprehensive environmental interest association’ (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 71). Other ENGOs such as FoE, Greenpeace and WWF have been established on a European level since the mid-1980s, whilst others such as BirdLife International, Climate Network Europe and the Transport and Environment Federation were established during the 1990s (ibid: 71-72).

Radical ENGOs, such as Climate Justice Now! (CJN) relate issues such as climate change to anti-capitalist demands (Reitan and Gibson, 2012). CJN (n.d.) describes itself as ‘a network of organisations and movements from across the globe committed to the fight for social, ecological and gender justice’. Such ENGOs do not have much place in
the European Commission’s vision of European civil society (Hunold, 2005). In fact the EU makes use of opportunities and constraints to empower less radical ENGOs, which may be institutionalised and co-opted within EU structures, just as can be the case with regard to NGOs and the national State. Thus, for example, whilst DG Environment can be seen as trying to empower ENGOs through access to the policy process, on the other hand this empowerment could end up in a state of dependence (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 72), and could benefit long-established ENGOs at the expense of recently-set up groups (Taylor, 2005: 165).

EU accession can influence ENGO activism through the ‘boomerang effect’ (Johnston, 2011: 186-7), where the EU is used as a gateway for empowerment. The dislocatory effect of EU accession could provide new discursive opportunities for ENGOs in the formation of nodal points through hegemonic struggles. In their analysis of ENGOs in Romania, Hungary and Poland following EU accession, Börzel and Buzogany (2010) add ‘the top-down nature of Eastern enlargement and the weakness of both state administration and civil society actors did give rise to sustainable cooperative state-society relations in the CEE’ (710).

On the other hand, in spite of historical and political differences in such countries, EU accession did have similar effects on ENGOs as regards their agenda and activism, such as increased professionalization of certain ENGOs which, in turn, cooperate with radical ENGOs who are too weak to work alone in naming and shaming their respective Governments (ibid: 728). Börzel adds that ENGOs coming from Southern European countries, which are most likely to benefit from opportunities provided by the EU which

4 Central and Eastern European countries.
can be used to put pressure on their respective governments, are at the same time most likely to take advantage of them, given their lack of resources (Börzel, 2008: 232). Indeed, she concludes that actors that do not exploit resources to their advantage on the international level are likely to be weakened, due to the fact that much environmental policy is being carried out beyond the nation state. The same applies also to institutions such as national parliaments (233).

At the same time it is important to emphasise that whilst environmental activism across the EU has increased, also due to increasing connectedness of environmentalists (Rootes, 2007a: 622), it is still mostly at the national and local levels which are mostly characterised by such activism. Rootes (2007c) says that there is ‘at best a very modest trend towards the Europeanization of the issues raised by environmental protests and the forms they have taken’ (255). Most protests are focused on national and sub-national levels, and the mobilization of protesters takes place accordingly. Hence, the localism of Southern European political cultures is considered to be influential on environmental activism in countries such as Spain, Greece and Italy (Rootes, 2007a: 622). JoAnn Carmin and Adam Fagan’s (2010) analysis of ENGOs in post-Soviet EU accession states shows that notwithstanding the increased political and financial opportunities for ENGOs, many focus their efforts on national and sub-national contexts (697). Ruth Webster (2000) analyses the collaboration between European ENGOs and reaches similar conclusions, stating that collaboration between them is not so common, and when they do collaborate they tend to prefer informal coalitions. The differences among such ENGOs,
as well as their constraints are reasons for this. Examples include competition over funding, contrasting strategies, and aims to achieve success on an individual basis.

Hence, environmental NGOs seem to be following the trend of social movements and political protests in general, where research to date shows ‘little evidence of strong Europeanization’ (Eising, 2008: 168). Thus, ‘it is not surprising that there appears to have been at best a very limited Europeanization of tactical repertoires’ (Rootes, 2007c: 251). This does not mean that Europeanization has not taken place. What is the case is that this has been an uneven process with different impacts, depending on factors such as ENGO-type and policy. In this regard, ENGOs which have benefitted most from Europeanization are those which are stronger and more professional, thus showing signs of institutionalisation (Börzel and Buzogany, 2010: 718-719).

Therefore, once again, overdetermining factors within specific hegemonic formations should be given due analytical importance when analysing ENGOs within a European Union framework. It is now possible to propose a theory of ENGO empowerment in the EU, in order that research indicators may be constructed in relation to the research questions of this study.

2.8 Conclusion: ENGO Empowerment in the EU

This chapter has provided a theoretical background for the analysis of the empowerment of ENGOs in the European Union, which, in turn, will be analysed within the Maltese context in this thesis.
It has been shown that social movements can discursively articulate their demands through empty signifiers that function as nodal points, which form chains of equivalence made up of political alliances. This can result in hegemonic formations, and therefore, empowerment. Social movements are active across various levels (local, national, global, and also by making extensive use of the media), and their empowerment through hegemony can be substantiated in terms of sensitising, procedural, structural and substantive external impacts.

Within each social formation, the State, comprising the condensation of conflicting forces, incorporates, both class and non-class actors within civil society, and within both national and global contexts, in antagonisms for the creation of hegemonic formations.

Institutionalisation enables social movements to form broad coalitions and to influence State power through close proximity. Yet this could also result in change of ENGO structures, co-optation and a strengthening of moderate ENGOs at the expense of radical ones. In this respect, a creative tension exists between radical and moderate ENGOs.

ENGOs – a particular type of social movement organisation - cannot be categorised within an all-encompassing framework. Ideological differences exist between moderate and radical ENGOs, whereby the former are identified through ideologies such as ecological modernisation, sustainable development and conservationism, whilst the latter are identified through ideologies such as eco-socialism, environmental justice and
ecologism. Yet these ideological representations are not absolutes, and ENGOs can also be characterised by more than one ideological representation at the same time.

The EU is characterised by a hegemonic process of Europeanization, which can also have dislocatory effects, thus resulting in new discursive opportunities through floating signifiers. EU accession is a case in point. New space is created for antagonism and articulation of demands with differentiated and uncertain outcomes. Similar to the national State, the EU comprises the condensation of antagonistic forces, even within the EU institutions themselves. Hence civil society actors such as social movements in general and ENGOs in particular can shape EU policy, though they are one actor out of many.

Nodal points on economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability and protection, feature prominently in EU politics. These are often signified by neo-liberal demands, though the economic logic does not feature in all EU environmental policies. The latter often involve moderate ideologies of ecological modernisation, sustainable development and conservationism.

ENGOs within the EU attempt to influence both EU institutions, national governments and the public. However, their activism is still mostly based within the nation State. The latter is bypassed when the EU is seen as a better gateway to achieve environmental demands. In turn, the EU can enhance the empowerment of ENGOs through the creation of hegemonic formations involving nodal points related to ENGO discursive
constructions. Due to ideological consent, ENGOs which adopt moderate environmental ideologies are more likely to experience empowerment than ENGOs which adopt radical environmental ideologies.

The theoretical backdrop of this study will be applied in forthcoming chapters, which will analyse the empowerment of Maltese ENGOs in relation to Malta’s EU accession. Prior to that, the next chapters will provide a descriptive account of environmental politics in Malta. Subsequently, the methodology and research methods of this thesis will be highlighted in relation to the research questions and main research themes.
3. Environmental Politics in Malta

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents some information about Malta and its political and environmental governance. Reference will also be made to two environmental struggles prior to EU accession. The chapter will also look at Malta’s EU accession process, and developments following Malta’s EU accession. In this way Maltese environmental politics will be contextualised, in anticipation of subsequent chapters which analyse ENGO empowerment in relation to Malta’s EU accession.

3.2 Development

Malta is considered to be a Small Island State, which, in turn, has particular vulnerabilities and constraints (Briguglio, L, 1995). In Malta’s case these include small territory size; high degree of economic openness; dependence on a very narrow range of exports; dependence on imports, most prominently energy and industrial supplies; and insularity (Government of Malta, 2002: 17).

Malta and its sister islands Gozo and Comino have a land area of about 320 square kilometres and are situated south of Sicily and north of Libya in the centre of the Mediterranean sea. Malta’s has a population of just over 400,000 and has the highest population density in the EU, by far exceeding other member states (Eurostat, 2010: 163-4). Indeed by 2007, Malta had over 1,200 persons per square kilometre – ten times higher than the EU-27 figure (ibid). According to Malta’s National Statistics Office (2006), ‘it is likely that Malta is currently approaching its peak population pressure, which is set to
stabilise or even decline in the near future’ (23). As one would imagine, this is of
considerable influence to environmental politics in Malta, particularly when issues such
as space and resources are under the spotlight.

Malta has a history of colonisation by various foreign powers, including the Phoenicians,
the Romans, the Arabs, the Knights of St. John, the French (for two years), and the
British, prior to independence in 1964. It has been described as backward due to

‘the historical absence of a local, national industrial bourgeoisie such as had led
the rest of Europe into modernity and development in the late eighteenth,
nineteenth and early twentieth century’ (Vella, Mario, 1994: 73).

British rule, which lasted for over 150 years, was characterised by the usage of Malta as a
military base, developing a naval shipyard in the process. Malta’s industrial base
expanded from the mid-1960s, and accelerated during the 1970s. The Maltese economy
was transformed from one depending on Britain’s defence needs to one based on exports
of goods and services, the latter including tourism. In the most recent years, the service
sector has overgrown the manufacturing sector.

Malta joined the European Union in 2004. Prior to that, Malta had an Association
Agreement with the European Economic Community, which was signed in 1970 under a
Nationalist Government. Malta’s application for EU accession was presented on the 15
July 1990, once more during another period of government led by the Nationalist Party
(PN) which had succeeded 16 years of Labour rule (1971-87). This application was
briefly frozen during the 22-month period of Labour-led Government (1996-98), only to
be reactivated again under the subsequent Nationalist Government. A screening process
was commenced during 1999. This was followed by negotiations on the different chapters of the *aquis communautaire* with a substantial portion of this exercise being concluded by January 2000. Negotiations on the environmental chapter were concluded on 1 October 2002, under the Danish EU presidency. Negotiations with Malta and the 9 other applicant countries of the time were formally concluded at the Copenhagen Summit of the European Union on 13 December 2002. On 16 April 2003 Malta signed the EU treaty and subsequently joined the EU on 1 May 2004.

During the 1980s and 1990s Maltese society experienced an upward shift in employment and educational levels, with a standard of living similar to that of other Southern European societies. Yet at the same time, Malta maintained a predominantly materialistic value system, possibly due to relatively lower educational levels and lower female participation in the labour market (Agius, N. 2003: 12-13). However, post-materialist values were on the increase. According to Anthony M. Abela (2000),

‘Maltese society emerges as predominantly traditional and materialist. Maltese people mix traditional, materialist and post-materialist values’ (217).

By the time Malta joined the EU, its economy was diversified, with a large and expanding service sector which also comprised tourism and related sectors, together with manufacturing and trade sectors (Deguara, 2004: 102). The economy had also become less dependent on manufacturing, and more on services (Agius, N. 2004: 133). Indeed, Malta’s economy was considered as a high income and developed economy, ‘with a focus on services and a narrow manufacturing base, while agriculture and fishing account

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5 The late Abela authored Malta’s World Values Survey reports, erstwhile co-ordinated by Ronald Inglehart.
for a minor proportion of gross domestic product’ (Azzopardi, 2009: 103). By 2008, Malta’s service sector accounted for 76.9 per cent of total Gross Domestic Product, which, in turn, could indicate a ‘cleaner form of economic growth’ (MEPA, 2010b: 9).

During this time, the process of economic liberalisation and privatisation pursued in various sectors of the economy, eventually also including the politically controversial Malta Shipyards, known for its strong links with the Labour movement (Brown and Briguglio, Michael 2009). Yet, even though neo-liberal measures were on the increase, Malta retained universalistic welfare structures in areas such as health and education (Brown and Briguglio, Michael 2007). At the same time, there problems such as low employment of female and ageing workers (Eurostat, 2010) and youth unemployment related to low levels of education (Brown and Briguglio, Michael 2010). Indeed, Malta can be said to have a hybrid welfare regime which is influenced by factors such as the country’s colonial history; geographical location; partisan politics; traditional values; Catholic heritage and EU membership amongst others (Bugeja, 2010). Hence, according to Ian Bugeja, liberal, conservative, social democratic and Southern European traits are all present in the Maltese social welfare complex. Besides,

‘as an EU member state, Malta must also keep in line with targets set by the European Union, which in turn can influence Malta’s welfare model’ (Briguglio, Michael and Bugeja, 2011: 24).

The most pressing sustainability issues in Malta include various environmental concerns, such as negative impact of land development; water status; waste management; tourism pressures and degradation of natural resource and loss of biodiversity (Government of Malta, 2002: 22-23; Moncada, Camilleri M., Formosa, Galea, 2010). According to the
National Commission for Sustainable Development (2004) environmental problems were also negatively affecting the Maltese economy notable because of unsustainable production and consumption practices, giving rise to balance of payment imbalances; by transferring economic resources away from future generations (ibid:27); and by excessive reliance on resource intensive industries (ibid: 29).

3.3 Politics, Civil Society and the Media

The Maltese political context has traditionally been characterised by strong party loyalty towards the Nationalist and Labour Parties (Falzon, S. 2006), which is very much rooted in social and family background (Hirczy, 1995).

Voting turnout in general elections in Malta always exceeded 90 per cent of the electorate (Lane, 2000: 212). According to Godfrey Baldacchino (2002), the dominant Nationalist and Labour parties are ‘catch-all’ parties with strong social networks and modern media apparatuses, acting like total institutions. As he puts it:

‘Only the members of the troika – the two main political parties and the Catholic Church – loom large as anchors of identity. The “national interest” has been sabotaged, imploded into the frenzied partisanship internally, replaced by integrationism externally’ (199).

Partisan politics do not leave much space for ‘third fronts’ (Agius, N. 2000: 115), the only exception being the Catholic Church which has considerable influence in political and social life (ibid: 116). Arguably, its influence has declined over the years, as witnessed, for example in Malta’s pro-divorce referendum in 2011, where the pro-divorce

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6 It is pertinent to note that the 2013 general elections, resulted in a massive vote-swing from the outgoing Nationalist Party to the victorious Labour Party which could raise doubts as to the persistence of such a tendency. This thesis, however, covers an earlier period.
vote attained a majority (52.67 per cent). Yet, in itself, the late entry of divorce as a legal right in Malta shows the persistent influence of Catholicism. Such a partisan divide also dominated Malta’s EU accession process, with Nationalist Party and Alternattiva Demokratika - The Green Party being strongly in favour and the Labour Party being strongly against, earning the Maltese the conceptual title of ‘ambivalent Europeans’ (Mitchell, cited in Baldacchino, 2002: 203).

Patronage plays a strong role in Maltese politics. According to Jeremy Boissevain (1993) ‘politics has become a corrosive zero-sum contest characterised by factional loyalty that reaches a veritable frenzy just before elections’ (150). In this context, Government Ministers have become ‘the new super “saints”’ (ibid: 154), and members of parliament have become ‘brokers, at best intermediaries between ministerial patrons and their own constituents’ (ibid). In this context, ‘Malta is a paradise for political saints’ (ibid: 156).

The Nationalist Party governed Malta between 1962 and 1971 (obtaining Malta’s independence in the process), between 1987 and 1996 and between 1998 and 2013. Throughout its history, the Nationalist Party adopted a social conservative ideology. (Puli, 2004: 130), it enjoyed a good relationship with the Catholic Church, and its support base was rooted in the ruling and middle classes (Fenech, D. 1988: 134). At the same time, however, under the leadership of Eddie Fenech Adami (between 1977 and 2004) the Nationalist Party also presented itself as the party for national reconciliation. When in opposition prior to 1987, the Nationalist Party promised an end to the then prevailing
political violence and discrimination and promoted itself as an enhancer of democracy based on European lines (Briguglio, Michael 2009: 132).

After 1987 the Nationalist Government adopted market liberalisation measures while strengthening the welfare state, making the Nationalist Party hegemonic. It merged populism with political direction and the modern with the traditional (ibid: 135). At the same time, it was supported by ‘support mechanisms’ of the bourgeoisie, including the Church, much of the mass media and the old school business community’ (Agius, 2000: 119). During this time, the Maltese class structure was dominated by an ‘organisational triumvirate enjoying significant inter-family connections and collusions, plus a very ample presence on a large number of company directorships and state appointed boards’ (Baldacchino, 1993: 330).

Following Malta’s independence, the Labour Party (PL), on the other hand, was in government between 1971 and 1987 and between 1996 and 1998. Under the premierships of Dom Mintoff (1971-1984) and Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici (1984-1987), Labourite ideology verged on socialism on one hand and nationalism on the other, whilst also emphasising populist traditional values such as patronage. Here, the welfare state was by and large constructed, enabling Labour to be hegemonic in the 1970s (Briguglio, Michael 2001). The Labour Government between 1971 and 1987 believed in state intervention within a mixed economy, especially in those sectors where the private sector failed to take an initiative (Briguglio, L. 1988: 190), thus enabling the development of industrial capitalism in Malta (Vella, Mario, 1994).
Under the leadership of Alfred Sant, Labour’s economic policy emphasized the role of the private sector as the motor of the economy in the context of industrial growth within a strong welfare state. Labour also aimed at attracting the vote from both the middle and working classes. This helped enable electoral victory in 1996, together with other factors such as its promises to hunters and trappers and its opposition to the newly introduced VAT tax regime. Yet Sant’s stint as Prime Minister lasted less than two years, primarily due to austerity measures and internal conflict within the Party (Briguglio, Michael 2001). Between 1998 and 2003, the Malta Labour Party consistently opposed Malta’s EU membership bid that was championed by the Nationalist Government and other civil society organisations. Following Malta’s EU accession, the Labour Party won the first-ever European Parliamentary elections held on the islands during 2004 by winning 3 seats out of 5. Yet the Nationalist Party won the subsequent general election in 2008 by a razor-thin minority of 1,580 votes.

Under new leader Joseph Muscat, elected in June 2008, Labour won the 2009 European parliamentary elections by winning 4 out of 6 seats. The party adopted a ‘progressive and moderate’ agenda characterised by populist rhetoric (Briguglio, Michael 2010). Subsequently, Labour won the general elections in 2013 through a landslide victory, winning 54.83 per cent of votes.
Malta’s Green Party, Alternattiva Demokratika\(^7\) (AD), was established in 1989. The party was originally formed by former members of the Labour and Nationalist parties, former members of the defunct Partit Demokratiku Malti\(^8\) and by activists from non-governmental organisations such as Zghazagh ghall-Ambjent\(^9\) and Tan-Numri\(^10\). Most of its activists comprise ‘young middle class people, who stress the importance of such post-material issues as the environment and civil liberties’ (Agius, N. 2000: 117).

AD first contested the general elections in 1992, presenting a programme based on green politics, meritocracy, further democratisation of Malta’s political structures, including the introduction of civil rights such as divorce (Briguglio, Michael 2009: 136). In 1992, the Party achieved 1.7 per cent of the votes and it subsequently also elected a small number of councillors in various local council elections (including myself in Sliema in 2003, 2006, 2012 and 2013). In 2004, the Greens won 9.33 per cent of the votes cast in Malta’s first election of its representatives in the European Parliament. This relative success was not repeated in the 2009 European Elections. In the 2013 general elections\(^11\), AD adopted a comparatively more radical platform in social, economic, environmental and civil rights issues, and it achieved its best ever general election result, 1.8 per cent, up from 1.31 per cent in the 2008 general election. Dominic Fenech (1999: 193) notes that an important

\(^7\) Tr. from Maltese: ‘Democratic Alternative’. This shall also be referred to as the Green Party and Alterantiva Demokratika – The Green Party.
\(^8\) Tr. from Maltese: ‘Malta Democratic Party’. This party contested the 1987 general elections, obtaining less than 1 per cent of the vote.
\(^9\) Tr. from Maltese: ‘Youth for the Environment’.
\(^10\) Tr. from Maltese: ‘The numbered’.
\(^11\) I Chaired the Party following the 2009 European Elections to 2013. I resigned from Chairperson after the 2013 general elections. Apart from achieving its best general election result, during this period AD also started re-electing local councillors and co-founded the ‘Yes’ movement in the divorce referendum.
reason for the lack of electoral success of AD is that people tend to switch to Labour or Nationalist rather than vote for the third Party.

As stated above, the Catholic Church has strong political influence in Maltese society. In the 1960s it intervened directly during a politico-religious controversy within Malta, where it directed its followers not to vote Labour. The influence of the Catholic Church is also enshrined in Malta’s Constitution, where the Church is earmarked as Malta’s moral voice. Another clear example of the political influence of the Church is the lack of certain civil rights in Malta, such as gay marriages, even though, as stated above, the introduction of divorce in 2011 (following a referendum) reflected a decline in Church influence, notwithstanding its aggressive anti-divorce campaign.

Within Maltese civil society one also finds various constituted bodies and various NGOs, amongst others. A notable example in terms of political influence is the General Workers’ Union which formed a united bloc with the Labour Party in government between 1971 and 1987. This formal merger was dissolved in 1992. Other organisations include the Nationalist-leaning Confederation of Malta Trade Unions and its member organisations (including the Union Haddiema Maghqudin\footnote{Tr. from Maltese: ‘Union of United Workers’. Its moniker in English is Malta Workers’ Union.}, the Malta Chamber of Small and Medium Enterprises (GRTU - previously known as General Retailers Trade Union), the Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry (which was recently formed through a merger of the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Industry), the Malta Union...
of Teachers (which recently formed the Forum of trade unions with other smaller unions) and the Federation of Hunters and Trappers

Another important player in Maltese civil society is the mass media. A thorough analysis of the media lies beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is important to note that according to Carmen Sammut (2009) the Maltese media system ‘has a democratising potential’ (93), as

‘the constituents of the Maltese “information” society have various possibilities to actively engage with social, political and economic processes’ (ibid: 95).

Different media outlets coexist in Malta, which are grouped by Sammut as ‘advocacy media’, with specific political or religious aims, ‘commercial media’, which is profit-oriented, and ‘public service’ media (ibid: 82). As regards advocacy media, Sammut notes that dominant political blocs (most notably the two main political parties) have strong media influence over the media, despite the pluralism in place since 1991 (ibid: 81). Malta is the only European democracy which allows political parties to own radio and television stations. One can also note the influence of the Catholic Church, especially through its own radio station, and the ‘resilient working class media’ (ibid: 94) through the daily newspaper of Malta’s largest trade union.

The commercial media also includes influential newspapers in English, namely The Times, The Malta Independent and Malta Today. They ‘target the better-educated and better-off classes’ (ibid: 86), and have traditionally adopted a ‘middle-of-the-road’ approach to partisan politics (ibid). Nevertheless, there are differences between them. For
example, The Times is considered by many to be more conservative and leaning towards the Nationalist Party, whilst the Malta Today is more liberal.

Hence, the Maltese media system needs reassessment in order to build upon its democratising potentials whilst correcting excessive polarisation and dominance of the two major parties (Sammut, 2007).

### 3.3 The development of environmental politics

#### 3.3.1 Environmental politics before Malta’s EU accession

Maltese environmental politics were in their infancy during the 1960s. After Malta achieved independence in 1964, it experienced various economic changes, including the expansion of industry and tourism. Malta’s economy was transformed from one depending on the expenditures of the British defence system to one based on marketed exports of goods and services (Briguglio, L. 1995).

At this time, new industries, and a corresponding increase in standard of living, land and property speculation were witnessed in Malta, ‘possibly because influential members of government, opposition and administration have growing vested interests in the expanding property market and construction industry’ (Boissevain, 1993: 142). Concurrently, the first environmental campaign by an ENGO – Din l-Art Helwa$^{13}$ – was undertaken. This ENGO campaigned for limiting the height of a hotel (Excelsior) which was being built against the bastions in Valletta (Boissevain and Gatt, 2011: 127).

$^{13}$ Tr. from Maltese: ‘This fair land’. This forms part of the first stanza of Malta’s national anthem.
Political party electoral manifestos in the 1960s and 1970s did not cover the environment, and it was only in the 1980s that environmental issues entered the political agenda, even though there were campaigns by ENGOs in the preceding decades (Mallia, E.A. 1994: 693-4). During this time, land development under the Labour government was haphazard and environmentally ruinous, and environmentalists organised public action similar to those taking place in Europe, though activists were often attacked by political thugs, the police and hunters (Mallia, E.A. 1994: 695). An example of this took place in Valletta on 23 November 1985, when Labourite thugs beat up youth who were protesting against Government’s inaction on the environment (Boissevain, 1993: 153). This did not stop such youth – who formed part of Żgħażagħ għall-Ambjent – to keep protesting in subsequent years (Boissevain and Gatt, 2011: 127). Some of these activists were later amongst the founding members of Alternattiva Demokratika.

During the eighties, ENGOs such as Żgħażagħ għall-Ambjent (which eventually became Moviment għall-Ambjent14 – Friends of the Earth Malta), Din l-Art Helwa Malta Ornithological Society (which eventually became Birdlife Malta), and Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature (which eventually became Nature Trust) were in existence, with the latter two tracing their existence back to the 1960s together with Din l-Art Helwa (Briguglio, Michael and Brown, 2009).

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14 Tr. from Maltese: ‘Movement for the Environment’.
In the 1987 general election, both the incumbent Labour Party and the main opposition Nationalist Party spoke about the environment in their programmes, as did the small Partit Demokratiku Malti, which, though not being a green party, had various green proposals in its manifesto.

In 1989, Malta’s Green Party, Alternattiva Demokratika, was born. This existence of this party ensured that environmental issues entered the public sphere, for example through media coverage (Bossevain and Theuma, 1998: 103). By this time, the political context had become more tolerant and people had tended to be more vocal in criticism of the Government. The environment had increasingly achieved the status of a major political issue (Boissevain, 1993: 154-155).

The Nationalist Government introduced the first attempt to have holistic environmental legislation through the Environment Protection Act of 1991 and the drafting of a Structure Plan, as well as the setting-up of the Planning Authority through legislation in 1988 and 1992. In 1992 Malta also set up a Ministry for the Environment. At the same time, important global developments were taking place – such as the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

In a society characterised by a ‘tangled web of tradition and modernity’ (Giddens, 1994b: xxviii), Maltese people were increasingly conscious on environmental issues (Abela, 2000, Tonna, 1996). As was referred to previously, Anthony M. Abela’s Malta study, which formed part of the European Values Survey, revealed increased post-materialist
values amidst a predominantly materialist setting. For example, an increasing number of respondents (59 per cent) were willing to give part of their income for the prevention of environmental pollution. Most respondents also agreed that Malta needs to collaborate with international organisations on environmental protection (Abela, 2000: 225). Similar concerns were also shown in the 1999 public attitude survey carried out by the Planning Authority. Indeed, respondents showed concern on such issues as the fast rate of building development, tourism, waste and educational issues, amongst others (cited in Zammit, A. 2004: 214). Yet, the seemingly increased consciousness on the environment took place in a context of customs and attitudes that according to Boissevain (n.d.) were partly responsible for environmental destruction in Malta, together with the Government’s policies in this area. Such customs and attitudes include,

‘The widespread south European custom of treating all public space as a no-man’s land on which it is permissible to throw rubbish. … The strong family-cantered attitude that holds that any action undertaken to benefit one's family is justifiable, and that others behave similarly. This attitude has been called amoral familism. ... The generally weak sense of heritage that furthers the destruction of national patrimony. … The extreme importance all Maltese attach to owning a house. … The pervasive system of patronage, clientship, nepotism and the real or imagined network of friends-of-friends reinforces the firm belief that influential friends and relatives in government or political party in return for loyalty, political support, favours or cash, can obtain building permits, regularise abusive building activities, influence the judiciary and obscure other contraventions. … The country’s somewhat muddled and archaic legal system makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for MEPA\textsuperscript{15} successfully to prosecute building offences and to remove illegal constructions, even if it had the resources to do so. … Fear of retaliation – such as burning or splashing paint on the front door for reporting or testifying against illegal building or other activity leads to the Maltese version of Sicilian omertà: collusion through silence. … An electoral system that furthers the friends-of-friends syndrome. The many small multi-member constituencies generate intense pressure on politicians competing for votes in the same small pool of constituents. … the Maltese custom of short-term

\textsuperscript{15} In short for ‘Malta Environment and Planning Authority’.
planning combined with greed for quick profit is a major cause of the destruction of the landscape’ (3-5).

By this time, Malta was considerably more built up that the European average and at the same time had to import most of its agricultural produce (Ragonesi, Manduca, Mallia, Camilleri M., 1997). Demand for land-use came from sectors including industry, commerce, tourism, housing, quarrying, waste management and agriculture. Total built-up area increased from 4.5 per cent in 1957 to 21 per cent in 1995, much higher than the European mean of 8 per cent (Mallia, E.A. 2000: 17). By 2005, the percentage increased to 23 per cent (NSO, 2006: 19). Natural habitats occupy only 19 per cent of mainland Malta (ibid: 14). At the same time around 23 per cent of housing in Malta was vacant (Government of Malta, 2002: 49). Agricultural land declined by 27 per cent between 1970 and 2005 (NSO, 2006).

The Tourism sector kept expanding, and between 1996 and 2005, an average 293.5 tourists per 100 inhabitants arrived in Malta annually (NSO, 2006: 19-21). The pressures of the tourist industry on the Maltese environment were therefore significant, having ‘a severe impact on the landscape’ (Boissevain, 2000: 3) apart from putting pressure on Malta’s infrastructure and waste management. In this regard, Lino and Marie Briguglio (1996) argue that whereas by the 1990s, tourism was directly contributing to around 15 per cent of Malta’s Gross Domestic Product, with an additional multiplier effect, this industry had notable effects on the environment. These included the increase in demand for building; increased production of waste; more use of environmentally dangerous substances and high tourist densities (174-176). Such impacts are even more pronounced
given Malta’s small size. On the other hand, tourism has increased environmental awareness (ibid: 183). Its impact on the environment, together with the need to have an environment to attract tourists, have both acted as latent functions in this respect.

In the meantime, though being politicized, the environment often remained on the losing end. As Edward A. Mallia (1994) put it,

‘Partisan political restraints extend to practical situations. The parliamentary [Labour] opposition voted against approval of the Structure Plan on quite trivial grounds; it has given only highly equivocal support to the drive to eliminate seaside shanties; Government and Opposition have failed to propose credible measures to bring hunting laws in line with modern conservation policies; Ministers boast of huge increase in the number of vehicles on the road; air and water quality are only of concern to politicians when they are on the Opposition benches. There is no air pollution monitoring service; regular testing of drinking water is carried out but the results are not published. On the positive side, last year there was an extensive sampling of sea-water quality. Furthermore, our application to join the European Union has encouraged Government to be somewhat less pusillanimous about environment legislation’ (701-702).

In another publication before Malta’s EU accession process, Mallia (2000) added that Malta’s legislation and planning tools were not enough to meet the challenges which Malta was facing, especially since different social groups were ‘seeking to establish or maintain a position at the expense of the community eventually leading to a general collapse’ (ibid: 26). Hence, even though public awareness was increasing, Governments were not taking enough action, leading to a far from sustainable situation. Indeed, Malta’s 1996 report for the United Nations’ Development Programme (UNDP) highlighted the need to ‘sharpen ecological insights so as to deflect human development in directions which will at least cut down the rate of destruction to sustainable values’ (Inguanez, 1996: 89).
Along the same lines, Friends of the Earth (Malta) identified the main constraints to sustainability in Malta as

‘A general lack of appreciation of the seriousness of environmental degradation, as well as the causes thereof, and the means already available to reduce or counter such degradation… A strong tendency to build lifestyles around the accumulation of material wealth… A high population density and the limitations of space on the island… An overdependency on the construction industry and the heavy investment in immovable property’ (Ragonesi, Manduca, Mallia E.A., Camilleri M., 1997: 49).

Indeed, Malta was experiencing a transformation in production and consumption patterns, which, in turn had an impact on the environment (NSO, 2002a: 9). As Joseph Cassar (2010) puts it, with specific reference to youth, ‘there is tension but also interconnectedness between youth identity, consumption and ecological citizenship’ (4). In this regard, youth are reflexive whilst also being located in a ‘structure of consumption’ (ibid: 87).

Not surprisingly, during this time the environmental movement was growing. NGO membership (in general) had been increasing since the 1990s (Abela, 2001), though there seems to be more participation in NGOs related to sports and religion rather than other areas such as environment, social welfare and human rights. The most influential NGOs and interest groups in Malta were either related to the Catholic Church or were chiefly concerned with economic issues (as is the case with employers’ associations and trade unions) (Agius, N., 2000: 116). As Noel Agius puts it,

‘The small number of new groups that are concerned with post material values – human rights, animal rights, consumer rights, libertarian rights not to mention the environment is very subdued (ibid)… Malta is still a land dominated by the old
bourgeois. Its support mechanisms, the conservative church, the greater part of the mass media and the old school business community help keep this hegemony intact’ (ibid: 119).

Yet, various NGOs focusing on social justice and the environment were born during those years, and collaboration and cooperation amongst NGOs increased. However, prior to EU accession, Malta lacked legislation which recognizes the importance of NGO involvement and civil society participation (Government of Malta, 2002: 62). In this regard, NGOs also lacked access to funding (Caruana, 1998), though new initiatives were developing, such as the provision of funds from MEPA for environmental projects.

3.3.2 The Fronts Against the Hilton and Against the Golf Course

Amidst the expansion of the environmental movement, the militant and socially-oriented NGO Moviment Graffitti\(^\text{16}\) joined ranks, and eventually, another left-wing NGO, Zminijietna – Voice of the Left\(^\text{17}\) also allied itself in environmental campaigns. Examples of such alliances included the Front against the Hilton redevelopment project in St Julians, which was formed by activists mainly coming from Moviment Graffitti and Friends of the Earth (Briguglio, Michael 1998), and the Front Against the Golf Course, a broad coalition made up of diverse environmental, social, cultural, religious and political organisations and which was successful in its campaign against the development of a golf course at Tal-Virtù (Galea, P. 2011; Briguglio, Michael and Brown, 2009: 53). I had a leading role in both Fronts.

\(^{16}\) Tr. from Maltese: ‘Graffiti Movement’.
\(^{17}\) Tr. from Maltese: ‘Our Times – Voice of the Left’.
During the 1990s it was becoming evident that the Planning Authority was not promoting sustainable development and that conflict between different interests was evident in environmental policy. For example, my research (1998) on the Hilton redevelopment project in Malta (known as ‘Portomaso’) concluded that the PA was acting in the interests of developers. This particular development project was supported by successive Nationalist and Labour governments but faced quite a lot of opposition, culminating in a 6-day hunger strike by ‘Front Against the Hilton’ activists (hailing mostly from Moviment Graffitti¹⁸ and Moviment ghall-Ambjent – Friends of the Earth) which only stopped once the Ombudsman agreed to investigate the case. Those opposing the development project as was being proposed included various ENGOs, the Green Party, residents, Labour member of parliament Evarist Bartolo and the Sliema Local Council, which was dominated by the Nationalist Party and also included Green representation. St Julian’s council – where the Portomaso project was situated – did not object to the development proposal. Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party, Moviment Graffitti and Moviment ghall-Ambjent – Friends of the Earth believed that there were strong links between the developers and the Nationalist and Labour Parties.

The Portomaso research shows that the support of the State towards this development project was not merely related to the possible links between political parties and the developers. Indeed, I argued that ideological influence was very strong, particularly when it was being argued that the development would generate economic growth. Hence,

‘The State and land developers form part of a power bloc through which both stand to gain from the exploitation of land. The State gains through the

¹⁸ I was involved in this action.
generation of economic growth. Land developers legitimate the exploitation of land through the State Apparatus’ (ibid: 85).

Indeed, both the Nationalist and Labour party emphasised the need for economic growth within a free market (Agius, N., 2000: 20).

The Front Against the Golf Course, on the other hand, opposed the proposed development of a golf course in Verdala, Rabat, on agricultural land. Amongst others, the Front comprised Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party, the Progressive Farmers’ Union, Nature Trust, Friends of the Earth (Malta), Moviment Graffitti, the University Chaplaincy, Zminijietna - Voice of the Left, Din l-Art Helwa, the Farmers’ Central Cooperative Society, Malta Organic Agriculture Movement, Inizjamed and others. Opponents of the project also included the Labour-led Rabat Local Council, Nationalist MP Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando and Din l-Art Helwa.

In 2002, a petition signed by almost all the farmers working on the land in question was presented to the President of Malta, the Vatican’s Apostolic Nuncio (as the land in question formed part of a State-Church agreement in Malta19), the Archbishop, and Members of Parliament. The petition appealed to then Prime Minister Eddie Fenech Adami to intervene after MEPA decided to consider the application for the development of the golf course, thus disregarding its own internal experts. In this regard, the Front Against the Golf Course said:

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19 The land in question used to belong to the Church but was subsequently transferred to the State and administered through an office known as the Joint Office as part of the State-Church agreement, but on condition that it could only be used for social, cultural, educational or agricultural purposes (Cini, 2002b).
‘We appeal to the board of the Malta Planning and Environment Authority to approve the recommendation of its own Planning Directorate and refuse permission for this unsustainable proposal’ (The Sunday Times, June 23rd, 2002).

Save for activities such as a protest march in Valletta on 27th July, 2002 (Malta Today, July 28th, 2002), the Front Kontra l-Golf Course rarely took to the streets to protest. Indeed, it focused much of its lobbying through the media and through participation in MEPA meetings and consultation processes. The Front made use of technical discourse to oppose the proposed development, focusing on economic, social and ecological factors. Indeed, it presented a 50-page technical critique of the proposal’s environmental impact statement (Boissevain and Gatt, 2011; 133). As Patrick Galea (2011) observes, the Front was successful in framing its campaign around the themes of agricultural preservation, environmental sustainability and the contestation of legitimacy.

It is interesting to note that the developers AX Holdings were supported by some farmers who stood to make financial gain whilst on the other hand, farmers who attributed more importance to the social and cultural aspects of land were more likely to oppose the development. In both cases, farmers’ opposition and/or support crossed party-political lines (Agius S., 2003).

In a way, the 1998 Portomaso defeat taught activists some important strategic lessons on campaigning and alliance building, and by then the environment had become part of the national agenda in Malta. As Boissevain and Caroline Gatt (2011) noted, the campaign against the proposed development
‘exposed the way powerful developers operated, displayed the government weakness in dealing with power developers, and demonstrated what could be achieved by coordinated non-violent action. They put both the Planning Authority and developers on notice that they would be monitored and irregularities would be attacked’ (130).

The proposed golf course development grinded to a halt following MEPA’s refusal in 2004. Though at face value this can be dubbed as the first environmental victory a few months after Malta’s EU accession. In reality, however, it was not connected to Malta’s EU accession, as all activism and lobbying took place prior to accession within the context of Maltese politics and legislation. The Front, therefore, successfully managed to fill in empty signifiers through its discursive coalition, thus creating a hegemonic formation based on a broad alliance.

The victory of the Front Against the Golf Course can therefore be seen as a historic victory within Maltese environmental politics prior to Malta’s EU accession, together with others. These included the alliance comprising Labour, AD, Local Councils, ENGOs and, a charismatic priest, against a leisure complex in Munxar in the mid-1990s (Boissevain, 2004: 243-247) and other alliances such as those against the Siggiewi cement plant and the Mnajdra temple landfill. Another proposed development – that of an airstrip in Gozo – was shelved by the Labour Government in 1996 following opposition by AD, Moviment ghall-Ambjent and Moviment Graffitti in 1995, when the proposal was backed by the then Nationalist administration, even though the proposal has resurfaced in subsequent years (Boissevain and Gatt, 2011: 128).
Boissevain (n.d.) observes that out of nine major campaigns after 1995, the environmental movement was victorious in seven and was defeated in two, and that they are still engaged in appealing another ten. As he remarks, however, when major parties opposed or did not show much concern with development projects – as is the case with the Munxar project, developers are defeated (Boissevain, 2004: 254). In his words, despite the fact that ENGOs are exerting increasing influence in civil society and raising consciousness on environmental issues, MEPA ‘approves projects and condones infringements that are backed by important political/economic interests’ (255).

3.3.4 ENGOs, the environment and Malta’s EU accession process

At the turn of the century, ENGOs were establishing themselves as important players in Maltese politics. According to the National Commission for Sustainable Development (2004: 39), interest in ENGOs increased in the ten years prior to EU accession. It considered ENGOs as main protagonists in raising awareness on the environment in Malta, together with MEPA, the former Environment Protection Department, the Education Division and the University of Malta.

In 1992, the Development Planning and Environmental Protection Acts had already comprised Malta’s first formal policies regarding public participation, for example as regards environment impact assessments (National Commission for Sustainable Development, 2004: 37). Yet, whereas lobbies such as trade unions and employers’ organisations made use of the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development to put forward their views, no such structure was available in the environmental sphere. Indeed, the National Commission for Sustainable Development said that
‘broadly speaking, with the possible exception of the Waste Strategy, most Government Ministries and agencies have yet to find ways to effectively involve the general public’ (ibid: 38).

The Maltese Government itself admitted that there needed to be

‘increased cooperation and collaboration among public institutions and civil society in matters relating to sustainable development’ (Government of Malta, 2002: 92).

In this regard, Malta signed the UN/ECE Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters. Subsequently, after Malta joined the EU, Directive 90/313 related to freedom of access to information on the environment became applicable (National Commission for Sustainable Development, 2004; 11). Malta was also involved in various global environmental initiatives. These included the Concept of the Climate as Common Heritage of Mankind – which was requested by Malta within the United Nations in 1988, ultimately leading to the Climate Change Convention, which was ratified by Malta in 1994; and the United Nations Law of the Sea, the latter being adopted in 1981 after being initially proposed in 1967. Malta also participated in global summits on the environment such as those of Rio de Janiero in 1992, Kyoto in 1998, Johannesburg in 2002 (where Malta co-chaired the central group representing EU candidate countries, thus enabling Malta to be one of the 13 negotiating countries that finalised the Summit’s conclusions) and Copenhagen in 2009. It also acceded to international legislation such as the Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer in 1982, and was also a party to various multilateral environmental agreements regarding biodiversity, pollution control, nuclear safety, regional and other matters. Malta also played a leading role as regards the setting up of a Mediterranean
Commission for Sustainable Development, in relation to the Mediterranean Action Plan, and in the development of the vulnerability index of small islands developing states (Government of Malta, 2002).

The Maltese environment was now considered by the Maltese Government to be ‘very environmentally vulnerable’ (Government of Malta, 2002: 22) due to reasons such as high population density; a relatively large coastal zone in relation to land mass; an innate fragile ecosystem and the relatively high impact of economic development (ibid). Besides, rule of law was not being respected in various areas including quarrying, construction and hunting. Enforcement and legal sanctions in these areas left much to be desired.

As Malta moved closer to EU accession, the Environment Protection Act was updated in 2001 – for example by giving greater powers to the State, such as in the transposition of international obligations and sustainable development (Government of Malta, 2002: 25). In the meantime, new legislation was being drafted due to endogenous and exogenous factors – the latter prominently including EU legislation requirements. In line with the EU acquis, Malta introduced legislation on areas such as air quality assessment and management; freedom of access to information on the environment; pollution caused by the release of certain dangerous substances into the aquatic environment; quality of petrol and diesel fuels; waste management, permits, control and incineration; urban waste water treatment; and the protection of waters against pollution by nitrates (Government of Malta, 2002: 89). Malta also designated 31 special areas of conservation, amounting to
around 15 per cent of land areas, in line with requirements of the EU nature protection _acquis_. Environmental NGOs were entrusted to be involved in the management and administration of such areas (National Commission for Sustainable Development, 2004: 19). In the run-up to EU membership, the Government of Malta released 37 impact studies on various sectors, including the environment. For example, it transpired that around 35 per cent of water that was being produced by the Water Services Corporation contained more nitrates than the maximum allowed by the EU (Bonello and Fenech, N. 2001).

Malta’s Planning Authority was merged with the Environmental Protection Department to form the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA), in 2002, and various other institutions were set up, including the Malta Resources Authority; the Malta Maritime Authority; the Malta Standards Authority, the Occupational Health and Safety Authority and the National Commission for Sustainable Development, though the latter ceased from functioning for some years, which was rather strange given that Malta was a signatory of the Millennium Declaration, together with 150 other states, which supported the principle of sustainable development and Agenda 21 (National Commission for Sustainable Development, 2004: 5). Indeed, as the Government of Malta itself put it in its national report for the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002,

‘…in Malta, mechanisms for the promotion of sustainable development are institutionally and legally entrenched. There is the need, however, for further capacity-building to render these legal and institutional set-ups more effective’ (Government of Malta, 2002: 27).
Civil society organisations played a key role in Malta’s EU accession process, when over thirty organisations supported the Nationalist Government’s proposal for EU membership\(^{20}\).

As I argued elsewhere, the pro-EU camp formed a hegemonic formation, enabling not only Malta to join the EU but the Nationalist Party to win yet another general election, in 2003:

‘The fact that 31 civil society organizations supported Malta’s EU membership shows that the EU membership had become part of the common sense of the epoch, just like pluralism and liberalization in the early 1990s. Young people, especially university students, were also among the keenest supporters of membership. The pro-EU membership camp emphasised that Malta’s economy would stand to gain through membership, enabling Malta’s export-oriented economy to have greater access to EU markets and to act as a credible bridge in the Mediterranean between North and South, the European Union and North Africa. Youth would have more opportunities to study and work abroad, enjoying the same rights as their European counterparts. The EU would also help improve standards in areas such as the environment, workers’ and consumers’ rights, and gender equality – areas associated with post-materialist values which were becoming increasingly important to Maltese citizens, particularly the highly educated, young and expanding new middle-classes. Moreover, the pro-EU camp insisted that Malta would be a net receiver of EU funds at least for the initial years. In addition the Maltese also managed to win favourable derogations and transition periods in areas such as the environment, policies concerning purchase of property, free movement of workers and foreign policy. In short, EU accession was projected as being a concrete and credible project that reflected both materialist and post-materialist values’ (Briguglio, Michael 2009: 134-135).

\(^{20}\) Those in favour of EU membership included the Nationalist Party, Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party, the Federation of Industry, the Chamber of Commerce, the Malta Employers Association, the Malta Union of Teachers, the Confederation of Malta Trade Unions, the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association, the Association of Farmers, environmental NGOs and the General Retailers and Traders Union. Those against included the Labour Party, the General Workers’ Union, the Campaign for National Independence (led by Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici), a sizeable section of the hunters and trappers’ lobby (even if not officially), a section of entrepreneurs within Maltese industry that caters for the local market, the Progressive Farmers’ Union, and Dom Mintoff’s Malta Arise Front.
EU membership was discursively constructed as being beneficial to Malta’s environment, which possibly meant that ENGOs would be empowered in the process. Disruption through the dislocatory effect of EU accession created discursive opportunities for ENGOs. This was taking place in a context of overdeterminations such as two-party dominance and an expanding civil society which was articulating a variety of demands.

3.3.5 The construction of environmental politics from 2004 onwards

An important political development following Malta’s EU accession was the emergence of various NGOs in different areas, such as Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar (FAA)\(^{21}\) and Ramblers’ Association in the environmental field (Briguglio, Michael and Brown, 2009: 59-60). Maltese civil society activism on an EU level could also be witnessed, such as the conflict between environmentalists and hunters on the hunting issue, whereby the former pressed for Malta’s conformity to the EU birds’ directive, whereas the latter argued that Malta should have a right to derogate (Camilleri, G. 2010). This particular issue is referred to and analysed below, together with others. In the meantime, this section describes the situation as regards environmental policy, legislation and consciousness in Malta following EU accession. These were influential in the construction of environmental politics in Malta during this period.

The Government’s environment policies were heavily influenced by Malta’s EU accession. For example, not only is Malta party to the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and not only is Malta a signatory of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol (which is not binding on Malta), but as an EU member state, Malta has

\(^{21}\) Tr. from Maltese: ‘Together for a better environment’.
transposed all EU legislation dealing with climate change (MEPA, 2010a: 19). Indeed, between 2005 and 2008 Malta published 54 pieces of legislation on the environment, and between 2004 and 2007, public expenditure on the environment increased by 31 per cent to 1.5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (MEPA, 2010b: 45). In this regard, almost 60 per cent of expenditure was taken up by solid waste management, mostly for works on engineered landfills and recycling facilities. Over a quarter of the expenditure went towards management of wastewater, mostly for construction of treatment plants. Around 10 per cent of expenditure was allocated to biodiversity and the protection of landscape, and other expenditure was allocated for programmes and initiatives including pollution abatement. Between 2004 and 2006, Malta received almost 120 million Euro from the EU for such expenditure (ibid: 46). Malta also introduced 50 economic instruments related to the environment (MEPA, 2010a: 63). Funding was used for projects and programmes such as the acquisition of air monitoring equipment, marine scientific surveys, aerial emissions and control at landfills, civil amenity sites and bring-in sites, waste separation, improvement of drinking water quality, sewage treatment infrastructure, and others (Galea Debono, 2006g)

Malta also introduced an eco-tax in 2004, though it was criticised for being a mere revenue generator rather than a tool aimed to protect the environment. Indeed, a study by Carmel Cacopardo (2006) concluded that Malta’s eco tax system was not preceded by social or economic studies. On a similar note, Nature Trust argued that the rationale on taxation in Malta – including eco taxation - was simply to generate revenue, adding that
the Government should ring fence revenue generated from the latter, which could subsequently be used for environmental purposes (The Times, December 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2008).

For the period 2007-13, Malta secured a further 855 million Euro (together with a further 15 per cent co-financing by the Maltese Government) under the EU cohesion, rural development and fisheries funding instruments, mostly for infrastructural projects. The environment featured as one of the key strategic objectives for the period in question (Camilleri, I. 2006\textsuperscript{o}). It also declared that it would be studying ways how civil society can get easier access to EU funds (The Times, August 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2006). Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi reiterated that the environment was one of the key seven ‘pillars’ in this regard, and appealed to his Nationalist Party to contribute to the challenges related to climate change, especially due to the threat of rising sea levels (Busuttil, C. 2007a).

At the same time, however, Malta’s institutional capacity required further upgrading in terms of funding and human resources, through more public and private investment (MEPA, 2010a: 4). Climate change measures – such as those proposed by the National Sustainable Development Strategy were in need to be mainstreamed across all policy sectors, together with a national environmental education policy and a national plan for green public procurement (ibid: 23, 62). In particular, MEPA (2010a) states that

‘further development of participatory approaches and the strengthening of civil society in general would help significantly with the ongoing democratization of Maltese society with respect to decision-making that affects the environment’ (62).

\footnote{Nature Trust had also emphasized the importance of educational initiatives ‘that would be instrumental in changing consumer behaviour’ (The Times, June 6\textsuperscript{th}, 2006).}
In this regard, the third pillar of the Aarhus Convention, the MEPA Audit Officer and the Voluntary Organisations Act were seen as offering opportunities for ENGOs to strengthen their activity (ibid: 66), even though they do not have the right to take member states to the European Court of Justice, after the Council of Ministers blocked a proposal of the European Commission (Euractiv.com, July 27th, 2006). Yet, like anyone else, and in view of the Freedom of Access to Information on the Environment Regulations 2005 European Directive 2003/4/EC, they have the right to request the competent authority – namely MEPA – to provide environmental information in its possession or in the possession of other public authorities (Cassar, Godwin 2006).

Similarly, the Environment Impact Assessment Directive 85/337/EEC; 97/11/EC; 2003/35/EC; 2009/31/EC enables the systematic analysis of a project’s likely environmental impact of human beings, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climate, landscape, material assets, cultural heritage and the interaction between these factors. In theory, this can bring about various benefits in relation to environmental and decision-making processes, though, in practice, much depends on the

‘transposition into national law and the already existing national standards and environmental requirements but also on the implementation by the relevant authorities. EIA did not – as sometimes wrongly expected – change environmental policy and is certainly not a substitute for it’ (Ekmetzoglou-Newson, 2005: 231).

Environment Impact Assessments (EIAs) are frequently made use of in the European Union, irrespective of whether developers are public or private. All member states are supposed to carry out EIAs of major public and private projects (Carter, 2001: 264), yet, at the same time Article 2(3) of the EIA Directive gives the possibility to member states
to exempt individual projects from Environment Impact Assessment. Criteria in this regard are not specified, but the European Commission and the public should be given reasons for such exemptions (Holzinger, cited in Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 204). As seen below, this loophole featured prominently in the development project controversies.

Following its EU accession, Malta received a warning from the EU on the lack of legislation to ensure that the EIA Directive’s criteria were applied (Zammit, R. 2006). In the meantime, the Government published proposed amendments to its EIA rules, which were criticised by Malta’s Green Party for giving developers the right to appeal within the Environment Ministry, whose decision would be final. The changes were criticised for ‘skew[ing] even further a process which is already slanted in favour of the developer’ (The Times, February 12th, 2007). Subsequently, Friends of the Earth Malta, Moviment Graffitti, Flimkien Għall-Ambjent Ħajra and the Ramblers Association also protested against these changes, stating that the final say on whether a development requires an EIA would shift to the Environment Ministry instead of to MEPA experts. Similar to the Green Party, the ENGOs said that there was already a ‘pro-development bias’ within MEPA’s boards, and now things would be even worse (Micallef, 2007d). Later on, Moviment Harsien Ħondoq23 also expressed its opposition to the new EIA rules, stating that developers would benefit from this (The Times, March 30th, 2007). In reply, the Environment Ministry said that it was not true that a Director would follow orders from the Minister, but added that it was considering appointing a Board instead of a single person to avoid ‘intrinsic risks’ (The Times, March 12th, 2007). Subsequently, the

23 Tr. from Maltese: ‘Movement for the Protection of Hondoq’.
ENGOS which previously held a press conference on the issue submitted a formal reaction to the Government on the issue, reiterating their position and adding that whilst they understand that Malta’s legislation should conform to the EU Directive, Government’s proposed changes would only create ‘more confusion and possible abuse’ (The Times, April 2nd, 2007).

The Government eventually adopted the EIA regulations in 2007. The regulations also allowed developers and MEPA to negotiate guidelines or terms of reference of EIAs behind closed doors, following recommendations of the general public and NGOs, though there was no obligation to take heed of such recommendations (Debono, 2009a). Subsequently, a register of approved professional EIA consultants was set up, which was welcomed by Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar, which also praised ‘the sterling work carried out by MEPA’s EIA department’, though it called for measures to ensure that conflicts of interest or external pressure would not take place (The Times, August 29th, 2009).

The EIA legislation, therefore, provided an opportunity for ENGOs to increase their involvement in environmental politics in Malta. This was used by ENGOs in specific cases, as shown in case studies below. Along these lines, Josann Cutajar and Jimmy Magro (2009) observed that EU accession legitimized the voices of NGOs, where consultation played an important role in fields including the environment, sexuality, disability, marital status and racism. At the same time, the legislation which regularizes the position of voluntary organisations was introduced in 2006, though ‘this might have
been enacted to control popular political participation rather than facilitate it’ (ibid: 123). Such a viewpoint was also echoed by a working group representing various NGOs (Grima, 2007). Indeed, the then president Ramblers Association of Malta, Lino Bugeja, at the time stated that as things stood his ENGO obtained legal advice not to register as a voluntary organization, because

‘while purporting to safeguard and enhance such independence, the intended legislation, in its present form, unless drastically amended, will only serve to subject NGOs to stifling bureaucratic and paternalistic controls, which, in the wrong hands, can nullify the independence and freedom of action NGOs enjoy at present’ (cited in ibid).

At the same time, others noted that ‘special influence groups’ (Consiglio, 2009: 10) such as NGOs were becoming more powerful following Malta’s EU accession, though one might question if they ‘really represent the new “civil society”, given that they comprise ‘unelected groups of people, with sometimes questionable accountability’ (ibid).

In the meantime, environmental consciousness remained high following Malta’s EU accession. For example, the 2008 public attitudes survey carried out by MEPA (MEPA, 2010c) showed that 69 per cent of the respondents considered the environment as being equally important as the economy, whilst 23 per cent considered it to be more important than the economy (ibid: 16). The former percentage declined from 78 percent compared to a previous MEPA survey in 1999, whilst the latter increased by 8 points during the same period (ibid: 53).
The survey showed that the most pressing environmental concerns were considered to be air, waste and land use issues respectively (ibid: 16). Air and waste switched top positions, compared to 1999 (ibid: 53). Respondents were clearly aware of the impact of climate change, with 85 per cent agreeing that Malta will be affected by it. 62 per cent believed that Malta had a high potential for renewable energy (ibid: 30). An astounding 94 per cent agreed that potentially harmful activities on the environment should be regulated (ibid: 33), and 93 per cent agreed with the polluter-pays principle (ibid: 34).

Amongst the most striking responses were that 89 per cent of the respondents agreed that car use should be restricted when this exceeds air quality limits, and 85 per cent agreed with stricter car tests in relation to air quality (ibid: 18). 84 per cent agreed that Malta was too built up, and 56 per cent disagreed that Gozo should be built up further (ibid: 20). 52 per cent believed that construction has a negative impact on the environment (ibid: 21), which, though being high, decreased from 83 per cent in a previous MEPA survey in 1991 (ibid: 53). 61 per cent agreed with pedestrianization and 85 per cent agreed that old buildings should be conserved in towns and villages (ibid: 25). 64 per cent believed that there was not enough public recreational space in the countryside (ibid: 32). This percentage was even higher in 1991 – when 86 per cent registered this reply (ibid: 55). Coming back to 2008, 67 per cent were concerned about water scarcity (ibid: 41), and 79 per cent believed that noise pollution was a problem in Malta (ibid: 42).

74 per cent of respondents said that they were ready to invest in energy efficient devises, and 67 per cent were ready to pay a ‘little bit more’ for electricity coming from
renewable sources (ibid: 29). Yet, most respondents did not indicate a willingness to pay for the management of protected areas, even though respondents who were more educated, younger, had a higher income and came from Northern district areas showed more willingness to pay than others (ibid: 28). This finding tallies with that of Diana Aquilina (2009), whose research on the new plastic bottling system in Malta concluded that even though residents of Attard and Marsascala believed that the environment and quality of life were to be given priority over the free market, and even though there was widespread opposition towards the liberalisation of plastic bottles (which in practice replaced glass bottles), the same residents were not prepared to support waste strategies in a financial way. It is interesting to note that following Malta’s EU accession, the soft drinks market had to be liberalised in a way that permitted all types of bottles. Hence, following a transitional period that expired in 2007, Malta’s previous system of returnable glass bottles for soft drinks was replaced. Incidentally, all soft drink producers switched to plastic bottle use, thus contributing to an increase in plastic waste. This was one area, which unlike many others, represented an environmental deterioration due to EU legislation.

A Eurobarometer (2008) survey on attitudes of European citizens towards the environment also had interesting findings. For example, whereas the first thing that comes to mind to the average European with regard to the environment was pollution and climate change, the average Maltese thought about the state of the environment to be inherited by future generations (1). The top environmental issues according to Maltese
respondents were air pollution, growing waste and urban problems, whilst for the EU27 these were natural disasters and depletion of natural resources (ibid: 2).

The Eurobarometer survey showed that Maltese respondents believed that economic, social and environmental factors all influence their quality of life, but compared to the EU as a whole, the Maltese gave more importance to the environment (ibid: 3). In what seems to partially contradict the findings referred to above, Maltese respondents also tended to be ready to pay more for environmentally-friendly products, and, as is the case with the EU27, such willingness is more common amongst higher educated respondents (ibid: 2).

The first years of Malta’s EU accession where therefore characterised by overdetermining factors, which, apart from those earmarked in the previous section of this chapter, also included the dislocatory effect of EU membership, which provided discursive opportunities for ENGOs, including newly-set up organisations. The challenge to upgrade of policy and laws in line with EU legislation enabled such opportunities.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter sought to present background information regarding politics and environment concerns in Malta, and argued that EU accession provided discursive opportunities for ENGOs to articulate their claims. This conclusion will be further analysed in subsequent chapters through a perspective which focuses mainly on post-Marxist discourse theory. The next chapter will discuss how this will be
methodologically applied. Subsequently, respective chapters will present and discuss the findings of this study.
4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology and research methods which were used in this study. The first part of the chapter presents methodological framework adopted in this regard, which is then followed by a presentation of the research methods of the thesis.

4.2 Discourse Analysis

4.2.1 Introduction

This thesis makes use of an interpretivist methodology which revolves around the ‘Essex school of discourse analysis’ (Howarth and Griggs, 2012: 317) within the ‘Essex discourse-theoretic approach’ (Laclau, 2000: xi). The next sections elaborate on this type of discourse analysis. These sections also discuss how discourse analysis was adopted to reply the research questions of this study through specific research methods, data collection techniques and analysis.

4.2.2 Research Strategy

As stated in chapter 1, the research questions of this study comprised the following, with specific focus on Maltese ENGOs:

(1) Has EU accession effected the lobbying of ENGOs?
(2) Has EU accession enhanced the empowerment of ENGOs?
(3) Has EU accession led to the institutionalisation of ENGOs?
Chapter 2 theorized the empowerment of ENGOs, whereby particular importance was given to the specific characteristics of social formations and to the relationship between the State and civil society, within an EU context, and with particular reference to ENGOs as social movement organisations. Chapter 3 described the development of environmental politics in Malta.

As highlighted in chapter 2, this study is not after objective casual explanations, but seeks to understand and interpret socially produced meanings in relation to the research questions. Thus, I did not apply ‘counterfactual reasoning’ (cited in Haverland, 2005), which assumes that other factors, such as the economic, political, institutional or technological remain unchanged when analysing the impact of the EU. Lenschow (2006) suggests that ‘Europeanization requires that the EU impulse is sent before domestic changes come under way’ (60), adding that few analytic models actually reduce the explanation of change to one single item.

The interpretative approach of this study can be criticised on the grounds that rather than establishing a truth, it can, at best, used in the interests of certain groups under investigation (Hammersley, 1992). Here it has to be emphasised that this study does not attempt to provide an absolute, monolithic truth, but rather, a systematic reading through discourse analysis. This can be supplemented by other readings carried out with similar or alternative approaches. It is such pluralism which can help enrich the sociological tradition and the sociological imagination.
Discourse analysis has been used in the analysis of environmental struggles, enabling the identification not only of what actors say and do but also what they represent in terms of values and motivation (Jessup, 2010: 22-23). Hence, as Brad Jessup puts it, such an analysis looks into the storylines of different actors, which in turn might have common ground even if having plural and hybrid environmental philosophies (ibid.). Such an analysis can also unearth ideological representations which legitimize the reproduction of social structures (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 243), irrespective of whether such representations reflect some objective reality or not. In their turn, such structures are contingent and incomplete. Discourse analysis examines their political and historical construction and functioning (Howarth, 2000).

Through the highlighting of discourses of political actors and institutions, dominant ideas (and actors whom they represent) can be identified within hegemonic formations. Such an analysis can reveal which discourses are included in debates and which are ones excluded, and can also reveal how dominant discourses are challenged (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 247-8).

The particular discursive approach adopted in this study differs from others, such as that proposed by Norman Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2000, 2003). Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis assumes that language, as an irreducible part of social life, is dialectically interconnected with other social elements, yet social life cannot be reduced to language or discourse. Discourse, therefore, is a ‘constitutive part of its local and global, social and cultural, contexts’ (Fairclough, 1995: 29). Hence, Fairclough (2003)
proposes the application of discourse analysis with other analyses, such as ethnography and institutional analysis. His ontology is therefore “realist”, giving due importance to contextual factors such the already existent social reality (2-8)

Conversely, discourse theorists such as Laclau, Mouffe and Howarth consider ‘language, actions, and objects’ to be ‘intertwined in what we call “discourse”’ (Howarth and Griggs, 2012: 308). Thus, structures within which social agents attempt to articulate hegemonic projects and discursive formations are analysed, yet such structures are deemed as being incomplete (Howarth, 2000: 128-9). Hence, ‘discourse theorists have to modulate and articulate their concepts to suit the particular problems they are addressing’ (ibid: 133). This enables interpretation of problems, cases and issues. Here, it must be emphasized that discourse theorists argue that there are different research styles of conducting discourse analysis which are compatible with its social ontology (ibid: 134; Lauber and Schenner, 2011: 514).

Linguistic and non-linguistic data are therefore used by such discourse analysts to signify discourses and their respective “realities” (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 4; Laclau, 2005: 68). Howarth (2000) highlights the various qualitative research methods which can be used in this regard. These include primary data from newspapers, reports, pamphlets, personal biographies, media representations such as films, in-depth interviews, and participation-observation. In all instances, discourse analysts should be aware of the theoretical considerations related to the specific modes of research, for example regarding the ‘changing power relations between interviewer and interviewee’ (140). Cross-
reference can also take place, for example by making use of both interviews and textual analysis (Griggs, 2005: 123; Howarth, 2005: 339).

Through discourse analysis, therefore, I could verify whether EU accession could be singled out as influencing the empowerment of ENGOs, or whether, alternatively, EU accession could be considered as one overdetermining factor amongst others, thus going beyond simple explanation (Wolcott, 2001: 36). On the other hand, it should be made clear from the start that it was impossible for this study to take into consideration all possible explanations related to the empowerment of ENGOs. Discourse analysis takes account of different voices, but it cannot possibly include all of them. Thus, discourse analysis offers one representation amongst others (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 84).

Indeed, theoretical and methodological systems can never be as complex as the environment they are analysing. As Borges (1964) recounts, when a king asked a cartographer to create a completely accurate map of his country, the map was as big as the country, thus being useless for practical purposes (319).

4.2.3 Methods, Themes; Data Analysis

Discourse analysis has been described as a ‘messy method’ (Tonkiss, 1998: 250) which is difficult to formalise into a standard approach. Instead of focusing on quantity of data, as is the case with other methods such as content analysis, discourse analysis attempts to uncover data that is rich in textual detail, providing fruitful insights into a particular issue under research (ibid: 246). Fran Tonkiss remarks that in this regard, even ‘a single speech or newspaper report or conversation can generate very fruitful themes for analysis’ (ibid:
This thesis made use of qualitative interviews (elite interviews) and case studies to reply the research questions.

Discourse analysis is not institutionalised and standardised as is the case with other methods with a longer sociological tradition. Given that the use of discourse analysis is not as mainstreamed as other more conventional methods, evaluation of studies using this research method may be difficult and maybe even not appreciated enough, hence leading to criticism. On the other hand, one should appreciate its labour-intensive and time-consuming qualities (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 11), whilst acknowledging that it is one method amongst a plurality of equally important methods (ibid: 16). As Phillips and Hardy (2002) put it

‘discourses are not neatly packaged in a particular text or even in a particular cluster of texts. Researchers can only trace clues to them regardless of how much data they collect’ (74).

Keeping such challenges in mind, as an initial guide for data collection and analysis, I applied Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke’s (2006), six phases of what they define as “thematic analysis”. The phases consist of familiarizing oneself with one’s data; transcribing data (if necessary), and formulating initial ideas; generating initial codes by systematically coding data deemed interesting from the entire data set; collating codes to form potential themes, whilst collecting data for each theme; checking whether the themes work with both the coded extracts and the entire data set; giving a name and definition to the themes, whilst refining the specificity of each; and, producing a final report.
In relation to the above, Howarth (2000) proposes three basic operations for the analysis of empirical data through discourse analysis. First, ‘the “translation” of information into textual form’ (141). Here, linguistic and non-linguistic data is treated as text which can be analysed through techniques that are in line with the ontological assumptions of discourse theory. Second, ‘the application of constructed theoretical frameworks to the problematized object of investigation’ (ibid). Here, abstract logics and concepts are applied to a specific case. Third, ‘the deployment of the various techniques of discourse analysis to the problem investigated’ (ibid). In each case, theoretical flexibility takes place through the application process, as theoretical concepts are articulated during the research process itself (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 5).

This study applied Howarth’s proposals as follows. As regards the translation of information into textual form, different forms of data were collected (Geertz, 1973; Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Wetherell, 2001). The qualitative elite interviews and case studies were treated as text for analysis. Collection of information from newspapers did not involve accumulation of as much data as possible with the intention of discovering discursive truths through numerical presentation of key text, but rather, involved the unearthing of ‘essences with sufficient context’ (Wolcott, 2001: 44). Notwithstanding this, the number of newspaper articles collected was extensive.

As regards the construction of theoretical frameworks, this was carried out through key concepts related to hegemonic struggles namely articulation, antagonism, equivalence, hegemonic formations, overdetermination and dislocation (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985;
Howarth, 2000; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000), and, where applicable, through substantive, procedural, structural and sensitizing impacts of ENGOs (Giugni; 1995; van der Heijden 1999; Carter 2001; Rootes 2007a). After being initially explored through the narratives of ENGO respondents, thus raising queries on their potential application, these were analytically applied to each case study.

Discursive techniques were used to analyse the empowerment of ENGOs. Data was sorted and coded into keywords and themes (Tonkiss, 1998: 253-254) in relation to ENGO politics, namely ideology; institutionalisation; State power; Europeanization; and empowerment. Variation in the text (Tonkiss, 1998: 256) was analysed, for example by looking at how social agents, such as ENGOs with different ideologies, discursively relate to specific concepts and issues. I also read for emphasis and detail and attended to silences (Tonkiss, 1998: 257-258). In the case of the former, I carefully analysed how discourse was used by different social agents in strategic ways. For example, I noted how at times the Government made use of ‘rational arbiter’ discourse to seemingly depict itself as being a fair judge on environmental issues. In the case of the latter, I noted how, for example, social agents such as ENGOs and political parties were not always equally active on all issues. For example, in the case of bluefin tuna, Maltese ENGO tended to be much less active than they were in other issues. Hence, less discursive evidence for analysis for produced, leading to a relatively shorter case study.

Ideologies, keywords and arguments utilised by social agents in their articulatory practices were identified through their respective discourses. Such a method is similar to
that proposed by Volkmar Lauber and Elisa Schenner (2011) and by the “new political ecology” which focuses on environmental struggles and power relations and on discourses which are articulated by the State and movements (Hannigan, 2006: 55).

The next section will focus on the first of the research methods being used within the framework of discourse analysis, namely elite interviewing.

4.3 Elite Interviewing

4.3.1 Introduction

Elite interviewing is made use of when it is deemed important to interview persons who are experts on the topics being researched (Leech, 2002: 663). In this regard, Peter Burnham, Karin Gilland, Wyn Grant and Zig Layton-Henry (2004) argue that respondents tend to have more expertise than the interviewer on the particular topic being discussed, and some respondents might be more “important” than others because of their degree of influence in decision-making processes. The most common type of research technique used in this regard is the semi-structured interview (205).

Thus, in this study, the main protagonists themselves - namely ENGOs (through their representatives) - were asked whether they believe that EU accession has resulted in their empowerment. This research method enabled a comparative ideological categorization of ENGOs in relation to their perceptions of empowerment. This was subsequently substantiated through the application of theoretical concepts to specific case studies.
It was felt that questions related to matters such as ENGO ideology and strategy were best answered through open-ended replies. There were various reasons for this. First, because I felt that ENGO representatives, as elite respondents, can provide me with valid data, through their narrations, which I might not have thought of in advance. And second, because such data might not neatly fit into clear pre-established definitions. For example, it was shown that in some cases, ENGO ideology did not clearly fit into prescribed concepts.

Indeed, “informants” accounts do not necessarily mirror a world “out there”. They are constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumption, and interpretive’ (Kohler Riessman, 1993: 4-5). The same event can be interpreted and constructed differently through the narratives of different social actors, who, for example, can ‘exclude experiences that undermine the current identities they wish to claim’ (ibid: 64). Thus, narratives require interpretation, as they do not speak for themselves. In turn, interpretations are ‘partial, alternative truths’ (ibid: 22).

Therefore, the subjective interpretation of reality can have different readings. It is for such reasons that it was deemed vital to interview key representatives from Maltese ENGOs yet at the same time bearing in mind that elite interviewing was not the be-all-and-end-all of the methodology of this research, and was therefore cross-checked with case studies. This research method was therefore triangulated to deepen the research findings (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 206).
Elite interviewing can be criticised for being unrepresentative, and of being subject to different interpretations. On the other hand, this type of interviewing has its strengths, especially if one is interested in the perceptions of social actors who are themselves involved in the issue under research (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 218-219). In Maltese society such a research method has been tried and tested, for example by environmental sociologist Anna Zammit (2002), who analysed environmental attitudes of Mayors. In this study, elite interviewing was particularly important so as to enable the ideological categorization of ENGOs in relation to the scope of this thesis.

4.3.2 Sampling

Elite interviewing can make use of purposive samples as well as snowball or referral sampling. In the case of the former, the expertise or knowledge of the researcher about a social group and its representatives is given a lot of importance (Berg, 2004: 36). In the case of the latter, the researcher relies on information from other persons (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 207).

It sometimes becomes difficult to decide when to stop adding possible respondents to a sample. On the one hand, the researcher may require more respondents, but on the other hand, practical issues may deter further interviews. What is important is that the objectives and purposes of the study are reached. It has been suggested that between 20 to 30 interviews might be a good target for projects where elite interviewing is the principal research method employed (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 208). In the case of this study, it was decided to interview representatives of all the fourteen
Maltese ENGOs that were active during Malta’s EU accession process. They were asked to nominate two representatives each, to be interviewed separately, thus aiming to reach a target number of 28 respondents. Given that it was decided that the protagonists themselves should select their most fitting spokespersons, the selection of respondents was given high importance, keeping in mind that respondents may possess certain skills in the production of narrative. This is essential for active interviews (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995: 27).

The Maltese ENGOs in question were Nature Trust Malta; Birdlife Malta; Friends of the Earth Malta; Din l-Art Helwa\(^\text{24}\); Moviment Graffitti\(^\text{25}\), Zminijietna - Voice of the Left\(^\text{26}\); Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar\(^\text{27}\), Ramblers’ Association Malta; The Biological Conservation Research Foundation (Bicref); Gaia Foundation; Movement for the Protection of Hondoq; Qui-si-sana and Tigne Residents’ Association; Committee Against the Proposed Recycling Plant and Save Wied Garnaw Action Group.

As the names of the ENGOs suggests, it is evident that there is a wide range of ENGOs in Malta. The ideological and strategic make-up of these organisations were analysed through the research methods of this study. But it is pertinent to note that only ENGOs which are actively involved in protecting the environment in one way or another were selected, and coalitions were excluded from this process. Coalitions, however featured indirectly in the research process, given that their membership included ENGOs.

\(^{24}\) Tr. from Maltese: ‘This fair land’. This forms part of the first stanza of Malta’s national anthem.

\(^{25}\) Tr. from Maltese: ‘Graffiti Movement’.

\(^{26}\) Tr. from Maltese: ‘Our Times – Voice of the Left’.

\(^{27}\) Tr. from Maltese: ‘Together for a better environment’. 
On the other hand Hunters’ and Trappers organisations were excluded from the process. Even though they subscribe to conservationist aims, when it comes to habitats, their scope lies directly contrary to the basic aims of ENGOs. Their inclusion would have widened the sample to such an extent that it would have been pointless identifying ENGOs in the first place. The same applies for organisations which are active in heritage conservation and agriculture respectively.

Six of the ENGOs (four conservationist, one sustainable development, and one radical, as explained below) form part of the “MEPA Nature Group” – a group of environmental NGOs which are consulted by the MEPA Environment Protection Directorate during the scoping, review and public consultation stages in the Environment Impact Assessment process.

4.3.3 Making Contact, Gaining Access and Being an Insider

Interaction between interviewer and respondent is particularly important in elite interviewing, especially since respondents have the opportunity to reply in detail to the questions put forward to them. Access to certain elites might be difficult, even though is not likely to be the case with representatives of NGOs, who ‘are usually quite keen to have opportunities to put their case across’ (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 209).
In this study, targets, once identified, were contacted via email. They were informed about the study in question through a covering letter which consisted of details including scope, contact details and ethical considerations. ENGOs were given four weeks in which to reply, and reminders were sent to ensure response. A copy of the letter can be found in as an Appendix. Once ENGOs had nominated their representatives, arrangements were made to fix appointments for interviews.

Given my role and experience in politics and civil society activism, contact with the ENGOs was facilitated. As a political activist, I have been actively involved in the social construction of various environmental issues and campaigns since I was a university student. Amongst others, I have been involved with radical leftist organisations active in environmental politics – Moviment Graffitti (which I co-founded) and Zminijietna Voice of the Left since 1994, and with Malta’s Green Party – Alternattiva Demokratika, where I progressed from public relations officer to party chairperson (I occupied the latter role between 2009 and 2013). I am also a Green Party local councillor (from 2003 to June 2009, and subsequently from 2012 onwards), and I had a prominent role in environmental alliances such as the Front Against the Golf Course and the Front Against the Hilton. It is important to note that the interviews of this study were carried out during summer 2009. This was before I became Chairperson of AD. However, at the time I was active in the party and in Zminijietna – Voice of the Left.

In relation to my activism, sociology has helped me understand the political dimension of the environment, and indeed, my first dissertation, “State/Power: Hiltonopoly”
(Briguglio, Michael 1998) attempted to analyse the power blocs and ideological constructions involved in a controversial development project in Malta. Being an activist puts me in a privileged position to gather knowledge and form networks which enrich my sociological production.

At the same time, my background might have raised queries regarding possible conflicts of interest in my research. One might highlight the problem of being an insider with clear positions on various environmental issues, and being caught between the roles of politician, activist and sociologist. My own activism, therefore, could have had various implications with respondents. Given that I have taken positions on various issues related to ENGO activism, this could have influenced certain respondents to be cautious when giving certain replies. Certain respondents might have responded differently had they been interviewed by someone else, thus effecting reliability in the traditional sense of the term.

There are various ways how such dilemmas can be tackled. First, one can query whether the knowledge of an insider can be generalized on the population under study. The experiences and views of a researcher within a community are not necessarily identical to those of other members of the same community (Foster, cited by Shaw, 2013: 94), particularly when such a community – in this case the environmental movement – comprises different ENGOs with different ideologies. Hence, one’s position in this respect can be defined as that of an

‘insider-outsider researcher... sensitised both to the discourses of the ... community, and the dominant worldview. My position as insider allowed for sensitising approaches to research, and my position as outsider allowed for
reflexivity. Being an insider sensitises the researcher to the experiences of the research participants’ (Shaw, 2013: 94).

This is the approach taken by Frances Shaw in her research on Australian feminist blogs. She is both a feminist and a blogger, but she started off her research as a researcher, thus adopting the role of both insider and outsider (ibid).

Second, as is the case, for example, with Feminist Standpoint Methodology, the experiences and positions of a researcher are acknowledged and valued. What is important is that the researcher is accountable, reflexive and responsible (Gannon and Davies, cited by Shaw, 2013: 95).

Third, one can take account of the fact that Malta is a small state characterised by a high degree of familiarity and where knowledge rapidly becomes public through access to information and gossip. As Ronald Sultana and Godfrey Baldacchino (1994) put it,

‘nearly every social relationship serves a variety of interests, and many roles are played by relatively few individuals. The same persons are thus brought into contact over and over again in various activities, because each operates and meets the other on the basis of different roles held in the context of different role-sets; decisions and choices are therefore influenced by the relationships which individuals establish and cultivate with others in a repertoire of diverse social settings. Impersonal, non-person specific, standards of efficiency, performance and integrity cannot therefore fail to come into play, modified by the myriad relationships bring the people concerned together... And, given the absence of confidentiality and anonymity, inhabitants learn to manage intimacy: they get along, whether they like it or not, knowing that they are likely to renew and reinforce relationships with the same persons in a variety of settings over the course of a whole life span’ (16-17).

Sultana and Baldacchino add that the Maltese therefore develop a ‘sophisticated mode of accommodation’ (ibid: 17). Besides, Boissevain and Gatt note the ‘woven mess of social
relations that underpins most environmentalist activism’ (Boissevain and Gatt, 2011: 137), where many activists have multiple roles and ties in different spheres related to civil society, academia, business and government.

In this regard, the fact that I play plural roles was probably not been something out-of-this-world for my interviewees. If anything, my direct experience and active participation in environmental politics enabled me to gain relatively easy access to ENGOs. It helped encourage respondents to be more open. Affinity helped create both social capital (through networks and generation of trust) as well as cultural capital (whereby both the both interviewer and the respondent share a certain degree of habitus), thus increasing validity. Hence, should I have misquoted them or used their anonymous statements for ulterior purposes, I could immediately be identified.

In a way, the smallness of Maltese society acted as a sort of panopticon through which I self-regulated myself into playing the role of a sociologist with an activist background, yet who was systematic in his analysis and who fully respected the ethical procedures which were adopted. I ensured that my own political opinions were not imposed or presented as if they are authoritative in terms of professional knowledge (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 268). In no way did I try to influence respondents during the interviews, and it was made clear from the start that my interest in this study was academic.
4.3.4 Ethical Considerations and Coding of Respondents

ENGOs and their selected representatives were informed that their replies would be treated in strict confidentiality and that the data generated would be used solely for research purposes. In fact, in order to protect their ethical rights, the representatives filled in and signed a consent form approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Malta. Respondents were also made aware that they would be free to quit the study at any point in time and for any reason.

The real names of respondents and the ENGOs they represent were not used. In the case of the former, respondents were referred to as ‘respondent 1’ or ‘respondent 2’ respectively for each ENGO, where applicable. In the case of the latter, I tried to give the ENGOs names which have ideological connotations and which were based on their replies. Hence, I basically juggled around with terms such as ‘conservationist’, ‘sustainable developmental’ and so forth (as indicated in the previous chapter). This particular form of labelling was adopted as it was important to show whether, for example, certain types of ENGOs were more likely to consider themselves as experiencing empowerment through Malta’s EU accession when compared with others.

The labelling of ENGOs was not free of problems, however. In the first instance, it was difficult to neatly categorise certain ENGOs into the ideologies referred to in the theoretical chapter of this study. In this case, I had to take arbitrary decisions, which were however based on the responses of the respondents, on my sociological interpretation of the ENGOs’ ideological slant and on my experience as an activist in the field. In the case
of two particular ENGOs, my conclusion was that they should be defined as ‘radical’, as their radical-leaning ideologies could not be strictly inserted within the eco-socialist, environmental justice, ecologist, deep ecologist or eco-feminist ideologies referred to in the previous chapter. They had various things in common with such ideologies, but, in their own respective ways, these two ENGOs had their own particular characteristics which go beyond radical environmentalism. Here one may ask whether such organisations should be referred to as ENGOs in the first place, but as already shown above, such NGOs were actively involved in protecting the environment, so, for the purpose of my study, they qualify for the ENGO definition. In the case of other ENGOs, they were defined according to the ‘sustainable developmental’, ‘conservationist’ or ‘local’ categories, amidst their similarities and differences. These ENGOs were also grouped together as moderate ENGOs.

In view of the above, it was therefore assured that ethical principles namely ‘beneficence or the avoidance of harm’; ‘veracity or the avoidance of deception’; ‘privacy or autonomy’; ‘confidentiality’; and ‘consent’ were applied in this study (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 253).

4.3.5 Semi-Structured Interviews

As already stated earlier, interviews were carried out through semi-structured interviews. Such interviews do not have one fixed format. However, a common thread can be identified. For example, first, it is important to formulate a list of topics or questions to be covered. Second, these should be prioritised. Third, the interview’s framework should not be too rigid. This is of particular importance in order that the interviewer can give proper
attention to the interpretations and meanings of interviewees, which, in turn can lead to novel and unexpected information (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 212-3).

The questionnaire was designed in a way to help ensure a smooth interviewing process. The first questions dealt with matters which respondents would presumably feel comfortable about. The questionnaire then progressed to more central questions, which, in certain instances, were of a more delicate nature due to their political, ideological and organisational connotations. At the end of each interview, respondents were asked whether they would like to add anything that had not been discussed during the interview (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 215).

Thus, the first questions were of a biographical nature, and were followed by the more central questions, or what Grant McCracken (1988) defines as ‘grand-tour questions’ (38). These were supplemented with ‘floating’ and ‘planned’ prompts (ibid: 41), through which respondents were encouraged to elaborate on their replies (Berg, 2004: 86). This took place by means of questions such as ‘How come?’ or ‘Can you elaborate?’. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix ‘B’.

Given that the questionnaire was of a semi-standard format, it permitted the redesign of certain questions as the research progressed, in order to cover new themes that developed along the way (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 216). Thus, the experience of both researcher and respondent were of value during an active research
process (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). Respondents were free to go beyond the prepared questions, thus further amplifying their subjective perspective (Berg, 2004: 81).

4.3.6 Pilot Testing

The questionnaire was pilot-tested on four respondents from two ENGOs, one of which is radical and the other emphasizes sustainable development. The pilot-tests did not indicate any significant problems with the questionnaire, and I could therefore proceed accordingly.

4.3.7 Response Rates

The response rate was of twenty-four out of twenty-eight possible respondents. In the case of one ENGO, replies were sent in writing from just one respondent, and in the case of another ENGO, two-respondents were interviewed together upon their request (these were considered to be one respondent, as replies were almost entirely given by one respondent, and when this was not the case, there was agreement between the respondents). Only one ENGO - Save Wied Garnaw Action Group - did not respond to the request to be interviewed. In this regard it is pertinent to note that this particular ENGO, which celebrated its fourth year of existence in 2008 (Polidano, 2008), seems to have disappeared from the public sphere since then. The response rate was therefore very high.

4.3.8 Interviewing

The interviewing process took place whilst bearing in mind both the insider’s dilemma referred to previously, as well as preconceived ideas of both respondents and myself (Berg, 2004: 98). Among the factors which discourse analysts should take into
consideration when carrying out semi-structured interviews, one finds the need for analysis of similar and different interpretations that emerge during interviews and the constraints faced by interviewees. The importance of dislocation should also be given due importance when analysing the roles of individuals (Griggs, 2005: 123). An example of this is when activist interviewees exaggerate, underplay or simplify their responses to be in line with the official positions of their respective organisation. This can result in teleological narratives of success or individualized explanations for cases of failure (Howarth, 2005: 338). Besides, when elite interviewing takes place, it is often difficult to reach a balance in terms of authority over the discourse being produced, especially since the interviewer is meant to remain “neutral” so as not to create bias (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 214).

In order to confront such challenges, I adopted the dramaturgical concept of role-taking, as defined by Bruce L. Berg (2004). Here, the interviewer consciously attempts to build and maintain a good rapport with the interviewees, whereby he takes on the role most fitting to the particular interview context. In this regard, interviewing becomes a participatory process, even though the interviewer has to maintain a certain amount of intentional control (98-100).

Berg’s notion of dramaturgical interviewing takes account of both verbal and nonverbal channels of communication. Besides, the interviewer also takes on the role of actor, director and choreographer (ibid: 102-3). This respectively involves being non-judgemental on whatever the interviewee states; taking an outsider’s view in order to
assess the performance being carried out; and being reflective enough to facilitate control of the interview process (ibid: 103). Thus, ‘the entire interview is a self-conscious social performance’ (ibid: 104).

In view of the above, I left it to the interviewees themselves to decide where the interviews were carried out. Hence, some interviews were carried out in my University office; others were carried out in the premises of respective ENGOs; and others were carried out in places such as work offices of respective respondents. I also adapted my use of language accordingly. Hence, some interviews were carried out in English, whilst others were in Maltese. I did my utmost to remain impartial and as unobtrusive as possible. Due importance was also given to the interviewer’s appearance. Indeed, I tried to adapt my appearance to the particular background of the ENGO in question. This helped avoid ‘drawing attention to themselves by their dress’ (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 210).

The length of the interviews – which, as stated previously, took place during Summer 2009 - varied from twelve minutes to seventy-one minutes. Twelve out of twenty-three interviews lasted between twenty-one and forty minutes. One interview was handed in writing, as stated above. Six respondents were female; whilst eighteen were male (the number goes up to nineteen if including the two male respondents who were interviewed together in the case of one ENGO).
4.3.9 Data Processing Techniques

A digital recorder was made use of for the interviews, and interviewees were informed beforehand about this so that they could give their consent or otherwise. There are mixed views regarding the usage of recorders during interviews. Dvora Yanow (2000), for example, does not favour taping, though at the same time she advises researchers to adapt according to the situation (32). McCracken (1988), on the other hand, warns that note-taking creates an ‘unnecessary and dangerous distraction’ (41).

Similarly, there are mixed opinions regarding the transcription of text. According to Yanow (2000), selectivity and summarizing provide interpretations which shape the way policies are perceived and acted upon. In this regard, policy analysts can act as translators who help different groups understand each other’s accounts, thus resulting in a democratic approach (87-91). James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (1995), who promote “Active Interviewing”, suggest that

‘reports do not summarize and organize what interview participants have said as much as they “deconstruct” participants’ talk, showing the reader the hows of the whats of the narrative dramas of lived experience’ (80).

In the case of this study, data collected from interviews was coded into themes (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 217-8) referred to earlier, thus enabling systematic data processing through the theoretical lens of this study. Data was managed in a focused and simplified form. When required, for example with respect to interviews, this included both direct quotes as well as displays which grouped data, through tables (Berg, 2004: 39).
4.4 Case Studies

4.4.1 Introduction

As stated earlier, this study also made use of case studies. These can sensitize researchers to the complexities of social realities, and can consequently enable the learning of ‘the grammar of discourse theory’ (Howarth, 2005: 330).

Case studies were particularly important for this thesis as they enabled a comprehensive analysis of specific environmental issues involving ENGOs in relation to Malta’s EU accession. Apart from providing fresh data, this can also be used to verify whether the subjective perceptions of ENGOs (as uncovered through qualitative interviewing) is matched by representation in the public sphere, in which the mass media plays a key role. The analysis of case studies therefore enabled the analysis of hegemonic formations on specific issues, which, in turn, was substantiated through concepts related to substantive, structural, procedural and sensitizing impacts.

All data produced and analysed in this chapter was important for practical purposes, providing an applied backdrop to the data that was created through the interviews. In this respect, I felt that the analysis of text was more appropriate through a qualitative method which focuses on analysis of discursive threads, rather than through quantitative techniques such as content analysis. As I had pointed in out in my Masters’ dissertation entitled ‘Ideological and Strategic Shifts from Old Labour to New Labour in Malta’ (2001), which used a similar method:
‘The main reason for this choice of analysis is that measuring frequencies could sometimes lead to misleading results. For example, if the word “new” occurred 1000 times, would this be a low score? Would 1300 occurrences of this word represent a different message? This problem is compounded by the fact that the word in question could have occurred in a non-political context; that counting words could be too mechanistic; and that keywords need to be analysed within the respective context in order to make sense. For example, a politician may use certain keywords if he is addressing his Party’s core supporters; and may use different keywords if he is making a speech addressed to a particular social group such as the business community. However, various points of reference and keywords are utilised within the thesis in order to verify the language in relation to its ideology and strategy. These are analysed by using an approach which gives importance to general trends and to the context in which the communication in question takes place’ (37).

4.4.2 Selection of Case Studies

Case studies have been criticised for lack of representativeness and for lack of rigour in the methods used, especially due to the subjectivity of the researcher (Hamel, Dufor and Fortin, 1993: 23). In response to such criticism, one can say that if case studies are used comparatively – as was the case in this study - this can result in the construction of analytical categories that are free from subjective value judgements (ibid: 26). The theoretical themes of this study provide such categories, which, though representing a particular theoretical reading, are nevertheless systematic and academically legitimate. In this regard, Howarth (2005) highlights the importance of selecting different ‘maximum variation’ case studies so as to enable analysis which takes considerations of different circumstances (331). Berg (2004) adds that

‘when case studies are properly undertaken, they should not only fit the specific individual, group, or event studies but also generally provide understanding about similar individuals, groups or events’ (259).
Yet, case studies are cumbersome and time-consuming. Deciding on the number of cases that are deemed necessary in order to carry out a proper analysis is a challenge in itself. Jacques Hamel, Stephane Dufour and Dominic Fortin (1993) suggest that this can be verified through the usage of one’s sociological imagination. This, in turn, makes use of ‘methodological tactics and selections employed in determining which case should be used, or more accurately, which subject should be investigated’ (36).

As regards this challenge, and for practical reasons, I made use of a convenience sample of case studies which was as holistic as possible, trying to capture a mix of intensity of EU legislation; different forms of activism of Maltese and EU ENGOs respectively; the interplay of national, European and global environmental politics, and different outcomes.

Consequently, the case studies selected for this purpose included hunting and trapping; fishing of Bluefin tuna; climate change; and development projects. The latter was in turn divided into three case studies dealing with two specific development projects in Sliema, and one dealing with a policy change on a macro-level, covering development in general, namely Malta’s extension of development zones.

I chose the hunting and trapping issue because it dealt with an area covered by extensive EU legislation and which was characterised by constant lobbying from ENGOs in Malta and the EU. Climate Change was chosen as it is a relatively new topic, which, nevertheless, has been characterised by lobbying not only by ENGOs, both in Malta and within the EU, but also by the EU itself, resulting in binding targets within the union.
Fishing of bluefin tuna is not characterised by a policy regime that is as strong as, say, the EU Birds Directive. Besides, it does not have relatively-long established tradition of political antagonism, as is the case, for example with development projects in Malta. This case study was chosen as it has not been characterised by strong lobbying from Maltese ENGOs, though this was carried out by European and global ones. The discursive silence (Tonkiss, 1998: 258) of Maltese ENGOs is one reason why this case study is comparatively shorter than others.

Development projects were chosen as they tend to represent one of the most prominent areas in environmental politics in Malta, notwithstanding the fact that EU legislation is not so extensive in this regards. I chose 2 Sliema case-studies as they had different outcomes, and I chose the extension of development zones issue as it was characterised by constant lobbying from ENGOs in Malta, which eventually attempted to take the issue at EU level.

The fact that I chose specific case studies automatically meant that I had to exclude others. One prominent area in this regard is waste management. Prior to Malta’s EU accession, Malta had a lack of waste management policies and most collected waste was simply dumped in specified sites. The largest site in this regard is Maghtab, which was transformed into an ever-growing mountain of waste, metaphorically looking like a monument to the lack of sustainable waste management policies in Malta. Malta’s waste management policies and legislation improved considerably through EU accession, yet
this had its exceptions. For example, Malta had to liberalize its legislation on materials used for beverage bottles, thus giving way to a massive increase in plastic bottles, instead of the previous returnable glass bottle system. The upgrading of Malta’s waste management facilities was also characterised by antagonism. The most prominent example of this was the conflict against the upgrading of Malta’s recycling facility at Marsascala, with the Committee Against the Proposed Recycling Plant unsuccessfully lobbying against the upgrading in question. These two specific issues which were both analysed by Diana Aquilina (2009; 2011), demonstrated that Malta’s EU accession was characterised by uneven processes as regards environmental politics.

4.4.3 Data Collection

Hamel, Dufour and Fortin (1993) state that case studies can make use of different methods, which, amongst others, may include news reports, official documents, remarks in context, personal writings and literary works. As regards this study, a multitude of readings concerning the case studies in question were taken mainly from newspapers. Such documents provide valuable discourse on Maltese society, Malta’s EU accession process and Maltese ENGOs.

The compilation of such data was an on-going process lasting years, generating box files full of information for analysis. Reference was made to news articles following Malta’s EU accession up to 2009 (with the odd reference to 2010, when necessary), thus resulting in a huge quantity of data which had to be filtered out and analysed in terms of the research questions of this study.
Data was primarily obtained from two newspapers\(^2\). The first was English-speaking daily newspaper ‘The Times’ and its sister newspaper ‘The Sunday Times’, which are Malta’s best-selling newspapers and which have a long tradition in journalism since the 1930s. They also have a very strong online presence. Allied Newspapers, which publishes the Times, has been described as ‘an institution in itself’ (Sammut: 2009: 86). Like all other newspapers, The Times and The Sunday Times have their own biases, and are generally considered to be leaning towards the Nationalist Party and to have a middle-class readership. In this regard, Julian Manduca (1995) observes that these two newspapers (and another newspaper, The Malta Independent),

‘do not give adequate importance to the concerns of those that are affected by business ... [and] when issues related to business are treated, the business community is rarely (if ever) held responsible for the damage that it may be generating’ (86).

Data was also obtained from ‘Malta Today’, which was established in 1999, and which ‘employs a crop of journalists who are seeking to challenge the prevalent institutions by instilling media-centric agendas’ (Sammut, 2009: 87). Its editor and many of its journalists were themselves political and NGO activists (ibid). Malta Today also has a strong online presence and has become a mainstay of the Maltese media. In my opinion (which is based on my consistent reading of this newspaper ever since its first edition in 1999), this newspaper is generally sympathetic to the cause of ENGOs.

\(^2\) Some data was obtained through cuttings, and other data was obtained through online sources. Hence, for example, data obtained through cuttings is referenced in this format: The Times (September 23\(^{rd}\), 2006): NGOs call for preservation of Hondoq ir-Rummien . Data obtained through the internet is reference as follows: The Times (October 5\(^{th}\), 2006): Nine consortia interested in offshore wind farm. Retrieved October 6\(^{th}\), 2006, from http://www.timesofmalta.com/core/print_article.php?id=238997
Other data was collected from international news agencies such as Reuters and Euractiv, as well as from European ENGOs, amongst others. Besides, background data on each specific study was obtained through scholarly and official sources.

Newspaper material might present problems in terms of reliability and accuracy, especially if one ignores issues such as ownership and editorship of media outlets (Burnham, Gilland, Grant and Layton-Henry, 2004: 172). Having knowledge of such biases can help produce critical evaluation. Besides, it is through such material that one can ‘reasonably hope to give as comprehensive and balanced an account of events as it is possible to assemble from public sources’ (Rootes, 2007b: 16). This material can supplement interviews. It can actually provide information not resulting from interviews, particularly in a small society such as Malta, where, given that ‘people tend to know each other’ (Borg, 1996: 48), some are reluctant to speak on certain issues. Hence, it is not surprising that research by established sociologists in the field of environmental politics make use of such a mix of research methods. A prime example of authors deploying such research methods can be found in various papers focusing on ENGOs in the established ‘Environmental Politics’ academic journal (2010).

To sum up, it was assumed that multiple interpretations or readings may be carried out on matters such as policy (Yanow, 2000), especially because of the existence of a plurality of groups for which policy is relevant, including interest groups such as the protagonists of this study, namely Maltese ENGOs. One textual source might have been considered of more relevance than another, given its particular context in relation to the subject matter of this study. This method might not have been as scientifically rigorous as content
analysis; nevertheless it did involve careful systematic analysis of themes from a particular reading, namely the theoretical backdrop of this dissertation.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

This section will discuss issues relating to validity and reliability in relation to this study, over and above observations that have already been made in this regard.

With respect to reliability, one might criticise the research methods chosen as lacking in terms of ‘measurement procedure [which] yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out’ (Kirk and Miller, 1986: 19). This critique can be used against the research methods used in this study. As regards case studies, one might say that the collection of data was subjective, based on my theoretical background and research interest. Other researchers might have given different emphasis in their collection of data, and might have produced different interpretations or readings in their analysis.

The same can be said as regards interviews. One can relate the reliability of interviews to the “objectivity” or “truth” in the responses of the interviewees (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995: 9). On the other hand, the narratives of interviewees can be seen as discursive constructs within the context of power relations which might change over time, in turn possibly influencing the narratives of interviewees (Kohler Riessman, 1993: 65). Besides, as argued earlier in this chapter, such narratives might not even agree with the interpretations of researchers on the same interview. In this regard, it could be inferred that it is difficult to evaluate discourse analysis through the measurement of reliability,
since discourse analysis assumes that there are multiple readings of particular situations (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 80)

As regards validity, which has to do with the extent to which an answer is “correct” (Kirk and Miller, 1986: 19), similar arguments can be put forward, especially since it is being assumed that discourse is subject to different interpretations and readings. Yet, discourse analysis must be based on solid evidence and must come through as plausible and analytic in its evaluations (Kirk and Miller, 1986: 80), which, as shown in this chapter, was the case. The ‘ultimate tribunal of truth’ (Howarth, 2000: 142) of such research is ‘the community of critical discourse analysis and the wider community of social scientists’ (ibid). As regards validity of interviews, trustworthiness is a key factor when it comes to analysis of narratives of social actors (Riessman, 1993: 65). This has already been discussed previously, in relation to being an insider.

4.6 Conclusion

The methodology and research methods of this study were applied in the following chapters, thus analysing whether Maltese ENGOs have been empowered through Malta’s EU accession process. In this respect, elite interviewing was used in order to interpret the voices of the ENGOs and to categorize the ENGOs through ideology. Case studies on specific issues enabled the analysis of hegemonic formations in specific issues articulated by ENGOs.
5. Interviews with Maltese ENGOs on EU Accession and Empowerment

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the results of interviews carried out with ENGO activists, through which a comparative ideological categorization of ENGOs was produced, in relation to their perceptions of empowerment. This was substantiated through the application of theoretical concepts to specific case studies in subsequent chapters.

The methodological chapter introduced the particular research method used for such interviews, namely elite interviewing through discourse analysis. It also showed how the respective sample was selected and interviewed, and that 24 out of a possible 28 respondents replied, with only one (defunct) ENGO not being interviewed. For this purpose, this chapter is organised according to themes related to the main theories of this study. In each case, respondents’ replies are presented and discussed, and are subsequently engaged upon through the theoretical framework being used in the analytical summary at the end of each section. As explained in the methodology chapter, respondents are referred to according to ENGO ideology type and respondent number (for example: Conservationist1, Respondent2 refers to the second respondent from the first conservationist ENGO). A more in-depth analysis is then carried out in the last part of the chapter. In various instances, figures are presented to explain trends in respondents’ responses on the basis of the type of ENGO they represent (in terms of ideology).
It is pertinent to note that in various instances, respondents from the same ENGOs gave different replies. However, as shown below, clear trends could be observed amongst different ENGO types. In practice this means that even if at times respondents from the same respective ENGO did not necessarily agree on all responses, when one groups responses together by ENGO ideology or size, it could be seen that various similarities and differences exist within similar and amongst different ENGOs respectively. It is important to reiterate that ENGO ideology is being given prime consideration in the categorization of such organisations.

5.2 ENGOs: Ideology, structure and strategy

5.2.1 Introduction

ENGO respondents were asked various questions on the aims, structure and strategies of their respective ENGO. This enabled the construction of ENGO types according to ideology and size, through which analysis could be carried out.

5.3.2 Ideology

When ENGOs were asked about their aims, different respondents from respective ENGOs had similar replies, save for two instances. When interpreted and grouped, the replies were as follows, referring to number of ENGOs (Figure 1).
The largest numbers of ENGOs - 6 out of 13 – have conservationist aims. As explained previously, such aims emphasize consensual reforms within the existing socio-economic structure, focusing on the preservation of what is considered to be threatened by society. Characteristics such as protection of the natural environment were referred to in general, and particular aims such as providing education and managing sites were referred to in particular. As one respondent put it, the aim of the ENGO was the protection of the natural environment and heritage. Conservation was hereby seen as being related with education and advocacy through lobbying with the authorities for enforcement, introduction of new legislation (Conservationist1, Respondent1).

Respondents from Local ENGOs clearly defined the goals of their organisations in relation to a specific local development issues being opposed by them respectively. These were the development of a yacht marina and tourist village in the bay known as Hondoq ir-Rummien in Gozo; the development process of a waste separation plant in Marsaskala; and the various urban development projects being carried out in the Qui-si-sana and...
Tigne’ areas in Sliema. As explained earlier in this study, these organisations tend to emphasize ‘not in my backyard’ (NIMBY) concerns. On the other hand, respondents from ENGOs focusing on sustainable development focused on having holistic and integrated visions. Issues such as climate change (Sustainable Development1, Respondent1) were referred to, and the need to relate environmental protection with equity was emphasised (Sustainable Development1, Respondent2; Sustainable Development 2, Respondent1). Hence, as already discussed earlier, such ENGOs attempt to reconcile economic, social and environmental factors through the involvement of the State and civil society by means of cooperation at international, national and local levels.

Radical ENGOs are being defined as such, because, as already explained in the methodology chapter, their respective ideologies could not be strictly inserted within the eco-socialist, environmental justice, ecologist, deep ecologist or eco-feminist ideologies referred to in the theoretical chapter. In this regard, respondents from Radical1 referred to civil society activism, and in one case, to strengthen the voice of the left in Malta (Radical1, Respondent2). On the other hand, respondents from Radical2 emphasized factors such as being active against the oppression of human beings, the environment and animals, and have a vision of radical democracy (Radical2, Respondent1). Elements of anti-capitalism, intersection of economic, social and environmental concerns, and in the case of 1 ENGO, ecologism (in the form of animal rights) were found in such ENGOs.

Different respondents from respective ENGOs also had similar replies on whether their organisation was radical or moderate, save for two instances, where 2 respondents from
respective moderate ENGOs claimed that their organisation was ‘radical-moderate’ – these responses were coupled with ‘moderate’ responses. Indeed, some respondents defined their ENGO as being both moderate and radical, and this was the case for both respondents of a specific ENGO. In this case the ENGO was interpreted as being radical (also taking other factors into account, such as other responses of the respective activists).

To sum up, the vast majority of Maltese ENGOs are moderate, focusing on conservation, sustainable development or local issues. A minority of ENGOs are radical. Almost half of Maltese ENGOs are conservationist.

5.2.3 Structure

When asked about the age of their respective ENGOs, it transpired that the oldest ones were founded in the 1960s (Figure 2). In the case of some respondents, I had to double check their replies because of incomplete or incorrect information.

![Figure 2 Age of ENGOs, by Ideology](image)

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Michael Briguglio (2013): EU Accession and Civil Society Empowerment: The Case of Maltese ENGOs
The three ENGOs that were founded in the 1960s are all conservationist, and have a large size, as explained further below. Those founded following Malta’s 2004 EU accession are divided equally amongst conservationist or local-issue ENGOs.

As regards size of the respective organisations, it transpires that there is a balanced mix between large, small and medium-sized ENGOs. In one particular case, the ENGO has the composition of a federation of local councils and local NGOs, so it was categorised as such. Large ENGOs employ staff, in some cases around ten, and have a large number of members, in some cases exceeding 1,000 and in one case exceeding 3,000. Small-sized organisations on the other hand, rely on core activists on a voluntary basis and have much smaller membership numbers. Medium-sized organisations also rely on volunteers, though in one case, there is also a part-time employee.

Three out of four large ENGOs are conservationist and were founded in the 1960s, whilst the remaining one focuses on sustainable development. Both radical ENGOs are small, as are two out of three local ENGOs (the other being a federation). One conservationist ENGO is small, too. Medium sized ENGOs are conservationist (two cases) or sustainable development (one case). Therefore, whilst radical ENGOs are small, moderate ENGOs are mixed in terms of size. Large ENGOs tend to be conservationist.

When ENGOs were asked about the social background of their members, 17 respondents said that their members have different social backgrounds. Though there were disagreements between some respondents from the same respective ENGOs, no
respondent referred to members from a low socio-economic background. Besides, 6 out of 7 respondents who said that their members have average to high socio-economic backgrounds are from conservationist ENGOs. These are spread evenly amongst small, medium and large ENGOs of this type.

As regards sources of income, the most common replies were that ENGOs were self-financed or got income from the state or civil society. Some respondents gave more than one reply. For the purpose of this study, ‘self-financed’ refers to membership and donations from members; ‘state’ refers to funds from the Government and the EU, also including throughout management of sites and public areas such as nature reserves (such as those in Ghadira, Mellieha and is-Simar, Xemxija). ‘Civil society’ refers to funds from businesses, fund-raising, donations, NGOs and other institutions. ‘Commercial’ refers to sale of services and products, including educational services and organic products amongst others.

![Figure 3 Sources of ENGO income](image)

*Figure 3 Sources of ENGO income (Note: SF: Self-financed; S: State; CS: Civil Society; C: Commercial).*

As can be seen, radical and local issue ENGOs are more likely to be self-financed whilst conservationist ENGOs are more likely to obtain funds from civil society. Replies also
show that most small ENGOs are self-financed, whilst the majority of large ENGOs obtain funds from the State or civil society. State and civil society funds are more common amongst conservationist ENGOs and amongst large ENGOs (in both cases) and medium-sized ENGOs (in the case of funds from civil society). Such trends may be examples of institutionalisation of ENGOs through access of certain forms of funding. It would thus not be surprising that state and business actors prefer to “invest” in ENGOs which are ideologically closer to their respective aims. Funds for the management of nature reserves can be seen as a case in point.

An analysis of sources of state funding to ENGOs shows that whilst ENGOs with different aims (save for local issue ENGOs) have benefitted from EU funds, only conservationist ENGOs benefit from funding from the Government. As regards ENGO size, large ENGOs are the only ones to benefit from Government funding and from funding for management of sites and public areas.

ENGO ideology and size also influenced replies of respondents as regards decision-making structures. Whilst all respondents from radical and local issue ENGOs affirmed that their organisations have democratic structures, replies from respondents of respective sustainable development or conservationist ENGOs were mixed. The divide is more striking when one analyzes replies on the basis of ENGO size. All ENGOs have democratic structures, save for the large ones, which mix democratic structures with bureaucratic ones.
5.2.4 Strategy

There is broad consensus amongst ENGOs about the need for social change. Indeed, 21 out of 24 respondents replied in the affirmative. When asked to elaborate, examples given included the need for a change in mentality; giving more space for civil society; and having better regulations and enforcement. As one respondent put it, society ‘needs a change in mentality that the building industry is Malta’s saviour’ (Local1, Respondent1).

When ENGO respondents were asked about whether environmental protection is more important than economic growth, 16 replied that a sustainable balance between both is needed, and the remaining 8 emphasized environmental protection. Figure 4 shows how replies varied by ENGO type. Certain respondents from the same respective ENGOs had different replies.

![Figure 4 Environmental protection vs Economic Growth](image)

Radical, sustainable development and conservationist ENGOs tend to emphasize the need for a sustainable balance, whereas local issues ENGO tend to emphasize environmental protection. Medium sized ENGOs are entirely in favour of a sustainable balance. When respondents were asked about what strategies they envisage to tackle environmental
problems, political factors were given priority, followed by planning and education/communication. Examples of political factors include civil society participation, working closer with the State and lobbying. Some respondents gave more than one reply, and various respondents from same respective ENGOs did not give identical replies. Figure 5 explains further.

![Figure 5: Strategies to tackle environmental problems](image)

**Figure 5 Strategies to tackle environmental problems**

*Note: PF – political factors; P - planning; R – realism; EC – education/communication; E - enforcement; I - Implementation of EU policy.*

Whereas political factors and planning are given importance by ENGOs of all ideologies, conservationist ENGOs give top priority to education and communication. This reply, together with political factors, is also prioritised by large ENGOs. Small ENGOs emphasize planning, followed by political factors. Medium-sized ENGOs emphasize political factors, followed by implementation of EU policy.

ENGOs were also asked about methods used to mobilise public opinion. The most popular method – by far - referred to by respondents was the media. Some respondents
gave more than one reply, and various respondents from same respective ENGOs did not give identical replies. Figure 6 refers.

![Methods used by ENGOs to mobilise public opinion](image)

**Figure 6 Methods used by ENGOs to mobilise public opinion**
*(Note: M - media; C - civil society participation; A - actions; P - public awareness; R - rallies; V - various)*

One can observe that even though the media is the most popular method overall, radical ENGOs couple this with various methods. Sustainable developmental ENGOs prefer raising public awareness. The latter is also emphasized by large ENGOs, being almost as popular as the media.

### 5.2.5 Analysis – ENGOs: ideology, structure, strategy

It can be observed that there are differences in aims, structures and strategies of ENGOs in Malta. The oldest and largest ENGOs tend to be conservationist, though there are other ENGOs with this ideology of different sizes and different ages. People from average to high social backgrounds are more likely to be in conservationist ENGOs, though most ENGOs have members from all social backgrounds and no ENGO has members
exclusively from low social backgrounds. This mix of members tallies with research by Maria Brown and myself on the ENGOs in Malta, where it was stated that

‘it has to be confirmed through further research whether ENGOs are primarily composed of members from the New Middle Class’ (Briguglio and Brown, 2009: 59).

There is broad consensus amongst ENGOs on the need for social change. In this regard, in line with the theoretical background of this study, ENGOs can be seen as representing a plurality of political and social demands and different ideologies. Through empty signifiers, they articulate their demands, which, in turn can result in durable nodal points and hegemonic formations (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000).

6 out of 13 ENGOs are conservationist. These include Nature Trust Malta, Birdlife Malta, Din l-Art Helwa, Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar, Ramblers’ Association Malta and the Biological Conservation Research Foundation. 3 are large in size, 2 are medium and 1 is small. Large ones have structures which are at once democratic and bureaucratic. Being conservationist and large is also more likely to generate access to funds from the State and civil society. In turn, this can point towards the institutionalisation of such ENGOs (Van der Heijden, 1999; Carter, 2001; Rootes, 1999, 2007a,b,c), which in itself can be seen as an example of empowerment through cooperation with institutions such as those pertaining to the State through discursive proximity within hegemonic formations.

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29 This research will be referred to in more detail in the subsequent chapter which used secondary data to analyse the ideologies and actions of ENGOs in Malta within the context of EU accession.
Conservationists emphasize the need to have a sustainable balance of environmental protection and economic growth, which is also common amongst various other ENGOs. In itself, this provides ample discursive opportunities to create chains of equivalence for political alliances, not only among ENGOs, but also with State and EU institutions, given the nodal points of economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability and protection. In this sense, antagonism takes place against discourses which clash with environmentalist demands. As regards methods used for the tackling of environmental problems, conservationists tend to emphasize factors such as political ones, education and communication. They also tend to mobilise public opinion especially through the media.

Sustainable developmental ENGOs (2 out of 13) comprise Friends of the Earth Malta and the Gaia Foundation. They obtain income from various sources, and have structures which are either democratic, or which are democratic and bureaucratic. This depends on the size of the organisation. Indeed one such ENGO is medium-sized, and one is large. It is difficult to observe a clear trend regarding institutionalisation or otherwise of such ENGOs, for example to see whether they are co-opted into State structures. They tend to be moderate in ideology, and like conservationist and radical ENGOs, they emphasize the need for a sustainable balance between environmental protection and economic growth, thus once again pointing for fertile ground for alliances through chains of equivalence. Sustainable developmental ENGOs tend to emphasize political factors to tackle environmental problems. Raising public awareness is their preferred method to mobilise public opinion.
Local ENGOs (3 out of 13) include the Movement for the Protection of Hondoq, the Quis-sana and Tigne' Residents’ Association and the Committee Against the Proposed Recycling Plant. These ENGOs have moderate ideologies, are entirely self-financed and have democratic structures. Most local ENGOs are small in size, with the exception of one, which is a federation. Such ENGOs are not institutionalised. For such ENGOs, usage of the media is the most popular method to mobilise public opinion, and they tend to emphasize planning and political factors to tackle environmental problems. They tend to give priority to environmental protection over economic growth – indeed this is the only group of ENGOs which puts environmental protection ahead of economic growth. This can complicate their claims to fill in empty signifiers and form chains of equivalence, as their primacy of environmental concerns might come at the expense of demands which attempt to reconcile this with economic concerns in a sustainable manner.

As explained in chapter 3, the radical minority of ENGOs (2 out of 13) – Moviment Graffitti and Zminijietna Voice of the Left cannot be neatly situated in a particular radical environmental ideology- hence they are broadly being referred to as ‘radical’. These ENGOs obtain income either entirely through self-financing or through self-financing followed by other sources respectively, depending on the ENGO. They are both small organisations, they both have democratic structures and they are not institutionalised. They both believe in a sustainable balance between environmental protection and economic growth, which, as stated above, can point towards the creation of chains of equivalence and political alliances. Yet, at the same time, the radicalism of such ENGOs
might result in opposition to discourse which signifies economic and environmental demands through neo-liberal ideology. Radical ENGOs consider political factors and planning to be the most important factors to tackle environmental problems, whilst their preferred methods to mobilise public opinion include making use of the media, among others.

All ENGO types emphasize the importance of political factors to tackle environmental problems. Yet, from what is observed later on, not all ENGOs are ready to make clear political affiliations with political parties, hence showing that the creation of political alliances, chains of equivalence and possible hegemonic formations as theorised by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) is not as straightforward as implied at face-value, even if diverse ENGOs may share common concerns (Jessup, 2010). An important commonality between ENGOs is the importance they give to the media for their activism, in line with sociological theorization in this regard (Castells, 2012; Goodwin and Jasper, 2003).

5.3 Institutionalisation of ENGOs

5.3.1 Introduction

The next batch of questions verified whether Maltese ENGOs have been institutionalised. In the first instance, respondents were asked about resources obtained by their respective organisations. This was followed by a direct question on whether ENGOs have become institutionalised.
5.3.2 Resources from the Maltese State, the EU and business

When asked if their ENGO obtains resources from the Maltese state, 9 respondents replied in the affirmative, and 11 replied negatively. 3 said that they did so, but no longer do, and 1 had no reply. Figure 7 refers.

Figure 7 Does your ENGO receive resources from the Maltese State?

It is evident that conservationist and sustainable developmental ENGO are more likely to obtain state resources, unlike local issue and radical ones. Large ENGOs are the most likely to obtain state resources. State resources include not only funding, but also resources related to management of sites and projects. This could be due to various reasons related in institutionalisation. For example, certain sources of State funding are related to EU funding, which in turn have strict administrative criteria which are more likely to be met by large ENGOs. It is also more likely that large ENGOs are entrusted to manage projects such as nature reserves. Besides, when one keeps in mind that almost all large ENGOs are conservationist, save for one which focuses on sustainable development, one can also give ideological reasons for the above. Indeed, one would imagine it less likely to have radical ENGOs benefitting from state funds, if these
ENGOs are after radical social transformations, considering the State as a main adversary.

A similar trend was observed for funds from the EU, even though one particular radical ENGO is in receipt of such funds. Figure 8 refers.

![Bar chart showing ENGOs' resources from EU by ideology](chart.png)

**Figure 8 Does your ENGO receive resources from the EU?**

A similar trend (amongst ENGOs on the basis of ideology) also emerges when respondents were asked if resources are obtained from businesses. Once again, this is hardly surprising, especially when, for example, radical ENGOs are most likely to be anti-business, unlike conservationist and sustainable development ones, which at times for partnerships with businesses on environmental projects. As regards local ENGOs, they do not receive resources from business, save for some sponsors of adverts, according to one respondent. Figure 9 refers.
When it comes to ENGO size, small ENGOs are unlikely to receive such funds. Hence, in this case, the majority of respondents – 13 - replied positively, one stated that the ENGO is working for such funds, and 10 replied negatively. In one case, respondents from the same respective ENGOs did not give identical replies, as one respondent replied positively whilst another said that her ENGO is working for such funds.

### 5.3.3 Have ENGOs become institutionalised?

In response to the direct question whether ENGOs have become institutionalised, the most common reply was negative (10 respondents). One respondent said that everything depends on the Government, which doesn’t work hand in hand with ENGOs as their lobbying is seen as a threat (Sustainable Development1, Respondent 1). However, a majority of respondents agreed that institutionalisation is affecting ENGOs, albeit in different ways. As explained below, examples include legitimisation processes through cooperation between ENGOs and the State; receipt of funds from the State, EU and business concerns; authorisation to manage public land; and co-optation of ENGO members to State structures. Indeed, 6 respondents agreed that ENGOs are institutionalised, 7 said that some are institutionalised whilst others are not, and 1 said...
that ENGOs are partially institutionalised. As one respondent put it, there is a whole structure which denies ENGOs right to speak if they do not participate in official processes - ‘but if you participate, you would be legitimising the whole process’ (Radical2, Respondent1). As another respondent put it,

‘Yes, there are some that have, and in fact it’s a provision in our statute that we are not to take on Government property as in restoration projects in order to diminish the risk of jeopardising our independence’ (Conservationist3, Respondent2).

Yet another respondent added that the State also tries to institutionalise individuals from ENGOs (Local3, Respondent1). Figure 10 elaborates, showing that the majority of respondents from conservationist and large ENGOs do not agree that ENGOs have become institutionalised. All respondents from radical ENGOs agree that institutionalisation characterizes at least some ENGOs, and at least partially. Mixed replies exist for all other categories.

Figure 10 Are ENGOs institutionalised?

5.3.4 Analysis – Institutionalisation of ENGOs

A hegemonic formation based on environmentalist claims may be characterised by institutionalisation of ENGOs. Symbiotic relationships between ENGOs and the State take place, where the latter provides resources such as funds and access to information to the former, and in turn the latter legitimizes State structures by participating in them and
through ideological cohesion, which, in turn, may influence State decision-making. Material factors such as receipt of resources from State formations (whether National or European) or from businesses, can help institutionalize such organisations, possibly resulting in co-optation (Edwards, 2009: 116; Rootes, 2007a) and a state of dependence (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 72). When asked on feedback in this regard, more respondents from Maltese ENGOs agreed that at least some ENGOs have become institutionalised, at least partially, than respondents who disagreed. Ideology and size of ENGO tend to be influential in this regard. It is interesting to observe that moderate ENGOs – which are most likely to be institutionalised (especially conservationists) – are less likely to perceive institutionalisation than radical ENGOs, which, in turn, are less likely to be institutionalised. Hence, the term ‘institutionalisation’ is itself contested, depending on the social actor – and his respective interests and social position – concerned. What for one ENGO may be empowerment through participation in State structures with the intention of improving the environmental situation may be articulated as a sell-out and co-optation by others who believe that the State is a main adversary in the struggle for a better environment. Yet, as shall be seen, hegemonic formations require the construction of durable nodal points and from chains of equivalence comprising both ENGOs and State structures. Discursive proximity is essential in this regard.

If one categorizes responses of ENGOs, one notices that both conservationist and large ENGOs are amongst the most likely to obtain resources from the Maltese state, from the EU and from businesses. They are also the most likely to disagree that ENGOs have become institutionalised, though there are almost as many conservationist respondents
who agree that at least some ENGOs have become institutionalised. Besides, some conservationist ENGOs – albeit minorities in all respective cases – do not receive funds referred to above.

Sustainable developmental ENGOs are likely to receive funds from the sources referred to above, and have mixed opinions on whether ENGOs have become institutionalised. Local ENGOs do not receive funds from the Maltese state, the EU or from business (save for one exception in the case of the latter, namely the federation). They have mixed opinions on whether ENGOs have become institutionalised. Radical ENGOs are most likely to agree that ENGOs have become institutionalised - indeed no radical ENGO disagrees with this question. Such ENGOs do not receive resources from the State or from business at present, though 1 radical ENGO receives resources from the EU.

Hence, a ‘creative tension’ between moderate and radical ENGOs is in place (Carter, 2001: 147). In itself, this shows that institutionalisation is not a one-way process, and that environmental issues are in themselves characterised by antagonism and articulatory practices in the construction of hegemonic formations.

5.4 State power and the environment

5.4.1 Introduction

The next area upon which ENGOs were asked dealt with State power and the environment. In this regard, respondents were respectively asked about their ENGOs’ relationship with the Maltese State, EU institutions, other ENGOs and other civil society
organisations. Subsequently, they were asked to earmark the strongest influences on environmental policy in Malta.

5.4.2 ENGOs’ relationship with State institutions

When asked about their relationship with State institutions, 9 respondents said that this was positive and 8 said it was mixed. Only 3 respondents said it was negative, and 4 said it was distant.

On the positive side, a representative from a conservationist ENGO referred to constant interaction with MEPA as well as interaction with Ministries and Government departments. The respondent also highlighted the creation of MEPA’s nature group which is made up of ENGOs (Conservationist1, Respondent1). Some respondents highlighted mixed relationships, depending on which State agency is referred to. As one respondent put it,

‘We have a good relationship with MEUSAC [Malta-EU Steering and Action Committee] and MEPA, where we participate. But the same cannot be said from Ministries, which do not invite us. We get to know that we were not invited through others’ (Radical1, Respondent1).

On the negative side, a respondent from a local ENGO emphasized his organisation’s antagonist relation with MEPA, adding that Transport Malta (Malta’s transport authority) ignores them completely and that ‘parliamentarians reply close to elections, otherwise they ignore us’ (Local1, Respondent1).

No radical respondent reported a positive relationship with State institutions, though none reported a negative one. On the other hand, 2 out of 5 respondents from local ENGOs
reported a negative relationship. Conservationist ENGOs tend to be the most positive, with 6 respondents out of 11 reporting a positive relationship and 4 reporting a mixed one. Large ENGOs are also the most positive.

5.4.3 ENGOs’ relationship with other ENGOs

The vast majority of respondents – 16 - claimed that their ENGO has a positive relationship with other ENGOs. Only 3 respondents – from radical ENGOs - said that they have a negative relationship (the other radical respondent claiming a ‘mixed’ relationship), whilst 4 claimed they have a mixed relationship and 1 claimed a distant relationship. There is a difference between radical and moderate ENGOs, which is also reflected in ENGOs when analysed in terms of size – given that both radical ENGOs are small. One respondent claimed that the age of pique amongst ENGOs is over, and asserted his ENGO attempts to increase co-operation amongst NGOs, though moderate ENGOs tend to work closer together (Conservationist4, Respondent2). On the other hand, other respondents claimed

‘In these recent years, our relationship with the ENGOs who consider themselves as environmentalist was not so good. This was not something that we decided upon. They decided on this’ (Radical2, Respondent2).

‘We don’t work with those who call themselves environmentalists’ (Radical1, Respondent1).

In this case, an ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality (Saunders, 2008) between different ENGOs was evident.
5.4.4 ENGOs’ relationship with political parties

The most common response given by respondents when asked about their ENGOs’ relationship with political parties was that their ENGO was not affiliated. Indeed, 11 respondents replied accordingly – 6 of whom coming from conservationist ENGOs, 4 from sustainable development ones, and one from a local ENGO. In terms of size, 6 respondents from large ENGOs, 4 respondents from medium-sized ENGOs and 1 respondent from a small ENGO replied accordingly. However, it also transpired that 8 respondents claimed a positive relationship with Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party (AD) (4 radical, 3 local and 1 conservationist respondent respectively, 7 coming from small ENGOs and one from a large ENGO), whilst the Labour Party (PL) had 7 positive replies (1 radical, 3 conservationist and 3 local respondents, respectively, 4 coming from small ENGOs, 1 from a medium one and 2 from large ones) and 4 moderate replies. Only 3 respondents had a positive reply for the Nationalist Party (PN) (1 conservationist and 2 local respondents respectively, 2 of whom coming from small ENGOs and 1 from a large one), with 6 stating that there is no relationship with the party.

Radical ENGOs tend to have a good relationship with AD, a moderate relationship with PL, and no relationship with PN. Sustainable developmental ENGOs are not affiliated with any party, and the same holds for most conservationist ENGOs, though 3 respondents claim a positive relationship with Labour. Local issue ENGOs tend to have good relationships with the 3 parties, though in 2 cases there is no relationship with the PN. When it comes to ENGO size, the small ENGOs tended to claim to have best relationships with AD, followed by Labour. This could mean that small ENGOs find
more support from opposition parties (which holds for both PL and AD) as well as with parties with Green ideology. Given that small ENGOs are less likely to be institutionalised, they might have less to lose through a relationship with small, Green or opposition parties. Medium and large ENGOs tend to be non-affiliated. This might by a symptom of institutionalisation, where such ENGOs strive to be as politically “neutral” as possible in order to maintain an independent, objective and legitimate status. Yet, as argued in this study, such a position – characterised by the lack of discourse on political adversaries - might ultimately be a far cry from the more antagonistic positions which are after radical social change. In short, institutionalisation may result in empowerment, but not in deep social transformations.

5.4.5 ENGOs’ relationship with non-Environmental NGOs and other civil society organisations

The vast majority of respondents (16) claimed that their ENGO has a positive relationship with non-Environmental NGOs and other civil society organisations. 3 others claimed a positive but infrequent relationship, 2 claimed a distant relationship, and 3 claimed no relationship.

The Radical, sustainable development and conservationist ENGOs respectively claimed to have the best relationships with non-Environmental NGOs and other civil society organisations, with the radical ENGOs being clearest in this respect, as all respondents replied positively. The latter also applies for small and large ENGOs, and is also the case with the Federation. Local issue ENGOs are mixed between those who claim a positive relationship and those who claim no relationship.
5.4.6 The strongest influences on environmental policy in Malta

In the last question with regard to State power and the environment, respondents were asked to identify the strongest influences on environmental policy in Malta. Respondents gave a wide range of replies, and sometimes highlighted more than one factor. The factor achieving most replies was ‘economic interests’, with 8 replies.

As one respondent put it, the building industry and the concern for employment are most influential.

‘Attempts are made to approve certain projects to generate more employment. Sometimes the employment created is artificial. Contractors keep going on with big projects which are not sold. It’s better to have small contractors on small projects, as the income is shared more equally. Sometimes big contractors don’t pay all taxes. I think it is [here he refers to a company] that did not pay all its stamp duty. What are we getting from fish farms? I think they are getting some tax exemptions. Is it because they employ some fishermen?’ (Conservationist4, Respondent1).

The respondent was referring to the fact that even though the construction industry does not command a substantial part of Malta’s gross domestic product (as elaborated upon in chapter 5), it has particular presence in Maltese society given that construction projects occupy a permanent place in the Maltese landscape. This is the case even though according to Malta’s last census, 53,136, or around one-fourth of Maltese properties are vacant (NSO, 2007: 172). Besides, given the lack of party-financing regulations in Malta, it is evident that there is a clear financial link between the construction industry (and its subsidiaries in areas such as tourism and residential homes) and major political parties. Along these lines, as another respondent said

‘The strongest influence is that there is a full relationship between those who win public tenders and those who finance political parties. There is no transparency on
financing of political parties. For example [refers to a businessman] wins tenders for homes for the elderly, builds the premises of a political party, and employs people of a particular political party. How can he be stopped?’ (Radical1, Respondent2).

Some other respondents were more optimistic, indeed 3 referred to NGOs as being influential, whilst 4 referred to the influence of civil society. Yet another 4 referred to the EU, whilst 8 gave other replies. As one of the more optimistic respondents put it,

‘In a democratic country, people power [is influential]. If we harness the people to recognise how important the environment is, and you are not shackled with political loyalties, and you’ll be transparent or consistent, you’ll convince them’ (Conservationist5, Respondent1).

Figure 11 elaborates further. Indeed, it shows that replies are mixed amongst respondents from different ENGOs, though it can be observed that economic interests are given most importance by respondents from ENGOs that are radical, conservationist, small and large. Conservationist ENGOs also give quite a lot of importance to the influence of civil society and the EU, whilst sustainable developmental ENGOs tend to give importance to the influence of NGOs. Large ENGOs also emphasize the influence of the EU. The influence of the EU on environmental policy in Malta shall be elaborated in subsequent sections of this chapter.
5.4.7 Analysis – State power and the environment

Most respondents report a positive or mixed relationship with State institutions. The vast majority also claimed a positive relationship with other ENGOs as well as with non-Environmental NGOs and other civil society organisations. As regards relationship with political parties, the most common reply amongst respondents was that their ENGO was not affiliated, though a good number of respondents claimed that they have a positive relationship with AD, closely followed by PL – probably because the first is a Green party whilst the second was Malta’s main opposition party during the time of this research. Such replies indicate the potential of creating chains of equivalence against adversaries on environmental issues.

When respondents were asked on the strongest influences on environmental policy in Malta, the most common reply was that of economic interests. Indeed, the symbiotic relationship between the State and the economy (Briguglio, M, 1998), in which ruling class interests and demands have an influential role – is perceived to exist by Maltese ENGOs. Hence, though various factors influence State power on environmental matters, economic interests are perceived as having a very influential role, even though this is not necessarily permanent. Nodal points that bypass economic issues therefore represent a tough nut to crack for ENGOs in various hegemonic struggles. This could either provide a more formidable challenge to form chains of equivalence against adversaries with economic interests, or, the construction of nodal points that comprise both economic and
environmentalist discourse, which, in turn, can be characterised by the institutionalisation of ENGOs.

In this respect, Conservationist ENGOs and large ENGOs are the most likely to have positive relationships with the Maltese state, though there are almost as many who claimed a mixed relationship. The vast majority of both conservationist and large ENGOs claimed a positive relationship with other ENGOs as well as with non-Environmental NGOs and other civil society organisations. In the latter case, small ENGOs claimed the same. The above indicates institutionalisation and its respective enabling of forming broad coalitions to influence State power. On the other hand, however, as regards relationship with political parties, conservationists tend to claim non-affiliation. The same holds for large ENGOs. Hence, whilst such ENGOs are close to the State, they do not want to be seen supporting particular political parties. Whilst implying a certain degree of strategic independence, this may also imply a politics without adversaries, which, in turn, given the lack of antagonistic relations with powerful interests, can imply institutionalisation. Conservationists also claim that economic interests are most likely to influence environmental policy making in Malta, closely followed by NGOs, people power (these two factors are grouped as ‘civil society’) and other factors.

Sustainable developmental ENGOs have mixed relationships with the Maltese state and with non-Environmental NGOs and other civil society organisations. Respondents from the medium-sized sustainable developmental ENGO claimed a distant relationship with the State and no or at least an infrequent relationship with the NGOs in question
respectively. Those from the large sustainable developmental ENGO claimed a mixed or positive relationship with the State and a positive relationship with the non-Environmental NGOs and civil society organisations. On the other hand both ENGOs with the sustainable development ideology claimed a positive relationship with other ENGOs and claimed not to be affiliated with any political party. Respondents also had mixed replies on the strongest influence on environmental policy in Malta, though the most popular was that related to the influence of NGOs.

The Local ENGOs have an ambivalent relationship with the Maltese state – as witnessed in the mixed replies of their respective respondents - and a positive relationship with other ENGOs. They also have a positive or no relationship with other non-environmental NGOs or civil society organisations. These ENGOs tend to have a positive relationship with AD and the PL, closely followed by the PN, though as regards the latter, there are just as many who claim no relationship with the party. Local ENGOs gave varied replies to the strongest influences on environmental policy in Malta.

As regards radical ENGOs, they claimed a mixed or distant relationship with the Maltese state, depending on the NGO. They tended to claim a negative relationship with other ENGOs, and they claimed a positive relationship with non-Environmental NGOs and other civil society organisations. No radical ENGO claimed that it has no relationship with any political party, and such ENGOs tend to have best relationships with AD and no relationships with PN. Radical ENGOs claimed that economic interests or other factors exert most influence on environmental policy-making in Malta.
It is interesting to note that conservationists and sustainable developmental ENGOs, which do not claim affiliation with political parties, are those which have most positive perceptions on the empowerment of ENGOs, as shown below. The opposite holds for local and radical ENGOs – which, for example claimed the strongest affiliation with Malta’s Green Party, Alternattiva Demokratika. Does this mean that to be empowered, the alliances formed by ENGOs must exclude political parties, particularly AD, in order to construct hegemonic formations? This would imply that ENGOs use social and cultural capital in a creative way to form the most effective alliances according to the context in which they are operating (Doyle and Doherty, 2006: 884). Or does it mean that ENGOs that prefer being politically non-affiliated have become institutionalised through processes such as co-optation, legitimation and ideological consent with State structures, which in turn, does not promise radical change (O’Connor, 1998: 270)? In this case, empty signifiers may be characterised by discourse within moderate ideology.

5.5 EU accession and State power

5.5.1 Introduction

Subsequent to the previous section which dealt with State power and the environment, ENGOs were asked about the influence of EU accession on State power.

5.5.2 Influence of EU accession on the Maltese State

All respondents, save for one exception who was not asked the question by mistake, agreed that EU accession has influenced the Maltese state. Hence all ENGOs agree that
the Maltese state has been affected by EU accession, though some respondents were more pessimistic or cautious than others. As some respondents respectively put it,

‘Yes a lot. Neo-liberal policy has become a dogma in EU institutions, many of which have this way of thinking, and this is a threat for the left. The EU has provided fertile ground for neo-liberal direction to the economy. But on other issues such as civil society and environment, the Maltese government is uncomfortable and struggling, as it still has colonial mentality’ (Radical1, Respondent1).

‘In a way yes, it has. In the environment and in other matters, [political] space has been created. Apart from the national space there is the EU, and the State has to be careful as it is in the EU. But the EU doesn’t do miracles and the State can always find loopholes’ (Radical2, Respondent2).

‘If it has, it’s very much on a superficial level. So yes, now we have a parliamentary secretary responsible for civil society, consultation and so forth. Well meaning, yes…… …. They’ve changed only when they really reached the edge of the cliff’ (Sustainable Development1, Respondent2).

‘Yes, it has. What’s obviously very important is the carrot and stick policy with the EU. It gives you finances to make improvements. It forces you to make improvements through its directives and regulations and then penalizes you if you don’t do them. The carrot and stick is extremely good’ (Sustainable Development2, Respondent1).

‘EU accession has forced the Maltese State to come in line on certain issues which it would not have done otherwise’ (Conservationist3, Respondent2)

‘Yes, there are funds and penalties. Government does its own thing, let alone if these are not there!’ (Local3, Respondent1).

### 5.5.3 Analysis – EU accession and State power

Whilst all ENGO respondents agreed that EU accession influenced the Maltese State, some cited resistance or lack of implementation of EU policy. Others emphasised the way how the EU overpowers the Maltese state, especially through carrot and stick polices. Thus, in various instances the EU is characterised by a process of Europeanization, which, having a dislocatory effect, can create discursive opportunities through floating signifiers (Torfing, 2005: 16). In turn this is characterised by the articulation of demands
through hegemonic struggles with differentiated and uncertain outcomes, including opt-outs and non-compliance by the national state. Thus the EU is not a super-state which imposes its will on member nation states, but rather, the condensation of forces in struggle (Poulantzas, 2000: 151), where, Europeanization nevertheless plays an important role (Jessop, 2004, 2008; Delanty and Rumford 2005). Commonalities and differences are thus part and parcel of the European social complex (Roche, 2010).

5.6 Europeanization of Environmental Politics

5.6.1 Introduction

ENGOs were subsequently asked questions to verify whether environmental politics have become Europeanized in the Maltese context. Respondents were asked to explain on what levels their respective organisations are active, and whether EU accession influenced their lobbying strategies and the way they deal with various institutions and organisations. Subsequently, respondents were asked whether they think that EU environmental policy has become Europeanized, with specific reference to the Maltese situation.

5.6.2 Levels of activism of ENGOs

Maltese ENGOs are active at local, national and European levels, and to a lesser extent, at a global level. It also pertinent to note that some respondents may have mixed ‘local’ and ‘national’ levels, though the replies given seem to indicate clear trends amongst different types of ENGOs.
It transpires that radical and sustainable developmental ENGOs tend to be active at all levels – as is the case with large ENGOs. Conservationist ENGOs are mostly active at local, national and European levels, as is the case with small and medium ENGOs, whilst local ENGOs are mostly active at local and European levels and are not active at all at the global level.

5.6.3 Influence of EU accession of ENGOs’ relationships with institutions and organisations

ENGO respondents were asked whether EU accession influenced the way they deal with the Maltese State, EU institutions, other ENGOs and other civil society organisations. It is interesting to note that respondents from the same respective ENGOs did not give identical replies, save for one case. The most popular reply was that the EU has been influential in terms of legislation and structures (8 respondents). As one respondent put it,

‘Accession has armed the ENGO with clear modes of behaviour expected of an authority set up to comply with legal notices which transpose the directives’ (Conservationist3, Respondent1).

The second most common replies were those stating that the EU has provided further resort for lobbying, and that the EU did not really influencing one’s ENGO (6 respondents in both cases). Some respondents gave more than one reply. In the words of two respective respondents,

‘Even when we had coalitions, we used to say that if Government does certain things then we’ll resort to the EU. You always have this tool, even strategically’ (Radical2, Respondent2).
‘Not really. Maybe some more opportunities for funding, but still limited compared to some giant competitors, which always seem to win such funding. There is still a lack of effective assistance coming from the government in association with the use of funds from the EU for major projects’ (Conservationist6, Respondent1).

It is confirmed that replies were varied amongst different respondents. It can also be seen that the influence of the EU on legislation and structures was given importance mostly by conservationist and large ENGOs. Local issue and small ENGOs tend to state they are most likely not to be effected by EU accession.

5.6.4 Influence of EU legislation on ENGOs’ lobbying strategies

The vast respondents of ENGOs believe that their lobbying strategies are influenced by EU legislation. Indeed 16 respondents replied in the affirmative, whilst 6 replied negatively. When one analyses replies according to ENGO ideology and size, further conclusions can be made. Figure 12 refers.

![Figure 12 Influence of EU legislation on ENGOs' lobbying strategies](image)

It can be observed that respondents from all ENGOs except radical ones tended to agree that EU legislation has influenced their lobbying strategies. Radical respondents have mixed tendencies in this regard. Mixed responses can also be observed when one refers to
small and medium-sized ENGOs, unlike other ENGOs – for example all respondents from the large ENGOs agreed that EU legislation has been influential.

5.6.5 Europeanization of environmental policy

Almost all ENGOs agreed that environmental policy has been Europeanized, albeit giving different interpretations. Indeed, 12 respondents replied in the affirmative when asked. Another 9 agreed but added that national factors are also important. In turn some respondents were positive whilst others were negative about this. Only one respondent disagreed.

Whilst some respondents spoke of the spread of environmental policy in a standardised way across Europe (such as Conservationist2, Respondent2 and Sustainable Development1, Respondent 2), the latter added that this approach can sometimes be inflexible to national needs. An example in this regard is when, as an EU member state, Malta had to allow plastic bottles to be used for soft drinks, which in turn meant that Malta’s returnable-glass bottling system practically ended for most drinks (Aquilina, 2009).

Others, however, argued that the nation-state still plays an important role. For example, Conservationist2, Respondent1 said that the whole idea of the EU is not peace, cultural or environmental - it was a project designed to ensure that a specific economic model ensures its growth without borders. ‘The whole thing is based on neo-liberal policies, which creates most of the problems we have’ (Conservationist2, Respondent1). However, he added that because of the cultural and historical background of Europe, the
communities within it are strong and they can influence the policies of Europe. Thus, though the EU has strong environmental legislation, ‘I think the question is: Is the resistance to the policies growing or weakening?’ (ibid.). This respondent added that in Malta and the Eastern bloc there are major problems as various member-states are resisting regulations. Thus civil society has an important role to play, making sure that the European Commission takes action. In the case of the environment, ENGOs therefore have an important role in ensuring that member-states comply with EU policies aimed at upgrading the environmental situation. Sustainable development and medium-sized ENGOs are most likely to agree that Europeanization has taken place in a standardized manner. Other ENGOs tend to have mixed replies.

5.6.6 Comparing Malta with other EU countries on environmental policy

ENGO respondents were subsequently asked to compare Malta with other EU countries on environmental policy. 14 respondents said that Malta is environmentally backward. Whilst all types of ENGOs tended to agree that Malta is environmentally backward, radical ENGOs are more mixed in their attitudes.

5.6.7 Has the Maltese environment benefitted from Malta’s EU accession?

Most ENGOs agreed that Malta’s environment has benefitted from Malta’s EU accession. Indeed, no less that 18 respondents replied positively. As was the case with the question on comparing Malta with other EU member states, radical respondents gave mixed replies. This time around this was also the case with respondents from local issue ENGOs. This was in turn reflected in responses according to ENGO size, where small
ENGOs gave mixed replies, unlike medium sized and large ones (save for one exception). Figure 13 refers.

![Figure 13 Has the Maltese environment benefitted from Malta's EU accession?](image)

In the words of one respondent,

‘I think so. The ban on Spring hunting has already been fruitful. It will take a long time, 5 to 10 years, if illegal hunting is controlled. With regard to the designation of protected areas, we identified 11, and after lobbying, thanks to the Commission, they have been designated special protection areas. The next step is the management. So there is a trend towards nature conservation and protection. We will feel that more in the future. But because the situation in Malta is so terrible, these achievements are just so small and insignificant, and will not make such a big impact’ (Conservationist2, Respondent1).

Amongst those who disagreed, one respondent referred to consumption and development:

‘..I don’t think that the Maltese environment has benefitted. For example, the ODZ [Outside Development Zone] issue, which in a way was still approved; the introduction of plastic bottles – this was classic as Malta had a unique law on non-alcoholic beverages. The EU considered this as impeding trade, and said that it should be removed. Then Malta introduced waste separation, when we all know that large volumes of waste are required for this to be successful’ (Radical2, Respondent1).
5.6.8 Analysis – Europeanization of Environmental Politics

Most Maltese ENGOs tend to believe that environmental politics is becoming Europeanized. This can be seen through the activism of ENGOs. This is taking place at various levels, including the European, especially when the EU is seen as being more likely to meet environmental demands. Europeanization can also be seen when it comes to the impact of the EU on environmental policy and environmental improvements in Malta. As regards the latter, it is interesting to note that the ENGOs tend to see Malta’s environment as being backward when compared to that of other EU member states, in what appears to be a confirmation of the Mediterranean syndrome (Carter, 2001: 289), though, as explained earlier, there are differences even amongst Southern European member states.

Conservationist ENGOs tend to be active at local, national and European levels, though some are also active on a global level. The greatest impact that EU accession has had on conservationists’ relationships with institutions and organisations is that it has influenced legislation and structures – something which is also highlighted by large ENGOs. The conservationists – once again, similar to the large ENGOs – believe that EU legislation has influenced their lobbying strategies – thus once again the influence of the EU can be observed. Yet, they believe that Malta is environmentally backward when it comes to policy and when compared to other EU member states, even though Malta’s environment has benefitted through EU accession. When it comes to Europeanization of EU environmental policy, both the conservationists and the large ENGOs are equally divided in the belief that Europeanization is taking place or that it is taking place albeit also being
influenced by national factors, such as the way the Maltese state acts to avoid or water-down implementation of certain EU policies.

Sustainable developmental ENGOs are active at local, national, European and global levels, and EU accession has had mixed impacts on their relationships with institutions such as those comprising the State, and organisations such as NGOs. Their lobbying has tended to be influenced by EU legislation. They tended to agree that environmental policy is Europeanized and that Malta’s environmental policy is backward – as is the case with the medium-sized ENGOs. Like all the medium-sized ENGOs, the sustainable developmental ENGOs agreed that Malta’s environment has benefitted through EU accession.

The local ENGOs are mostly active at local and European levels, and they are not active at all at the global level. They tended to argue that EU accession has not affected them when it comes to relationships with institutions and organisations, though, paradoxically, they tended to agree that EU legislation has influenced their lobbying strategies. This ambivalence is also reflected in their mixed replies on whether environmental policy has become Europeanized and on whether Malta’s environment has benefitted through EU accession. On the other hand, they tended to assert that Malta’s environmental policy is relatively backward when compared to other EU member states. Such as belief is shared by small ENGOs and the federation – which, in turn, reflect the size of local ENGOs.
The radical ENGOs are active at all levels – local, national, European and global – and have mixed replies regarding the effect of EU accession on their relationships with institutions and organisations, The same holds for their position on whether EU legislation has influenced their lobbying strategies, on whether Malta’s environment has benefitted from EU accession and on how Malta compares with other EU member states in terms of environmental policy. In the first 2 cases referred to in the previous sentence, the same trend of mixed replies can also be seen amongst small ENGOs. As regards the Europeanization of EU environmental policy, the radical ENGOs said that either this is taking place or that it is taking place whilst also being characterised by national factors. Similar replies also tended to be given by small ENGOs. Given the above, it can be asserted that

‘Europeanization has affected the policy, polity and the politics of the environment. But the degree of change differs significantly from country to country’ (Börzel, 2008: 229).

Articulatory practices within new floating signifiers, in turn resulting from disclocation through EU membership, do not take place in a vacuum. They are subject to overdetermining factors which may differ from one hegemonic struggle and social formation to another – something which is analysed in the case studies of this thesis. Different ENGOs may also give rise to different articulations in terms of environmental activism.
5.7 ENGOs and EU Environmental Politics

5.7.1 Introduction

In this section, the ENGOs were asked for their interpretation of environmental politics in the EU. In this regard, the respondents were asked to describe their respective organisations’ relationships with political organisations such as NGOs, parties and EU institutions. Subsequently, the respondents were asked to assess the EU’s environmental performance and to highlight the main influences on environmental policy in the EU.

5.7.2 ENGOs’ relationship with EU political organisations

The most common type of relationship that the Maltese ENGOs have with political organisations is that with NGOs that are similar to them. Indeed, 12 respondents replied accordingly, followed by 5 respondents each highlighting relationships with political parties or having no relationship. Some respondents gave more than 1 reply.

When one analyzes replies in terms of ENGO type, it appears that sustainable development and conservationist ENGOs are more likely to have relationships with similar NGOs. The same applies for the medium-sized and the large ENGOs. The ‘no relationship’ response was most common amongst the local issue and the small ENGOs.

5.7.3 ENGOs’ relationship with EU institutions

Most ENGOs in Malta have some form of relationship with the EU institutions. Indeed, 13 respondents stated so, whilst another 3 referred to their relationship with the Malta-EU Steering Action Committee (MEUSAC). Conservationist ENGOs are most likely to have
a relationship with EU institutions, as is the case with the medium-sized and the large ENGOs. Almost all the ENGOs that have no relationship with the EU are small.

5.7.4 ENGOs’ assessment of the EU’s environmental performance

The Maltese ENGOs have ambivalent perceptions regarding the EU’s environmental performance. Indeed, whilst the most common reply from the respondents was that the EU has improved matters (8 respondents), 7 said that it has to be more effective, 3 said that it has problems with the implementation, another 3 said that it favours economic interests, and 1 respondent each replied that the EU increases awareness; has to balance different interests; and is too extreme in environmental policy!

In the words of one respondent, ‘if it weren’t for the EU, Malta would be in an even sorrier state than it is now’ (Conservationist1, Respondent2). Another more sceptical respondent said

‘It is avant-garde but not avant-garde enough, by any stretch of the imagination… if you don’t take the bull by the horns, and have very drastic, draconian environmental measures, it is going to lead to collapse… if you don’t change the system to make sure that on the ground, ecologically, you have a healthy system, a healthy society, you are going to go bankrupt. Environmentally and economically bankrupt… The whole world is going bankrupt, not because people have borrowed more money that actually exists, but because economies have borrowed more from the earth’s resources than the earth can maintain, and therefore, the same thing that happened with the credit crunch is going to happen with the eco-crunch… If Europe does not get much more radical, that’s where we’re going to end’ (Sustainable Development2, Respondent1).

Amongst the respondents who said that the EU favours economic interests, a respondent put it this way:

‘The EU safeguards and pushes in areas such as Natura 2000. But there is a contradiction regarding lobbying of business and environmental interests. There is
a struggle, and at times EU favours business. If workers are affected, so is the environment’ (Radical1, Respondent1).

The one respondent who said that the EU is at times too extremist, referred to the bloc’s stand on CO2 emissions as an example of its ‘strong stands’ (Local1, Respondent2).

As can be seen, the ENGOs most likely to say that the EU has improved matters were the conservationist and the medium-sized or the large ENGOs. Most of the local issue ENGOs believe that the EU has to be more effective. This is also the most popular reply amongst small ENGOs, even though there was just one respondent more than those who say that the EU has problems with implementation of legislation and that it favours economic interests. The radical ENGOs believed that the EU favours economic interests or that it has problems with implementing environmental policy.

5.7.5 ENGOs’ perceptions of strongest influences on environmental policy in the EU

As is the case with the ENGOs’ perceptions on the EU’s environmental performance, ambivalence also characterises the ENGOs’ perceptions on the strongest influences on environmental policy in the EU. Indeed, respondents gave a plurality of replies, ranging from lobbying to economic interests, from the European Commission and the European Parliament to national governments, and also highlighting other factors such as compromise, people’s values and Green parties.

In this regard, Conservationist4, Respondent 2 highlighted the standard of living, social issues, citizens’ concern for their rights, issues related to the economy and fiscal policy. In his opinion, the environment is quoted, but the people are giving more importance to
social issues and rights. Another conservationist referred to what he defined as external powers, such as the USA. In his words, the ‘battle of GMOs still continues’. Multinational corporations want to increase their power in the EU, so there’s a lot of pressure from the WTO. He added that the chemical industry, oil industry, and others have a lot of influence in Brussels, and that there are much more industry lobbyists than environmental ones. Besides, ‘the media is concentrated in the hands of the few. This makes our job more difficult’ (Conservationist2, Respondent1).

Another respondent referred to values, stating that apart from the influence of Green Parties, there are more people outside Malta who are less short-sighted about the long term impacts of environmental degradation (Conservationist1, Respondent2). Other replies included the following:

‘In many instances currents are against each other…. Those who want a better environment and quality of life are against those who put forward politics that puts profits first, thus resulting in compromises with big companies’ (Radical1, Respondent2)

‘In the EU there are lobbies, too, both as regards environmentalists and big business. The European Parliament has been dominated by conservative forces for many years. Traditionally, these give less importance to environmental issues. This shows how that in the EU, these right-wing parties gave more emphasis to economic growth, so this had an effect on the environmental agenda of the EU. Not that left-wing parties didn’t do the same, but rightist parties put more emphasis on this. Certain important environmental lobbies have also influenced EU policies’ (Radical 2, Respondent2).

5.7.6 Analysis – ENGOs and EU Environmental Politics

Notwithstanding that much activism of ENGOs is based within their country of origin, various Maltese ENGOs have relationships with other ENGOs, such as being affiliated with them. Hence, EU accession had the dislocatory effect of providing new
opportunities for ENGOs to form alliances with EU-based ENGOs, and to articulate discourse on a European level. To a much lesser extent, ENGOs have relationships with political parties at an EU level. However, one should not ignore the fact that a minority of ENGOs do not have any such relationships. Similarly, a majority of ENGOs have some form of relationship with EU institutions, though a minority have no such relationship. Maltese ENGOs have different perceptions of environmental politics in the EU, with some being positive whilst various others saying that it the EU has to be more effective or that it is too biased towards interests such as the economic. Similarly, ENGOs have mixed perceptions on what are the major influences on EU environmental policy, with replies including various economic, political and ideological factors. Thus, environmental policy is seen as reflecting the role of the EU the condensation of conflicts where, in various aspects, economic demands play a key role (Pesendorfer, 2006). Once again, it is shown that even though different overdetermining factors influence the articulation of environmental policy, economic discourse tends to form nodal points within EU environmental politics, characterised by chains of equivalence where opposing poles stand apart on matters such as neo-liberal ideology.

The Conservationist ENGOs tended to highlight their relationships with similar NGOs at a European level and with EU institutions. Similar trends are found amongst the large and the medium-sized ENGOs. Most conservationists – as is the case with the medium sized ENGOs - agreed that the EU has improved matters in the environmental sphere, though a sizeable minority of the conservationists perceived such processes as being more complex and contradictory, for example due to the influence of business interests. When
it comes to perception of strongest influences on EU environmental policy, the conservationists referred to a wide range of sources including political, economic, and ideological but also others such as the influence of certain countries.

The Sustainable developmental ENGOs have relationships with similar ENGOs at a European level and in one way or another have relationships with EU institutions. Such ENGOs vary in their assessment of the EU’s environmental performance, with one being more optimistic than the other. The Sustainable developmental ENGOs also highlight various sources of influence on EU environmental policy, including the political and the economic. Local ENGOs tend to have no relationship with EU political organisations, though this is closely followed by relationships with political party/ies. Responses from the local ENGOs are also split in terms of their relationships with EU institutions, though more state they have some form of relationship with institutions when compared to those who deny this. The local ENGOs also tended to believe that the EU has to be more effective in environmental matters, and they respectively referred to various political, economic and national sources of influence on environmental policy in the EU.

The Radical ENGOs, like the local ENGOs, are those which, when compared to other ENGOs, are most likely to have relationships with political party/ies at the EU level, though the 2 ENGOs in question are split in their responses in this regard. The same applies for relationships with EU institutions and with assessment of EU environmental performance. Indeed, the ENGO having relationships with political party/ies stated that it has relationships with MEUSAC and that the EU favours economic interests, whilst the
other organisation denied any relationship and stated that the EU has problems with implementation. With respect to the strongest influences on environmental policy in the EU, lobbying was most frequently mentioned by respondents, followed by economic interests. This conveys a belief in the possibility of social change through political struggle.

5.8 The EU and the Empowerment of ENGOs

5.8.1 Introduction

This section deals with questions asked to the ENGOs to verify whether the EU has empowered them, and if yes, in what ways. To analyse this issue properly, it was important to verify whether other factors were also influential in this regard. Hence, to begin with, ENGOs were asked to highlight factors which can empower them and to explain what can constrain such empowerment. They were also asked to state whether in the last few years they were empowered when compared to previous years, and whether this counts for the environmental movement as a whole. Subsequently, the ENGOs were asked if lobbying at an EU level is more effective than lobbying on a national level, and, vitally, whether EU accession has empowered them, and whether this counts for the environmental movement as a whole. Finally, the ENGOs were asked if they felt as empowered as their EU counterparts and whether all the ENGOs in Malta have been affected the same way by Malta’s EU membership.

5.8.2 Factors influencing and constraining empowerment of ENGOs

The ENGOs have mixed views regarding what influences and constrains their empowerment. Indeed various replies were given by the respondents when asked on this.
However the most common replies were state cooperation/civil society participation (11 respondents) and financial resources (10 respondents) in the case of the former and lack of financial resources (9 respondents) and lack of state cooperation/civil society participation (8 respondents) respectively. Other replies, in both cases, included amongst others self-induced factors, ENGO unity (or lack of it), human resources (in the case of the former), legislation (in the case of the former) and big business (in the case of the latter). Some respondents gave more than one reply. Given the diversity of replies, no respondent from the same respective ENGO gave identical replies.

Replies from different respondents included,

‘There has been a progression … of new, small … additional, powers’ (Conservationist1, Respondent1).

The respondent above referred to examples such as increased civil society participation and access to environmental information.

‘The key to everything is unity amongst organisations’ (Radical2, Respondent1)

‘Sometimes funds come with conditions, so they do not necessarily empower’ (Radical 2, Respondent2)

‘You’re in a constant state of evolution as an NGO, so the first step to empowerment is constantly being mindful of your own need to change, to evolve, to open up, not to be rigid, and to learn’ (Sustainable Development2, Respondent1).

This respondent added that to sum it up, money, organisational abilities, ability to budget well, knowledge and awareness are essential for the ENGOs’ empowerment

‘Empowerment means the power to effect change. In Malta we have empowerment for example through our protests, but it is not institutionalised. That’s why we sent a petition to the Parliamentary Select Committee so that the
environment will be constitutionally safeguarded. That would be an example of institutionalisation. The effect of not having repercussions or a violent response from the State, is in an example of indirect empowerment. We protested and had no negative repercussions’ (Conservationist5, Respondent1).

Examples of responses on factors that constrain empowerment included the following.

‘The same Government that pushes towards liberalisation, privatisation, making the Government smaller - but when it comes to the environmental sector, they’re trying to control everything themselves and you see no sign of this liberal policy’ (Conservationist2, Respondent1).

‘Big business usually, and the lobbying of, especially the construction industry in Malta, give the impression that if they fold under Malta will go under, which I don’t think is the case, because I don’t believe that the construction industry is so powerful. They say they have fifteen per cent of the economy, but according to some studies it is only about five per cent. In fact tourism is a lot more beneficial to the economy than construction. So that is in fact one of the things holding NGOs back. In fact the construction industry supports both the main political parties…. So, in fact I think that is the main thing that needs to be done, to pass a law about the support of political parties. However it is difficult as both the main political parties have their own vested interests and something like that would be difficult to get through’ (Conservationist5, Respondent2).

‘Finance is always the key problem’ (Conservationist6, Respondent1).

‘Developers [constrain], through their satellites. They have friends, and friends of friends, and they make empty promises’ (Local2, Respondent2).

The 2 most common factors referred to by the respondents, namely State cooperation/civil society participation and financial resources respectively, were more likely to be referred to by the conservationist and the sustainable developmental ENGOs respectively. The large ENGOs also gave more emphasis to these factors. Indeed, it can be observed that lack of state cooperation/civil society participation is emphasized by conservationist and large ENGOs, as is the case with lack of financial resources is emphasized, though the latter reply is also likely to be found amongst replies of sustainable development and medium sized ENGOs.
5.8.3 Have the ENGOs been empowered in the last years?

The ENGOs were subsequently asked whether they experienced empowerment in the last years when compared to previous years, and whether this counts for the environmental movement as a whole. As regards the former, the vast majority of respondents (15) replied in the affirmative, whilst 2 said that this depends on the issue and 7 replied negatively. The ENGOs showed less optimism as regards the empowerment of the environmental movement as a whole, though more respondents (10) replied positively, compared to 8 who replied negatively and 2 who said that this depends on the issue.

On the positive side, Conservationist3, Respondent 2 said that her ENGO has experienced empowerment, but that this was ceased and created rather than being necessarily granted. In addition, the chief cause of empowerment has been support from the EU. Similarly, another respondent said that much empowerment resulted due to the European Union.

‘We met the enforcement section when they came to Malta, discussing issues such as Ta’ Cenc and Xaghra l-Hamra. Through EU membership we could exert pressure on the Government from outside Malta’ (Conservationist5, Respondent2).

According to another respondent, empowerment is seasonal. It increases at election time and is less effective after elections. This counts for the environmental movement as a whole (Local1, Respondent1).
A respondent who replied negatively said that the introduction of regulations has resulted in more structured development processes. Though he stated that this is itself positive, he added that

‘once it is passing through this process, you can’t oppose it. If MEPA has approved the project, you can’t do anything about it. Previously there weren’t many rules and processes, so you could have immediately attacked the project for a number of reasons. Today you can’t as they’ll tell you that for example it is mentioned in the local plan, in the structure plan. So at the end of the day you’d be able to do nothing’ (Radical2, Respondent1).

He added that this also counts for the environmental movement as a whole in what he dubbed as a legitimization process.

When it comes to the empowerment of the environmental movement, Radical1, Respondent1 said that it could be the case that the ENGOs have become empowered, for example through demonstrations such as those on development in ODZ and proposed development Ramla l-Hamra in Gozo. He added that such ENGOs have middle-class backing.

‘But they are distancing themselves from the grassroots, and this is harmful. They might also lose members. They are conservative and elitist, for example they don’t work with unions’ (Radical1, Respondent1).

As another other respondent remarked,

‘To a certain extent I think it [empowerment of the environmental movement] has more strength with the media. But as regards other matters, as regards grassroots, I see apathy, in places such as the University, where previously many NGOs came from. Today new NGOs – Ramblers, FAA are made up of people of a certain age’ (Conservationist4, Respondent1).

Figures 14 and 15 elaborate.
From the above it transpires that sustainable development and conservationist respondents tended to believe that their ENGOs have been empowered. The radical and the local ENGOs were mixed in their responses, and in these 2 cases, responses are quite similar amongst respondents from the same ENGOs. Significantly, the medium-sized and the large ENGOs tended to be optimistic, whilst the small ENGOs were divided.

As regards the empowerment of the environmental movement as a whole, the conservationists and the radical ENGOs tended to believe this has taken place. The local
ENGOs disagreed. Whilst the large ENGOs were more likely to agree, small and medium-sized ones are divided in their perceptions.

5.8.4 Comparing lobbying at a national level with lobbying at an EU level

An important factor through which one can analyse the effect of EU accession on ENGO empowerment is lobbying. It is interesting to note that when asked whether lobbying at an EU level is more effective than lobbying at a national level, the most popular reply was that both types of lobbying are effective, depending on issues. Indeed, 12 respondents replied accordingly. An equal number of respondents (3 each) respectively argued that the EU or the national levels are more effective. Figure 16 refers.

![Figure 16](image)

**Figure 16** Is lobbying at an EU level more effective than lobbying at a national level?  
(Note: **BD**- both, depends on issues; **EU**- EU level; **N**- national level; **EN**- equally not effective)

One can observe that the most common reply for all the ENGO types was that lobbying at both levels can be effective, depending on the issue, save for the local ENGOs which are split in their responses. The small and the large ENGOs also tended to be more decisive in their replies favour both levels. Unlike medium-sized ENGOs which were divided, and the federation, which believe that both levels are equally not effective
5.8.5 EU Accession and the Empowerment of ENGOs

The respondents were subsequently asked what were perhaps the most important and direct questions related to this study. In the first instance, they were asked whether the EU accession had empowered their organisation and why. Subsequently, they were asked whether this counts for the environmental movement as a whole.

Significantly, 17 respondents believe that that their ENGO was empowered through EU accession, whilst 4 disagreed. 2 took a middle-of-the road approach, saying that this was variable. As regards the question on whether the environmental movement as a whole was empowered, less respondents agreed in comparison to replies on whether their respective ENGO was empowered, but less disagreed. Indeed, 15 replied positively, only 1 replied negatively and 7 said that this was variable.

Various reasons were given by the respondents to justify their replies. Sometimes more than one example was given by the respective respondents. The most common reason given for empowerment of their respective ENGOs was that of using the EU as a further resort when lobbying at a national level fails (9 respondents), followed by having civil society participation and having EU legislation in place, which each had 5 respondents.

As regards the reasons given for empowerment (or lack of it) of the environmental movement through EU accession, the most common positive reason was likewise a positive one, once again being that of using the EU as a further resort when lobbying on a national level fails (11 respondents), followed by having EU legislation (5 respondents)
and having civil society participation and financial resources respectively (each having four respondents).

On the positive side, one respondent said

‘When you have better legislation and more recognised participation, that’s empowerment. You have more tools to work with to achieve your objectives. The same applies to all the other NGOs. There’s improved legislation, more tools to work with, and much more recognition of participation’ (Conservationist1, Respondent1).

Sustainable Development1, Respondent1, argued likewise, stating that EU accession gave the ENGOs more voice, where they could refer to legislation and also influence its formulation. Others, such as Conservationist5, Respondent2 referred to the fact that the European Commission can be appealed to on certain aspects of environmental policy.

Similarly, other conservationist respondents said

‘…guidelines set down by the EU on development necessarily address the environment, and therefore, if necessary, environmental NGOs are going to be involved more than they used to’ (Conservationist1, Respondent2)

‘maybe some [ENGOs] were a bit late and some still do not realise what’s available out there. But because the ENGOs are so supportive and because we work together through networking, the others will get more professional and will become more efficient’ (Conservationist2, Respondent1).

‘Our organisation did not exist before EU accession. But the moment we got EU endorsement, our profile especially vis-à-vis the Government increased exponentially’ (Conservationist3, Respondent2).

Yet, there were conservationists who replied otherwise, claiming that their empowerment is variable, or that it did not take place. As one respondent put it, his organisation became empowered as an organisation, but also became less empowered as a lobby group.
‘This is one of the dilemmas of the EU. It can help you financially, but it can change your way of thinking as an NGO. You end up managing sites and you lose your lobbying factor. It has its positive and negative aspects’ (Conservationist4, Respondent1).

A radical respondent claimed that empowerment is variable because even though there have been changes in regulations, ultimately, no real change is taking place.

‘…in reality you also know that just because you’re quoting [EU legislation] and holding someone accountable, at the end of the day there still isn’t that iron fist which is showing how things should be…Yes, this counts for all, though there is the illusion amongst some ENGOs that we can save everything through these regulations’ (Radical2, Respondent1).

Another respondent said that even though the European Commission took some decisions which strengthened ENGOs,

‘I am seeing other organisations moving in reverse, closing up instead of opening up… … EU accession has eradicated grassroots activism of such organisations. [such ENGOs believe that] “We don’t need people as we have EU backing”’ (Radical1, Respondent1).

On the sceptical side, a respondent simply added that through EU accession ‘another door was opened. But we didn’t take much from that door’ (Local4, Respondent1).

An analysis of responses according to the ENGO type can be carried out through figures below.
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Figure 17 Has EU accession empowered your ENGO?

Figure 18 Has EU accession empowered the environmental movement?

It transpires that as regards the empowerment of ENGOs through EU accession, the respondents from the conservationist and sustainable development camps tended to be most optimistic. There were also more positive respondents from the radical and the local issue camps than the negative ones. As regards ENGO size, all types of ENGOs were more positive in their replies, save for the federation. All medium sized ENGOs were positive and most large ones were of the same tendency.

When it comes to the empowerment of the environmental movement through EU accession, one could note both similarities and differences when compared to the
previous question. Amongst the radical ENGOs, a minority – namely, only one respondent - believe that the environmental movement has been empowered. However, the majority of respondents from all the other ENGO types had positive perceptions, though it should be noted that the conservationists were less positive and the local issue respondents were more positive than the previous case. As regards ENGO size, once again all the medium-sized ENGOs were positive, and the Federation had the same perception – contrary to its reply to the previous question. Both the small and the large ENGOs were less positive than was the case with their reply to empowerment of their respective organisations through EU accession.

An analysis of the reasons given by the respondents to explain the empowerment (or lack of it) of their respective ENGOs through EU accession reveals that as regards empowerment of one’s ENGO through EU accession, the respondents referred to a plurality of reasons. However, the conservationists are more likely to emphasize civil society participation and legislation, followed by using the EU as a further resort. The latter was also the most popular reply amongst local ENGO respondents and amongst respondents from small and medium-sized ENGOs.

As regards the empowerment (or lack of it) of the environmental movement through EU accession, the local issue respondents emphasized using the EU as a further resort for lobbying purposes. Legislation and civil society participation are exclusively referred to by the conservationists (save for one exception in the case of the former). Small, medium sized ENGOs and the Federation tended to prioritize this reason too. The large ENGOs,
on the other hand, gave more importance to reasons such as legislation, civil society participation, and financial resources.

5.8.6 Comparing empowerment of Maltese ENGOs with EU ENGOs

The ENGO respondents were also asked to compare the empowerment of their respective ENGOs with that of the EU ENGOs. In this regard it is interesting to note that the most common reply given was that one’s respective ENGO was less empowered, with 11 respondents. 7 respondents, on the other hand, said that the level of empowerment was comparable, though in many cases they were referring to similar organisations, thus implying directly or indirectly that their level of empowerment cannot be compared with that of the big ENGOs.

Indeed, as Sustainable Development2, Respondent1 put it, his ENGO compares fairly well to the local organisations in Europe, but they don’t compare to larger national or international organisations, adding that from their membership fees alone, the latter make millions of Euros.

An interesting reply was that of Conservationist2, Respondent1. In his words,

‘this thing is a mixed blessing because Malta is a unique country. Because Malta is so small, and things are so personal, everyone knows everyone, and because [name of ENGO omitted] …. is now a strong organisation, I think we have access to top officials, much more than any other organisation, and this has nothing to do with the EU’ (Conservationist2, Respondent1).

In this sense, this respondent added, Malta’s ENGOs are in a unique position and this requires lobbying strategy, where one can get so close to a Minister. Nevertheless, he
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added that as regards consultation of ENGOs and taking their views on board, Malta ranks at the bottom with the other Eastern new entrants, where everything is done behind closed doors.

As another respondent put it,

‘… if we compare ourselves to other organisations, the fact that we’re small, we don’t employ anyone, and we take on other issues, there was less empowerment for us and for the organisations like ours, even amongst those active in the EU, and the leftist organisations.. We are an organisation with an explicit political agenda. Many ENGOs, not only in Malta - and this is not necessarily wrong, take on the environmental issue and do not want to be associated with politics, not parties, but political agendas like the left. This makes a big difference as regards empowerment from institutions. Obviously, if you have a particular political agenda on the environment, if the environment forms part of your ideology, then there is more reluctance to empower you’ (Radical2, Respondent2).

This respondent was however at odds with other radical respondents who had more positive replies.

With regard to this particular question, high level of disagreement was observed amongst respondents from the same respective ENGOs. It is interesting to note that most radical respondents believe that empowerment was comparable. Most conservationists and local issue respondents thought likewise. The negative trend is also more observable amongst the small and medium sized ENGOs.
5.8.7 Has EU membership affected Maltese ENGOs in the same way?

Subsequently, the ENGO respondents were asked whether EU membership affected Maltese ENGOs the same way. The majority – 15 respondents – replied negatively, whilst 7 replied positively.

Radical1, Respondent1 said that the big ENGOs which were incorporated with the State and which achieved State funding have become stronger. Likewise, certain ENGOs ‘compromise, and are ready so much to shake hands with the establishment, that this may be detrimental in the future’ (Radical1, Respondent2).

Interestingly, Sustainable Development1, Respondent2 argued that the ENGOs were not affected the same way because those which were not already affiliated to an international ENGO stood to gain more. Another respondent believe that there were different outcomes, because,
‘They have empowered them in the same way, but the empowerment has not been used in the same way by the different NGOs’ (Conservationist1, Respondent2).

Similarly, another respondent claimed that only 2 large conservationist ENGOs have realised what it meant to be in the EU. As regards the others,

‘Nobody’s going to empower them if they don’t empower themselves first’ (Conservationist2, Respondent1).

Conservationist4, Respondent1 elaborated, saying that some ENGOs disappeared or became weaker (he referred to one particular ENGO which lost many members to Alternattiva Demokratika - The Green Party). Others are now managing sites and obtaining funds, though losing their voluntary aspect. He also referred to other ENGOs which are more active on a local level.

It is interesting to note that many respondents referred to Birdlife and Nature Trust as having benefitted most from EU accession – both ENGOs being conservationist, large and being amongst the oldest ENGOs in Malta. A difference between them, though is that whilst Birdlife is clearly affiliated to Birdlife Europe and Birdlife International, Nature Trust does not have such a clear affiliation with an international ENGO, though its international affiliations include that of privileged partner of WWF amongst others.

Figure 20 elaborates on the replies given. The radical ENGOs clearly believe that Maltese ENGOs were not affected the same way, and the sustainable development and the large ENGOs respectively tend to argue likewise.
5.8.8 Other comments from ENGO respondents

Various ENGO respondents added other comments at the end of their interviews.

From a pragmatic perspective, one respondent said that being in the EU is a learning curve, and that the ENGOs still have a long way to go (Local1, Respondent2). Another respondent added that EU accession was very good for NGOs and the environment in general, but that there was still more to do. The respondent added that within the EU, the environment and the economy need to be seen as complimentary (Conservationist2, Respondent2).

Some, such as Radical1, Respondent1, said that ENGOs could be entering a blind alley if they are not active at grassroots level. Radical2, Respondent1 appealed for unity as ENGOs on their own do not have enough resources to successfully confront the State, development companies and others, adding that what is needed is real improvement, rather than legitimisation.
Some other respondents referred to the importance of education, enforcement and recognition from the State. As another respondent, Sustainable Development2, Respondent1, put it, motivation amongst ENGOs is of utmost importance. This is inspired by dedication and not money. Elaborating on this analogy, this respondent said that whilst companies can measure their results through profit and loss accounts, the ENGOs see progress after many years, and they are working against the system. In his words, ENGOs are pioneers, like other who previously fought for the rights of women, slaves and workers, and who, when starting, ‘were always bashed’.

Have things really improved? In the words of one particular respondent,

‘on a very superficial level environmental awareness has increased. It is still a matter of… they see a cloud of dust and they panic, or they see someone chop a tree and it’s a sin, but deep real ecological and environmental justice and things like that are still very far from the Maltese agenda, from civil society and policy makers’ (Sustainable Development1, Respondent2).

5.8.9 Analysis – The EU and Empowerment of ENGOs

EU accession can be seen as enhancing the power of most ENGOs, especially the moderate ones, though there are exceptions. Indeed, the vast majority of the Maltese ENGOs believe that EU accession empowered them. The majority (albeit in smaller numbers) believe that the same can be said as regards the environmental movement. In this regard it is pertinent to note that whilst only the majority of the conservationist and the sustainable developmental ENGOs believe that they were empowered through EU accession, the majority of all ENGO types believe that the environmental movement has been empowered through this process. Most ENGOs believe that they experienced empowerment in the last years, and more tended to agree than disagree that the
environmental movement has also experienced empowerment. However, there was less optimism as regards the latter (environmental movement) when compared to the former (one’s respective ENGO). In absolute terms, when asked on EU accession specifically (compared to when they were asked on the last number of years), the ENGOs showed more optimism. In this regard, therefore, EU accession per se is seen as a main source of ENGO empowerment. In both cases, however, the conservationists and sustainable developmental ENGOs tended to give positive replies, whilst the local and the radical ENGOs were divided in their responses. This is elaborated below.

As regards empowerment through EU accession, the most common reason cited by the ENGOs was that the EU can be used as a further resort both by ENGOs and the environmental movement (for example for lobbying purposes), followed by other reasons such as having civil society participation, legislation and financial resources. Hence, the dislocatory effect of Malta’s EU accession led to new discursive opportunities and floating signifiers, which enabled ENGOs to articulate in terms of resorting to EU structures when activism on a national level fails. ENGOs were also enabled to articulate their activism in terms of new available resources through EU accession. At the same time, the ENGOs believe that key factors influencing empowerment or lack of it included having state cooperation and civil society participation and having financial resources.

Hence, the ENGOs tended to view empowerment as being related mainly to procedural impacts, structural impacts and substantive impacts (Giugni; 1995; van der Heijden 1999; Carter 2001; Rootes 2007a). In turn, these have an influence on hegemonic formations
and on the institutionalisation of ENGOs. It is of particular relevance to note that ENGOs downplay the importance of sensitizing impacts (ibid) as an indicator of empowerment. Yet, the fact that ENGO articulations have resulted in nodal points which partially fix meaning, shows otherwise. This is analysed in the case studies of this thesis.

Judging by replies of ENGO representatives, there does not seem to be a perceived sense of collective action in terms of a unified environmental movement. This contrasts with the fact that many ENGOs share common beliefs such as giving priority to both environmental protection and economic growth, and also with the fact that ENGOs have created specific alliances and chains of equivalence on various issues. This dilemma is analysed in the subsequent case studies.

Many ENGOs also believe that lobbying at both national and EU levels can be effective, depending on the issue at stake – the EU is seen as a gateway for empowerment when opportunities within the nation state fail (Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001: 344-5). Hence, Börzel’s (2008: 232) assertion that ENGOs from Southern European are likely to benefit from opportunities provided by the EU which can be used to put pressure on their respective governments, holds ground, in line with the ‘boomerang effect’ concept (Johnston, 2011: 186-7). Besides, similar to Chris Rootes’ theorization of environmental protest in the EU (2007b,c), one can also conclude that the Europeanization of protest is not seen as one of the strongest reasons of empowerment by ENGOs, though there are some examples of the ENGOs forming strong alliances with their European ENGO counterparts, for example as regards hunting. Here, chains of equivalence were formed
against the hunting lobby, and were signified through strong reference to EU legislation. This is analysed later on in this study.

The ENGOs also believe that there are differences among them in relation to empowerment. Indeed, many expressed concern that the Maltese ENGOs are less empowered than their EU counterparts, and that not all the Maltese ENGOs were affected the same way by EU accession.

Almost all the conservationist ENGOs held that they EU accession has empowered them, thus confirming that as far as they are concerned, the moderate ENGOs are those most likely to be empowered. All the medium-sized ENGOs share this belief, as do most of the large and small ENGOs. Such trends are also observable when the ENGOs were asked whether EU accession has empowered the environmental movement, albeit in less positive terms. The conservationists highlighted reasons such as civil society participation, legislation and using the EU as a further resort to explain the effect of EU legislation on their empowerment. Likewise, they tended to highlight reasons such as legislation and civil society participation in relation to the environmental movement. The conservationist ENGOs tended to give most importance to state cooperation and civil society participation, followed by possession of financial resources as key factors that affect empowerment. A similar trend can be observed amongst the large ENGOs. The majority of the conservationist ENGOs believe that they had experienced empowerment in the last years, and more conservationists believe that the environmental movement has been empowered when compared to those who disagreed. In both cases, similar trends
are observable amongst large ENGOs. As regards lobbying at the national and European levels, a good amount of conservationist ENGOs believe that both can be effective, depending on the issue. The large ENGOs believe the same or – in the case of a minority – had no opinion. Most conservationists felt less empowered than their EU counterparts. A small majority of the conservationists did not think that EU accession had influenced the Maltese ENGOs in the same way.

The sustainable developmental ENGOs – being moderate, too - tended to believe that EU accession has empowered both them and the environmental movement. The most popular reason given for both cases (as is also the case with medium-sized ENGOs) was that they can use the EU as a further resort. Most ENGOs of this type felt they were empowered in the last years. However, there were mixed opinions on the environmental movement (the same applies for medium-sized ENGOs, in both cases). The sustainable developmental ENGOs gave different reasons to highlight what influences the empowerment of the ENGOs, though state cooperation and civil society participation, coupled with financial resources were the most cited reasons. Similar trends were found amongst the small and the medium-sized ENGOs. As is the case with the medium-size ENGOs, the sustainable developmental ENGOs tended to see lack of financial resources as the factor that was most constraining. They also tended to believe that lobbying at both national and EU levels can be effective – a belief that is also common amongst small and large ENGOs. Besides, they had mixed opinions regarding their degree of empowerment as comparable to their EU counterparts, and they tended to disagree that EU accession had influenced the Maltese ENGOs in the same way.
The local ENGOs were not united in their responses on empowerment. As regards the influence of EU accession, they were divided, though there were more positive replies. On the other hand, most respondents believed that EU accession had empowered the environmental movement. In both cases, using the EU as a further resort was seen as the most important reason. The local ENGOs believe that were various reasons which influenced and constrained ENGO empowerment. These ENGOs harboured different opinions as to whether they and the environmental movement had been empowered in the last years, though there were more negative replies, especially in the case of the latter. The local ENGOs were also divided in their responses on whether EU accession had influenced the Maltese ENGOs in the same way, and as to which type of lobbying is more influential. However, none highlighted the national level alone. These ENGOs also tended to feel less empowered than EU ENGOs – as was the case with responses from the small ENGOs. Local ENGO respondents showed that not all the moderate ENGOs benefited from Malta’s EU accession. This could be because of the fact that environmental ideologies which are most influential in the EU comprise ecological modernisation, sustainable development and conservationism (as shown in the theoretical chapter), which, in turn, are not the prime focus of the local ENGOs. These focus more on NIMBY concerns and with areas which are not comprehensively covered by EU directives.

The radical ENGOs – like the small ones – were divided on whether EU accession had empowered them, though there were more positive replies. Similar trends could be seen
in their tendency to believe that lobbying can be influential at both the EU and the national levels, depending on the issue. No radical ENGO believed that the environmental movement was not empowered through EU accession. They highlighted various reasons to explain the influence of EU accession on the empowerment of both their respective ENGOs and the environmental movement. They tended to believe that the environmental movement was empowered during the last years. They also tend to believe that the degree of empowerment of their respective ENGOs was comparable to that of their EU counterparts. Such ENGOs also gave different reasons to explain what effected the empowerment of the ENGOs, and they were divided in their perception on whether they were empowered during the last years. This was also the case with the small ENGOs. Hence, though the radical ENGOs have a more radical vision than that of the EU (Hunold, 2005), they partially conceded that the EU had been influential on empowerment. However, it was evident that the moderate ENGOs of the conservationist and sustainable development types were more likely to experience some form of empowerment, especially if they had been long-established (Taylor 2005: 165). Indeed, no radical ENGO believes that EU accession influenced the Maltese ENGOs the same way.

5.9 The EU and the Empowerment of ENGOs: Comparisons and contrasts amongst different ENGO types

The following table summarizes the responses to various questions in line with the main themes of the study, with the aim to identify key trends amongst ENGOs, which are categorised according to their respective ideology, for comparative purposes.
### Table 1. Comparing and Contrasting ENGO responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conservationists</th>
<th>Sustainable Development</th>
<th>Local Issue</th>
<th>Radical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize Environmental Protection</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritize Economic Growth</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding from the State</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding from Civil Society</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding: Self-financed</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding from commercial sources</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure democratic/bureaucratic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure democratic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources from Malta State</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources from EU</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Split</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources from Business</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception on Institutionalisation of ENGOs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Split</td>
<td>Split</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with Maltese State</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed/Distant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with Maltese ENGOs</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with other Maltese NGOs/Civil Society actors</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with Maltese Parties</td>
<td>Not affiliated</td>
<td>Not affiliated</td>
<td>AD, PL followed by PN</td>
<td>AD, no PN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activism: Local</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activism: National</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activism: European</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activism: Global</td>
<td>Split</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU impact on ENGO lobbying</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with EU Institutions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Split</td>
<td>Split</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with EU ENGOs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with EU Political Parties</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Split</td>
<td>Split</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has EU empowered ENGO</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Split</td>
<td>Split</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has EU empowered Movement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last years: Empowerment ENGO</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Split</td>
<td>Split</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Years: Empowerment Movement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Split</td>
<td>Split</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU same influence on Maltese ENGOs</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Split</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It can be observed that as regards empowerment of the respective ENGOs and the environmental movement, both relating to the EU during the last years, the most positive ENGOs are conservationist (4 positive trends), followed by sustainable development (3 positive, 1 split), radical (2 positive, 2 split) and local (1 positive, 3 split) respectively. Hence, under no ideology could one find a majority of ENGOs with negative replies in this regard. It could also be observed that there were more positive replies as regards empowerment from the EU than empowerment during the last years. This was also observed in previous research on empowerment of ENGOs (Briguglio, Michael and Brown, 2009). This shows that the EU membership can be theorized as having a dislocatory effect that enables ENGO empowerment, especially when it comes to the empowerment of the environmental movement, where all the groups of ENGOs replied positively. Yet, despite the presence of floating signifiers through which ENGOs could articulate their demands within the new EU context, this is an uneven process which was characterised by other overdetermining factors, such as Malta’s party-political system. This is shown in the subsequent case studies. In this regard it is important to note that

‘Malta’s EU accession and the influx of civil society organisations are the latest of a series of overdetermining influences on Maltese politics. In this regard, it is pertinent to conclude that politics in Malta is not characterised by a single determination. Malta’s colonial legacy; the island’s particular electoral system and bi-polar political divide; the cultural role of organised religion; the influence of economic, ideological and ecological factors, both local and global; and the role of agents, whether political parties or historic personalities, have all left their mark’ (Briguglio, Michael 2009: 141).

It is also important to note that even though EU providing opportunities which are otherwise unachievable through the nation state (Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001: 344-5; Börzel, 2008: 232), thus confirming the validity of the “boomerang effect”
Johnston, 2011: 186-7), most respondents do not believe that the EU has had the same influence on the Maltese ENGOs.

Another important observation is that the ENGOs which felt most empowered, namely the conservationists, were least likely to agree that the ENGOs had become institutionalised. The other moderate ENGOs, namely the sustainable development and the local ones, tended to be divided in their perceptions, whilst the radical ENGOs were the most likely to agree that ENGOs had become institutionalised.

An analysis of replies which are unique to particular ENGO types reveals that the conservationists are the only ENGOs that do not rely on self-financing and that do not tend to believe that ENGOs have become institutionalised. Significantly, they were the only ENGOs which relatively claimed the most positive relationship with the Maltese State. (They were also divided in their replies regarding activism on a global level, but this is not hereby deemed as being of key importance).

If one looks at the replies which are unique to the conservationists and to the sustainable developmental ENGOs together, namely the two ENGO types which felt most empowered, one can observe that both receive funding from the State and civil society. Both have structures which are democratic and bureaucratic. Both obtain resources from the Maltese State, from the EU and from business. Both are not affiliated with political parties. Both have relationships with EU institutions, EU ENGOs. Both do not have
relationships with EU political parties. Both also asserted that they had been empowered through EU accession and during the last years.

An analysis of replies regarding the local ENGOs, which were the least optimistic regarding the empowerment of ENGOs, reveals that replies unique to them included the fact that they do not tend to prioritize economic growth alongside environmental protection. They are basically self-financed and they do not tend to be active on a national level. They are also not active on a global level. Respondents are split in responses on whether the EU had the same influence on Maltese ENGOs. It is pertinent to note that such ENGOs tended to claim relationships with political parties in the following order, AD and PL, followed by the PN.

The Radical ENGOs, which were the second least optimistic regarding the empowerment of ENGOs, tended to have unique replies in that they were divided when it comes to receiving resources from the EU. They do not receive resources from business and they tend to believe that ENGOs have become institutionalised. Their relationship with the Maltese State is mixed or distant, and they tend to have negative relationships with Maltese ENGOs. They have a positive relationship with AD and no relationship with the PN.

Replies which were unique to the local and the radical ENGOs together included the fact that both tend to be self-financed. Both do not have structures which are at once bureaucratic and democratic (their structures comprise just the latter), and they do not
tend to have relationships with EU ENGOs. Their replies differed regarding relationships with EU institutions and EU political parties, and as regards to whether they were empowered through EU accession as well as whether they were empowered in the last years.

It could therefore be asserted that empowerment through EU accession has affected the Maltese ENGOs differently, with the conservationists claiming to have been most empowered, followed by the sustainable development, the radical and the local ENGOs respectively. The differences and similarities amongst the different ENGOs exemplifies the ‘creative tension’ of such organisations within the environmental movement (Carter, 2001: 147). The most empowered ENGOs, namely the conservationists have defining characteristics - some of which they share with sustainable developmental ENGOs, the next most empowered group. These include procedural impacts such as their closeness to the national State and the EU in terms of relationships (with both institutions and ENGOs); their claim to be politically non-affiliated; and their tendency to disagree that ENGOs are institutionalised. These ENGOs also claimed non-reliance on self-financing (as opposed to other types of financing and resources) and have bureaucratic-democratic structures. Such ENGOs might consider themselves as equal partners to State structures, having a potential to create chains of equivalence through alliances which can be hegemonic, and which can result in substantive and structural impacts such as change in environmental legislation and new environmental structures. These are signified through discursive articulation which can (but does not necessarily) have sensitizing impacts at both national and EU levels, given its moderatism and proximity to EU policy. A critical
evaluation of such ENGOs might conclude their empowerment may have a strong degree of institutionalisation, where articulatory practices can reveal ideological consent (Althusser, 1984), co-optation (Edwards, 2009: 116; Rootes, 2007a), change of organisational structure (Giugni, 1995), and a state of dependence (Knill and Liefferlink, 2007: 72) on State structures and/or the EU, at the expense of more radical empty signifiers and nodal points.

The least empowered ENGOs, the radical and the local are the closest to AD and at times some do have relationships with other parties. In terms of procedural impacts, they are the least close to the national State and to the EU institutions and the other ENGOs. In the case of radicals it is interesting to note that they claimed a negative relationship with other Maltese ENGOs, thus revealing a strong sense of antagonism. The radicals and the local ENGOs have democratic structures and are self-financed. They are the least institutionalised ENGOs. What these ENGOs are articulating is least likely to feature in nodal points characterised by environmental discourse which is hegemonic at an EU level. Hence, compared to conservationist and sustainable developmental ENGOs, they are less likely to form part of chains of equivalence that are signified by discourse that represents ideological consent with EU structures.

In the case of radicals, they may be propagating the most radical environmental politics, which is also the case for Malta’s Green Party AD. Similarly to them, this party is the least empowered and institutionalised when compared to the PN and the PL. The local ENGOs are combating on a least favourable terrain in relation to EU accession, because
EU directives and nodal points do not cover much of their concerns. This means that local ENGOs have difficulties in filling empty signifiers with discourse that can be related to EU legislation and policy. When campaigns on local development issues have sensitizing impacts and the occasional substantive impact, this is despite EU policy, as shown later on in this thesis, so it has little to do with Malta’s EU accession. Besides, the direct adversaries of the local ENGOs hail from the construction industry which is very influential in Maltese politics. The case of the local ENGOs shows that being a moderate ENGO is therefore not enough to claim empowerment through EU accession. In their case, their moderatism has not been a gateway to empowerment as much as it has been for other moderate ENGOs.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed by means of qualitative interviews whether the Maltese ENGOs were empowered through Malta’s EU accession, as seen through their own eyes. Prime focus was made on the analysis of ENGOs through their respective ideologies, through which a comparative analysis was carried out. The previous section analysed the main findings, showing that empowerment through EU accession has affected the Maltese ENGOs differently, though they were generally enhanced. In this regard, the conservationists achieved most empowerment, followed by the sustainable development, the radical and the local ENGOs respectively. The next chapters will analyse specific environmental issues involving ENGOs in relation to Malta’s EU accession, through a case study approach. Consequently, the construction of hegemonic formations on such issues can be substantiated through the analysis of sensitizing, procedural, structural and substantive impacts.
6. Case Studies: Development Projects

6.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at 3 case studies which are grouped together as ‘Development Projects’. These cover two specific land development projects in Sliema, and one relating to policy change on a macro-level, covering land development in general, namely Malta’s extension of development zones.

6.2 The articulation of development as an environmental issue

Like other micro-states, Malta shares an intensification of the problem of management of space (Baldacchino, 1992). Between the 1990s and 2008, Malta’s population density kept growing, and increased by 9 per cent, rising to 1,309 persons per square kilometre (MEPA, 2010b: 8). In this regard,

‘while Malta’s population has largely met its basic material needs, the population continues to place unsustainable demands on the environment, putting strains on natural resources and processes’ (MEPA, 2010a: 4).

By the turn of the century, construction and quarrying accounted for around 3 per cent of Malta’s GDP, compared to the 22 per cent contribution of manufacturing and the 20 per cent contribution of tourism respectively, the latter having ‘relatively high inter-industry linkages and multiplier effects’ (National Commission for Sustainable Development, 2004: 31-33). In this regard, John A. Consiglio (2009) says that in the past half-century, the Maltese economy adopted a ‘Tourism and Building Construction Model’ (4).
Housing permits increased between 2000 and 2008, even though the progressive upward trend between 2000 and 2007 was reversed in 2008, probably due to the prevailing economic climate (MEPA, 2010b: 10). At the same time, annual growth rates for construction between 2004 and 2008 peaked at 8.3 per cent in 2006 (compared to 3.3 per cent in the EU-27) and went down to 2.4 per cent in 2008 (compared to -3.1 per cent in the EU-27) (Eurostat, 2010: 375). By 2008, Malta’s land area was covered mostly by agriculture (51 per cent), urban areas (22 per cent) and natural vegetation (19 per cent). Malta had 62 urban conservation areas and 1,904 scheduled cultural heritage buildings, monuments, features and archaeological sites (ibid: 29). Compared to the 27 EU member states, Malta had the lowest percentage of utilised agricultural land occupied by organic farming (Eurostat, 2010: 459). According to Malta’s 2005 national census, 27.6 per cent of all dwellings were vacant – an increase of 49 per cent from 1995. 22.4 per cent of all dwellings were permanently vacant (cited in MEPA, 2010b: 8). The overdevelopment of the Malta has resulted in many calls for change in policy. MEPA (2010a) itself has said that

‘urgent measures, including economic instruments and re-orientation of the construction industry towards rehabilitation, are needed to address this issue in ways that do not place undue pressures on affordability and availability of housing, and take into account social and economic implications’ (8)

60 per cent of respondents of a scientific survey commissioned for MEPA in 2008 agreed that there should be penalties on vacant properties and buildings so as to encourage their use, though this figure decreased from 66 per cent in 1999 (MEPA, 2010c: 55). Subsequently, in the run up to Malta’s 2008 membership of the Eurozone, when the Government introduced incentives for people to declare otherwise undeclared money, it
seemed to be the case that property development became a prime area for the channelling of such money (Debono, 2007c).

Around 20 per cent of land in Malta has been given legal protection, and 13 per cent (MEPA, 2010a: 46) forms part of the “safety net” for Europe’s biodiversity” (Scheuer, 2005b: 13). This refers to the Natura 2000 network of protected sites for habitats and species of European Community interest, which, in turn are identified under the Bird Directive 2009/147/EC (codified version of 79/409/EEC) and Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. On average, 15 per cent of land in the EU forms part of Natura 2000 (Scheuer, 2005b: 41). On the other hand, 29 per cent of Maltese habitats and 36 per cent of Maltese species featuring in the EC Habitats Directive had an unknown status, whilst 64 per cent of habitats and 44 per cent of species included in the EC Habitats Directive were considered to have ‘an inadequate or bad conservation status’ (MEPA, 2010a: 46).

Given the above, it is not surprising that overdevelopment was a major environmental issue in post-EU accession Malta. Indeed, as already stated previously, following Malta’s EU accession, ENGOs such as Flimkien għall-Ambjent Aħjar and the Ramblers’ Association were set up, both focusing on issues such as overdevelopment in urban and rural areas respectively. Together with other ENGOs, they co-ordinated two of the largest single environmental demonstrations in Malta, in 2006 and 2007 respectively. They also successfully campaigned extensively against various controversial developments such as the proposed golf course at Xagħra l-Ħamra, various developments in Gozo. ENGOs in Malta have articulated an empty signifier which can be called ‘Stop Overdevelopment’.
The signifier has been filled with various claims, for example by linking overdevelopment to lack of sustainability, lack of open spaces, negative effects on people’s health and the negative impact of construction on the environment, society and the economy. Here, meaning was partially fixed, creating a nodal point for such issues.

6.3 Development in Malta: Chains of equivalence and ENGOs

Victorious environmental alliances against development projects were formed in Malta following EU accession. These included those against the proposed golf course at Xaghra l-Hamra and the Ramla l-Hamra villa complex (Boissevain, n.d.: 8). At times, the moniker of ‘Coalition of Environmental NGOs’ was used. An example in this regard relates to the opposition towards ‘speculative’ and ‘illegal’ development in Ta’ Cenc, Gozo, where the land in question was said to be omitted from the Natura 2000 network by the Maltese parliament, thus ‘losing access to substantial EU funding and career opportunities in rural development for a national park’ (Galea Debono, 2006f).

Ad hoc and temporary committees based on local issues were also set up following Malta’s EU accession, such as the Committee for the Rural Protection of Ghajn Tuffieha, which opposed the proposed Golf Course at Xaghra l-Hamra referred to above and a proposed bypass on rural land, which project was subsequently dropped by the Government. The latter issue had been raised at EU level by Green MEP Michael Cramer in 2005, who asked the European Commission if it was aware of the Maltese Government’s plan to develop a bypass on good quality agricultural land (Farrugia, M. 2006f). Other coalitions, however, were of more lasting duration. These include Moviment Harsien Ħondoq and the Committee Against the Recycling Plant as proposed. The latter had the structure of a federation, and
attempted to construct a broad alliance. However, it did not share the same fortunes of, for example, the Front Against the Golf Course, even if Malta was now an EU member state. As Diana Aquilina (2011) puts it, the Maltese Government did not breach any EU directive when developing the recycling plant, and its discourses of ecological modernization and neo-liberalism favoured the process. Indeed, ENGOs and AD used the EU as a further resort to protest against various developments, including

‘the extension of the Development Zone boundary; the Fort Cambridge apartment blocks; the Ta’ Cenc extension, villas and heritage park; the Midi consortium’s massive Manoel Island and Tigne’ Point projects; the Pender Gardens multi-story apartment complex; the mega Smart City township development; the 900 unit apartment complex on Xemxija Hill; the Mistra Bay disco; the Qala Creek hotel, marina and tourist village scheme; and the alleged excessive export of farmed bluefin tuna’ (Boissevain, n.d.: 8)

By the end of 2008, there were eight petitions dealing with development projects before the Petitions Committee of the European Parliament. Among others, these included one against the proposed recycling plant in Sant’Antin, Marsascala and one against the polluting activity of a cement factory in Lija, both of which were dismissed by the European Commission (Harwood, 2009: 128-9). In addition, four petitions concerned hunting and poaching (which is referred to below), and two concerned the general environment (ibid: 128).

This section will focus on three case-studies, namely the Qui-Si-Sana gardens, Fort Cambridge, and the Local Plan Rationalisation process, which, in turn, share similarities and differences due to their specific characteristics. The case studies show that as far as development projects go, various types of alliances were formed, at times being broad and inclusive of various ENGOs, other NGOs and the Green Party, and at other times
being more restrictive. Amidst the diverse chains of equivalence, the ‘other’ consistently comprised the construction industry, the Nationalist Government and the Malta Environment and Planning Authority, even though the latter two could be seen as the condensation of antagonistic forces.

6.4 Qui-si-sana Gardens, Sliema

A development proposal characterised by antagonism was the proposal of a car park and commercial centre in Qui-si-sana, Sliema, beneath an existing public garden. It was proposed in a Government development brief in 1999 which was subsequently amended in 2002 following public consultation (Busuttil, 2005b; The Times, November 24th, 2004). The contractors in question, C & F Contractors, were also due to develop a separate car park and commercial outlet at the Chalet, another coastal area very close to Qui-si-sana (Cini, 2005a). The proposal also formed part of a plan to divert traffic from Bisazza Street to the Qui-si-sana and Tigne’ peninsula, in view of plans for the pedestrianization of the former. This area was also subject to extensive commercial at residential development at Tigne’ point (known as MIDI – this had already been approved), Fort Cambridge (which was approved during this car park controversy – next section refers), and the proposed development known as Townsquare.

The Nationalist-dominated Sliema Local Council agreed with the proposed development at Qui-si-sana gardens, yet it opposed further development at garden level with the exception of a small kiosk (Cini, 2004). On the other hand the Green\textsuperscript{30} and Labour

\textsuperscript{30} I was the Green Councillor in question. I represented Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party in Sliema Local Council between 2003-9 and from 2012 onwards.
minority opposed the proposal. Nationalist Environment Minister George Pullicino, himself from Sliema, told Malta’s parliament that he expected MEPA to consider the development application in line with a 2002 development brief for the area. Pullicino added that the development brief proposed an upgrading of the area, and that the development would still include the public garden (The Times, November 24, 2004). In an interview with The Times newspaper, Pullicino declared that the main reason why he ‘pushed this project is to reduce the pressure on parking spaces for residents in the locality’ (Cini, 2005c).

The Qui-si-sana Residents Association

opposed the proposal, and it was endorsed by the Green Party (The Times, January 21st, 2005). The Association claimed that the proposal served to attract more traffic and consequently to increase air pollution in the area. In a meeting held for residents of the area, residents were reported to have had a sense of disillusionment for being ‘let down’ by Government MPs. The only exception was that of member of parliament and former Sliema mayor Robert Arrigo, who was opposing the development and who wrote back to residents to confirm his support (Farrugia, M. 2005).

In a heated Sliema council general meeting in April 2005, then Sliema mayor Albert Bonello Dupuis said that the fresh plans for the project were unacceptable. He gave a two-month deadline to the developer to submit new plans (Busuttil, 2005a). Yet, in June 2005, the Sliema Local Council did not agree with the Green proposal to oppose the

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31 The association was later on renamed ‘Qui-si-sana and Tigne’ Residents Association’.
project and to have fresh public consultation, but instead agreed to meet the Prime Minister in order to press for the withdrawal of the development brief (Busuttil, 2005b). This followed a previous decision which was approved thanks to the support of a Nationalist councillor to a Green-Labour proposal for public consultation on the project, in a heated meeting attended by Qui-si-sana residents (Cini, 2005b). Concurrently, the Qui-si-sana Residents’ Association appealed to the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Environment to reconsider the project. Furthermore it petitioned the European Parliament through the Alternattiva Demokratika and the European Green Party. At the time, the secretary general of the European Green Party was Maltese politician Arnold Cassola (The Times, May 21st 2005). Spanish Green MEP David Hammerstein expressed his support towards the petition (The Times, May 26th, 2005), which insisted that the proposed development required an Environment Impact Assessment. MEPA believed that the development did not require an EIA, even though it was estimated that around 11 million cars a year would be passing on the road connected to the car park, in a congested residential area (Galea Debono, 2005a).

The issue was made even more controversial when the developers announced that they would charge residents for a parking permit in the car park (Debono, 2005a). This had already been opposed by the Sliema Local Council (Cini, 2005a), and, eventually by the Ministries for Rural Affairs and the Environment and Urban Development and Roads respectively. In the meantime, the Sliema Council also applied for its own residential parking scheme, independently of the developer’s (Debono, 2005b). The developers proceeded to submit updated plans which apart from a three-storey car park also included
a bowling alley, a health centre, a gym, a dance studio and a squash court, in addition to retail outlets and top-floor development of a catering facilities (Debono, 2005c).

Another antagonistic local council meeting held in November 2005 – four months before the upcoming council elections - once again split the council, as Green and Labour councillors demanded a government consultation meeting with residents over the proposed car park, whilst Nationalist majority councillors asserted that they were in favour of having a car park. Members of the Qui-si-sana Residents Association said that the Council had committed a ‘double u-turn’ and that Nationalist councillors were being pressurised by their own Government to support the project (Galea Debono, 2005b). The association subsequently held a meeting for its members and it was decided to condemn not only Nationalist councillors, but also the Prime Minister and Ministers and MPs from the Sliema district. Legal action and a demonstration were also being considered (Micallef, 2005). The latter took place, in front of the Prime Minister’s office, but only around 20 residents turned up (Galea Debono, 2006a).

As the Sliema Local Council elections were drawing closer, Alternattiva Demokratika held a press conference on the existent Qui-si-sana garden, stating that the proposed development would have adverse impacts on the quality of life of residents, showing that ‘all the talk about consultation and subsidiarity have been revealed to be just talk’ (Farrugia, M. 2006a). The Greens also said that Brussels would soon discuss the petition it had submitted (ibid). Yet, to the disappointment of both the Greens and Qui-si-sana residents, the European Commission announced that there did not seem to be any
infringement of EU rules. As regards the need or otherwise of an Environmental Impact Assessment, the Commission said that the project fell under the responsibility of MEPA, as Malta’s national authority. The Qui-si-sana Residents’ Association was invited to submit any further information it had on the issue (Camilleri, 2006a).

The Nationalist majority in the Sliema Council reiterated its stand in favour of a car park in Qui-si-sana when, a few days before the Council election, they voted not to object against the developer’s proposals that were submitted to MEPA (and that had a 30-day deadline for comments) ‘as long as they conform to the development brief’ (Debono, 2006a). The Labour and Green councillors voted against this motion (ibid). The attitude of the Nationalist majority was in synch with sociological findings of Anna Zammit (2002), who found that the dominance of partisan politics constrains the behaviour of local council mayors, who would otherwise have been more environmentally-conscious. She found that

‘party allegiance led to nepotism and interference, which in turn bred the feelings of resignation that appear in the mayor’s comments’ (200).

Thus environmental action was

‘often hampered by party political issues, including pique, nepotism, lack of cooperation and vote catching’ (ibid: 202).

It was more common to have such organisations contact Mayors rather than the other way round, hence revealing a lack of organic relationships between local councils and ENGOs (ibid: 119).
In the meantime, Labour announced that it would stop the Qui-si-sana car park project if it were in power, and called for transparency on the matter (The Sunday Times, February 26th, 2006). The Qui-si-sana Residents’ Association voiced its concerns loudly in a public meeting chaired by the Minister for Urban Development and Roads, Jesmond Mugliett, and the Transport Authority, over proposed traffic changes at the Ferries and Tigne’ in Sliema (Micallef, 2006a).

A few days before the Sliema Local Council election, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi wrote to the 693 persons who had written to him a few weeks earlier, sending him the same petition that was sent to the European Commission. Gonzi said that the petition was not based on correct information, that Sliema needed a resident parking zone. He further stated that the new development would not feature unwelcome forms of business. He added that it was up to MEPA to decide on the proposed development (Fenech, N. 2006a).

Following the 2006 Sliema Council election, which confirmed 6 Nationalist seats (albeit with 10 per cent less votes) as against 2 Labour and 1 Green seat32, Sliema had a new mayor, Marina Arrigo, the wife of former Mayor and current MP Robert Arrigo. She replaced Albert Bonello Dupuis, who was known to be closer to Minister George Pullicino, in what seemed to be a rivalry between both Sliema heavyweights. A few days later, the Prime Minister met residents from Qui-si-sana in a meeting that was reportedly arranged by Robert Arrigo. The residents remained resolved in their opposition to the car

32 I was elected on behalf of Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party.
park and the proposed development (Debono, 2006b). Their association appealed for the scrapping of the 2002 development brief and for a rethink of the whole project, especially since thousands of parking spaces were being provided by new developments nearby (Micallef, 2006b).

Marina Arrigo took a different position from that of her predecessor. She stated that she opposed any commercial development in the area, save for a small kiosk, and that the development brief should be changed accordingly. The developers had also withdrawn plans for various commercial aspects of the development, yet only the withdrawal of the 2002 development brief would satisfy the Qui-si-sana Residents’ Association (Debono, 2006d). In the meantime, Prime Minister Gonzi informed Sliema local councillors in a meeting that he would be working to remove commercial development form the proposed development (Debono, 2006f).

In 2007, MP Robert Arrigo requested Jesmon Mugliett, Minister for Urban Development and Roads to withdraw traffic plans through which traffic passing from Bisazza Street would be passing from Qui-si-sana due to the former’s pedestrianization. He also declared the car park proposal as ‘becoming a non-issue’ (Debono, 2007d). Simon Camilleri, on behalf of the Qui-si-sana Residents’ Association told the Malta Today newspaper that Arrigo was ‘the only Sliema MP who listened to Qui-Si-Sana residents when we needed support’ (ibid), adding that Arrigo’s part in holding dialogue between residents and the Prime Minister meant that the car park was ‘on hold’ (ibid). Camilleri said that his organisation had
‘no political agenda; our only brief is to protect the interests of the residents. We have no faith in MEPA or the ADT\textsuperscript{33} to do this. The government’s actions are alarming. The ADT has put its plan into action before the consultation process started. Although this is contrary to EU law, MEPA has accepted it and is processing the application’ (ibid).

The multilateral opposition towards the Qui-si-sana project was effective indeed, and the opposition towards the project, united through the signifier of ‘stop overdevelopment’, ultimately stopped the car park proposal, notwithstanding the fact that there was no EU backing for its cause. The opposition of residents and their respective ENGO, Green and Labour representatives, and the assistance of a Nationalist MP and his Mayor wife formed a victorious chain of equivalence. Residents were unofficially aware of the shelving of the proposed car park and commercial development. This was officially dropped when the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs applied to MEPA for the upgrading of the garden instead of the development as originally proposed. This proposal ironically came from the Ministry of George Pullicino. This was the second victory for the residents, as plans for nearby commercial and car park development at the Chalet had also been dropped (Malta Today, November 29\textsuperscript{th}, 2009). Qui-si-sana gardens were thus due to be embellished into a recreational park with play areas for children. Yet these were to be complimented by an ADT 2007 traffic management proposal, which was still of concern to residents, given the on-going development of the area (Debono, 2009d).

\textbf{6.5 Fort Cambridge, Sliema}

Amidst the on-going development at the Qui-si-sana and Tigne’ area in Sliema, the Fort Cambridge development proposal caused political controversy in a not so different way.

\textsuperscript{33} Malta Transport Authority.
from the Qui-si-sana car park issue. Yet the two development proposals, situated very close to each other, had different outcomes. In the case of Fort Cambridge, residents, and the Qui-si-sana and Tigne’ Residents Association in particular – with the support of the Green Party and Green and Labour local councillors and ENGO Flimkien għall-Ambjent Ahjar, were not successful in stopping the development project. However, EU intervention enabled the commissioning of an Environment Impact Assessment for the project.

The Fort Cambridge proposal comprised an area of 25,220 square metres that was previously owned by the Government and was leased to national airline Air Malta for use as a hotel (Crowne Plaza). The land also comprised a historic fort dating from the early 1900s with ditches dating from the 1880s. The Nationalist Government after submitting the site to a tendering process agreed to sell the entire site to the developers for Lm23 million (equivalent to almost 55 million Euro), subject to a development brief. Once it transpired that the site would be redeveloped and would comprise 386 apartments, opposition was articulated around the signifier of ‘stop overdevelopment’. Then Alternattiva Demokratika Chairperson Harry Vassallo, for example, said that the proposed development would create ‘further chaos in a traffic-choked town’, and that ‘this is a defeat for planning democracy in Malta’ (Grech, 2007a). AD was very critical of the fact that no Environment Impact Assessment was going to take place on the proposed development (ibid), which comprised six blocks including a 16-storey building and a four-level underground car park. The Green Party said that Government’s decision not to have an EIA, which also meant that no Environmental Planning Statement (EPS)
would be required, was illegal. Flimkien għall-Ambjent Ahjar said that this violated EU directives, given that objectors did not have reasonable time to comment following submission of final plans. The ENGO also criticised the Government for actively encouraging ‘cancer-inducing traffic in Sliema’ (Vella, Matthew 2007a).

In a Green Party press conference, AD’s Sliema Local Councillor asked Nationalist councillors to declare their stand on the issue, and lamented on the fact that MEPA was considering projects on a case-by-case basis instead of holistically. In the same press conference, FAA spokesperson Astrid Vella, said that

‘we have found a lot of cooperation from Mepa employees but these are not the ones who dictate policies. We are seeing monuments to greed being built, creating ghettos for the rich, ruining the health of residents in the process’ (Fenech, 2007c)

In the meantime, the Sliema Local Council, whose mayor at the time was Marina Arrigo, announced that it would be requesting a public meeting with MEPA on the matter. The Local Council said that the developer should stick to the development brief and that protected areas would remain protected (The Times, January 18th, 2007). Yet MEPA said that an EPS was not required as it had ‘sufficient information to take a decision’ (ibid) on the application, and that potential negative impacts had been identified through the developer’s project description (PDS). This document was quoted as claiming that negative impacts from vibrations, air quality and shadows caused by tall buildings would be minor. The document did not refer to traffic, yet a separate traffic impact assessment said that given that the area was already characterised by other projects, there would be

34 I was the Local Councillor in question.
no significant impact due to traffic from this particular project (Vella, Matthew 2007a). On the other hand MEPA postponed a public hearing on the project which was scheduled to take place on 29th February, 2007, after its Planning Directorate requested to be given more time to analyse new options on the proposed development (The Times, February 27th, 2007).

A public meeting was called by the Qui-si-sana Residents Association on 1st March, 2007, which also featured participation of Green and Labour councillors together with Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar. During the meeting it was suggested that residents lobby with Members of Parliament and Local Councillors and to complain to the EU (Galea Debono, 2007). A few days later, a judicial protest was filed by Sliema residents who requested MEPA to carry out various impact assessments on the project, which according to them would have negative impacts such as the generation of pollution, noise, and traffic in a densely populated area. They added that even though Malta had not yet transposed EU directives related to environment impact assessments, Malta did not have the right to legislate contrary to EU directives (The Times, March 8th, 2007d).

A day after, MEPA granted outline permission to the Fort Cambridge development – which was now comprising 365 apartments, offices, an underground car park, a hotel, together with the existing military barracks and the Fort Cambridge – which was to be restored. The development comprised six high rise buildings, the highest of which having 23 storeys. MEPA confirmed that no EIA was required as it had sufficient information from the developers. FAA and the Qui-si-sana Residents Association expressed their
objection to the MEPA decision, which was supported by the latter’s entire Board save for Labour representative Joe Brincat, who objected on legal grounds (Farrugia, M. 2007a). Consequently, GAP Developments – the developers of the projects – issued secured bonds amounting to Lm15 million (equivalent to 35 million Euro) to part finance the development (The Times, March 28th, 2007). The bond issue was immediately over-subscribed, with an excess of subscriptions worth Lm1.3 million (The Times, April 25th, 2007). Eventually, Fort Cambridge was given special designation status by the Government, giving rights to non-Maltese residents such as the buying of property within it without the need to apply for a permit that is usually required for such transactions. This status had also been given to six other developments including Portomaso in St Julians and MIDI in Tigne’ (Malta Today, June 20th, 2007).

Just as it seemed that things were plain-sailing for the developers, The Times newspaper reported that the European Commission was verifying whether there were grounds to commence infringement proceedings against Malta given that no EIA was carried out on the project. A complaint on the matter had been formally sent to the Commission by the Qui-si-sana Residents Association (Micallef, 2007g). A few days later, in an article in The Times, MEPA Director-General Godwin Cassar (2007) said that according to the EIA Directive 85/337/EEC, certain projects (‘Annex 1’ projects) always require an EIA, whilst, others (‘Annex 2’ projects) are subject to discretion of EU member states. He asserted that Fort Cambridge fell under the latter.
The European Commission decided to take action against Malta on the waiving of the EIA for Fort Cambridge. It demanded an explanation from Malta, and gave the Government one month to reply instead of the usual two. The Commission asserted that in the unlikely case that Malta ignored the warning, it would urgently take the matter to the European Court of Justice and stop the development, something which only happened twice before in the EU. In reaction to this, GAP Developments chairman George Muscat said that the development would carry on as it had a permit and that things would be considered on a day-by-day basis. Yet he added that he was sure the project would go ahead. Muscat also revealed that around two-thirds of the property had already been sold on plan (Camilleri, I. and Micallef, 2007).

On the other hand, the Quis-sana and Tigne’ Residents Association considered the EU decision to reflect the importance of the issue, adding that rather than having EIAs on individual projects, an independent strategic environmental assessment was required in the whole Tigne’ peninsula. The ENGO added that the application should also be assessed in terms of EU rules related to sustainable development (The Times, July 7th, 2007). The Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment said that in a meeting held in Brussels with Commissioner Dimas, nothing was said on the carrying out of an EIA for the development, but Minister George Pullicino confirmed that the Government would be replying to the EU (The Times, July 19th, 2007a).

Despite the Government’s reply against having an EIA (Camilleri, I. 2007n), MEPA subsequently demanded an EIA from the developers of the project. EU pressure was
apparently effective. In reply to questions by The Times, MEPA now said that an EIA was never excluded. In its words,

‘the permit was conditional on further evaluation of the visual impact, the wind impact and the general cumulative effect which the development, along with other neighbouring large-scale projects, was having on the area’ (Micallef, 2007j).

Flimkien għall-Ambjent Ahjar welcomed the decision, considering it a ‘milestone’. It said that an EIA should have been carried out immediately, and not after the outline permit was given, but that

‘now that we are in the EU, even at this late stage, changes may be required to meet environmental standards’ (ibid).

On 5th June 2008, MEPA was due to give final approval to the Fort Cambridge development, but, following a 5-3 vote, the Board postponed its decision and suggested that the maximum height of the project reached 16 floors instead of 23, as in the development brief and original proposal (Micallef, 2008j). Amidst confrontation between residents and local councillors on one side, and MEPA officials on the other side, it was board member Joe Farrugia who said that the 23-storey height was unacceptable. Interestingly, TV news bulletins emphasised that he was the Prime Minister’s appointee on the MEPA board (Debono, 2008c).

Yet the decision was only postponed for the next 3rd July, and FAA protested that residents’ rights were not being respected as the vital studies were not yet completed. These included a traffic management plan by the Transport Authority and a Social Impact Assessment demanded by the Sliema Local Council. FAA also remarked that one week
before the General Election, which had taken place in March of the same year, Prime Minister Gonzi had promised the Qui-si-sana residents that they would be consulted and that their needs would be given due consideration. As the ENGO put it, ‘so far no consultation has taken place’ (The Times, July 1st, 2008).

D-day had arrived, and the MEPA Board unanimously gave final approval to the Fort Cambridge development in a heated meeting lasting three and a half hours. MEPA approved a maximum height of 20 storeys. Yet some Board members were absent, including Joe Farrugia, who originally proposed the 16-storey compromise. The meeting was characterised by a public relations disaster for new Chairman Austin Walker, as a MEPA statement announcing the approval of the project was given by mistake to the press before the actual meeting commenced. Commenting on this incident, the Office of the Prime Minister said that MEPA’s public relations officer had been instructed to prepare draft statements for the possible outcomes, yet Walker refused to give a copy of the alternative text to the press. The Labour Party immediately criticised the press release issue, calling it a ‘farce’ with respect to public consultation (Micallef, 2008k). ENGOs were highly critical of the MEPA Board meeting in question. Din l-Art Helwa said that, following other bad decisions, the Authority’s credibility was ‘at an all time low’ (Micallef, 2008l). The Ramblers Association was also disappointed, and FAA said that developers were still ‘ruling this country due to a weak political class who are not prepared to stand up to them’ (ibid).
The following August, Sliema’s Green Councillor\(^{35}\) presented a motion demanding that the Sliema Local Council appeals against the proposed development, on the grounds that the 20-proposal approval was in violation of the development brief maximum height of 16 storeys (Malta Today, August 20\(^{th}\), 2008). It was also stated that the Environment Impact Assessment was incomplete in view of its lack of a social impact assessment (Debono, 2008d). The motion was supported by all Nationalist and Labour councillors, including Mayor Marina Arrigo, whilst former Mayor Albert Bonello Dupuis abstained. MEPA subsequently said that the 20 storey height of the project respects the 16-storey limit as the 20 storeys can be developed within the 16 storeys (Debono, 2008e).

As the appeal fizzled out, it was announced that Charles and Anthony Azzopardi, big-businessmen known for their ownership of Azzopardi Fisheries, which, in turn was caught in a bluefin tuna controversy (referred to in a subsequent case study in this chapter), was injecting 17 million Euro into the Fort Cambridge development, through a company named Tigne’ Skies. The developers of the project, GAP, which had already collected 35 million Euro through its earlier bond issues, also announced that over 225 apartments out of the permitted 341 were sold, though it was not clear how many of these were dependent on promise-of-sale agreements (Darmanin, 2009). Indeed, by September 2009, an interim financial statement by GAP Developments to the Malta Stock Exchange revealed an increase momentum in works but a slowdown in sales. The company had agreements which were expected to earn 99 million Euro in sales. By June 30 of the same year, 10 million Euro were received by the company (The Times, September 7\(^{th}\), 2009).

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\(^{35}\) I was the Councillor.
Hence, unlike what happened in the Qui-si-sana gardens project, this time around the development project went ahead.

The dominance of the Nationalist Party in Sliema was an overdetermining factor in this respect. Even though Nationalist councillors endorsed protests against the development, they did not oppose the development *per se*. As Jon Vercellono (2009) put it, Sliema residents are

> ‘effective “prisoners” of their political affiliation and … social, cultural and historical factors contribute to an inflexible unwillingness to entertain discourse of other political parties who may better support their interests’ (iv).

Indeed, Qui-si-sana is a traditionally Nationalist leaning part of Sliema. Residents and their respective ENGO and political party supporters were successful in stopping the development of the Qui-si-sana garden, but this was overshadowed by other development such as Fort Cambridge, even though in the case of the latter there was EU intervention (as regards need for an EIA) as well as active support of additional ENGOs, such as FAA. The chains of equivalence formed for Qui-si-sana garden, and the respective success of the alliance, represented more of a one-off victory rather than a trend of successes. In the last instance, and amidst antagonisms in place, the symbiotic relationship between the state and land developers remained a powerful overdetermining factor, even in the heart of the Nationalist constituency Sliema. The dislocatory discursive opportunities brought about through EU accession and signified through EU Directives were either inexistent or ineffective against such a hegemonic formation.
6.6 The Local Plan Rationalisation Process

The third case study regarding development concerns Malta’s local plan rationalisation process. Unlike the previous two case studies, which concerned two specific development projects in Sliema, this case study focuses on a national process which was of significance to development in general, thus being on a macro-level.

Following Malta’s EU accession, the Nationalist Government conducted a land rationalisation exercise which was to set clear boundaries for development, over the ones in place, which had been drawn up in 1988, a year after the Nationalists took over from 16 years of Labour Governments. In May 2006, Environment Minister George Pullicino said that the schemes that were in place were designed in a rushed way to stop urban sprawl, resulting in various ‘anomalies’ and ‘injustices’. Pullicino said that following the drawing up of local plans, various demands were made for inclusion of land within development zones. Hoping that the issue would not be made ‘political’, Pullicino added that criteria for inclusion in development zones would be subject to public consultation, resulting in legally-binding development zones for 10 years (Fenech, N. 2006b). Controversy immediately erupted, resulting in chains of equivalence behind the ‘stop over development’ signifier.

A few days later, Labour Party spokespersons said that caution should be exerted in such an extension, and expressed concern that Cabinet was interfering in such matters and that the government was contradicting its own polices, especially since 23 per cent of Malta was built up (The Times, May 17th, 2006). Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party
labelled such plans as ‘mass destruction’, representing a turn for the worse and threatening areas such as garigues, arable fields, urban landscapes and valleys. The Greens announced that a task force with NGOs has been set up on the issue. Chairperson Harry Vassallo said that ‘Malta has become an eternal building site for electoral reasons’ (The Times, May 20\textsuperscript{th}, 2006). The Malta Chamber of Planners (Grech, 2006a), the Church Environment Commission (Busuttil, 2006), and the Chamber of Architects and the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (Micallef, 2006c) also opposed Government’s plans.

The draft criteria that were eventually set by Cabinet included various conditions, yet it ultimately meant that the amount of land that would be potentially subject to development was around double that originally earmarked by MEPA, which, in turn, were deemed ‘inconsistent’ by a spokesperson for the Environment Ministry. In the meantime, The Times reported that some of the land in question belonged to certain Members of Parliament and high-profile figures of both major political parties as well as certain notorious developers (Micallef and Grech, 2006). Minister George Pullicino (2006a), writing in The Times, presented himself as a rational arbiter in the issue, stating that ‘like most issues, there are two opposing positions on the changes to the development boundaries’ and that only 10 per cent of land requested for inclusion will actually be approved for development. He said that this process was beneficial to the environment as ‘it provides for settlement boundaries that are rational and, therefore, less likely to be subject to extension in some future date’ (ibid). He also warned against the repercussions of having a possible future Labour government characterised by ‘the well
known practice of Labour candidates of promising everything to everyone’ (ibid). The Nationalist Government was, therefore, articulating a discourse of ‘rationality’ and of being an ‘arbitrator of competing interests’, as against the opposing signifier of ‘stop overdevelopment’, which, in turn, was being characterised by expanding chains of equivalence from political parties in opposition and civil society representatives which also included ENGOs.

Indeed, Martin Galea (2006), executive president of Din l-Art Helwa, disagreed with the Minister’s discourse. Referring to official statistics, Galea reminded that construction activities only account for 4.7 per cent of GDP, that 23 per cent of properties are vacant, and that 23 per cent of Malta’s land is urbanised. Thus he said that rather than increasing Malta’s development zone by 2.4 per cent, Government should do the opposite, as

‘development has exploded beyond all boundaries of sustainability and credibility’ (ibid).

In the meantime, various NGOs – including conservationist, sustainable development, local and radical ENGOs - declared that a ‘non-political’, ‘national environment rally’ would be held to protest against overdevelopment and ‘environmental abuse’, and ‘to demand a better future for Malta’s children’. They decried Government’s rationalisation plans as well as proposals for development in areas such as Ta’ Cenc and Xaghra l-Hamra (The Times, May 31st, 2006). In anticipation of the rally, Moviment Graffitti, protested during Malta’s official commemoration of the bread riots of June 7 1919 (a national feast), and displayed a banner with the words ‘1919 – Hakma Kolonjali, 2006 –
Hakma ta’ l-Ispelulaturi\textsuperscript{36}, to the on looking dignitaries. In a statement reminiscent of environmental class conflict (Layfield, 2008), the organisation said that Malta was being ruled by speculators and developers in the environmental field (Farrugia, M. 2006b).

The ENGO rally was held in Malta’s capital city Valletta on 11\textsuperscript{th} June, 2006 and had a considerably large turnout. During the rally, leading spokesperson Astrid Vella, of Flimkien għall-Ambjent Ahjar, made reference to various development controversies, and, together with Lino Bugeja of the Ramblers’ Association, urged the public to sign a petition against extension of development zones and for the serious analysis of other developments in relation to sustainability. The petition also appealed for all political parties to ‘unite on the environmental front’ (Galea Debono, 2006b). FAA, which took a leading role in the rally, also called for an autonomous and accountable MEPA; legislation on transparent political party financing; rent law reform; full citizens’ access to information, representation and protection; and a ban on development outside development zones. Astrid Vella remarked that the Qui-si-sana residents had set an important precedent in having MEPA refuse a permit after it was given. The 500 or so demonstrators and NGO representatives were also joined by Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party and representatives of the Nationalist and Labour parties. PN president Victor Scerri justified their presence due to what he considered as the pro-environment credentials of the activity, rather than a protest against the development zones extension (Vella, Matthew 2006a; 2006b).

\textsuperscript{36} Tr. from Maltese: ‘1919 – Colonial Rule, 2006- Speculators’ Rule’.
Following the rally, the Nationalist Party issued a statement along the lines of the ‘rational arbiter’ discourse, saying that it was pro-environment and that it backed Government’s actions in favour of the environment, giving various examples of the latter (The Sunday Times, June 11th, 2006). Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi later said that the boundaries extension was very much related to his Government’s decision to increase availability of dwellings in the housing market, thus rendering housing more affordable for couples. He criticised what he saw as an absence of socio-economic arguments by those opposing the rationalisation process. Gonzi added that a consultation process on the matter had been going on since 1993 (Farrugia, M. 2006d).

In the meantime, individual ENGOs kept coming in with their protests. Birdlife Malta said that Malta had enough land to cover demand for housing till 2020, and that injustices committed in the past would not be overcome by ignoring the planning process (The Times, 23rd June 2006). Friends of the Earth Malta criticised the consultation process, given that Cabinet had already approved the boundaries’ extension. The ENGO added that a moratorium on further development was required, and that there was no social need for new housing given that there were more than 20,000 vacant properties. In its words, ‘sustainability is only a buzzword among our politicians’ (The Sunday Times, 25th June 2006). Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar also criticised the claim that there was a social need for the extension of boundaries, and reiterated on the extent of vacant properties, adding that whilst the European average of built-up land was 7 per cent, Malta’s was 22 per cent. The ENGO said that existing old houses should be restorated, and said that Government was acting as a speculator on the matter, as it was the largest single landowner involved
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(The Times, 27\textsuperscript{th} June 2006). Nature Trust criticised the 6-week short period for consultation on the matter, adding that the proposals ‘go beyond sustainable development and environmental protection’, given Malta’s size (The Times, June 30\textsuperscript{th}, 2006). Yet, the period for public consultation ended on June 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 2006, thus awaiting Parliamentary review (Micallef, 2006c).

The Times newspaper also appealed to government to ‘drop its proposals’ (The Times, June 20\textsuperscript{th}, 2006), and Malta Today newspaper asked Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas in relation to the extension of 2.4 per cent of Malta’s area and whether this was infringing the Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42/EC, which is directed towards government planning in order that environmental considerations and public participation are factored in the process (Scheuer, 2005b: 15). Hence, the EU was now being used as a further resort by quoting EU legislation, in line with the discourse of ‘stop overdevelopment’. In reply, the Government claimed that the Directive in question was not being breached (Debono, 2006c). Yet, Malta Today reported that official sources within the European Commission were investigating whether Malta was breaching the Directive (Debono, 2006e).

Concurrently, four ENGOs asked Malta’s Civil Court to issue a warrant of prohibitory injunction against MEPA, on the grounds that Cabinet or the respective Minister could not impose changes to local plans. Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar, BICREF, Friends of the Earth Malta and the Ramblers’ Association added that MEPA could not communicate any conclusions to the Government (The Times, July 7\textsuperscript{th}, 2006). At the same time,
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Minister George Pullicino announced that the final revised extension, duly submitted to MEPA, resulted in an extension of 2.3 per cent, thus being 0.1 per cent smaller than was previously the case (Micallef, 2006d). A few days later, different ENGOs held a joint press event and appealed to Government to drop its plans, which required parliamentary discussion and approval (Micallef, 2006e).

Yet, the Nationalist Government remained steadfast in the position, with Pullicino (2006b) resorting to the ‘rationalist arbitrator’ discourse once again. Indeed, he stated that Labour was the ‘main speculator’ on the issue as it was trying to please everyone at the same time, unlike Government which was deciding on such a sensitive issue. He retorted that the opponents also included persons whose property was not included in the new proposed boundaries. Pullicino said that 90 per cent of requests for extensions were refused, and that the 2.3 per cent increase in land for development actually amounted to 0.4 per cent of Malta’s total area, whilst 46 per cent of proposed changes were included in MEPA’s local plans. On the same day of Pullicino’s article, 14th July 2006, the parliamentary debate on the development zones commenced (The Times, July 15th, 2006). Yet the ENGOs did not give up, and two days later, the coalition of ENGOs announced that another national protest was going to be held the following week, when Parliament was going to vote on the proposals. Lino Bugeja, representing the Ramblers’ Association, said

‘It is clear that the government’s unusual urgency to rush the rationalisation process (through Parliament) by Wednesday is manifestly meant to pre-empt EU structures which come to force on July 21’ (Galea Debono, 2006c).

Bugeja added that it was ironic that George Pullicino’s most recent article on rationalisation was published on Bastille Day and contained Orwellian discourse on
‘adjusted boundaries for better planning’ (ibid), as did FAA spokesperson Astrid Vella (2006), who also referred to the ‘Big brother’ Orwellian rhetoric of the Minister. The Green Party’s Gozo Regional Committee, Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar (ibid) and Moviment Graffitti (The Times, July 17th, 2006a) appealed to the public to participate in the upcoming protest march. Vella appealed to Prime Minister Gonzi to ‘listen to what the people who voted you in are saying’, and criticised the rationalisation process. Din l-Art Helwa and Nature Trust reiterated their appeals to Government against the extensions, basing their argument on loss of natural heritage with no economic or social benefits (The Times, July 18th, 2006a). The Church’s Environment Commission – through its chairperson Victor Axiak (2006) - also expressed its reservations on the extensions, and referred to an article by Bishop Emeritus Nikol Cauchi (2006), published a few days earlier in The Times (as was the case with Axiak’s) on land use and sustainable development, citing the importance to balance out socio-economic and environmental needs.

A day before Parliament’s decision and the respective ENGO’s protest, the coalition of ENGOs met President Eddie Fenech Adami (who had been Prime Minister of Malta between 1987 and 2004, save for the 22-month interval of Labour rule) and distributed fliers to members of parliament. In the meeting, the ENGO representatives insisted that the boundaries’ extension was handled in an ultra vires manner given that it was in violation of the Development Planning Act. Astrid Vella was reported as saying that the ‘silent majority... far beyond the numbers who will turn up to protest’ (Grech, 2006d) were supporting the cause of the ENGOs. Lino Bugeja told the Times that 5,000
Nationalist sympathizers were ready to ‘withhold their vote in the coming election’ should the plans be approved (ibid). The chains of equivalence articulated around the ‘stop overdevelopment’ discourse were thus being portrayed as having significant electoral strength.

The protest march took place on 20th July, 2006, and around 1,000 persons participated – a massive amount for such a demonstration, considering that such protests usually attract between half a dozen and the odd two-dozen activists. 10 NGOs and the Green Party were officially represented. Astrid Vella said that those attending actually represented 10,000 votes, as many were backing their cause. She also appealed to MPs not to vote on Party lines. Ramblers’ spokesperson Lino Bugeja said that the issue would be taken to Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas, whilst a spokesperson from Friends of the Earth Malta referred to the importance of the SEA directive (Galea Debono, 2006d). In response, the Government said that its process was exempt from Malta’s Strategic Environment Assessment Regulations 2005, because the rationalisation process commenced before Malta’s EU accession and was now in its final stages (The Sunday Times, July 23rd, 2006a). In the meantime, MEPA declared that it received 3,913 requests for the inclusion of more sites within development boundaries, and 1,439 objections (The Sunday Times, July 23rd, 2006b), thus seemingly confirming Government’s ‘arbiter’ discourse.

In the meantime, the coalition of NGOs wrote to the Members of Parliament and urged them to vote ‘for Malta’ rather than according to party lines. Moviment Graffitti warned
of the ‘economic, social, and psychological negative repercussions’ of overdevelopment (The Times, July 25th, 2006). The Green Party filed a judicial protest warning against Parliamentary approval of the rationalisation process, and a spokesperson for the EU Environment Commissioner was reported as saying that Government’s decision may be violating the SEA directive (Micallef, 2006f).

On July 26th, 2006, Malta’s parliament approved the boundaries extension in strict accordance with party affiliation, with 33 Nationalist MPs voting in favour, and 28 Labour MPs voting against, even though Labour granted a free vote to its representatives. During the session, Labour leader Alfred Sant made allegations on the way some properties were included in the development zones. He said that this ‘web of corruption’ was characterised by ‘friends of friends’ and took Malta back to the 1960s (The Times, July 27th, 2006). During the parliamentary session, ENGOs held another protest in front of Parliament, and once again referred to the SEA Directive. They also lamented the fact that over half of the sites included in the new development zones were only recently submitted, thus betraying Government’s argument that the rationalisation process started years back (Galea Debono, 2006e).

Living up to his ‘rational arbiter’ discourse, Environment Minister George Pullicino announced during a subsequent press conference the possibility of setting up an Appeals Board for persons who felt that their property should have been included in the development zone extensions. The Minister asserted that the reason why land was left out of the process was an environmental one, and ‘not out of spite or to vindicate ourselves’.
Pullicino also attempted to unite himself with the ‘stop overdevelopment’ discursive coalition when he said that Labour promised a greater extension of zones than that approved by Parliament, and remarked that Labour MPs Roderick Galdes and Charles Buhagiar had actually suggested such extensions. In what seemed to be a reply to the ENGO criticism, he said that 65 per cent of extended land had been recommended by MEPA and included in local plans, whilst in what seemed to be a reply to Sant’s jibe on friends of friends, he asserted that

“One loses friends with such exercises, but we established criteria to avoid creating anomalies. It was an exercise where we put the country before the party’” (The Times, July 28th, 2006).

A few days later, on 7th August 2006, MEPA announced that it approved all local plans for Malta and Gozo, thus completing a process which had been going on for the previous years. It said that the plans aimed at ‘regulating development’ (The Times, August 8th, 2006). The Chamber of Architects congratulated MEPA and Minister Pullicino for the approval and publication of the last four local plans in question (The Times, August 12th, 2006).

In the meantime, adversaries of the ‘stop overdevelopment’ coalition were becoming more vociferous in their demands. Indeed, later on during the year, the Chamber of Small and Medium Enterprises (GRTU) criticised the Government for lack of consultation on the local plans, yet for a very different reason of the ENGOs. The GRTU said that the new plans threatened developers who had already submitted development proposals and made respective costings, and called for measures to avoid having the construction sector fall into ruin. It also called for fiscal incentives to encourage property rental (The Times,
October 15th, 2006). MEPA’s Audit Officer Joseph Falzon also commented on the procedures adopted by MEPA for its local plans approvals, and concluded that there was the risk of ‘potential abuse’ due to lack of transparency (Micallef, 2006g).

During November 2006, Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party filed a judicial protest on the SEA issue and also wrote to the European Commission, arguing that the Government’s extension of development boundaries was illegal, as it breached the respective directive, given that the rationalisation process had substantial environmental effects (Micallef, 2006h). Yet a spokesperson for the European Commission said that it currently had no plans to take legal action against Malta. Instead, it said the issue was going to be raised during ‘normal’ discussions with the Government (Camilleri, I. 2006l). AD added that it would be taking legal action against the Government, adding that it was not legitimate to consider last-minute amendments to local plans as being part of a proper planning process (The Times, December 18th, 2006). In January 2007, the Greens filed an official letter in court, which was due to be followed by a request for a prohibitory injunction on development in the extended boundaries (Micallef, 2007a). The latter was carried out on January 26th 2007 by the AD Chairperson and 65 persons who claimed to be affected by the rationalisation process (The Times, January 26th, 2007). Subsequently, Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar, Friends of the Earth Malta, the Ramblers Association and Moviment Graffitti filed a sworn application that claimed that the parliamentary motion which approved the rationalisation process was illegal. The application which was filed together with 125 persons negatively affected by the extensions approval, claimed that
Government’s approval did not comprise an exemption from the SEA Directive, and also demanded that the Court disallows MEPA from issuing permits in land included in the development zones. Government’s SEA Audit Team, the Minister for the Environment and MEPA were addressed in the application (The Times, February 3rd, 2007; The Times, February 9th, 2007; Debono, 2007a). Concurrently, however, others took opposite legal action. Co-owners of land at Bahar ic-Caghaq filed a judicial protest against the fact that their land was not part of the new development zones, and had thus been excluded from the rationalisation process (The Times, January 17th, 2007).

In February 2007, a Court dismissed the application that was submitted by AD and 65 persons, on the grounds that the Green Party had no legal interest to justify a warrant of prohibitory injunction, and that there was no proof that the latter would protect the rights of the applicants. The Court also claimed that the rationalisation process was legal. AD replied that it will show that EU Directives were being violated (The Times, February 15th, 2007).

Just a few weeks later, the European Commission commenced infringement procedures against Malta and asked the Government for clarifications on the rationalisation process (Debono, 2007b). Yet the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment insisted that the Government was in conformity with the EU legislation (Micallef, 2007e).

Later on during the year, radical ENGOs Moviment Graffitti and Zminijietna Voice of the Left separately referred to the fact said that according to Malta’s latest census, vacant
property was on the increase. Zminijietna said that it was ‘ironic that while vacant property is increasing, the Government increased land area for development in the 2006 rationalisation exercise’ (The Sunday Times, November 4th, 2007), whilst Moviment Graffitti called for a national plan for better use of property (The Times, November 29th, 2007). On the other hand, a mix of conservationist and sustainable developmental ENGOs, namely Din l-Art Helwa, Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar, Friends of the Earth Malta, Gaia Foundation, the Light Pollution Awareness Group, Nature Trust and the Ramblers Association jointly welcomed amendments carried out by the Government in the Development Planning Act. These enabled online public access to development plans and information on development applications (The Times, January 31st, 2008a).

The 2008 General Elections were approaching, and the Green Party kept on insisting that the rationalisation process was illegal, citing the SEA Directive as evidence. Chairperson Harry Vassallo criticised both the Nationalist and Labour Parties for agreeing to keep the extension zones, and said that people who purchased property in such areas would face ‘terrible consequences’ (Calleja, 2008a). Along the same lines, a few days after the 2008 general elections (which were won once again by the Nationalist Party, albeit by a very slim margin) Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar said that in spite of the Structure Plan, over 2,500 development permits were issued Outside the Development Zone in the previous two years. The ENGO said that permits should be re-examined. In particular it referred to the ‘outrageous’ supermarket development in Safi and of the permission to develop a disco in Mistra, on land which belonged to Nationalist member of Parliament Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando (The Times, March 24th, 2008).
By then, ‘ODZ’ (Outside Development Zone) became one of the most popular words in the vocabulary of Maltese environmental politics. Prime Minister Gonzi himself had said that ‘ODZ is ODZ’, and he was frequently taken to task by ENGOs for this, given that he attempted to show environmentalist credentials. The Ramblers Association, for example, said that legislation should ‘put a definite stop to all speculation in areas outside the designated development zone’ (The Times, May 1st, 2008).

By the end of 2009, the European Commission had yet to decide whether the extension of development boundaries was in violation of EU legislation (Camilleri, I. 2009e). Yet, the ENGOs might have been too optimistic in expecting a positive outcome in this regard. Indeed, early in 2010, it transpired that the Maltese Government was not considered to be in breach of the Directive, due to technicalities involving dates and timelines established in the Directive. Specifically, member states were required to conduct Environment Impacts Assessments on plans commenced after 21 July 2004, or for plans which started before this date but which had not been completed before 21 July 2006 (Debono, 2010).

As is the case with the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, the SEA directive ‘has been disappointing so far from a nature conservation point of view and rarely has a project been stopped or substantially altered’ (Scheuer, 2005b: 15), even though both directives have great potential if combined with other policy frameworks. Indeed, the European Environmental Bureau had noted a slow application of this directive within the EU, with inconsistent applications (Euractiv.com, February 27th, 2006). Hence, Europeanization in this area is at best limited.
The Nationalist Government might have made opponents with its discourse of ‘rationality’ and ‘arbitration’, yet, in the final instance, its symbiotic relationship with land developers, coupled with its neo-liberal pro-development ideology prevailed. The eventual splintering of the opposing chains of equivalence did not help matters. Whilst ENGOs of all stripes and the Green Party marched together in the first activities and statements against the rationalisation process, such a unified alliance did not last long. As shown above, conservationist and sustainable developmental ENGOs remained generally united, whilst eventually, radical ENGOs and even the Green Party acted separately. Labour opposed the rationalisation process, yet, it gave mixed messages along the way.

6.7 The empowerment of ENGOs in relation to development projects

An application of discourse theory (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Howarth, 2000; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000), to the three case studies referred to above concludes that following Malta’s EU accession, the development of land remained high on the agenda of the State, thus retaining its status of a nodal point, where, by and large, the construction industry had a hegemonic status in Maltese politics. This is substantiated through the application of external impacts of ENGOs (Giugni; 1995; van der Heijden 1999; Carter 2001; Rootes 2007a).

As was pointed out earlier in the text and in previous research (Briguglio Michael, 1998), a symbiotic relationship exists between State structures (including the dominant political parties) and the construction industry (which, in turn, is dominated by big business interests). The former enable the latter to operate and give legitimacy to their operations.
(also through non-enforcement), whilst the latter rally around the discourse of economic growth and neo-liberal ideology, thus creating a nodal point. Operators within the latter are also related to the dominant parties through party financing, which is not regulated in Malta. Environmental class conflict is, therefore, in place (Layfield, 2008) as an overdetermining factor together with other “Southern European” features such as patronage and obligation.

The case studies show that antagonisms with respect to development typically involved ENGOs, the Green Party on one side, and the PN Government, MEPA and developers on the other side. Labour’s position was ambivalent, as though it frequently opposed decisions taken by the Nationalist Government and MEPA, such opposition did not fit squarely to an alternative discursive formation. Labour opposed the rationalisation process, but did not propose a clear alternative.

The ENGOs articulated their demands and formed chains of equivalence around the ‘stop overdevelopment’ signifier. Various alliances were formed in this respect, thus partially fixing meaning through nodal points with sensitizing impacts, for example in the Maltese media. With respect to antagonisms surrounding the rationalisation process, alliances comprised ENGOs and parties with different ideological characteristics, yet eventually radical ENGOs, the Green Party and Labour, albeit their respective differences, did not feature in respective coalitions. With respect to the Sliema development issues, local ENGOs formed alliances with others, including political parties or individual representatives, with mixed results.
In each of the 3 cases, the dislocatory effect of EU membership, seen through the availability of EU structures for environmental demands, was resorted to by ENGOs and others (Börzel, 2008: 232), yet there were mixed results. With respect to the Qui-si-sana gardens case, which also won the support of the European Greens, the European Commission did not find any infringement of any EU directive, and, therefore, did not contribute to the successful outcome of the anti-development alliance. Evidence shows that multilateral political lobbying on a local level (with the support of the PN Arrigo-faction), was able to influence the Nationalist Government to stop the development and thus have a substantive impact. Yet this victory was not a sign of things to come, and did not result in a hegemonic formation against overdevelopment. Indeed, the Fort Cambridge development project, only a few blocks away from Qui-si-sana, was approved, notwithstanding intervention from the European Commission, as a result of which an Environment Impact Assessment for the project was carried out.

In the case of the local plan rationalisation process, the European Commission investigated the issue through the perspective of the SEA Directive, yet eventually decided that the Maltese Government was not in infringement. In the meantime, development on the affected areas proceeded unhindered. The economic influence of the construction industry and the pro-development state ideology were, therefore, hegemonic in both latter cases, in spite of Malta’s EU accession. It is pertinent to note that the ENGOs did not form alliances with European ENGOs on any of these issues.
Hence, judging by the three cases in question, one cannot speak of a hegemonic formation which brought about significant changes in Malta’s development projects. The nodal point promoting development of land remained hegemonic in the Maltese political landscape. As Rootes (2013) puts it,

‘Local campaigns may raise fundamental issues of life and death for communities, but they are often crushed beneath the steamroller of a developmental rationale that sets economic advantage against and above environmental amenity’.

Indeed, when local victories take place, these are unlikely to influence policy on at a broader level (Carter, 2001: 152). Yet, this is not to say that ENGOs involved in this area did not experience any form of empowerment since Malta joined the EU. For example, ENGOs – which increased in number following Malta’s EU accession (in itself a structural impact) - had sensitizing impact as they were highly influential in helping increase consciousness in Malta on overdevelopment, thus partially fixing meaning through a nodal point. Arguably, however, this political discourse would have been in place even if Malta did not join the EU, yet without reference to EU environmental policy. The media played an important role for such sensitization, especially in the case of the rationalization process, where The Times and Malta Today both opposed Government’s plans.

ENGOs made frequent reference to EU policy and used it as a gateway for empowerment (Börzel, 2008: 232; Johnston, 2011: 186-7; Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001, 344-5), with mixed results. The fact that Malta joined the EU meant that it had to conform to EU legislation such as that covering Environmental Impact Assessments, release of public information, and strategic environmental assessments. State structures and
procedures were affected by this. Besides, as already stated in Chapter 4, MEPA has its own ‘Nature Group’, comprising ENGOs which it regularly consults. Public consultation became mainstreamed in Malta’s development processes. Yet, as shown earlier in the text, EU legislation in these areas is comparatively weak or ineffective, when compared to other legislation.

Thus, when it comes to development projects, the main substantive achievement of ENGOs following EU accession, was Malta’s adapting to EU legislation, yet this has minor influence. The one major development project analysed in this chapter that was stopped represented a substantive achievement, yet neither EU accession, nor ENGO institutionalisation were overdetermining factors in this regard. Overdevelopment is likely to retain the status of a nodal point in Maltese environmental politics in the years to come. As was the case prior to EU accession, ENGOs are not in a position of strength, though they have been slightly empowered through the accession process.
7. Case Study: Hunting and Trapping

7.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the hunting and trapping issue in relation to the empowerment of ENGOs. This area is characterised by extensive EU legislation and by constant lobbying in Malta and in the EU.

7.2 The articulation of hunting and trapping as environmental issues

Malta’s first legislation aimed at preserving bird species was published in 1911 (Camilleri, G. 2010: 38), and in the last decades of the twentieth century, subsequent Labour and Nationalist administrations carried out various changes in legislation (ibid: 31), yet Malta was not in line with EU rules. The latter

‘developed largely out of public concern about the annual killing of migratory birds, which was widespread in Southern Europe, as well as a result of pressure from citizens’ organisations and the European Parliament’ (Falter and Scheuer, 2005: 37).

For example, Maltese legislation published in 1980 left out various species that were protected under the Berne Convention, apart from the fact that it was hardly enforced (Camilleri G. 2010: 39). In 1993, and in reply to Malta’s 1990 application to join the EU, the European Commission expressed its position that traditional practices would have to conform to the European wildlife preservation conventions, and during the same year, the Nationalist Government published new regulations (Pollacco, 2004: 131).

These introduced various restrictions on hunting and trapping, and were very controversial, to such an extent that in 1994 the Labour Party – which won the
subsequent general election in 1996 – entered into an agreement with hunters’ and trappers’ organisations to tone down such regulations, to the delight of the latter (Briguglio, Michael 2001: 205). The Federation of Hunters, Trappers and Conservationists (FKNK)\textsuperscript{37} – the largest hunting and trapping organisation in Malta – directed its members not to vote Nationalist in these elections (Pollacco, 2004: 135) and also used the slogan ‘10,000 members = 10,000 votes’ (Debono, 2009b). Hence, the agreement had an impact on Labour’s victory (Boissevain, 2000: 7). Subsequently, the Nationalist Party – which was re-elected to power in 1998 - made an agreement with hunters’ and trappers, promising that hunting legislation would not be effected by EU legislation (Camilleri, G. 2010: 32).

Malta’s EU accession obliged conformity with the Birds Directive, which prohibits hunting in Spring and disallows trapping, save for rare exceptions. When the Nationalist Government negotiated Malta’s EU membership, it claimed to have won a concession which enabled hunting for quail and turtledove in Spring, subject to strict monitoring and enforcement; and trapping for seven species of songbirds would be permitted till the end of 2008, to be replaced by a captive breeding system. In the meantime, a moratorium on new trapping licences was issued in 2002 (Government of Malta, 2003: 106). A new committee, known as ‘Ornis’, was set up to regulate hunting and trapping. It comprised representatives appointed by Government, hunters and environmentalists. (ibid: 108).

\textsuperscript{37} This will also be referred to as the Hunters’ Federation.
Hunting and trapping were amongst the most controversial environmental issues in Malta during and following EU accession. Even though Lino Farrugia – the General Secretary of the Hunters’ Federation did not do well in the 2004 European Parliament elections in 2004 (winning 1.3 per cent of votes as an independent candidate) – hunters and trappers still had a ‘very significant bargaining counter… played to their advantage’ (Falzon, M.A. 2008: 17).

By 2007 there were 11,929 licensed hunters and 4,616 licensed trappers (The Times, February 8th, 2007). It does not seem to be the case that hunting is a class issue, in the sense that the ENGOs are not struggling against ruling class interests, but rather against an influential political lobby. Hence ‘environmental class conflict’ (Layfield, 2008) does not seem to be applicable in this specific case study.

According to Mark Anthony Falzon (2008), hunters still retain a sense of ‘control’ over the countryside (17). Lack of State resources, particularly through poor enforcement on illegal hunting practices, does not help to stop illegal hunting, even though, for example, in 2006, 419 persons were arraigned in this regard (The Times, February 8th, 2007). Falzon (2008) notes that, as is the case with other Mediterranean hunters – hunters in Malta have produced a discourse that is at odds with that of sustainability – which, in turn, is produced by the ‘northern European conception of hunting’ through the EU Birds Directive and ENGOs (20). Yet hunting and trapping have been subject to significant opposition both in Malta and within the EU. Indeed, 64 per cent of Maltese people
believed that hunting and trapping are detrimental to other recreational activities in the countryside (MEPA, 2010c: 31).

Whilst both the Nationalist and Labour Parties have attempted to strike what they deem to be a balance between the hunting and environmentalist lobbies, the Green Party has been consistently speaking for Malta’s complete adherence to the Bern Convention and to the EU’s Birds Directive. In this regard, the European Greens lobbied within the European Parliament and pressurised the European Commission to investigate the hunting issue in Malta (Harwood, 2009: 126). As elaborated upon below, the European Parliament issued a resolution against the state of affairs in Malta, also due to the pressure from petitions received from ENGOs in the EU and from the general public (Camilleri, G. 2010: 44). An on-going infringement procedure against Malta has characterised this issue, where the EU and the media have been ‘used’ by those actively opposing Malta’s hunting situation (Harwood, 2009: 186).

A few days after Malta’s adoption of the Birds Directive on March 29th, 2006 (Mallia, S. 2006), Birdlife International appealed to the European Commission to ensure that Malta bans hunting in Spring. Birdlife described Malta as ‘Europe’s worst offender on illegal bird hunting and trapping’ (Camilleri, I. 2006b). The Government of Malta had allowed spring hunting in both springs of 2005 and 2006 (Camilleri, I. 2009c). Yet, Malta’s change in relations through EU membership meant that a new legal and political context was now in place.
Maltese ENGOs, with the support of their European counterparts, the European Commission, the European Parliament (EP) and the Greens, have articulated an empty signifier (Laclau, 2005) which can be called ‘Stop spring hunting and trapping in line with the Birds Directive’. The signifier has been filled with various conservationist claims, for example by linking hunting in Malta to the destruction of migratory species which are a common European heritage, by using scientific and technical language to justify claims for sustainability, by lobbying for Malta’s full conformity with the EU legislation and, failing this, on the financial sanctions imposed on Malta. Meaning was partially fixed in this respect, creating a nodal point. Yet, the Birds Directive forms part of the EU Natura 2000 network, which, though ‘intended to be a unifying discourse… it often has to reckon with an unruly political environment’ (Van der Heijden, 2010: 98), particularly as it is in competition with other policies at various levels (ibid).

7.3 Hunting and Trapping in the EU and Malta: Chains of equivalence and ENGOs

According to Hein-Anton Van der Heijden (2010), ENGOs have created ‘new green public spheres’ around Natura 2000, through reports, usage of the media, and activism at EU, national and local levels. In turn, their opponents include landowners, hunters and farmers amongst others (121).

Amongst the Maltese ENGOs, Birdlife took a leading role in the hunting and trapping issue. It was not only equipped with its affiliation with Birdlife International, and it not only enjoyed direct or indirect support of other Maltese and European ENGOs and the
Green Party (at European and Maltese levels), but, more significantly, it formed part of a chain of equivalence (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) which also comprised the European Commission and the European Parliament. On the other hand, the Nationalist and Labour Parties attempted to neutralise conflict with both sides, by aiming for consensus. At the same time both supported the hunting lobby by trying to defend their aspirations, within European and national politics.

Once Malta had formally adopted the Birds Directive in 2006, the European Commission said that it would be taking legal action against Malta on spring hunting (Camilleri, I. 2006e), and the Petitions Committee of the European Parliament recommended the non-renewal of the derogation on Spring hunting in 2008 and the abolition of trapping after 2008. The Committee met stakeholders including Birdlife, the Hunters’ Federation, the Environment Ministry and members of Parliament. Nationalist MEP Simon Busuttil, who previously headed Malta’s EU-Information Centre in the run up to Malta’s EU referendum, expressed his reservations to some conclusions of the Petitions Committee (Camilleri, I. 2006d). EU accession thus had a dislocatory effect by disrupting existing hegemonic formations and providing discursive opportunities through legal and political action. Later on, during a public debate, Busuttil stated that the Nationalist Government was honouring its pre-referendum promise that hunting in Spring could still be practised in Malta. He added that notwithstanding this, Malta had harsher hunting regulations than those in place in 1990s, which, as stated previously, had been the cause of so much controversy (Farrugia, M. 2006e). Birdlife Malta, on the other hand, declared that Malta was never granted a hunting derogation from the Birds Directive in Malta’s EU accession
treaty, but only allowed trapping of seven species of finches till 2008 (Grech, 2006b). In the meantime, Labour MEP John Attard Montalto, whose pro-hunting and trapping positions were welcomed by the Federation for Hunting an Conservation, was formally included in the European Parliament Hunting Group, the secretariat of which falls under the responsibility of the Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU (FACE) (The Times, July 17th, 2006b).

7.4 Antagonisms in the implementation of the Birds Directive

For the ENGOs campaigning for the implementation of the Birds Directive, the ‘other’ was clearly Malta’s hunting lobby, which, in turn returned the compliment with confrontational discourse. A few days after the European Commission announced that it would be taking legal action against Malta on hunting, Lino Farrugia, speaking on behalf of the Federation of Hunters, Trappers and Conservationists, said that Birdlife would have to step over the former’s ‘dead bodies’ before abolishing ‘traditions’ like hunting and trapping, and that the Maltese Government was determined to allow Spring hunting to take place through a derogation.

‘Birdlife and co. will feel the full weight of the wrath of FKNK and Maltese hunters and trappers… [We would] gladly accept the easy road of confrontation with BirdLife’ (The Sunday Times, July 9th, 2006).

Farrugia’s statement was criticised by Din l-Art Helwa (The Times, July 18th, 2006b), and did not stop Birdlife Malta from requesting an end to spring hunting. Indeed in July 2006 the ENGO asked Minister George Pullicino whose side he was on in the hunting issue (Grech, 2006c). Birdlife was also supported by EU ENGOs such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the UK, which is the Birdlife Partner in the UK and
which has over 1 million members (The Times, August 21st, 2006). The latter collected 115,000 signatures which were submitted in boxes to Malta’s Prime Minister in an action with Birdlife Malta during January 2007 at the doorstep of the Prime Minister’s office in Valletta. The petition appealed to the Government to conform to EU hunting laws, and coincided with a study presented by Birdlife which showed that birds from 38 countries had been shot or trapped in Malta (Grech, 2007b). Other EU ENGOs also pronounced themselves against spring hunting in Malta, and a petition of over 190,000 signatures was presented to the European Parliament (The Times, August 21st, 2006).

In the meantime, Birdlife Malta engaged a well-experienced Turkish activist, Tolga Temuge as its new director. Temuge had previously been campaign director of Greenpeace Mediterranean, and was also involved in various peace and justice movements around the world (Grech, 2006e). Birdlife Malta, together with other ENGOs was also collaborating with the Government and MEPA in the management of special protected areas, with the help of EU funds (The Times, July 2nd, 2007; MEPA, 2010a: 46)

The ENGO stepped up its campaign against illegal hunting and uncovered a Government decision, through a police memo, to temporarily refrain from taking legal action against hunters who run foul of the law. The latter led to the resignation of veteran ornithologist Joe Sultana from Government’s Ornis Committee (Grech, 2006f). A few months later, in February 2007, chairman Tonio Azzopardi followed suit, days before a controversial meeting which was set to discuss the opening or otherwise of the spring hunting season for the year (Micallef, 2007b). On March 22nd, a few days after the announcement of the
hunting seasons for the year, Aldo E. Azzopardi, a veteran hunter, also resigned from the committee (Fenech, N. 2007e).

On an EU level, the European Parliament’s intergroup on the welfare and conservation of animals said that the police memo issue was unacceptable. No Maltese MEP - Nationalist or Labour - formed part of this group (The Times, October 17th, 2006). The European Commission was sensitized about this issue, saying that it was ‘seriously concerned’ about the hunting situation in Malta and about news of the memo. The Government of Malta, through the Justice and Home Affairs Minister Tonio Borg, said that the Commissioner of Police provided a reasonable explanation for this, in that at times authorities tend to bide time before filing charges, especially when prescriptive periods are for two years. Birdlife Malta was not impressed and filed a judicial protest on the matter (Micallef and Camilleri, I. 2006).

The European Parliament Petitions Committee said that it was considering taking action against Malta, and it also revealed that the European Commission was still expecting a reply from Malta with respect to accusations on infringement of the Birds Directive’s provisions on spring hunting (Camilleri, I. 2006i). Malta had already missed the previous deadline set for 4th September, 2006, to reply to a warning letter sent the previous June by the European Commission on spring hunting, but was granted a further two months to reply (Camilleri, I. 2006f). Hence the European Commission was going to open a second file against Malta on hunting.
With pressure mounting on the Government in general and the Police Force in particular, the police eventually declared that the hunting memorandum was no longer in force, meaning that the hunters who break the law would be taken to court (Grech, 2006g). This did not stop the Petitions Committee of the European Parliament to ask for the Malta hunting issue to be on the agenda of an EP plenary session, in the presence of all the European Commission and in which all MEPs could take part (Camilleri, I. 2006k). The Hunters’ Federation was not pleased at all with the way things were proceeding. It backed out of an Ornis committee meeting and instructed hunters and trappers to be on the lookout for the announcement of street protests against existing hunting regulations (Grech, 2006h).

The Government, being on the receiving side of pressure from all sides, said that it was studying proposals on amending hunting laws which were issued only a few months before, adding that it only received concrete proposals from Birdlife and the FKNK (The Times, November 29th, 2006). In the meantime, the Hunters’ Federation gave the Government a deadline of a few days to publish amendments or to face protests. It also called for the re-introduction of the police memo (Testa, 2006a). It subsequently presented a ‘protest document’ to the Government with proposed amendments to ‘avoid a lot of trouble for hunters and for the police’ (Testa, 2006b). The Federation wanted Government to be in line with its pre-referendum promises and with what it deemed were Malta’s negotiations with the EU. It also announced a meeting for hunters, ‘who simply feel betrayed’, in anticipation of Government’s changes to the law (Grech, 2006i). On the
other hand, Birdlife said that Government should publish any proposed changes for consultation before legislating (The Times, December 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2006).

Both organisations accused the Government of giving in to the demands of their adversaries. Both of them were later on invited for a meeting organised by the European Commission on January 17, 2007, to discuss Spring hunting, trapping and illegal hunting. Other invitees included the Federation of EU Hunting Associations, Birdlife International, MEPA and Malta’s permanent representation in Brussels (Fenech, N. 2007b; The Times, January 10\textsuperscript{th}, 2007). When the meeting took place at the DG Environment building in Brussels, a protest against spring hunting was held by the Gaia for Animal Rights Organisation. During the meeting, the European Commission reportedly reiterated that Malta was not justified in asking for derogation for spring hunting from the Birds Directive, and that trapping must stop after 2008. Yet the Maltese Government declared that it intended to challenge the Commission’s stand. Lino Farrugia, on behalf of the Hunting and Trapping Federation, said ‘we are very satisfied with the position being adopted by the government’ (Camilleri, I. 2007a). Later on, following an ultimatum to Government which was subsequently withdrawn, Farrugia said that he was cautiously optimistic on the likelihood of opening the spring hunting season, adding that his Federation provided ‘enough scientific and socio-cultural information to yield fair regulations, including the permission for spring hunting’ (Grech, 2007d)
On the other hand, after the meeting, Birdlife said that it expected Malta’s Ornis committee to be in line with EU directives. In the meantime, the European Commission released an information note which stated that

‘following an assessment of the information provided (by the government), the Commission has concluded that a satisfactory solution to spring hunting existing during the autumn hunting season and, therefore, no derogation from the Birds Directive was justifiable’ (Camilleri, I., 2007b).

Birdlife International was on the lookout for Malta’s ‘delaying tactics’ (Grech, 2007c) on spring hunting. The ENGO’s EU policy manager Konstantic Kreiser said Malta was the only country which was permitting spring hunting for two bird species and that derogation on this would only be applicable ‘if Malta proves that there is no other solution to spring hunting – and the EU is clearly providing autumn as an alternative’ (ibid). The Government of Malta did not take heed of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the ENGOs, and once again gave its approval for spring hunting for 2007, through an Ornis Committee meeting chaired by Louis Cilia, following the resignation of Tonio Azzopardi a few days before the meeting. Birdlife officials walked out of the meeting in protest, and called the decision ‘scandalous and farcical’ and said that it would keep the European Commission informed of the sanctioning of illegal hunting. In contrast, the Hunters’ Federation said the decision was ‘unsurprising and too long in coming’. The Government also introduced harsher sanctions for illegal hunting (Grech, 2007e). The European Commission immediately condemned the Government’s decision and said that this will lead Malta to the European Court of Justice, following an infringement procedure that had commenced in June 2006 (Camilleri, I. 2007c).
Malta’s Green Party, said that with this decision, the Government was betraying the European ideal that Maltese people voted for, adding that the Government had no mandate ‘to defy the EU’. Birdlife Malta agreed, adding that Ornis simply acted as a rubberstamp and that it will use all national and international legal instruments at its disposal to confront the situation (Grech, 2007f). Moviment Graffitti, Friends of the Earth and animal welfare NGOs also opposed the Government’s decision. On the other hand, trappers expressed their concern on whether the trapping season for finches would be opened, but were assured that the Ornis committee would soon discuss this issue (Fenech, N. 2007d). Labour, on the other hand, said that the Nationalist Government was ‘making a fool’ of both hunters and environmentalists and that, in reality, it was aiming at delaying the issue till after the next general election, rather than clarifying matters (The Times, March 2nd, 2007). 

Environment Minister George Pullicino defended his Government’s position in an article in The Times, entitled ‘Striking a balance’, which, as was the case with the rationalisation issue on development projects, attempted to produce a ‘rational abriter’ discourse. In his words,

‘It is easy to be in favour or against. But it is not easy to seek a balanced approach that seeks to strike a balance between nature protection and respect for tradition… Beyond emotions, one must underscore a fact. This government has a political mandate, twice confirmed by universal suffrage, to safeguard traditional hunting and trapping, including in spring. People voting for the government’s programme, following the lengthy EU accession negotiations, consented to the conditions negotiated by the Maltese government. Hunting and trapping in spring was part of the package… The Maltese government considers its application of the derogation to be well-founded and within the legal framework of the EU Birds Directive and it is prepared to defend its position even in front of the European
Court of Justice… The message cannot be clearer. We will be tough on abusive hunting and trapping practices. I cannot hide my surprise at the fact that Birdlife went as far as criticising even their own proposals! … Even though practised by a minority, one should give due consideration to the fact that hunting and trapping are deeply rooted among our society. It is highly illogical to think that this tradition can be taken away by one single decision. Of course, those who oppose hunting cannot be satisfied with this week’s announcements. I appreciate that. But likewise, I appeal to them to appreciate that we have a political mandate for sustainable hunting and that is exactly what we are trying to implement’ (Pullicino, 2007).

Pullicino’s words and actions did not seem to please anyone, even though he was aiming for consensus. Indeed, when the amended hunting regulations were published, followed by a Government statement justifying harsher measures for abusive hunting, both the Hunters’ Federation and Birdlife were critical (Micallef, 2007c). Effectively, the 2007 Spring hunting season was shortened. It was previously between March 25 and May 22, but was now going to take place between April 10 and May 20 (The Times, March 8th, 2007b). Consequently, a pro-hunting protest was held in Valletta, and journalists and photographers from different newspapers were physically attacked and verbally abused. Describing the scene, The Times (March 8th, 2007a) reported:

‘Hunters and trappers taking part in a protest march in Valletta yesterday assaulted hunters and photographers, breaking and taking camera equipment while throwing glass bottles in the direction of the police and the media. Chanting “Pullicino purcinell38”, hundreds of them marched as though on the warpath from City Gate to Republic Square, clad in camouflage and armed with beer bottles, nets, cages and even the odd shotgun. The posters threaten that the Rural Affairs Minister would not be re-elected and called the Prime Minister a liar’.

During the protest, the FKNK president Joe Buttigieg said that though there were enough protesters to form a party, what was really needed was ‘muscle’, through their votes.

38 Tr. from Maltese: ‘clown’.
Indeed, Buttigieg warned that should Government remain idle, 7,000 voters and their families would give their response in the local council elections which were a few days away. Various protesters chanted pro-Labour slogans during his speech. In the meantime, Nature Trust, Din l-Art Helwa, Friends of the Earth Malta, Malta Ramblers Association, Gaia Foundation and Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar expressed their concern on developments in the hunting issue and criticised the Nationalist and Labour Parties for giving in to the hunting lobby for political reasons (ibid).

The Prime Minister, the Nationalist, Labour and Green Parties, and various voices from civil society, including various ENGOs condemned the incidents, yet these were downplayed by the Hunters’ Federation (The Times, March 8th, March 9th, March 11th, 2007, March 10th 2007a). The contrasting statements of the Labour Party and Moviment Graffitti were of particular interest. Labour said that “the few protagonists”... did not do justice to the absolute majority of hunters and trappers’ (The Times, March 9th, 2007), whilst Graffitti said that “the might is right” attitude has become synonymous with several hunters on past occasions, which attitude was consolidated’ in the protest (ibid).

In the meantime, the Environment Minister George Pullicino confirmed the shortened spring hunting season and also sanctioned the recommendation of the Ornis Committee to disallow finch trapping and the shooting of ducks from sea craft during spring. The former was in line with Malta’s EU accession treaty (The Times, March 10th, 2007b). As if the hunters’ lobby needed more antagonism, the European Greens tabled an EP resolution to condemn Malta over spring hunting, given that ‘Malta was not applying EU
rules’ (Camilleri, I. 2007h). The European People’s Party unsuccessfully attempted to remove this resolution, through MEPs Simon Busuttil and David Casa from Malta’s Nationalist Party, who were supported by the only other Maltese MEP who was present, Labour’s John Attard Montalto (ibid).

The European Commission remained consistent in its position on hunting in Malta, and in a meeting between Environment Minister George Pullicino and Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas in 2007, the latter insisted that Malta should not allow spring hunting any longer (Camilleri, I. 2007e). In an address to the European Parliament, Dimas said that

"the government’s decision to keep spring hunting this year is a perfect example of misinterpretation of EU law. I do have a glimmer of hope that following our second warning the Maltese government will comply with community law" (Camilleri, I. 2007j).

Dimas added that Malta’s opening of spring hunting seasons in 2005, 2006 and 2007 was illegal, adding that an additional warning letter would be sent to the Government of Malta by the Commission (Vella, Matthew, 2007b). Subsequently, a resolution by the Greens and the United for Europe of the Nations group (ibid), which urged the European Commission ‘to redouble its efforts to persuade the Maltese authorities to comply fully with Community law’ on hunting, was approved by the European Parliament. However, amendments by Maltese MEPs resulted in the removal of text which urged the government to reconsider its recent position on hunting in spring. Malta’s Nationalist MEPs voted against the resolution, whilst the Labour ones abstained. On the other hand,
Alternattiva Demokratika and Birdlife Malta welcomed the vote (The Times, March 16th, 2007).

Within such a context, Birdlife Malta’s Executive Director Tolga Temuge (2007) lambasted the Government for creating what he saw as a smokescreen when spring hunting was illegal in the EU, and when Malta never got a special exemption or derogation in this regard, and when trapping was not permitted all year round. Temuge added that Malta was the only EU member state that was allowing the spring hunting of two bird species, which is far more than what some other member states unsuccessfully tried to do. He added that ‘there is no scientific data upon which to base’ (ibid) Government’s spring hunting decision. Commenting on the political parties in Malta, Temuge said that Prime Minister Gonzi had the opportunity ‘to be the first leader in Malta to set a precedent by banning spring hunting’ (ibid). Indeed,

‘Environmental protection and conservation may not be the vision of this government. On the other hand, the Labour Party insists on acting like three monkeys refusing to see, hear or talk about the issue. And Alternattiva Demokratika’s deafening silence on the issue prior to the announcement of a spring hunting in 2007 exemplifies the party’s ineffectiveness. It was only after the issue started to command attention that AD decided to join the bandwagon’ (ibid).

Temuge’s harsh criticism of the Greens contrasted with the position of the European Green Party, which resolved to ‘thank AD for its consistent and continuous commitment towards the safeguarding of biodiversity in Europe and Malta’ (Zammit, R. 2007a). Indeed hunting and trapping have been on AD’s agenda ever since it was founded in 1989, when its declaration of principles stated that Malta should ‘immediately sign the
1979 Berne Convention which regulates hunting and trapping’ (Alternattiva Demokratika, n.d.).

As promised, the European Commission did write to Malta and gave it a month, as against the usual two months, to submit a formal reply. Should a reply not have been submitted by then, or were it not satisfactory, this would have led the Commission to proceed to the second stage of its legal proceedings, namely the reasoned opinion stage. Commissioner Dimas said that when other countries with similar problems, namely Italy, France and Finland, were taken to court, they had to stop hunting in spring (Camilleri, I. 2007k). When Malta duly replied, it downplayed the quantities of quail and turtle dove species that migrate over Malta but added that a scientific study will be carried out on actual figures. The Government also said that given the Maltese context, it was conforming to the accepted term of ‘no other satisfactory solution’ given that spring is Malta’s main hunting season (Camilleri, I. 2007i). Malta’s official reply was later on harshly criticised by Birdlife, which replied through a technical report compiled by wildlife biologist Andre’ Raine. He basically argued that Malta’s migratory route between Europe and Africa is important on an international level, and that killing of birds was very high (Grech, 2007h).

In the meantime, Moviment Graffitti said that both political opportunism of the Government as well as spring hunting should be stopped, adding that the European Union was justified in pressuring the Maltese government (The Times, March 31st 2007). Birdlife Malta criticised a proposed methodology by the Government – so as to justify the
latter’s claims with the EU - for the study of migration of quail and turtledoves over Malta, which according to the ENGO was unscientific and biased in favour of spring hunting (Micallef, 2007f).

Within the fourth week of Malta’s 2007 spring hunting season, illegal hunting was causing controversy. Birdlife Malta referred to over 200 sightings, adding that the numbers were growing, and the Police said that over 40 people had been booked by then (Micallef, 2007h). In the same period, around 3,000 pine trees in Foresta 2000 – an afforestation project managed by Birdlife Malta, Din l-Art Helwa and the Environment Ministry, were destroyed. Birdlife had also received various threats and acts of vandalism, resulting in solidarity from various ENGOs (Farrugia, M. 2007b; The Times, May 12th, May 13th, 2007). The Government immediately decided to close the spring hunting season, which had a week and a half to go, to Birdlife’s delight (Farrugia, M. 2007c), and to the satisfaction of the European Commission, which, however, reiterated that hunting in spring should not be allowed (Camilleri, I. 2007l).

On the other hand, the Labour Party said that the Government’s sudden decision showed that it was not serious when it comes to law enforcement, and in the process the Party received criticism from Gaia Foundation, Din l-Art Helwa, Nature Trust, Friends of the Earth Malta, the Ramblers Association and Birdlife Malta, who jointly asked Labour to take a clear stand on hunting. The ENGOs welcomed the Government’s closure of the spring hunting season, adding that this should be followed by a ban on spring hunting and on trapping (The Times, May 16th, 2007). Subsequently 15 organisations including
ENGOs Moviment Graffitti and Friends of the Earth Malta as well as Alternattiva Demokratika, expressed their agreement with the closure of that year’s spring hunting season and appealed to members of Malta’s parliament to abolish spring hunting in general, which they deemed ‘unsustainable’. In their protest in front of parliament they also expressed their lack of confidence in the Ornis committee not being impartial and autonomous (Grech, 2007i).

On the other hand, the committee of the Federation of Hunters and Trappers proposed a change in its statute through which it would no longer be prohibited from being aligned with political parties. A few weeks earlier, a similar proposal made by an individual member was outvoted during the Federation’s annual general meeting (Farrugia, M. 2007d). Yet this time around, the proposal was approved, meaning that the Federation now had the right to guide its members on political issues, though all officials and council members were still prohibited from contesting elections with political parties, due to another clause in the same statute (The Times, July 19th, 2007b).

During this period, Environment Minister Pullicino declared to The Times newspaper that there was ‘no guarantee on spring hunting’ the following year and that hunters had to present a plan for self-regulation in order that discussions with the Government could take place. Yet just a day before, MEP and fellow Nationalist Party representative Simon Busuttil told a radio programme that he was sure that the Government would live up to its promise to open the hunting season the following year (Grech, 2007j).
It is interesting to note that in the same year, Cyprus was officially reprimanded by the European Commission for allowing two days of hunting during Spring 2007 (Camilleri, I. 2007o). In the following year, Cyprus permitted bird hunting for 6 days in May, despite the EU Birds Directive (Camilleri, I. 2008k). Birdlife Cyprus estimated that around 500,000 migrating songbirds, especially robins and warblers, were trapped and killed in the island, mainly to be cooked (Reuters, December 20th, 2007). Italy, Spain and Austria had also been subject to legal action by the European Commission for breaking Bird Directive laws (Camilleri, I. 2006p).

European ENGO International Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) announced the organisation of a bird protection camp in Malta in mid-September, comprising 22 campaigners from the EU who would be surveilling the activities of hunters (Fenech, N. 2007f). In addition, Birdlife Malta announced a similar camp in September, comprising 53 activists (also including scientists and conservationists similarly to CABS) from different countries – the biggest to-date since they were first organised in the late 1990s. The main objective of Birdlife’s ‘raptor camp.. [was].. to collect data on migratory species’, though ‘the second aim.. [was].. to act as a deterrent for hunters who break the law’ (The Times, September 3rd, 2007).

Once the monitoring camps commenced, activists reported various cases of indiscriminate hunting activities. Commenting at a press conference, one such activist said, ‘I knew about the illegal hunting here, I had read about it but I wasn’t prepared for the scale of it. There are hunters’ hides everywhere’ (Micallef, 2007k). In the meantime,
various CABS activists said that they were being harassed by some hunters (Micallef, 2007l), amidst a tense atmosphere which was also characterised by rhetoric from the Hunters’ Federation against ‘German extremists’ and ‘foreign interference’, adding further ‘foreign leadership’ to that of the ‘Turkish’ director of Birdlife Malta (Busuttil, C. 2007b).

By the time the monitoring camps came to an end, both CABS and Birdlife reported various instances of illegal bird hunting. Birdlife Malta alone reported over 209 incidents of illegal hunting and trapping in the few days covered by its camp (Grech, 2007k). In the meantime, the Church Environment Commission condemned illegal hunting and urged hunters to carry out their activities in a sustainable and ethical manner (Massa, 2007). The Federation for Hunting and Conservation announced that hunters who were convicted of hunting illegally would lose their membership with the Federation. This decision was of particular significance as according to Maltese legislation, endorsement from a recognised hunting association is required to obtain a hunting licence (The Times, November 22nd, 2007).

The European Commission was closely following developments, and it decided to issue a reasoned opinion as part of its infringement procedures against Malta. Commissioner Divas referred to Malta’s spring hunting as ‘madness’, and said that this issue was one of the most controversial that he had faced in recent years, with some other countries having similar cases as Malta’s (Camilleri, I. 2007q). As spring was approaching, Birdlife Malta

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39 One of Malta’s national feasts celebrates the victory against the “great siege” of the Ottomans in 1565. At the time, Malta was ruled by the Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta.
criticised Malta’s delaying tactics as regards responses to warnings from the European Commission, and it also criticised the Nationalist and Labour Parties for trying to appease the hunting lobby in order to win votes, and in disregard of EU legislation and Malta’s ‘natural heritage’ (Grech, 2008a). The ENGO also wrote to the Prime Minister in an appeal not to open the upcoming hunting season. In reply the Federation for Hunting and Conservation and its EU counterpart, the Federation for Associations for Hunting and Conservation in the EU (FACE), said that Malta can be granted derogation under the EU Birds Directive,

‘which would make it possible for hunters to catch quail and turtle dove in small numbers and under strictly supervised conditions in spring by taking into account the particular bio-geographical and socio-cultural situation of Malta’ (Fenech, 2008).

In this regard, FACE and the FKNK issued a document with arguments for a derogation that permits a short spring hunting season. It also said that the latter would commit itself to strict observance of legislation and that it supported the Birds Directive (The Sunday Times, January 20\textsuperscript{th}, 2008b). This did not impress the European Commission, which stuck to its position on the issue (Camilleri, I. 2008a). Indeed, on 30\textsuperscript{th} January 2008, the European Commission decided to take legal action at the European Court of Justice. Alternattiva Demokratika immediately appealed to the Government to ban spring hunting (Camilleri, I. 2008b). Birdlife International and Biriflife Malta joined suit, whilst the Government of Malta stated that the European Court of Justice was indeed the best venue for a final decision to be taken on the issue, which it would respect, though it would be defending its position in favour of spring hunting (The Times, January 31\textsuperscript{st}, 2008b). The Labour Party, in the meantime, said that it will stand by the decision of the European Court of Justice (Massa, 2008a).
The Federation for Hunting and Conservation was not happy with the situation, especially since the European Commission was considering the first half of September to be adequate for hunting instead of the Spring season. It added that it would be taking the issue to the Maltese courts in order that hunting may take place in Spring, and emphasised that the Commission was ‘basing its case on evidence that is rooted on gross misinformation and outright lies’ (The Times, February 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2008). The Federation duly took the Government to court, and was represented by lawyer Alex Perici Calascione, who subsequently contested the 2009 European Parliamentary Elections on the Nationalist Party ticket. The main bone of contention was a letter sent by the Office of the Prime Minister to hunters and trappers prior to the 2003 general election (which was vital for Malta’s EU membership), which, as stated previously, promised that EU accession would not change Malta’s spring hunting regime (Micallef, 2008b).

In the meantime, the Hunters’ Federation wrote to the chairman of the Ornis Committee, proposing certain changes (for example, for an end to a moratorium on new trapping licences) and declaring that it will be informing all of its ‘thousands’ of members informed on everything that goes on within the Committee. It was indicative that this strategy was taking place ‘as the general election draws closer’ (Xuereb, M. 2008a). Birdlife Malta urged Ornis to refrain from deciding on hunting in Spring given that the issue was to be decided upon by the European Court of Justice. The ENGO also urged the Government to act responsibly (The Times, February 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2008). Once Ornis met, it decided to await the verdict of the European Court of Justice (Micallef, 2008c). In a rare
show of consensus with Birdlife, the Hunters’ Federation agreed with the Ornis decision (The Times, February 13\textsuperscript{th}, 2008). Yet, in practical terms, this meant ‘more pressure on the Environment Minister to decide himself’ (Vassallo, R. 2008).

The rare show of consensus between Birdlife Malta and the Hunters’ Federation seemed to be short-lived, as a few days later, three vehicles belonging to Birdlife council members and an American volunteer with Birdlife, were torched whilst the activists were carrying out scientific studies at the Buskett nature reserve. The incident was condemned from various quarters (Galea Debono, 2008a; The Times, February 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2008a; February 20\textsuperscript{th}, 2008a; February 20\textsuperscript{th}, 2008b). Yet the Hunters’ Federation criticised Birdlife for using taxpayers’ money for police protection towards its president and for ‘provocative’ tactics, including the inciting of ‘foreign interference and confrontation’, through monitoring camps, which were to be held again in that season (Micallef, 2008d).

Just a few days later, and a few days before the upcoming general election, two Birdlife billboards, featuring Maltese personalities appealing to Nationalist leader Lawrence Gonzi and Labour leader Alfred Sant to stop illegal spring hunting, were vandalised (The Times, February 23\textsuperscript{rd}, 2008). In the meantime, Birdlife Malta expressed its disappointment that to date ‘no single person has been brought to justice and this is sending a very wrong message’ (Massa, 2008b). In response, the Hunters’ Federation denied that it was aiming to encourage violence, or that it supported it. It added that Birdlife was ‘sending a very dangerous message’ by trying to eliminate ‘all hunting and trapping on the Maltese islands (The Times, February 26\textsuperscript{th}, 2008).
7.5 Hunting and Trapping amidst Elections and Court Case

With Malta’s upcoming general election just a few days away, the hunting issue remained a major controversy. On February 26th, 2008, at the European Court of Justice, the European Commission formally presented its case against Malta regarding spring hunting. It called for an urgent decision on the matter, and failing this, for interim measures so as to disallow any spring hunting in Malta till the matter is decided upon (Camilleri, I. 2008d).

A day after, the Ornis Committee once again decided not to submit any recommendations on spring hunting, given the pending European court case on the issue. It added that it would be consulting the Attorney General for temporary measures on the matter (The Times, February 27th, 2008). The Committee had been instructed by Minister Pullicino to decide on the matter, to the contrary of what it had done just a few days back. Birdlife expressed its satisfaction with Ornis’s decision, adding that government should now deal with the issue at stake (Micallef, 2008e). In a political twist of fate, sources from the European Court of Justice were reported by The Times as telling it that by the time the court would have decided on the matter, Malta’s general election would have passed (Camilleri, I. 2008e).

In the weekend that followed, the Hunters’ Federation held two public meetings. In the first meeting, held in Gozo on March 1st, 2008 (precisely one week before the general
elections), around 200 persons, many of whom were in camouflaged clothes, were told by secretary Lino Farrugia that should spring hunting be stopped, he would no longer instruct Federation members to conform with the law. He also warned Nationalist Prime Minister or any other winner of the upcoming general election not to knock on his door if promises are broken. Joe Perici Calascione, the Federation’s public relations officer, sported a Maltese flag on his back and used nationalist rhetoric, to the pleasure of those present including two candidates of the far right party Azzjoni Nazzjonali. In his words, ‘the EU Commissioner is Greek, the Birdlife director is a Turk and their biologist is from the Bermudas’ (Micallef, 2008f).

In the second meeting, held a day after in Rabat, Malta – a hunters’ stronghold – a much bigger crowd was present, and the Federation appealed to Malta’s President – (former Prime Minister) Eddie Fenech Adami to intervene in the hunting issue. Farrugia repeated his statement regarding his advice to hunters on abiding with the law should spring hunting be abolished, and added that such an abolition would be the first step for the end of hunting in the Maltese islands. Federation President Joe Buttigieg said that Labour had given hunters written declarations to protect their activities, and he appealed to those present to vote for pro-hunting and pro-trapping candidates who had the backing of their Party on this. In his words, ‘our biggest protest will take place on March 8’ (Xuereb, M. 2008b). Subsequently, two days before the general election, the Federation submitted a formal resolution to President Fenech Adami, which amongst others, reminded him of the letters sent to 17,000 hunters prior to EU accession – when the same Fenech Adami was

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40 Tr. From Maltese: ‘National Action’. 
Malta’s prime minister – which letter promised that hunting would continue after EU membership. They also referred to the special arrangement between Malta and the EU on hunting, which was signed in April 2003 by Fenech Adami (Testa, 2008a). On the other hand, Birdlife Malta said:

‘Now is the time for us to make our voices heard. Now is the time for us to appeal to the two main parties to take a decision in the interest of the majority of the Maltese population and our natural heritage. Now is the time to stop spring hunting once and for all’ (Schranz, 2008).

Just a few days before the general election, 13 NGOs – comprising organisations from different sectors, albeit predominantly environmental – jointly appealed to both Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and opposition leader Alfred Sant to declare their support of the Birds Directive and to do away with hunting in spring (Calleja, 2008b).

Following the Nationalist victory in the general election, and a few days before the expected decision of the European Court of Justice, anticipation was running high on the issue. Lino Farrugia told the press that he could not rule out any further trouble should spring hunting be banned. He added that ‘nobody can understand our love for hunting’ (Grech, 2008b). Yet, Tolga Temuge put it, ‘this is not village politics – you don’t get into the EU and then expect to do as you please’ (ibid).

As the sense of anticipation was increasing, the Hunters’ Federation expressed its satisfaction that Malta was presenting ‘the best possible defence’ for the upcoming court session (The Times, March 28th, 2008). In the meantime, it was announced that contrary to what is normally done, the court session in question, on 2nd April 2008, would be held
behind closed doors in view of the sensitivity of the case, and as an ‘informed source’ put it to The Times, this would allow more informal argumentation (Camilleri, I. 2008f).

Following the session, the Hunters’ Federation formally asked Prime Minister Gonzi to open the spring hunting season (in contrast to the previous appeal of the European Commission) should the Court delay in deciding (The Times, April 4th, 2008). As another week passed, the Federation publicly asked the European Court of Justice to decide as soon as possible, as ‘tension was building up among hunters and trappers, who did not know what the future held for their pastime’ (The Times, April 11th, 2008). In this regard, the Federation urged Maltese authorities and MEPs to lobby to this effect (Xuereb, M. 2008c).

Yet another week passed, and the Federation reiterated its appeal in a press conference in front of the Prime Minister’s office (Testa, 2008b). It also wrote to the EU representative in Malta and to Malta’s ambassador to the EU on the situations, who were asked to urgently intervene in the matter (The Times, April 22nd, 2008c). At the same time, Birdlife Malta issued its first annual report on illegal hunting, which documented the receipt of 419 protected birds that were shot, which was ‘the tip of the iceberg’. The ENGO also reported that following the general election, there was an increase in illegal hunting activities, especially in the election weekend. Birdlife also announced a spring watch monitoring camp in the last two weeks of April (Galea Debono, 2008b). Participants in the camp, in excess of 150, also included members of Din l-Art Helwa, Nature Trust, the Ramblers Association and the British Residents’ Association. Triumphanty, Birdlife said that this was
‘the first spring without hunting since Malta joined the European Union in 2004… This was indeed a true celebration, as many people turned up to walk through the countryside while admiring the miracle of our natural heritage undisturbed’ (The Times, April 14th, 2008b). At the same time, the Committee Against Bird Slaughter, which had just carried out a 10-day camp, reported a decline in illegal hunting (The Times, May 5th, 2008). Just as the Hunters’ Federation was appealing for the opening of the 2008 spring season, Birdlife claimed – in what seemed to be a play on words considering other recent statements - that ‘mayhem and anarchy’ were characterising the Maltese countryside, and that police were short of staff in relation to the abuse in hunting (The Times, April 15th, 2008). On the positive side for the ENGO, however, Birdlife said that ‘significant changes’ were observed in bird behaviour during the season (The Times, April 23rd, 2008).

Even though the police did make arrests as regards illegal hunting, Birdlife Malta complained that the situation was similar to a normal open season. The ENGO queried how Government can claim to control hunting in spring when it was failing in controlling illegal hunting (Micallef, 2008g). Just a few days later, abuse directed towards activists of the spring watch camp was reported, and a car belonging to volunteers was vandalised (The Times, April 22nd, 2008b).

On April 25th 2008, after three weeks of deliberations, the European Court of Justice decided to issue interim measures through which spring hunting would be banned during 2008 (Micallef, 2008h). The Government duly announced that it would be standing by this decision, and, therefore would not be opening the spring hunting season for the
current year. Birdlife Malta and Birdlife International welcomed the decision, and interpreted the interim measure as an

‘urgent need to prevent irreversible damage to these migratory bird species while a final ruling on this case is pending and not expected before 2009’ (Xuereb, M. 2008d).

The European Commission said that it expected the Government to permanently stop allowing spring hunting. Yet as the European Court of Justice put it,

‘it is apparent that the Commission’s application for interim measures cannot be dismissed for lack of urgency as far as concerns the current year. With regard to 2009, on the other hand, urgency is not made out in the present application for interim measures’ (Camilleri, I. 2008g).

Anti-EU membership NGO Campaign for National Independence, led by former Labour Prime Minister Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici, said that someone should assume responsibility for the Court’s decision, given that prior to EU accession the Maltese Government had ensured hunters and voters that hunting in spring would be allowed. He questioned the good faith of the European Commission and the Government regarding Malta’s negotiations for EU accession, and also opined that the Court’s reasoning would result in the eventual permanent banning of hunting in Malta (Calleja, 2008c).

Some weeks after this ruling, the Mellieha farm of an environmental ranger known for his activism with Birdlife was torched (Micallef, 2008i). In the meantime, to the disappointment of Birdlife, the Ornis Committee – which acted on the advice of the Attorney General – put forward recommendations which, according to Birdlife, were in breach of the Birds Directive. Amongst others, these included the extension of trapping for two species of birds beyond December 31st, 2008. Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi,
who, following the general election assumed the environment under his portfolio, had to decide on the matter (The Times, July 5th, 2008). Birdlife Malta said that no justification or data for the extension of the trapping period were given during the Ornis meeting, and it announced that it would be complaining formally to the European Commission on the matter (Grech, 2008c).

In the meantime, officials from the European Commission were reported as stating that the Ornis recommendation on trapping was unacceptable and would lead to legal proceedings (Camilleri, I. 2008n). The pressure seemed to have effect, as three weeks later, when the government announced the autumn hunting and trapping seasons for the year, it transpired that it rejected the recommendation to allow trapping beyond 2008 (The Times, August 2nd, 2008). Consequently, the Hunters’ Federation quit the Ornis Committee and said that it would be backing candidates in the upcoming European Parliamentary elections who would be supporting it. The Federation also said that it was looking forward to meet new Labour leader (and former MEP) Joseph Muscat on the matter (Xuereb, M. 2008e). In condemned the ‘invasion of foreign anti-hunting lobbyists who have made it their ambition to destroy anything that is Maltese culture and tradition’ (Peregin, 2008a). Referring to CABS as ‘mercenaries’ and ‘paid spies’, and to ‘other foreign spies’, the Hunters’ Federation claimed that the Government was permitting foreign interference and being servile to Birdlife (Busuttil, 2008).

As 2009 was approaching, the Hunters’ Federation announced that it would be returning back to the Ornis Committee so as to lobby for hunting in spring and trapping of birds
(The Times, December 24th, 2008). In the meantime, the Government confirmed that trapping would not be allowed in 2009, save for a ‘concession’ allowed by the European Commission through which seven bird species would be trapped till the end of the year, so as to carry out studies to ‘ensure sufficient genetic diversity of the captive species’ (Camilleri, I. 2009a). With the European Parliamentary elections round the corner, it was only the Green Party which had a stand against spring hunting, however, both the Labour and Nationalist parties fielded candidates of different convictions on hunting. For example, the Nationalists fielded Alex Perici Calascione – lawyer of the FKNK and brother of their public relations officer Joe – as a pro-hunting candidate, and at the same time also fielded former Nature Trust environmentalist Alan Deidun, and former European Commission and Malta-EU Information Centre employee Edward Demicoli. The latter immediately declared his opposition to spring hunting (Galea Debono, 2009), resulting in a boycott from the Hunters’ Federation and in praise from four ENGOs. The latter, comprising Gaia Foundation, Nature Trust, Friends of the Earth Malta and Birdlife Malta applauded Demicoli and Roberta Metsola Tedesco Triccas – another Nationalist candidate who said that her campaign would be giving priority to the environment (The Times, January 19th, 2009).

In spring 2009, the hunting season was not opened, even though the Hunters’ Federation urged the Government to do so (The Times, March 11th, 2009). In a letter to Malta’s members of parliament, also including Prime Minister Gonzi, the Federation said that the latter
‘has once again on this issue failed to exercise the powers of decision that as a determined leader of a member state, equal to all other member states in the European Union, he is expected to exercise’ (The Times, March 21st, 2009).

The Federation went as far as offering ‘to give-up most of the autumn season in return for the socio-cultural tradition of spring hunting’ (ibid). The ban of spring hunting was effective to an extent that CABS observed that the majority of hunters were respecting it (The Times, May 5th, 2009).

Following the European Parliamentary elections, which resulted in a majority of seats for Labour and a minority of seats for the Nationalist Party, the Hunters’ Federation once again boycotted the Ornis Committee, as the latter decided to ban autumn trapping of finches – which were the most sought after birds – whilst permitting trapping for four other species. Birdlife – clinging on Malta’s EU Accession Treaty - welcomed the decision but appealed to the Prime Minister to explain the conditions that would be in place and how many trappers would be permitted to trap. The Hunters’ Federation, on the other hand, said that Maltese trappers should not be treated as ‘second-class European citizen(s)’, adding that trapping was a ‘socio-cultural practice that dates back centuries’ (Peregin, 2009).

7.6 The European Court of Justice decides

On September 10th, 2009, the European Court of Justice was due to decide on Malta’s spring hunting issue. Before the verdict, Birdlife International and Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU issued a joint statement urging
respect of the Court’s decision in respect of biodiversity (Camilleri G. 2010: 46-47). In their words,

‘We remain convinced that the EU Nature Directives provide sufficient possibilities to reconcile nature protection, sustainable hunting, bird-watching and other recreational activities and socio-cultural traditions, in line with the Guidance Document on Sustainable Hunting’ (The Times, September 9th, 2009a).

Previously, both organisations had reached an agreement in 2004 for the continuation of hunting in the EU provided that it conforms to the Bird Directive (Camilleri G. 2010: 18). An example of ‘conflictual consensus’ (Mouffe, 2000: 103) was in place. The European Court of Justice ruled that ‘by authorising spring hunting of quails and turtle doves from 2004 to 2007, Malta has failed to comply with the Wild Birds directive’ (European Commission, 2009). At the same time, however, the ruling asserted that hunting for quails and turtle doves in autumn were not a satisfactory solution, even though, at the same time, the amounts of killings of the species in spring was not in line with the Birds Directive. The Maltese Government, which made use of the assistance from FACE in its legal team, said that it would respect the court’s decision (Camilleri, I. 2009d).

Birdlife Malta said that the judgement confirmed that spring hunting should be banned permanently; adding that hunting in autumn could take place on turtle dove, quail and another 30 species in accordance with the Birds Directive. Birdlife International also welcomed the ruling, adding that this ruling was not only positive for millions of birds which migrate back from Africa to Europe, but also showed how the Birds Directive could help ‘our common heritage’ (The Times, September 10th, 2009a). Yet, the other
The Federation of Hunters, Trappers and Conservationists did not give up:

‘The decision does not mean that spring hunting is banned for ever. The court could not remove Malta’s right to apply for a derogation in the future, and in view of new data which we already have, and with political will, we can get a derogation, although it will be more difficult’ (The Times, September 11th, 2009b).

During the 2009 FACE general assembly, the Federation of Hunters, Trappers and Conservationists said it welcomed a statement by the Government for the studying of a possibility to have a limited hunting season involving quail and turtle dove. The Federation said that it expected BirdLife Malta to be constructive with respect to the Court’s decision, and added that it would not tolerate neither illegal hunting nor attempts to stop ‘the traditional Maltese socio-cultural passion of spring hunting’ (The Sunday Times, September 13th, 2009).

During the same assembly, international lawyer Jan Bouckaert, who had been appointed by FACE to assist Malta’s Attorney General Silvio Camilleri and the Hunters’ Federation lawyer Alex Perici Calascione at the European Court of Justice, said that the Court’s decision was a case of losing a battle but winning the war. In particular, Bouckaert said that the Court looked at specific circumstances rather than adopting a generic approach. He believed that this ‘victory’ applied to all EU member states. FACE President Gilbert de Turckheim congratulates the Maltese Hunters’ Federation for speaking the truth in a determined way, thus leading to a ‘milestone judgement’ (ibid).
To the hunters’ delight, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi was reported by the Malta Today as telling their representatives that the European Court’s decision made possible a future derogation on spring hunting, though he did not make any commitments regarding the upcoming spring season. Gonzi reportedly said this in a meeting with the Federation of Hunters, Trappers and Conservationists and the St Hubert Hunters’ Association (Vassallo, R. 2009d). The Times, on the other hand, said the meeting was held with the St Hubert Hunters’ Association, the representative of which, Mark Mifsud Bonnici, stating that Gonzi told them that his government was ‘studying the possibility of exercising the derogation’ (Xuereb, 2009). A suggested solution was giving a closely monitored hunting quota during spring, which, in turn, was referred to as ‘false hope’ by BirdLife Malta, which added that Government had underestimated the number of bird killings during the Court ruling (ibid).

In the meantime, the number of licensed trappers in Malta increased from 500 to 1,266 between 2008 and 2009 (they were permitted to trap the four ‘specialist’ species decided upon previously), and the Government amended its regulations in view of the derogation it aimed to obtain from the EU (Vassallo, R. 2009c). Subsequently, in 2010, the Government announced that there would be a limited hunting season in Spring, between 24 and 30 April (excluding Sunday), which was subject to quotas on numbers of birds allowed to be shot and a limited number of licences, amongst other conditions (Camilleri, G. 2010: 63). It was more than evident that the hunting and trapping issue would remain characterised by antagonism in the realm of Maltese environmental politics.
7.7 The empowerment of ENGOs in relation to hunting and trapping

The above narrative shows that as regards hunting and trapping, ENGOs, both Maltese and European, were influential on State power in Malta, especially by resorting to the EU, and also being given prominence by the media. Yet the hunting lobby was influential too, and its influence on Malta’s main political parties is an overdetermining factor which remained in place even after EU accession. As Greta Camilleri (2010) declares,

‘Bird hunting has metamorphosed into a political issue, which led the Maltese Government to a situation where it was walking on a tight-robe involving the respective competing interests. Through consultation and frequent discussions on hunting, Government strives to strike a balance between maintaining a long-practiced tradition alive within the limits of EU hunting regulations. The Maltese system follows the pluralist model in politics, where interest groups (albeit their differences, including degree of influence) can lobby Government and provide checks and balances against state institutions and officials. In turn the State mediates between competing interests. However, this process is peculiar as it is characterised by the dominance of two political parties, namely the Nationalist and Labour parties respectively. Judging by the recent history of hunting in Malta, it seems that the issue will remain politically controversial at least for the immediate future’ (65).

The environment and the hunting lobbies were articulating the hunting and trapping issues in different ways, yet they both managed to partially fixed meaning through nodal points. In itself, this had an important role in the politicization of hunting and trapping.

As far as environmentalist demands go, chains of equivalence were formed around the ‘Stop spring hunting and trapping as in Birds Directive’ signifier, to the benefit of conservationist ENGO Birdlife Malta. Indeed, Birdlife’s demands were not only supported and/or shared by a myriad of ENGOs (Maltese and European) and other NGOs, which, at times issued joint statements, but also by the Green Party and its European Counterparts, and, significantly, of the European Commission and the
European Parliament. As regards the latter, however, certain hurdles were in place, especially from the European Peoples’ Party and also from Maltese MEPs. Personalities also supported Birdlife Malta, and the ENGO gained widespread sympathy when members or property were harassed or attacked.

The European Commission was clearly on the side of the ENGOs, whilst the European Court of Justice gave a ruling which had different interpretations, though being ultimately restrictive on hunting, when the latter was compared to its status prior to Malta’s EU accession. In the meantime, the Government of Malta and the major political parties tried to present a position of arbiters, though it is evident that they did much to try and accommodate the hunters’ lobby notwithstanding the EU legislation. Significantly, however, ENGOs did not seem ready to support the Green Party in the open, and Birdlife Malta actually criticised the Greens (as shown above in Tolga Temuge’s article), even though the latter had been speaking on the need for action on this issue since they were founded in 1989. Yet, together with some other moderate ENGOs, Birdlife did not think twice to openly praise Nationalist EP candidates for declaring their environmentalist positions. Radical ENGO Moviment Graffitti, on the other hand criticised what it deemed as the bullying tactics of the hunting lobby and political opportunism of the Government.

The hunting lobby, affiliated to FACE and armed with nationalistic, confrontational and traditionalistic discourse, tried to play the Nationalist and Labour parties against each other, especially during election time. This won them various concessions from the two parties. Other organisations which showed sympathy to hunters and trappers were the
anti-EU membership Campaign for National Independence and Azzjoni Nazzjonali, the latter floundering into nothingness after the 2009 European elections. Not even the European Popular Party could stop the anti-hunting sentiment of the European Parliament. To make matters worse for hunters, they now knew they were being watched and monitored. Indeed, despite the lack of widespread enforcement on hunting infringements in Malta, the presence of activists in monitoring camps acted as a detriment to hunters.

Significantly, even though the decision of the European Court of Justice was given different interpretations by the environmentalist and hunting lobbies, it ultimately enhanced empowerment of Maltese ENGOs. An anti-hunting and trapping hegemonic formation does not exist, but notwithstanding this, and despite the attempts of the Maltese Government to gain an exceptional status for Malta, hunters are in a much more restricted position than they were prior to Malta’s EU membership. The same applies for trappers, who are restricted by the EU legislation even though their issue was not taken to court. The dislocatory effect of EU accession resulted in discursive opportunities for ENGOs in Southern European Malta to resort to the EU (Börzel, 2008: 232) through the “boomerang effect” (Johnston, 2011: 186-7).

Therefore, ‘Stop spring hunting and trapping as in Birds Directive’ has the status of a nodal point, despite the political antagonisms in place (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 112; Howarth and Stravakakis, 2000: 8). It is also interesting to note that both the pro-hunting
and anti-hunting lobbies gave legitimacy to EU legislation. Both Birdlife International and FACE said that

‘EU Nature Directives provide sufficient possibilities to reconcile nature protection, sustainable hunting, bird-watching and other recreational activities and socio-cultural traditions, in line with the Guidance Document on Sustainable Hunting’ (The Times, September 9th, 2009a).

Yet, as shown previously, this is accompanied by antagonistic relations and different interpretations of EU policy and court decisions.

An application of the conceptualization of external impacts (Giugni; 1995; van der Heijden 1999; Carter 2001; Rootes 2007a) of the environmental movement, namely sensitising, procedural, structural and substantive would conclude as follows as regards empowerment of Maltese ENGOs with respect to hunting and trapping.

The ‘Stop spring hunting and trapping in line with the Birds Directive’ sensitized the political agenda of both the EU and Malta. The signifier was used by ENGOs – both Maltese and European - to sensitize EU institutions. In Malta, a political discourse was clearly in place, not only within the realm of party and ENGO politics, but, also within the mass media, where the issue was frequently reported and commented upon. This discourse was in conflict with the discourse propagated by the hunting lobby.

Unlike Malta, within the EU, a hegemonic formation around the Birds Directive has already in place – and prior to Malta’s EU accession. This was institutionalised in EU legislation, particularly through the Birds Directive. Malta’s EU accession thus had a
dislocatory effect which disrupted existing national legislation, thus having a substantive impact.

Parallel to the structural set-up of the EU as regards hunting and trapping – for example through its Environment Directorate within the European Commission - structural changes took place in Malta due to hunting and trapping. The Maltese Government also created the Ornis Committee featuring representation from the different camps, which, in itself meant that Birdlife Malta was institutionalised within the official consultation structure. The constant lobbying and the creation of monitoring camps by Maltese and European ENGOs also meant that there was a strong presence from civil society. On the other hand, enforcement against irregularities was rather weak, thus revealing a shortcoming in Maltese domestic structures. Along the same lines, Government was criticised by environmentalists for under-reporting when presenting official data to the EU.

Linked to structural changes, there were also procedural impacts which enhanced empowerment of ENGOs. The Ornis Committee itself was a case in point. But so was the fact that nature conservation sites – often forming part of EU programmes – were being managed by ENGOs. The European Commission gave legitimacy to the ENGOs through consultation, and the European Parliament took heed of ENGO lobbying by endorsing calls for Malta’s conformity to the EU legislation. The European Greens, in particular, were very vocal on this.
EU ENGOs in general and Maltese ENGOs in particular used the EU as a gateway for empowerment, through which their claims could be articulated (Börzel, 2008: 232; Johnston, 2011: 186-7; Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001, 344-5). Birdlife Malta – the most prominent ENGO in this regard – clearly relied on its European counterpart, and it also benefitted from the lobbying of other ENGOs within the EU. The dislocatory effect of EU accession, therefore, also affected the discursive coalitions between Maltese and EU ENGOs. Other ENGOs in Malta which spoke up on the issue also added pressure.

The conservationist ideology related to the preservation of species, through which the ‘Stop spring hunting and trapping in line with the Birds Directive’, was articulated, enabled the creation of a nodal point in relation to the adaptation of EU policy in Malta. Apart from Birdlife Malta, other conservationist ENGOs (Din l-Art Helwa, Nature Trust, Ramblers Association, Bicref and Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar) used such discourse, yet so did sustainable developmental ENGOs (Friends of the Earth Malta; Gaia Foundation) and a radical ENGO (Moviment Graffitti). ENGOs tended to be critical of both the Nationalist and Labour parties on their respective stands regarding hunting, yet Gaia Foundation, Din l-Art Helwa, Nature Trust, Friends of the Earth Malta, the Ramblers Association and Birdlife Malta did not shy up to specifically criticise the Labour Party’s vagueness. Gaia Foundation, Nature Trust, Friends of the Earth Malta and Birdlife Malta did not hesitate to publicly praise Nationalist European parliament candidates for their environmental credentials. Such a cavalier attitude was not shown
towards the Green Party which had been having a clear position on hunting and trapping since it was founded in 1989.

A quick-fix solution on hunting and trapping issue therefore, does not seem to exist, meaning that one can expect more antagonism on this issue in Southern European Malta.
8. Case Study: Fishing of Bluefin Tuna

8.1 Introduction

The next case study, dealing with fishing of bluefin tuna is shorter than other case studies. One main reason for this is that as explained in the methodology chapter, this issue does not have a well-established policy regime at EU and/or national level, nor does it have a relatively-long established tradition of political antagonism. This issue has not featured prominently on the agenda of Maltese ENGOs or political parties, yet European and global ENGOs were active in the field. Hence, discursive silence (Tonkiss, 1998: 258) features in this case study.

8.2 The articulation of fishing of bluefin tuna as an environmental issue

Malta has become a global giant when it comes to tuna ranching, amidst antagonism and lobbying from different interests and regulatory measures on national, European and global levels. The bluefin tuna industry is relatively new, and Malta has little policy-experience in the area. Yet, due to the island’s geographical position one could only expect that it would eventually become a hub of bluefin tuna fishing.

Prior to Malta’s EU accession, Malta’s fishing sector was witnessing industrialisation processes alongside its small-scale traditional sector. Maggie Borg (1996) analysed the rise of the aquaculture industry in the 1990s, which, at that time, was characterised by intensive monoculture fish farming. By then, the negative impacts on the marine environment of intensive monoculture were already being noted. Borg concluded that
‘decisions taken hardly ever reflect social and environmental impacts’ (183). She also noted how two cultures were in opposition, one representing traditional fishermen and the other representing the capital-accumulating aquaculture industry. Conflict was taking place within the State through agencies such as the Planning Authority (ibid: 184).

When Malta joined the EU, its fishing regulations had to change to be in line with EU legislation. This had a dislocatory effect in that traditional fishermen had to compete with industrialized fleets. The Government of Malta negotiated a 25-mile fishing zone around its coast for conservation purposes, which only permitted vessels smaller than 12 meters to fish in this zone through small-scale fishing (National Commission for Sustainable Development, 2004: 31). Yet, as the industrialization of fishing was on the advance, and bluefin tuna became a lucrative source of revenue for businesses working in the sector. Malta’s change in external relations meant that it now had to follow EU decisions, including those in global agreements.

ENGOs started to show concern over what they saw as unsustainable fishing of bluefin tuna through crisis-ridden discourse. They created an empty signifier (Laclau, 2005) which can be called ‘ban bluefin tuna fishing until stocks recover’. Greenpeace expressed much concern on this issue, saying that bluefin tuna stocks were down by 80 per cent due to overfishing. The ENGO demanded a ban of fishing in 40 per cent of the marine reserves in the Mediterranean (Reuters, June 16th, 2006). According to a report by Advanced Tuna Ranching Technologies, which was endorsed by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Malta is the largest tuna rancher in the world, accounting for 6,400,000kgs of the fish. The
report also criticised Malta for underreporting tuna catches (Debono, 2008a). On the other hand, WWF blamed Turkey, Italy, Croatia, Libya, France and Spain for being the worst culprits in terms of tuna fleet overcapacity in the Mediterranean (The Times, March 13th, 2008). Much of this tuna is exported to Japan for the lucrative sushi market, and Malta earns an estimated 100 million Euro a year from tuna exports to this country. Hence, whilst Malta’s tuna fishing fleet is tiny by international standards, the same cannot be said for its tuna-ranching industry, which is one of the largest in the world (Vassallo, 2008f).

8.3 Fishing of bluefin tuna in the EU and Malta: Chains of equivalence and ENGOs

The Nationalist and Labour Parties directly or indirectly supported big business development in tuna farming, even though Labour, originally had a different position, for example in its opposition to a batch of applications in 2002. One of these was turned down by the Planning Authority, another was withdrawn, and another not considered, to the delight of Nature Trust, the National Cooperative of Fishermen and the Professional Diving Schools Association (Cini, 2002a). Other ENGOs and AD – The Green Party, also opposed such development – with the support of the European, Spanish and Italian Green Parties (Boissevain, 2004: 247-254).

ENGOs were involved in environmental class conflict (Layfield, 2008) against big-business interests, from the fishing industry, which was actively supported by the Nationalist Government, and the Fisheries Commission of the EU, in a context of neo-
liberal ideology that overshadowed conservationist claims. A symbiotic relationship was in place between tuna big-business and the state, in that the former promised economic growth and the latter provided political support.

Global ENGOs Greenpeace and WWF were mostly active on this front. Maltese conservationist ENGOs Nature Trust, Din l-Art Helwa and the The Biological Conservation Research Foundation (Bicref) did speak up on the issue, as did the Green Party, yet there was no focused and well-organised ENGO campaign in Malta, thus resulting in a relative ‘discursive silence’ (Tonkiss, 1998: 258) of the Maltese environmental movement, when compared to other issues analysed in this study. Interestingly, and in what exemplifies the active role of the media in civil society activism, the Malta Today newspaper, through its reports, seemed to be more concerned with the issue than the Maltese environmental movement. The EU’s Environment Commission was also on the side of those calling for sustainable fishing. Even though there were no formal alliances in this respect, chains of equivalence (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) were being formed around the nodal point that demanded the protection of bluefin tuna from unsustainable fishing, in line with conservationist ideology. As shown below, both the EU and the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) were characterised by the condensation of conflicts (Poulantzas, 2000: 151) for the setting up of bluefin tuna quota catches, which, however, and as explained below, did not result in a hegemonic formation against big business interests.
8.4 Antagonisms in the setting of targets for bluefin tuna catches

In response to the concerns regarding unsustainable bluefin tuna catches, the Nationalist MEP David Casa believed that whilst illegal activities should be stopped and fishing for all species should be sustainable, ‘all support possible should be given to Malta’s emerging market’ (Vella, Matthew 2006c). Malta’s Government also deemed sensationalist the accusations from WWF that Malta was allowing illegal flights from spotter planes and also receiving illegal fish catches especially from Libya. These accusations were put forward in front of the Fisheries Committee of the European Parliament (Camilleri, I. 2006g).

In the meantime, the Fisheries Commissioner Joe Borg – who is Maltese – referred to scientific evidence of the International Commission for Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT) on depletion of bluefin tuna stocks in the Mediterranean and called for concrete action to protect the species. At face value this vindicated WWF’s warning on collapse of bluefin tuna stocks should current fishing trends persist (Camilleri, I. 2006h). However, WWF soon slammed the EU for blocking a deduction of annual tuna catches to 15,000 tonnes in 2010, as recommended by ICCAT scientists. Instead, a deal was reached for a gradual deduction to 25,500 tonnes from the then current 32,000 tonnes. In WWF’s words, this was ‘a collapse plan, not a recovery plan’ (Kambas, 2006). At the same time, Maltese fishermen called for the resignation of Joe Borg as they deemed that their yearly 344 tonne-quota had not been added to the EU quota, and they were therefore being discriminated against for not having a fixed quota, unlike fishermen in other countries (Farrugia, M. 2006g). Indeed, Malta’s quota was expected to decrease to 310 tonnes in
2007 and to decrease further subsequently (Camilleri, I. 2006m), to the harsh criticism of the Government of Malta which supported the fishermen’s demand for a fixed 344-tonne quota (Camilleri, I. 2006n).

Eventually, after a meeting of ICCAT, and following insistence by the Maltese Government, Malta was allocated a quota of 355.59 tonnes for 2007, which would eventually decrease to 307.38 tonnes in 2010. Minister George Pullicino insisted that the Government would keep defending the ‘legitimate interests of Maltese fishermen’ (Fenech, N. 2007a). The European Commission consequently confirmed Malta’s quota (Camilleri, I. 2007d). Yet the European Council of Ministers initially could not reach agreement on quotas for a 15-year plan to help rebuild stocks, resulting in a threat from the European Commission to close down the season for the year. Subsequently, agreement was reached, and Malta retained its 355-tonne quota, though this would have to be reduced by 25 per cent in the following four years (Camilleri, I. 2007m).

ENGOs were not satisfied with this. Greenpeace said that bluefin stocks were facing collapse, and called for all shipping fleets ‘to be called back to port’ in view of Government’s lack of ability to guarantee sustainable fishing, to the detriment of economic and cultural factors. Greenpeace also said that the EU was simply following the ICCAT agreement, which was unsustainable (Micallef, 2007i). In the meantime, the ENGO reported widespread illegal tuna fishing off Malta’s coast, though not by Maltese boats (Zammit, R. 2007b). Maltese ENGO Bicref also lamented on the ‘bluefin tuna decline in the Mediterranean’, alongside other increasing threatened species, and called
for new options and solutions to conserve and rehabilitate ‘our “engine of life” – Mother Nature’ (Vella, Adriana 2007).

In 2007, the European Commission initiated infringement procedures against Malta and five other EU member states for failing to provide information on bluefin tuna catches (Euractiv.com, September 27th, 2007). Malta’s Government however replied that it regularly submits such data to the European Commission. Moreover, the European Commission was reported as stating that according to preliminary reports and estimates, Malta was within the 355.5 tonne limit for the year (Camilleri, I. 2007p). By the end of the year, however, the European Court of Auditors raised doubts on fishing figures in the EU. Indeed, it stated that data on the six biggest fishing EU member states (Malta is not one of them) was not reliable (Camilleri, I. 2007r). In 2008, the European Commission once again warned Malta that it would face legal procedures if it did not follow new rules (Camilleri, I. 2008i).

ENGOs were stepping up their campaign for sustainable fishing, which amongst species, included bluefin tuna. Greenpeace activists (who were subsequently arrested) blocked an EU building with concrete breeze-blocks and the slogan ‘Shut down until fish stocks recover’ during an EU agriculture and fisheries meeting. As a Greenpeace spokesperson put it, “Unless changes are made and power is ceded to Europe’s environment ministers, Europe’s fisheries face a biodiversity and economic collapse’ (Reuters, December 18th, 2007). In April 2008 Greenpeace activists also raided a stand of 5 tuna exporters, including Maltese company Azzopardi Fisheries, during a seafood exhibition in Brussels
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(Camilleri, I. 2008j). WWF unsuccessfully called for a 3-year ban on bluefin tuna fishing, and subsequently urged retailers to stop selling Mediterranean bluefin tuna, and praised those which already did so (Reuters, January 29th, 2008).

In the meantime, both Greenpeace and WWF expressed concern on unregistered ‘pirate’ purse seine fishing vessels, and WWF identified two which were docked in Malta and which, according to the ENGO were most likely to be related to French, Maltese and Libyan interests (Malta Today, May 14th, 2008). Two vessels owned by Azzopardi Fisheries were reported by Greenpeace and WWF for being illegally registered. Malta’s Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs instructed the Malta Maritime Authority not to accept them as fishing vessels with the Maltese flag (Vassallo, 2008b). Subsequently, Malta’s Attorney General initiated legal proceedings against Charles and Anthony Azzopardi, owners of “Hannibal Fishing Ltd” on four vessels – two owned by the company, and two new ones bought from Turkey with French partners (Malta Today, October 1st, 2008).

In June 2008 the European Commission closed the bluefin tuna season for industrial trawlers, given that it was informed that the permitted quotas for the year had been reached. Malta only had one registered purse seiner, which meant that most Maltese fishermen, who used traditional fishing methods were not affected by this ban. Yet, the same could not be said for the large number of tuna ranching farms in Malta (Camilleri, I. 2008k). In a meeting of EU fisheries ministers, Maltese minister George Pullicino expressed his reservations on this, claiming that only 70 per cent of the allocated tuna quota for Malta was fished (Vella, Matthew, 2008). Besides, Azzopardi Fisheries – one
of the world’s top five tuna ranching industries – unsuccessfully wrote to the European Commission for financial compensation (Vassallo, 2008c). Some weeks later, experts commissioned by ICCAT said that Mediterranean tuna fishing should be suspended and sanctuaries should be set up to save the species from extinction (Camilleri, I. 2008s). ICCAT also estimated that 51 per cent of all bluefin tuna caught in the Mediterranean in 2007 was illegal and unauthorised (Camilleri, I. 2008q). In a run up forthcoming ICCAT meeting in November 2008, even the economically-liberal ‘The Economist’ magazine, joined WWF, Greenpeace and others in the call for control over the bluefin tuna industry through a temporary closure so as to allow the replenishing of stocks. As it put it:

‘The gold rush is over. The plunder should stop, and bluefin should be given time to build themselves up again’ (cited in Vassallo, 2008j).

At the ICCAT meeting in Marrakesh, Morocco, European Fisheries Commissioner Joe Borg said retaining the status quo on tuna fishing in the Mediterranean was not an option (Camilleri, I. 2008p). Yet, when it came to the crunch, the EU allied itself with various countries to have ICCAT decide for a 22,000 tonne-quota for 2009, way above the 8,500 to 15,000 tonne quota as recommended by scientists. After the meeting, WWF denounced the European Commission for allegedly threatening developing states with trade retaliations if they supported lower catches and extended closed seasons (Phillips, L. 2008b).

Yet, not all was plain sailing within the European Commission. In what seemed to be an internal conflict within the European Commission, it was reported that Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas supported the ban on bluefin tuna fishing, as against Joe
Borg’s argument for ‘balance’ between scientific advice and industry interests (Vassallo, 2009a). The European Greens believed that Borg was lobbying in favour of the tuna industry (Vassallo, 2009b).

In 2009, the European Commission seemed to be on Dimas’s side, as a compromise deal was reached through which bluefin tuna would be listed as an endangered species (The Times, September 9th, 2009b). The Commission went ahead with its proposal, and thus co-sponsored Monaco’s proposal to have bluefin tuna within the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites). Malta’s National Fishing Cooperative and the tuna ranching industry urged Malta’s Government to oppose this proposal on the grounds that it would endanger Malta’s 100 million Euro-per-year exports. Charlie Azzopardi from Azzopardi Fisheries said that

‘this will be a deadly blow to an industry on which a lot of Maltese depend. It accounts for an injection of foreign currency into the economy and the deficit will surely be bigger without the industry’ (Camilleri, I. 2009b).

The majority of EU member states disagreed with the European Commission’s proposals. Malta lobbied hard with other member states to vote against the Commission’s position, and subsequently, Environment Commissioner Dimas said he regretted the decision, whilst Fisheries Commissioner Borg, toned down his original position and said that it was now up to ICCAT to be responsible for the recovery of the species (Camilleri, I. 2009f). Nature Trust and WWF expressed their disapproval of the vote. The Maltese ENGO said that ‘short term economic gains were put before long term sustainable fishing and the welfare of this species’ (The Times, September 22nd, 2009). Subsequently, and a few days before the ICCAT meeting, Din l’Art Helwa added its voice too, urging the
Government of Malta to back Monaco’s proposal for a ban in bluefin tuna trading till stocks recover, on the grounds of survival of the species and the long term survival of the fishing industry (The Times, November 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2009).

When ICCAT met in Brazil in November 2009, it was decided to have a 40 per cent reduction in tuna catches, from 22,000 to 13,500 tonnes in 2010, as well as stricter regulations such as the restriction of purse-seiners. Commissioner Joe Borg, the tuna industry in Malta and fishermen welcomed the decision, whilst the ENGOs and the European Greens opposed it (Camilleri, I. 2009g). The European Council of Ministers decided to reduce Malta’s quote to 161 tonnes for 2010, down from 331 tonnes in 2008 and 262 tonnes in 2009. Minister George Pullicino said that he was backing Italy’s request for new financial measures with respect to the socio-economic impact of the decision (The Times, December 16\textsuperscript{th}, 2009).

8.5 Antagonisms and allegations of discrepancies and irregularities

The symbiotic relationship between tuna big-business and the state was also possibly being witnessed with regard to lack of effort by the Maltese state to combat alleged irregularities in bluefin tuna catches. Malta Today had already been querying whether a relationship of power exists in the tuna industry in Malta. Adding spice to such allegations, Malta Today reported that Charles Azzopardi, owner of Azzopardi Fisheries had invited Minister George Pullicino and MEPA chairman Andrew Calleja for a yachting trip to Sicily in April 2007 (Malta Today, July 6\textsuperscript{th}, 2008).
It was also being suggested that Malta’s tuna export figures were showing discrepancies of over 6 million kg over what was being reported and estimates of how much tuna could actually be exported over a one year period (Vassallo, 2008e). These allegations were being made by the international tuna consultancy firm Advanced Tuna Ranching Technologies, but were categorically denied by the Government of Malta through Fisheries director-general Anthony Gruppetta, who said that Malta was ‘committed to fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities’ (Malta Today, August 13th, 2008).

Malta Today, which was reporting on issues related to the tuna industry in general and Azzopardi Fisheries in particular, alleging irregular and illegal practices such as submission of false information on tuna catches (Vassallo, 2008g) and infringement of development permits (Vassallo, 2008h), was consequently faced with civil action for damages (libel) by seven tuna ranch and fish farm companies, including Azzopardi Fisheries. The newspaper responded that it would be summoning international experts from Greenpeace and Advanced Tuna Ranching Technologies amongst others as witnesses (Malta Today, August 27th, 2008).

Subsequently, Alternattiva Demokratika – The Green Party wrote to Fisheries Commissioner Joe Borg requesting him to investigate claims on false declarations by the Fisheries Ministry in Malta on two non-existent tuna farms and on the capacity of tuna farms in Malta. These allegations were categorically denied by the Ministry (Camilleri, I. 2008o). In the meantime, WWF accused Italy of catching 38% more bluefin tuna than
permitted, and of registering 800 tonnes of this excess in Maltese cages through Italian vessels. No investigations were carried out by the Maltese authorities in this regard, but the allegations were not denied by the Government (Vassallo, 2008i).

The bluefin tuna issue lingered on, with little satisfaction to those rallying around the nodal point which demanded a ban of bluefin tuna fishing till stocks recover.

8.6 The empowerment of ENGOs in relation to the bluefin tuna issue

From when this bluefin tuna issue was discursively articulated by ENGOs and the media, attempts were made to influence policy-makers for the regulation of unsustainable fishing, yet on the other hand it is more than clear that big business considerations were a tough overdetermining factor to overcome. The crisis-laden statements of ENGOs on collapse of tuna stocks, in response to what appeared to be a dislocatory situation, did not result in a hegemonic formation, and in terms of substantive impacts, were unsuccessful in banning the fishing of bluefin tuna until it become sustainable to recommence the activity. Even though the EU subscribes to conservationist environmental ideology, in this specific case neo-liberal ideology had a prevailing overdetermining effect.

Both ICCAT and EU structures where characterised by a condensation of conflicts surrounding the issue at stake, yet both seem ultimately unwilling to endorse the demands of ENGOs for policy changes in this sector. To put things into context, there is no such thing as a Birds Directive on bluefin tuna, neither in terms of legislation not in terms of symbolic effect. What exists is a lobbying battlefield characterised by antagonistic discourses, yet hegemonically characterised by neo-liberal ideology and the interests of
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big-businesses and nation-states. The most that ENGOs have achieved through their chains of equivalence are nodal points which partially fixed meaning on the importance of sustainable fishing (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 112; Howarth and Stravakakis, 2000: 8). As things stand, therefore, the signifier which called for the banning of bluefin tuna fishing until stocks recovered was not hegemonic, neither within the EU in general nor within Malta in particular.

As stated earlier, this case study, which is notably shorter than other ones in this study, featured the relative discursive silence of Maltese ENGOs. This is because they were not as vociferous on the bluefin tuna issue as they were on other matters. The conservationist ENGOs which spoke up on the matter (Nature Trust, Din l-Art Helwa, Bicref – the latter being the most focused on the issue) did not organise crusades. Instead, whether intentionally or not, they seemed to rely on the pressure of WWF and Greenpeace at European and global levels. When it mattered, the support of the EU and ICCAT left much to be desired, given that they only supported cuts in fishing rather than a ban until stocks recover. Hence, as far as the Maltese ENGOs were concerned, the EU was indirectly used as a gateway (Börzel, 2008: 232; Johnston, 2011: 186-7; Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001, 344-5), yet results achieved were very modest.

The Nationalist and Labour parties, unlike the Greens, were supportive of the bluefin tuna industry, either directly, as was the case of the Nationalist Government (through its Ministry responsible for Fishing), or indirectly, as was the case with Labour’s silence on the matter, save for its initial opposition to permits for development applications in 2002.
There was no significant lobbying from the part of small-scale traditional fishermen against bluefin big business. The nodal point which combined neo-liberal ideology with the “national interest” prevailed.

Despite the failure of ENGOs to construct a hegemonic formation on the issue, and despite the fact that various claims were made on the alleged irregularities characterising bluefin tuna fishing, ENGOs are more empowered than was the case had there been no EU or ICCAT rules. This can be evaluated through the application of external impacts as proposed by Giugni (1995), van der Heijden (1999), Carter (2001) and Rootes (2007a).

As regards sensitization, the issue did sensitize authorities and the public sphere, especially through the coverage in newspapers such as Malta Today. However, despite the dislocatory articulation of “collapsing fish stocks”, and despite activism – especially of ENGOs at a European level and respective press coverage - there was no rallying point within the Maltese environmental movement. As stated above, street protests and public outcry were, missing, and institutions ultimately favoured big business interests.

As regards structural impacts, the lobbying of global ENGOs such as WWF and Greenpeace was witnessed, yet there were no significant changes in Malta’s state structures, other than making sure that Malta had structural capability of conforming to EU and ICCAT prerequisites.
Malta’s EU membership meant that as far as substantive impacts were concerned, Malta was bound to follow EU regulations, which, in turn, conformed to ICCAT agreements. Yet, within the EU, the position of member states (including Malta) was very influential – far more than that of ENGOs. Hence legislation on bluefin tuna fishing represented a mixed bag, as it imposed limits on bluefin tuna fishing which, however, were miles away from the demands of ENGOs. Besides, questions have been raised on the actual enforcement of legislation – even in its minimalist form - on bluefin tuna catches.

Procedural impacts were only significant when the concerns of the Maltese ENGOs were similar to those of the ENGOs on a European level, which, in turn, lobbied at an EU level, with modest results. In Malta, the only form of structured consultation with ENGOs was through the MEPA planning process where applications for tuna farms were approved.
9. Case Study: Climate Change

9.1 Introduction

The final case study of this thesis deals with climate change. This issue, which has achieved global prominence in the recent years, has been characterised by lobbying not only by ENGOs, both in Malta and within the EU, but also by the EU itself, resulting in binding targets within the union.

9.2 The articulation of climate change as an environmental issue

Prior to Malta’s EU accession, climate change was not mainstreamed in Maltese legislation and policy, notwithstanding the fact that Malta’s appeals regarding climate change eventually led to the Climate Change Convention of the United Nations, which Malta ratified in 1994. Malta had hardly any policies which incentivise use of renewable energy. In this regard, it was estimated that the renewable energy potential of the Maltese islands could reach 24 per cent of the total energy generated during 2003, comprising 9.1 per cent from rooftop solar photovoltaic systems, 5.4 per cent from on shore wind farms, 3.4 per cent from offshore wind farms and 5.6 per cent from waste, whilst solar water heating in domestic buildings could offset 4.8 per cent of electricity that was generated (Farrugia R.N., Fsadni and Yousif, 2005).

In the meantime, Malta’s consumption of non-renewable energy witnessed a steep increase in the last decades of the twentieth century. By the turn of the century, the main consumers of energy were transport (30 per cent) and power generation (60 per cent) – through the usage of imported fossil fuels (Fsadni, Mallia, Nasser and Sayigh, 2000). One
of the biggest consumers in this regard was water production through desalination operations. Official statistics for the years 1987/88 to 1999/2000 show that there were increases in all emission types though the year 1999/2000 witnessed a drop, possibly due to the ‘adoption of cleaner fuels or the fixing of electronic precipitators’ (NSO, 2002a: 57). Between 1990 and 2002, energy consumption in Malta grew by 61 per cent (NSO, 2006: ix). In the meantime, there was no significant infrastructure for renewable energy such as solar and wind energy (Government of Malta, 2002: 30).

By the time that Malta became an EU member-state, the discourse of climate changed and became one of the predominant discourses in the ecological sphere. Being a small island, Malta was deemed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to be vulnerable to the effects of climate change, for example due to sea-level rise, even though Malta was deemed to have considerable experience in adaptation to variability in climate (Mimura, N., Nurse, L., McLean, R.F., Agard, J, Briguglio, L., Lefale, P., Payet, R., and Sem, G.: 2007). According to Lino Briguglio and Gordon Cordina (cited in Mimura, N., Nurse, L., McLean, R.F., Agard, J, Briguglio, L., Lefale, P., Payet, R., and Sem, G., 2007: 709), climate change had potential impacts on the economic development of Malta, affecting all sectors, but particularly tourism, fishing and public utilities.

By 2008, Malta was one of the lowest emitters of greenhouses gases in the EU (Eurostat, 2010: 576; European Environment Agency, 2010: 29; MEPA, 2010b; 24). Yet, according to Eurostat (2010), when it comes greenhouse gas emissions based on Kyoto base year 1990, which was given a value of 100, Malta’s rate for 2007 was the second highest in
the EU, reading 149, second only to Cyprus, and exceeding the EU-27 average of 90.7. Of course, given Malta’s small size, its share of greenhouse gases within the EU-27 was of 0.1 per cent (527).

 Concurrently, Malta was on the bottom of the EU list regarding the share of renewable energy within final energy consumption (ibid: 575; 36). Indeed, when it comes to net imports of energy, Malta had the highest energy dependency rate in the EU and one of the highest rates of tonnes of oil equivalent per inhabitant in the EU (Eurostat, 2010: 560-2). Malta’s greenhouse gas emissions rose by 49 per cent between 1990 and 2007, even though emissions per unit Gross Domestic Product declined by 18 per cent during the same timeframe (MEPA, 2010b: 24). After the energy sector (89 per cent), the waste sector was the second highest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions (6.6 per cent), followed by industrial and agricultural processes (2 per cent) (ibid: 20).

 Fuel imports increased by 3.14 per cent between 2004 and 2008 (MEPA, 2010b: 7). At the same time, 65 per cent of primary energy through imported fuels were used for electricity generation, via Malta’s state-owned energy monopoly Enemalta, which accounted for 100 per cent of market share in the electricity market, thus having the highest share in the EU, matched only by Cyprus (Eurostat, 2010: 576). In this regard, imported fuels decreased by 1 per cent between 2007 and 2008, reversing the upward trend between 1999 and 2007. This could have resulted due to higher fuel prices (ibid: 12). Indeed, given that electricity was subsidised for many years in Malta, public perception was that this was a low cost form of energy. This is not surprising when Malta
was one of the EU member states with the lowest prices for petrol and diesel. Besides, Malta’s electricity prices for households were also lower than that of the combined EU-27, yet the same could not be said for electricity prices for industry, which exceeded that of the EU-27 (Eurostat, 2010: 579-81). By 2008, Malta had the highest number of infringement procedures on environmental matters amongst the new EU member states, especially in relation to the reduction of greenhouse gases, measures on climate change, destruction of biodiversity and waste recycling. Half of the infringements – 12 out of 26 – had to do with air legislation (Camilleri, I. 2008m).

The Maltese environmental movement joined the global articulation of climate change as a dislocatory sudden crisis – perhaps the most pressing of our times, if not the ‘single most important subject of environmental consciousness’ (Van der Heijden, 2010: 167). Calls were being made for Malta’s adaptation to climate change even prior to the country’s EU accession. For example, in its report ‘Sustainable Malta’ (Ragonesi, Manduca, Mallia, Camilleri M., 1998), Friends of the Earth Malta appealed to the Government of Malta to reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 33 per cent by 2010 and by 79 per cent by 2050 (ibid).

EU accession provided a backbone to claims for climate change adaptation put forward not only by ENGOs and the Greens, but also by Malta’s Government itself through already existent external relations such as its membership of the United Nations and its participation in global summits on the environment. An empty signifier (Laclau, 2005) which can be called ‘Reduce CO2 emissions’ was articulated, thus partially fixing
meaning through a nodal point. The signifier has been filled with various claims, for example by linking climate change to global capitalism, lifestyle issues, energy efficiency, overpopulation, and others\(^{41}\) (van der Heijden, 2010: 175-6).

9.3 Climate change in the EU and Malta: Chains of Equivalence and ENGOs

European ENGOs – some of which have formed coalitions such as Green 10 and the Spring Alliance, and some of which have their own Maltese counterparts (such as Birdlife and Friends of the Earth) – formed chains of equivalence (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) through alliances with each other, and at times, with other social agents. At the same time, other ENGOs in Malta were active in their own ways, with the occasional alliance.

In 2006 ENGOs organised at an EU level (Greenpeace, WWF, European Federation for Transport and Environment, Friends of the Earth Europe and Climate Action Network Europe, 2006) appealed for EU greenhouse emission reductions by at least 30 per cent by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050, in order to reach the European Council’s goal of keeping global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels. They also appealed for a 25 per cent target of renewable energy sources by 2020, for a reduction of at least 20 per cent of energy consumption by 2020, which could save 60 billion Euro per

\(^{41}\) Climate Change was also referred to by conservationist ENGOs in relation to birds. In 2008, Birdlife International published a report linking climate change to bird extinction, which was also presented in Malta by its Maltese counterparts. Basing itself on the findings of the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Birdlife said that unless climate change is averted, bird species could become extinct by the end of the current century. These included Yelkouan Shearwater and European Stormpetrels, both of which are found in Malta and are of international importance (Micallef, 2008a).
year and create ‘as many as 1 million new jobs’. The ENGOs also constructed their ‘discursive exterior’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 107) by appealing for the phasing out of subsidies to ‘dirty energy’ comprising fossil fuels and nuclear energy; for the recognition of nuclear energy ‘as an environmental and financial folly’, and for the doubling of fuel efficiency of new cars over the subsequent decade. The ENGOs claimed that the majority of European citizens supported their goals, as witnessed through the 2006 Eurobarometer survey, which showed that the majority believed that solar and wind energy use should be developed by Governments (Greenpeace, WWF, European Federation for Transport and Environment, Friends of the Earth Europe and Climate Action Network Europe, 2006) The European Green Party and the European Trade Union Confederation, among others, also spoke up for strong climate-change policies. For example, the latter demanded a reduction of CO2 emissions by 75 per cent before 2050 and a Europe-wide tripartite social dialogue on climate change, amongst other proposals (Euractiv.com, October 24th, 2006).

9.4 Antagonisms in the setting of climate goals

Following the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992, the Kyoto Protocol was agreed upon in 1997, though it came into force in 2004. Through the latter – which was boycotted by the USA amongst others - industrialized countries representing at least 55 per cent of 1992 CO2 emissions were due to reduce CO2 emissions by 5.2 per cent below 1990 levels by the end of 2012, and the EU agreed to implement an 8 per cent reduction. Malta was a non-Annex I party signatory to the Kyoto Protocol and hence did not have emission targets as such. Nevertheless, as an EU member state, it was bound by EU directives which set such targets.
When the European Commission published its green paper on climate change in 2006, it highlighted six priorities which were apparently not as binding and ambitious as those proposed by the ENGOs. Besides, this required addressing global warming, with possible 2020 targets ‘in order to provide a stable investment climate to generate more competitive renewable energy in Europe’; the boosting of energy technology to ‘ensure that European industries are world leaders’, and ensuring that the EU speaks with a common external voice (Reuters, March 3rd, 2006). The EU’s second Emissions Trading Scheme for 2008-12, covering around 40 per cent of the EU’s total CO2 emissions, was launched by the European Commission in order that the EU might meet its Kyoto targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 8 per cent compared to 1990 levels. This scheme established a price on greenhouse emissions so as to incentivise industry to reduce such emissions. In this regard, the European Commission rejected nine (including Malta’s) out of ten allocation plans received from member states. European ENGOs welcomed this decision, though they criticised the lack of significant improvements in the granting of allocations.

Nature Trust praised the work by the European Commission with regard to climate change, and also had positive words for Malta’s national committee in charge of the National Allocation Plan for Greenhouse Gases (The Times, June 6th, 2006). Yet Malta was falling back in compliance with the EU legislation. It was warned by the European Commission to conform to the EU regulations on the setting up of a national registry on greenhouse gas emissions in relation to the Emissions Trading Scheme. This had to be set
up by the end of 2004, yet Malta, together with Poland, Cyprus and Luxembourg, failed to do so (Camilleri, I. 2006c). At the same time, Malta, together with 14 other EU member states, had also failed to submit carbon emission plans for after 2008, resulting in a warning from the European Commission (Spongenberg, 2006). Eventually, in 2007, the EU announced that it would be taking action against six member states – including Malta – which failed to submit the required information, thus receiving final warnings from the Commission (Reuters, March 23rd, 2007).

Besides, the European Commission, in an attempt to be ‘firm and fair’, asked Malta, together with other member states, to reduce its carbon emissions caps in relation to the national pollution-reducing plans of member states. In this regard, various member states were considered to ‘have been making a mockery of the Emissions Trading Scheme by being overly generous with allowances and in some cases giving industry the chance to pollute even more’ (Mahony, 2006). ENGOs such as WWF and Greenpeace welcomed the Commission’s stance. However, they added that it did not go far enough (ibid). Indeed, the Green 10 alliance of European ENGOs said that the Commission‘still sees environmental issues at first as a problem for the economy, a problem for competitiveness, and only when it leads to direct efficiency gains.. then the Commission is prepared to act... The Commission’s rhetoric is much greener than its actions. Its actions have been influenced by the principle that if it’s good for the environment it cannot be good for the economy’ (Reuters, April 30th, 2007).

Subsequently, the European Commission launched its new energy policy subject for approval by the Council of Ministers, which, amongst other proposals aimed to cut CO2 emissions by at least 20 per cent by 2020 compared to 1990 levels, with a further increase to 30 per cent should other developed nations comply through an international agreement.
This target was way above the 8 per cent Kyoto target. The European Commission also proposed a binding target of 20 per cent renewable energy by 2020 (up from 7 per cent), a 10 per cent target for biofuels for transport, and increased energy efficiency by 20 per cent (Reuters, January 11th, 2007).

Maltese ENGOs and the Green Party pressurised the Maltese Government to support such changes. For example, in a joint event on the Kyoto Treaty, Nature Trust, Friends of the Earth Malta and the youth section of Alternattiva Demokratika said that Malta should support the EU in keeping a leading role in the implementation of the Kyoto targets and in post-Kyoto discussions. The ENGOs also called for increased educational campaigns and the implementation of Malta’s targets (The Times, February 17th, 2007). Yet Malta did not seem to be very much in line with the EU directives. Indeed, during June 2007, Malta was warned for the second time by the European Commission for failing to comply with EU requirements set in the Combustion Plants Directive 2001/80/EC, in both Delimara and Marsa power stations. Besides, Malta had not submitted updated information on both (Zahra, 2007).

In 2007, the Environment ministers from the EU member states unanimously backed the proposals of the European Commission. This was met positively by WWF which said that this confirmed the EU’s intention to meet its international obligations (Reuters, February 21st, 2007). At the same time, antagonistic political demands were being articulated, both by national governments and business interests. Various Ministers - including Malta’s, through its Minister of Foreign Affairs - appealed for concessions on
their national share of CO2 reductions, and appealed for voluntary as opposed to mandatory national targets (Camilleri, I. 2007e) In anticipation of the European Council meeting that dealt with the matter, Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi said:

‘We can’t have hydroelectric power as we have no rivers or dams. We can’t have the amount of photovoltaic energy we would like to as our land is not big enough to have the necessary plants installed. So we need to be realistic. A one size fits all policy in this sector is not ideal’ (Camilleri, I. 2007f).

In the European Union summit held in March 2007, the EU leaders upheld the proposals of the European Commission, but also agreed with the proposal of member states including Malta that national targets should vary in accordance with each country’s circumstances. However, these targets were to be binding. Gonzi expressed his approval of this decision, adding that his Government had decided to connect Malta to the EU electricity grid through a submarine cable with Sicily and through renewable energy, though he referred to difficulties in the materialisation of wind energy development (Camilleri, I. 2007g). Commenting on these developments, Friends of the Earth Malta welcomed the commitments of the EU, but added that the Prime Minister ‘was uninformed’ on wind energy problems, and that unless Malta reviewed its official position on this energy and incentives for photovoltaic solar panels, Malta would not be able to reach its targets for 2020. The ENGO added that Enemalta’s intention of shifting from oil to natural gas would have significant effect, but ‘took time, money and drive’ (The Times, March 13th, 2007).

The ENGOs’ comments showed that antagonistic relations existed in the calls for climate change policies. At the same time, environment and energy Ministers welcomed the
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Commission’s package, with the former calling for flexibility in reducing CO2 emissions (Euractiv.com, March 4th, 2008). The ‘stable frontier’ (Laclau, 2005: 133) of climate change was being questioned by those calling for CO2 reductions, in terms of how the challenge should be tackled. The EU featured as the condensation of conflicts (Poulantzas, 2000: 151), which, at the same time was determined to reduce CO2 emissions. Hence, not only was the partially fixed meaning within the climate change nodal point at times signified in different ways by different actors within the chains of equivalence, but the EU was in one way linked to these chains of equivalence (to reduce CO2 emissions), but at the same time subject to lobbying antagonistic camps within the climate change hegemonic struggle.

In this context, whilst national Governments called for flexibility, the European Environment Bureau and the European Trade Union Confederation eventually called for greenhouse gas reductions between 25 and 40 per cent and for tax adjustments to ‘protect EU-based industry from unfair competition’ (Euractiv.com, March 4th, 2008). Greenpeace, on the other hand, stated that claims on industry’s shifting from Europe to more climate-lenient regions were ‘wholly unsubstantiated’ (ibid). Friends of the Earth International, in the meantime, joined the European Greens in calling for a political will leading to a reduction of at least 30 per cent in CO2 levels, in order ‘to prevent a climatic catastrophe’ (BBC News, January 23rd 2008). European Commission President Barroso, seemed to be caught in the middle of all this, yet he remained upbeat. Indeed, he spoke of ‘historic’ plans to make the EU ‘the first economy for the low-carbon age’ in his address to the European Parliament, using this to buttress his appeal for their approval of the
Commission’s plans, which were ‘not in favour of the environment and against the economy’ (ibid).

Maltese ENGOs continued to speak up on climate change. In its message for Earth Day 2008, Nature Trust called for a national strategy on renewable energy, beyond the small incentives that existed to date (The Times, April 22nd, 2008a). Moviment Graffitti called for policies and investment which favour renewable energy (Mizzi, 2008), whilst Zminijietna Voice of the Left called for realism, social justice and urgency. As the latter put it,

‘Malta has a global obligation to speak up for serious climate change goals, as small islands are among the societies likely to be worst hit by climate change. The EU proposals are made within a capitalist framework of endless production, commodification and technological quick-fixes, which, ultimately, do not solve the problems of wasteful consumption and social inequality’ (The Times, February 4th, 2008).

Zminijietna added that it believed in a centrally-planned, state-owned energy supply, together with increased prioritisation of public transport, localised production, better urban planning and waste management. It also concurred with the call of global NGOs on the environmental and social dangers of biofuels (ibid). A few days before Malta’s 2008

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42 Zminijietna’s radical leftist stances could also be seen in other instances, for example in its call for a referendum on the EU Treaty. With respect to the treaty, Zminijietna criticised the Government’s ‘fear of public debate, electoral manoeuvring in view of the upcoming general election and its neo-liberal ideology’, adding that the treaty ‘will affect present and future generations in a profound way, [and] will be rushed through Parliament in a mere technical and legal formality’ (The Sunday Times, January 20th, 2008a). Zminijietna’s stance on the EU treaty was not in conformity with that of other ENGOs. Indeed, EU ENGOs such as the European Environmental Bureau, on behalf of 143 ENGOs, were rather upbeat about it, and praised aspects such as democratization and transparency (Euractiv.com, December 14th, 2007). The European Environmental Bureau (2007a) believed that the Reform Treaty did not change the ‘strong basis for environmental policies’ that were provided in the 1985 Treaty revision, and in addition it earmarked climate change as a priority issue. It also retained the 1997 addition of ‘sustainable development’ as a reference together with the prioritization of environmental protection (1).
general elections, the ENGO added that environmental protection should take place, whilst ensuring social justice.

Following the general elections, a Government-appointed committee for climate change was set up, comprising various representatives from various sectors, including some ENGO members – though not all ENGOs were asked to participate\textsuperscript{43}. This committee had to ensure that Malta fulfils its EU obligations regarding CO2 emissions and alternative energy (The Times, June 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2008). At the same time, the Today Public Policy Institute (2008) – a newly-established think-tank- presented a list of recommendations on energy generation and conservation; the proposed connection to the European grid; wind energy; photovoltaic energy; biomass; solar water heating; and energy efficient housing amongst others (25-28). Din l-Art Helwa endorsed the former’s calls (Bianchi, 2008). Even State agency MEPA (2010a) has called for such changes, stating clearly that Malta is far away from EU targets and that the islands ‘will need to reduce consumption and develop widespread use of alternative technologies’ (9). MEPA also stated that energy demand should be decoupled from economic growth.

Concurrently, Friends of the Earth Malta welcomed a climate change private member’s bill presented by Labour parliamentarian Leo Brincat, who called for a strategic plan and annual progress reports by the Government (Calleja, 2008d). In this regard, the European Environmental Agency said that unlike other Mediterranean countries which have ‘quite extensive climate change assessments’, Malta had to date not yet prepared a plan on how

\textsuperscript{43} I recall this from my activism at the time.
to adapt to climate change (Muscat, C. 2008). During the same year, the European Parliament backed the plans for an increased use of renewable energy. It also backed proposals of Green MEP Claude Turmes for interim targets applicable to member states and penalty regimes for laggards (Euractiv.com, September 12\textsuperscript{th}, 2008a). In the meantime, WWF, through crisis-ridden discourse, claimed that climate change is happening faster than predicted, with huge adverse risks in various sectors – from food to health - in the pipeline. The ENGO urged the European Council of Ministers to commit to a CO2 reduction of at least 30 per cent by 2020 (Vucheva, 2008).

**9.5 Biofuel battles**

ENGOs also spoke in unison, and formed a chain of equivalence with other NGOs in an appeal to the European Union to be wary of biofuel usage as a measure to combat climate change. A group of 17 EU NGOs appealed to the European Commission to introduce tougher standards as regards the production of biofuel or to withdraw the obligatory biofuel transport targets. The NGOs claimed that as things stood, the production of such energy could result in lower social standards and destruction of important ecosystems. As a Friends of the Earth campaigner put it, ‘this means that anyone chopping down a rainforest two weeks ago can now sell the bio fuels he produces on that land as environmentally sustainable’ (Euractiv.com, January 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2008). Birdlife International, European Environment Bureau, Friends of the Earth Europe and Greenpeace teamed up with development NGO Oxfam International in stepping up their previous call later on in 2008 when the European Parliament was to vote on the issue. They called on the EU to withdraw proposals for the massive expansion of bio fuels (Birdlife International, European Environment Bureau, Friends of the Earth Europe, Greenpeace, Oxfam
Michael Briguglio (2013): EU Accession and Civil Society Empowerment: The Case of Maltese ENGOs

International, 2008). Along the same lines, Zminijietna – Voice of the Left appealed to the Maltese Government and to Maltese MEPs to oppose the increase in the share of biofuels on the grounds of increase in food prices and hunger due to resulting food shortages. Zminijietna instead proposed increased taxation on luxury cars consuming excessive amounts of fuel, for social and ecological reasons (The Times, April 14th, 2008a).

The ENGOs were partially successful in their appeals, as a report by Green MEP Claude Turmes, which eventually called for a share of 5 per cent share of renewables in transport fuel by 2015 and a 10 per cent target in 2020 was backed by the Parliament’s Industry and Energy Committee. ENGOs welcomed this as a ‘step in the right direction’. Biofuel businesses, on the other hand, opposed this decision, claiming it threatened investment in the sector (Euractiv.com, September 12th, 2008b). Eventually, an agreement was reached through which up to almost a third of the 10 per cent target would be attained through trains and electric cars rather than through biofuels (Harrison, 2008). In the meantime, the global community was moving closer towards the Copenhagen summit on climate change.

9.6 Towards the Copenhagen summit

As the United Nations’ global summit on climate change in Copenhagen, held in December 2009, was approaching, further decisions were taken in the EU as regards climate change targets. The ENGOs kept up their activism in this respect. For example Friends of the Earth Malta participated with other national branches of Friends of the
Earth International during the Global Day of Action on Climate activities (Van der Heijden, 2010: 183-4).

Late in 2008, negotiators from the European Parliament, the European Commission and the member states agreed on a compromise which would establish mandatory targets for member states in order that the EU may achieve the 20 per cent renewable energy target by 2020. Through the deal, the EU member states would be able to plan joint projects and to transfer renewable energy produced ‘statistically’ between themselves. Greenpeace hailed the agreement as a

‘ray of light… [a] sunny spell before heavy showers, as European leaders create loophole after loophole in other parts of the EU’s package of laws to tackle climate change’ (Phillips, L. 2008c).

An example of such heavy showers was Italy’s demand to review the legislation in 2014, which, according to diplomats, was supported by Austria, Cyprus and Malta (Harrison, 2008). However, what Malta wanted was nothing less than what other member states were entitled to, thus confirming its support to the empty signifier of a Europe-wide effort of combating climate change, with some strategic manoeuvring in between. As Minister George Pullicino put it during the EU climate talks in Poland,

‘Malta seeks to put itself on the same legal footing as its fellow (EU) member states in a collective and responsible commitment to continue reducing emissions of greenhouse gases after 2012’ (Reuters, December 11th, 2008)

The EU finalised its climate deal in December 2008, in advance of the Copenhagen summit. An agreement on a 20 per cent reduction of CO2 emissions and 20 per cent production of renewable energy was reached. Various compromises were made, resulting
in criticism from Green MEPs and ENGOs especially due to the high levels of carbon offsets. As a result of these compromises member states were being allowed to pay for emissions cuts in developing countries rather than in their own respective countries (Harrison and Jones, 2008). For example, Greenpeace stated that the deal did not guarantee an EU emissions reduction of 20 per cent, let alone the required 30 per cent which was really needed as a bare minimum against global warming.

The European Peoples’ Party and the European Liberals welcomed the deal. The European Photovoltaic Industry Association was positive too, though critical on certain exemptions. Yet Business Europe was reported as stating that ‘the deal would still impose higher costs on companies, particularly SMEs, in the form of higher energy and CO2 prices and a greater administrative burden’ (Euractiv.com, January 9th, 2009). It was therefore evident that, though there was broad consensus with the empty signifier which called for the reduction of CO2 emissions, there was no consensus as to how this could be achieved. This did not mean that ENGOs opposed the EU’s efforts on climate change. Indeed, prior to the Copenhagen summit, the Green 10 (2009) gave marks to the Barroso commission of 2004-9, failing it in most areas (the lowest grades given to Sustainable Development [2/10]; and Natural Resources and Transparency: each receiving 3/10), whilst giving highest marks to Climate (7/10), followed by Energy and Transport, each receiving 6/10.

When the Copenhagen summit eventually took place, the environmentalists and greens were disappointed by its outcome. The summit did not result in any clear binding targets,
even though the EU had its own targets. The EU eventually set up a Directorate General for Climate Action within the European Commission in February 2011 (European Commission Climate Action, 2011).

In Malta, Nature Trust – definitely not a radical ENGO - depicted an ‘us’ and ‘them’ situation when it said that

‘it is ironic that while civil society and environmental NGOs seem to be greatly concerned on our future, some world leaders are simply coming up with excuses’ (The Times, December 26th, 2009).

The ENGO used the discourse of crisis by adding that small islands like Malta and Cyprus will face big problems such as rising seawater levels, adding that Malta was lagging behind in meeting EU targets on climate change (ibid).

9.7 Emission schemes: Between the European and the national

Notwithstanding the Copenhagen flop, there was a substantive impact on Malta’s policies regarding climate change. The Government of Malta had to comply with the EU target through which Malta would be required produce 10 per cent of its energy from clean renewable sources by 2020. This includes energy from transport, electricity, heating and cooling (MEPA, 2010a: 31). Malta was also obliged to limit CO2 emissions increase by 5 per cent by 2020 (Official Journal of the European Union, 2009). Malta also had to have 10 per cent biofuel for transport use by 2020. Yet Malta’s target of 5 per cent renewable energy by 2010, as stated in its Treaty of Accession, was clearly not going to be attained (The Today Public Policy Institute, 2008: 5). Malta’s targets were the lowest in the EU,
even though this presented a significant increase from the then current 0.36 per cent (Camilleri, I. 2008c).

Yet antagonisms between the National – which in turn claim to represent the interests of industry - and the European, did take place, as already witnessed above. Another example was when Malta unsuccessfully asked for an annual allocation of 2.9 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions for the period in question. The European Commission reduced this by 30 per cent to 2.1 million tonnes a year. Malta’s Delimara and Marsa power stations were included in this scheme (Camilleri, I. 2006j, 2007g). Given that these two power-stations are state-owned through the Enemalta monopoly, it was the economic interests of the State in a context of limited resources, which were influential on the position of the Government of Malta regarding CO2 emissions. Yet, indirectly, such claims were of interest to Maltese industry too, given the dependence on oil obtained from Enemalta. Environmental class conflict (Layfield, 2008) could thus be seen as being in play. Together with some other EU member states, Malta did not seem pleased about this. Indeed, it was reported that some member states would take the European Commission to the European Court of Justice on grounds of what they deemed as harm to their industries (Euractiv.com, October 29th, 2007). However, Malta did not pursue further and eventually accepted its emissions target even when the European Court of Justice ruled against the European Commission (Camilleri, I. 2009h) As mentioned earlier, Malta could increase its emissions by 5 per cent in areas not covered by the Emissions Trading Scheme (Camilleri, I. 2008c).
Whilst some Governments were complaining on the Emissions Trading Scheme, other social actors were saying that it was too generous, thus resulting in windfall profits for power companies. WWF, for example, said that the scheme was rewarding some of the worst polluters in the EU, which, in the transitional period up to 2012, were handed ‘free pollution permits... [which].. is like handing them a cash bonus’ (Phillips, L. 2008a).

Two interesting twists related to Malta’s climate change adaption were related to production of energy. Indeed, in relation to the Europe 2020 strategy, the Government of Malta envisaged certain policies to improve efficiency in electricity generation and distribution. Key actions included setting up an interconnector with Sicily for the provision of electrical energy and the extension of the Delimara power station by 2012. Other actions included schemes which promote micro-generation of energy, through renewable energy, such as the provision of incentives for the installation of solar water heaters and photovoltaic panels and the determination of a feed-in tariff (Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, 2010: 29-32). The European Commission played an influential role with regard to the upgrading of the Delimara power station in Marsaxlokk. Following a decision taken by the European Commission in January 2008 to resort to the European Court of Justice in view of the excessive emissions of the power station, the Government of Malta announced in April that the power station would start using low-sulphur oil in a month’s time, albeit at a greater expense. The Government also reiterated its intention to close down the inefficient, old and highly polluting Marsa power station by 2015, in line with EU regulations (Camilleri, I. 2008h).
The Maltese Government – albeit characterised by changing rhetoric on its windfarm plans (Debono, 2009c) – eventually earmarked an offshore wind farm at Sikka l-Bajda and two onshore wind farms at Wied Rini and Hal Far respectively, which would be operated by the private sector and be compensated through a feed in tariff (Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Investment, 2010: 32). In the meantime, an antagonistic political demand against the site selection of wind farms came from within the ENGO camp. Birdlife Malta, erstwhile recipient of EU funds for a project at Sikka l-Bajda, called for a careful selection of sites, especially since a breeding colony of Yelkouan Shearwater was located just 2km away of Sikka l-Bajda. Birdlife asked whether a wind farm at this site would be in breach of the Birds Directive, given that in 2003 Malta included this bird and its habitat as a protected species in the Directive (Malta Today, October 22nd, 2008). Bicref, on the other hand, warned that offshore wind farms and oil drilling could have an impact on the marine ecosystem, and recommended that other clean energy options such as solar energy should be taken into consideration before other options (The Times, October 29th, 2008). Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar, which was consulted on Government’s change in policy, welcomed the decision to have land-based wind farms, given that they were being considered to be cheaper (Debono, 2009c).

On another note, an achievement of Malta and fellow island-state Cyprus in relation to climate change concerned Directive 2008/101. In this regard, following EU accession, the two islands managed to win a concession on aviation emissions, where the EU bound itself to consider the impact of the EU directive on islands, landlocked regions, peripheral regions and outermost regions (Moncada, Camilleri M., Formosa, Galea, 2010: 82).
9.8 The empowerment of ENGOs in relation to the climate change issue

An analysis of the influence of EU accession on Maltese ENGO empowerment with respect to climate change would conclude that by and large, ENGOs have been empowered. They formed part of a hegemonic formation through which climate change became a key political issue, with substantive impacts such as policy and legislative changes.

The signifier which called for a reduction in CO2 emissions formed a nodal point (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 112; Howarth and Stravakakis, 2000: 8) within this hegemonic formation. Even though the Nationalist and Labour parties were not at the forefront within the public sphere on the issue, and even though the Nationalist Government attempted to obtain a more flexible approach for climate change adaptation, the chain of equivalence for compulsory adaptation within the EU prevailed, albeit through moderate policies. Indeed, the climate adaptation deal adopted by the EU was criticised by environmentalists for not being ambitious enough. As suggested by Laclau and Mouffe in their theoretical analysis of hegemonic formations (1985), specific political demands, such as those of ENGOs partially surrendered some of their more radical claims, but ultimately conceded that a common position on climate change within the EU was better than not having a deal. In this respect, adaptation to climate change became mainstreamed in EU policy, in spite of the resistance of various national governments and business interests. The EU was ultimately characterised by ‘conflictual consensus’ (Mouffe, 2000: 103) through the chains of equivalence calling for CO2 reductions. Indeed, as Laclau (2005) emphasises,
‘Equivalence and difference are ultimately incompatible with each other; none the less, they require each other as necessary conditions for the construction of the social’ (80).

Thus, the analysis of external impact of the environmental movement, namely sensitising, procedural, structural and substantive (Giugni; 1995; van der Heijden 1999; Carter 2001; Rootes 2007a), could result in certain conclusions with regard to Maltese ENGOs, particularly when some of them were represented on an EU level by their European counterparts.

The ‘Reduce CO2 emissions’ signifier sensitized the political agenda in both the EU and Malta. The nodal point around the political discourse on climate change was articulated in a manner that took full advantage of the floating signifier resulting from the dislocatory effect of climate change as a sudden crisis. ENGOs – both Maltese and European - played no small role in this, and managed to capture the attention of the media through their statements and actions. Public awareness was sensitized.

In the process, structural changes took place at both the EU and the Maltese levels. As regards to the former, climate change was give importance within the European Commission, and in 2010 it was actually given its own portfolio through a new Commissioner for Climate Action. In Malta, apart from having the respective Ministries for the environment and resources dealing with climate change, the National Commission for Sustainable Development gave due importance to the issue, and eventually, a national Committee in charge of the National Allocation Plan for Greenhouse Gases, and, later on, a Climate Change Committee, were set up. In the process, ENGOs or their
representatives were consulted for their input, thus leading to procedural impacts which were previously not so common. Hence, the concerns of ENGOs on climate change were seen by EU and Maltese authorities as being legitimate, albeit representing one voice amongst others (such as industry). Climate change has become institutionalised within the EU and Malta, in a process of Europeanization in terms of challenges, opportunities and policy-making.

Substantive impacts have also taken place due to the Europeanization of climate policy, which, even though it demands less than what ENGOs lobbied for, still represented a substantial change in climate change policy, which was previously characterised by rhetoric rather than targets. The Kyoto Protocol and the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change gave legitimacy to such policy reform. In the years to come one can expect more antagonisms in this regard, with ENGOs articulating demands ranging from implementation of agreed targets to having more ambitious targets, with the more radical ENGOs demanding a change in the “system”.

By making use of political opportunities (Börzel, 2008: 232; Johnston, 2011: 186-7; (Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001, 344-5), Maltese ENGOs used the EU as a gateway for empowerment through which their claims could be articulated. Some ENGOs had European counterparts, like Friends of the Earth. ENGOs organised at a European level tended to welcome the fact that the EU has a climate change policy, though they were generally critical of its lack of ambitious targets. Such ENGOs were generally critical of neo-liberalism and instead opted for ideologies which varied between
sustainable development, ecological modernisation, conservationism and radical ideologies. For example the Spring Alliance believed that neo-liberalism was having negative climate change impacts with environmental, social and economic consequences. The Spring Alliance has formed an ‘encompassing discourse coalition of SMOs [Social Movement Organisations] from different social movements at the European level’ (Van der Heijden, 2010: 186). In this regard, Van der Heijden confirms its challenge to the ‘neo-liberal European Union policy frame’ (ibid), adding that even though it has been successful in propagating information, there is still room for development as regards collective action.

Other ENGOs, like Moviment Graffitti, Nature Trust, Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar and Zminijietna Voice of the Left were active on their own steam. In some sporadic cases, ENGOs worked together with political parties, such as when Labour’s climate change bill was supported by Friends of the Earth Malta, and when this ENGO and Nature Trust collaborated with the youth section of the Green Party in the appeal for Malta’s implementation of Kyoto and EU targets.

Conservationist ENGOs articulated their conservationist ideologies with others such as ecological modernisation. Though certain conservationist ENGOs tend to be amongst the most institutionalised, at times some were antagonistic towards EU policy and towards specific projects. Nature Trust, for example, welcomed the efforts of the European Commission and of Malta’s national committee responsible for climate change matters, but it was also critical of various world leaders with reference to the outcome of the
Copenhagen summit in 2008. Conservationists such as Din l-Art Helwa believed in solutions akin to ecological modernisation – such as the use of alternative energy, connection to the European energy grid, and energy conservation.

Yet not all forms of renewable energy were enthusiastically welcomed by ENGOs. Indeed, windfarms – an example of ecological modernisation - received a mixed reaction from conservationists. Birdlife Malta expressed its concern over the plans for an offshore windfarm close to a habitat of protected species, thus demonstrating the potential conflict between different EU policies. Offshore windfarms also raised the eyebrows of Bicref as to their possible impact on the marine ecology. Bicref called for the exploration of other options – such as solar energy - before resorting to this.

When the Government eventually agreed to have land-based windfarms, too, it seemed that the critique of ENGOs was effective. Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar, which was officially consulted on this, welcomed the whole process. Ecological modernisation was also favoured by Friends of the Earth Malta, due to its favouring of renewable energy sources. As explained previously, the ENGO was, however, speaking about climate change as early as the 1990s, when it put forward proposals through which Malta can be sustainable in its energy use, and in line with sustainable development ideology, linked this with various economic and social aspects.

On the radical front, Zminijietna Voice of the Left clearly identified capitalism as the main culprit of climate change. As shown previously, it spoke of the need for a move
from commodification, over consumption, technological quick-fixes and inequality towards a more centrally-planned energy system, localised production and better planning, with a strong state involvement. Zminijietna also endorsed the global call which raised awareness on the social and environmental impacts of bio fuels. Moviment Graffitti, on the other hand, tended to put more specific focus on the need for renewable energy, drawing it close to more moderate calls for ecological modernisation.

The ENGOs capitalised on global agreements such as Kyoto and global discourses such as that of the ICCP to strengthen their points. In turn, the EU, as a condensation of conflicts (Poulantzas, 2000:151) was characterised by ideological pluralism of neo-liberalism, ecological modernisation and sustainable development. The neo-liberal ideology assumed that the EU exists within a capitalist context, and thus, for example, promoted market-oriented policies such as emissions-trading schemes. Ecological modernisation provided the basis through which hi-tec and alternative technologies such as solar and wind energy could help reduce CO2 emissions without disrupting the consumerist tendencies within the EU. Sustainable development gave due importance to social and economic factors together with the environmental necessity to tackle climate change. Hence, diverse concerns, ranging from industry’s adaptation costs for various businesses, to new opportunities for businesses investing in renewable energy, to food shortages due to bio fuels were overdetermined together with the environmental challenges of climate change. All in all, ‘climate change has become an important driver of European integration in general, as it increases the EU’s domestic legitimacy’ (Van der Heijden, 2010: 175).
10. Maltese ENGOs, EU Accession and Empowerment: Analysis of Case Studies

10.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the empowerment of ENGOs in relation to the case studies of this thesis. Each case study had already comprised analysis of the empowerment of ENGOs for each specific issue at stake, so this chapter compares them by focusing on hegemonic struggles and resultant hegemonic formations and impacts; institutionalisation of ENGOs; and Europeanization of environmental politics. Subsequently, in the concluding chapter, the main findings of this chapter will be analysed together with the main findings from interviews with ENGOs.

10.2 Hegemonic struggles

This study has adopted the theoretical standpoint that social movements can discursively articulate their demands through empty signifiers that function as nodal points, which form chains of equivalence made up of political alliances. This can result in hegemonic formations, and therefore, empowerment.

In the first instance, social movements, through articulatory practice, can construct nodal points which partially fix meaning (Howarth, 2000: 102; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 113), as privileged signifiers in a discourse (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 8). Here,

‘the articulation of a political discourse can only take place around an empty signifier that functions as a nodal point’ (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 9).
In this respect, newspaper Malta Today declared 2006 as ‘the year of Civil Society’. The newspaper was referring to what it saw as the flourishing of Maltese civil society activism within the context of EU membership. As the newspaper put it in an editorial:

‘What do the Ta’Cenc protests, the pro-life campaign, the Qui-si-sana campaign, the protest against the circus, and the Marsascala uproar on the development of the waste recycling plant have in common? They all evidence the emergence of civil society; they show how people, and not necessarily politicians, can be the protagonists for change in society..... It is all about change from below upwards, and no longer about laws or proposals coming from above and being imposed upon those below. It is in quintessence the very spirit of Europe at work where people are often the catalysts of change, promoting ideas, which eventually find their way in the statute book’ (December 24th, 2006a).

In Malta Today’s reading, the varied voices emerging from civil society – ranging from ‘countryside ramblers... [to]... misguided neo-fascists.. [are]... largely middle class, pale blue voters... [who]... rallied behind the Nationalist’s Party vision for EU membership...[and who found themselves]... antagonised and alienated by the same party’ (December 24th, 2006b).

Such activists took to the streets, which

‘have been turned into the new parliament wherever the traditional bipartisan democracy has failed’ (ibid).

ENGOs can, therefore, be seen as an important part of such civil society activism and its sensitizing impacts. Maltese ENGOs enabled the creation of nodal points around the issues under analysis. In this regard, they articulated the respective ‘stop overdevelopment’; ‘stop spring hunting and trapping in line with the Birds Directive’; ‘ban bluefin tuna fishing until stocks recover’ and ‘reduce CO2 emissions’ empty signifiers. In the case of the bluefin tuna issue, Maltese ENGOs were not as active as in other issues, thus resulting in a relative ‘discursive silence;’ (Tonkiss, 1998: 258). Nevertheless, this issue was covered by the media, as was the case with other issues, as quoted in the case studies.
As theorized in this study, the logics of equivalence show that particular identities interpellated by a discourse are made equivalent with respect to an exterior universal threat (Howarth, 2000). Hence, empty signifiers enable different identities to join forces in spite of their differences. In turn antagonistic relations with other groups are constructed through boundaries (Griggs and Howarth, 2000: 56).

In the case of development projects, different ENGOs tended to form chains of equivalence which also comprised the Green Party. Their adversaries were the big business land developers, the Nationalist Government and MEPA. Yet, when ENGOs had substantive impact on a specific issue - in other words – stopping it - this had much to do with the fact that a significant voice from the PN government joined forces with the environmental movement. The Labour opposition had an ambivalent position, where it supported ENGOs yet did not distance itself from the symbiotic relationship between State structures and the developers, which, in turn was organised around the nodal point representing neo-liberalism and the discourse of economic growth.

As regards hunting and trapping, the main ENGO protagonist – Birdlife – formed chains of equivalence which, amongst others, comprised other ENGOs (both Maltese and European), the Green Party (likewise, both Maltese and European – but not formally allied to Birdlife) and European institutions, namely the Commission and Parliament, though the latter represented a condensation of forces (Poulantzas, 2000: 151). The adversaries in this respect were the hunters’ lobby, which articulated nationalistic, confrontational and traditionalistic discourse, yet which, at a later stage, formed its own
chains of equivalence with its European counterpart, giving its own reading of EU legislation and of the decision of the European Courts of Justice. The State and both major political parties were on the side of the hunting lobby through their attempts to win their political support.

EU structures also formed part of chains of equivalence formed by different ENGOs as regards the climate change issue. The EU signified the condensation of conflicting forces (Poulantzas, 2000: 151), which, in turn, was articulated through neo-liberal, ecological modernist and sustainable development claims. Hence the chains of equivalence calling for CO2 reductions were characterised by ‘conflictual consensus’ (Mouffe, 2000: 103) where different identities articulated different demands - ranging from flexible targets demanded by Governments to system change demanded by radical ENGOs. The partial surrender of identity resulted in claims for compulsory adaptation of moderate targets. In this respect, through construction of political frontiers in opposed camps, identities within the equivalential chains are modified in the process (Howarth and Griggs, 2012: 320).

As regards the bluefin tuna issue, it was already explained that Maltese ENGOs did not feature prominently in chains of equivalence, though some conservationist ENGOs were active in the field. On the other hand European and global ENGOs were very much active in this respect, gaining coverage by the Maltese media. The adversary of the conservationist chains of equivalence, were the social agents which discursively reconciled neo-liberalism and the national interest. In this regard, the State and the major
political parties directly or indirectly supported the claims of big business, and EU and ICCAT policies were not sufficiently strong to counter such articulations.

10.3 Impacts

As discussed earlier, this study substantiates the concept of hegemonic formations through the application of external impacts, namely sensitizing, procedural, structural and substantive (Giugni; 1995; van der Heijden 1999; Carter 2001; Rootes 2007a).

Sensitizing impacts were prominent in environmental struggles, and the media played an important role in this regard. Yet such impacts were not always directly related to Malta’s EU accession. For example, as regards development projects, the ample media coverage given to environmental issues was also in existence prior to Malta’s EU accession. As explained earlier in this thesis, the coverage given to the ‘Front Against the Hilton’ and the ‘Front Against the Golf Course’ are cases in point. Yet, the fact that civil society activism increased following Malta’s EU accession also meant that environmental issues gained more coverage from the media and had strong sensitizing impacts – including support from influential newspapers in the land rationalisation issue.

As regards hunting and trapping, claims to abolish spring hunting were already in place prior to Malta’s EU accession, but the post-EU accession empty signifier was constructed in a way that had direct relation to Malta’s new EU context. Hence, sensitization was more widespread, used by Maltese and European ENGOs and Greens and gaining ample media coverage. Sensitization had a strong influence on EU structures, which were
already bound to follow conservationist ideology through the Birds Directive. Thus, EU accession provided a new dislocatory and influential context for such sensitization.

Even more so, the climate change issue had a strong sensitizing impact, with a relatively broad conflictual consensus on the ‘Reduce CO2 emissions’ signifier. The floating signifiers related to the dislocatory and crisis-bound interpretation of climate change were taken full advantage of by the environmental movement. On the other hand, the dislocatory effect of collapsing bluefin tuna stocks did not have such a widespread impact, and sensitization was not comparable to that of other issues. Institutions ultimately supported big business interests.

Structural impacts with respect to ENGO empowerment were varied, and included changes in both state structures and the environmental movement. As regards the former, the Government of Malta set up consultation committees with respect to hunting and trapping and climate change, which, in turn included selective representation from ENGOs.

44 Given the small size of Maltese society, it is interesting to note the ‘woven mess of social relations that underpins most environmentalist activism’ (Boissevain and Gatt, 2011: 137), where many activists have multiple roles and ties in different spheres related to civil society, academia, business and government, as was highlighted in the methodology chapter. It is also interesting to note that whilst certain ENGOs were active in the environment sectoral committee within the Malta-EU Steering Action Committee (MEUSAC) prior to Malta’s EU accession, the same could not be said as regards Malta’s post-accession years. Indeed, Birdlife Malta, Friends of the Earth Malta, Moviment Graffitti and Nature Trust were active prior to Malta’s EU accession, whilst the Biological Conservation Foundation, Zminijietna Voice of the Left were active in MEUSAC following Malta’s EU accession, albeit also including other similar NGOs such as those involved in organic agriculture and permaculture. In both cases, other ENGOs were also active, but some have either disbanded since then or were set up very recently (Note: this information was given to me by MEUSAC in correspondence dated December 10th, 2010, December 20th, 2010, and December 5th, 2011). When MEUSAC was re-founded in 2008 (thus replacing the Forum Malta fl-Ewropa, which was set up after Malta’s EU accession), it invited NGOs to participate in sectoral committees and to propose nominees for eventual election in its core group (Vassallo, 2008d).
As regards the latter, four new ENGOs, namely Flimkien ghall-Ambjent Ahjar, the Ramblers’ Association, Movement for the Protection of Hondoq and the Committee Against the Proposed Recycling Plant were set up following Malta’s EU accession. FAA and the Ramblers, in particular, had quite an impact on the environmental movement, and were heavily involved in the organisation of large environmental campaigns and protests mainly on development issues such as those characterising the rationalisation process.

Structural impacts on development issues included the streamlining of State structures with those in the EU, which in turn had procedural impacts through public consultation of ENGOs. Similarly, as regards hunting and trapping and climate change, state structures were created and civil society consultation increased. In the case of hunting and trapping, nature conservation sites – often forming part of EU programmes – were being managed by ENGOs.

The lobbying of European (and at times global) ENGOs in the hunting and trapping, climate change and bluefin tuna issues were also in themselves structural impacts, as prior to Malta’s EU accession these organisations had much less presence in the country’s environmental politics. In the new context their voice was given legitimacy by Maltese and EU institutions, though at unequal frequency.

A main structural impact – which also intersects with procedural impact - could arguably be identified as the attempts of ENGOs to resort to EU structures in specific issues
(Börzel, 2008: 232; Johnston, 2011: 186-7; Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001, 344-5). As shown in each respective case study, this process was uneven, and the results of such lobbying were mixed.

As regards procedural impacts, these were chiefly characterised by increased consultation of ENGOs. ENGOs active against development projects and bluefin tuna fishing had increased opportunities to voice their planning concerns through MEPA structures, which were now subject to substantive changes such as the obligations related to Environment Impact Assessments and obligations towards the Aarhus Convention. Yet, as explained earlier there were no procedural impacts at Maltese level regarding national policy on bluefin tuna fishing itself.

The State committees set up with respect to climate change and hunting and trapping – erstwhile in response to EU obligations - meant that selective ENGOs had a voice on each, albeit being limited and often overshadowed by pro-Government representatives. However, as stated earlier, the European Commission itself relied on the information provided by ENGOs on specific issues. In the words of the joint head of the European Commission’s Environment Infringements Unit, this structure has an ‘open-door policy to civil society’, and that it gives importance to NGOs (The Times, April 1st, 2007).. Hence, the EU provided ‘new space for the self-organisation of people by providing a space beyond the nation’ (Edar, citied in Boissevain and Gatt, 2011: 138). For example, in 2007 a European Commission delegation also met Maltese ENGOs Flimkien ghall-
Ambjent Ahjar, Friends of the Earth, Ramblers’ Association of Malta, Nature Trust, and animal welfare NGO International Animal Rescue (Grech, 2007g).

Generally speaking, substantive impacts - when these took place - had more to do with Malta’s EU accession than with the influence of ENGOs. Such changes were especially significant with respect to Malta’s adherence to the Birds’ Directive as regards hunting and trapping and with respect to Malta’s climate change obligations. Yet even in cases which were not so much effected by substantive changes (namely development projects and bluefin tuna fishing), ENGOs still attempted to put pressure on the Maltese government by referring to EU legislation. Hence, Börzel’s (2008) assertion on Southern European ENGOs attempting to benefit from opportunities provided by the EU, is once again confirmed, though it has been shown that this is an uneven process with mixed results.

As shown previously, climate policy was substantially changed in both the EU and Malta through binding targets, even though, as shown previously, such legislation was more moderate than what was generally demanded by ENGOs. Legislation on hunting and trapping was also substantially changed through Malta’s EU accession, and so were regulations on fishing of bluefin tuna. As regards the latter, even though Malta now had to conform to EU and ICCAT regulations, these were not comparable to regulations and articulations on birds and climate. Though fishing quotas were regulated, the decisions taken were a far cry from what ENGOs demanded, irregularities in fishing catches seemed to be the order of the day. There was no comprehensive legal framework in
place, and the issue was not as institutionalized as hunting and trapping and climate change. In all cases however, antagonisms are likely to remain in place with respect to demands such as implementation, enforcement and actual targets.

With regard to development projects, Malta also adopted to EU legislation, which, however, does not concern various forms of development. It was also shown that when a development project was stopped, this was overdetermined by factors unrelated to Malta’s EU accession.

The above analysis of impacts thus largely confirms van der Heijden’s (1999) claim that ‘impacts are increasingly sensitising and procedural and less substantive and structural’ (202). In turn, this provides a backdrop to substantiate analytical claims regarding the construction or otherwise of hegemonic formations on these specific issues.

10.4 Hegemonic Formations

Given that this study relates ENGO empowerment to the post-Marxist theoretical conceptualization of hegemonic formations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Howarth, 2000; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000), it disagrees with specifying elements such as the economy a priori, as this would be essentialist. Instead, such a theoretical standpoint verifies how nodal points bring different elements together through signification (Howarth, 2000: 118-9). Hegemonic formations, therefore, partially fix meaning on signifiers within stabilized nodal points (Howarth, 2000: 110).
In the case of development projects, no such thing as a hegemonic formation based on the ‘stop overdevelopment’ signifier. EU accession did not change the ball-game in place, which was characterised by prevailing neo-liberal ideology and strong economic interests representing developers, who were involved in environmental class struggle (Layfield, 2008) with environmentalists. ENGOs had substantive impacts when their allies included representatives of the ruling Nationalist Party, thus reflecting conflicts within state structures (Poulantzas, 2000: 151). Conversely, the influence of land developers was clearly witnessed in the rationalisation and Fort Cambridge issues. Hence, the Qui-si-sana and Tigne’ Residents Association, which was actively involved in both issues, faced mixed fortunes. In this respect, as Boissevain (2004) remarks, party politics, together with economic interests, play a very important role in such issues in Malta.

With regard to hunting and trapping, there were no influential economic interests involved, but the pro-hunting lobby had considerable political clout, and was supported by both the Nationalist and Labour Parties. An anti-hunting hegemonic formation was not created in Malta, but a nodal point on the need to conform to the EU Birds Directive (which was hegemonic in the EU) was certainly in place, and the conservationist ideology within its nodal point was equivalentially shared between the EU institutions and ENGOs alike.

Unlike hunting and trapping, the bluefin tuna issue was characterised by environmental class conflict, chiefly represented by big business and the Maltese State on one side and ENGOs and their allies on the other, although, as already stated, not much lobbying was
carried out by the Maltese ENGOs. The Nationalist and Labour Parties, ICCAT and the EU (albeit characterised by internal divisions and a condensation of conflicts) were on the side of big business, within the hegemonic formation based around the discursive construction of neo-liberal ideology for economic growth and the national interest. Hence, no hegemonic formation around the ‘ban bluefin tuna fishing until stocks recover’ signifier was in place.

Conversely, a hegemonic formation was formed around the ‘reduce CO2 emissions’ signifier, in which ENGOs, particularly on an EU level, played no small part. In Malta, the main political parties did not take decisive positions on the issue, yet they did not attempt to block it, though the Nationalist Government preferred a more flexible approach, which, in turn was opposed by Maltese ENGOs. Within the EU, the discursive constructions around the ideologies of ecological modernization and sustainable development prevailed over neo-liberal ideology, and climate change targets were set for the EU in general and Malta in particular. Given the more radical vision of certain ENGOs when compared to the EU targets – as also observed by Hunold (2005) - one expects more antagonisms on this issue, despite the existence of a hegemonic formation. The dislocatory effect of the crisis-ridden climate change is likely to produce further discursive opportunities for the environmental movement.

Hence, though one can speak of various impacts (especially sensitizing and procedural) and the creation of nodal points, at the same time hegemonic formations are much less common. Even though Maltese ENGOs are more empowered then they were prior to EU
accession, it is imperative to combine this analysis with other overdetermining factors (such as economic and political, depending on the issue). Thus, distinctions between practices such as the political, economic and ideological were ‘pragmatic and analytical, and strictly internal to the category of discourse’ (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 4).

This analysis tallies with other research on ENGOs in Malta during the time of Malta’s EU accession. For example, Boissevain and Gatt (2011) highlight factors related to empowerment of the environmental movement, such as the sensitization of the public to environmental issues; the gaining of political legitimacy and representation, though limited; the successful challenge against the State when the latter attempts to commodify the environment without consultation; the creation of green space between the two major political parties; and the fuelling of mistrust against politicians and experts who are commissioned by developers. Bossevain and Gatt add that Malta’s EU accession helped give environmentalists ‘more political leverage and opportunities’ (138). In terms of sensitizing and procedural impacts, and in terms of the formation of chains of equivalence and nodal points, the voice of civil society was strengthened. There was greater access to national and transnational networks which were previously monopolized by particular social groups (ibid: 141).

10.5 Institutionalisation

The theoretical perspective of this study argues that institutionalisation enables social movements to form broad coalitions and to influence State power. At the same time, ENGOs could experience dependency, co-optation and change in organisational structures, while moderate ENGOs become more influential at the expense of radical
ones through ideological consent with State structures. In this respect, a ‘creative tension’ (Carter, 2001: 147) exists between radical and moderate ENGOs. The chapter that analysed ENGO empowerment through the interviewing research method elaborated on the similarities and differences among such ENGOs.

ENGOs had mixed experiences of institutionalisation in relation to Malta’s EU accession. For example, conservationist ENGO Birdlife Malta experienced a ‘change of fortunes’ (Harwood, 2009: 343) following Malta’s EU accession, this also being reminiscent of internal impacts on organisational structures (Giugni, 1995: 209). According to Harwood, the Government of Malta had to accept that EU membership changed the context in which it dealt with this ENGO. As shown in the case study on hunting and trapping, Birdlife Malta networked with similar ENGOs in the EU to lobby the European Parliament and the European Commission, thus consistently using the EU as a gateway for empowerment (Börzel, 2008: 232; Johnston, 2011: 186-7; Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001, 344-5), on the hunting and trapping issues.

At the same time, it is pertinent to note that the ENGO also benefited through increased access to EU funding. For example, as indicated previously, it benefited from almost 0.5 million Euro for a project related to the protection of the Puffinus Yelkouan bird, under the Life+ programme. The EU allocation covered 50 per cent of the cost of the ‘SPA Site and Sea Actions Saving Puffinus Yelkouan In Malta’ (The Times, November 3rd, 2006). The project also received funds from HSBC, MEPA and seven project partners (The Sunday Times, July 15th, 2007). Birdlife Malta also benefitted from 175,000 Euro from
the EU to cover half the costs for a campaign against bird trapping in Malta. In this respect, Executive Director Tolga Temuge said that the ENGO wanted to commence a dialogue with trappers and the public in view of a lack of information on the issue (Camilleri, I. 2008r).

Together with other conservationist and sustainable developmental ENGOs, such as Nature Trust, Birdlife Malta also benefitted from public funds for its projects (which include the management of public land of ecological importance). They publicly highlighted the need for funding of their projects, for example as was the case in a public dialogue on the environment with Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi in 2007 (The Times, May 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2007). In itself this might result in a process of dependency, thus having political implications on the lobbying of ENGOs.

The case studies earmarked in this study show that during the first years of EU accession it was more common to have ENGO alliances within chains of equivalence involving different ENGOs with different ideologies, as was the case with the initial protests against the rationalisation process. Here, various conservationist, sustainable development, local and radical ENGOs were active behind the same banner, which was also metaphorically held by the Green Party. Eventually, however, various conservationist and sustainable developmental ENGOs worked together, whilst radicals and the Green Party went their separate ways.
It is difficult to prove whether this is directly related to the fact that conservationist and sustainable developmental ENGOs are more likely to achieve EU and state funding. But, on the other hand, this can be seen as one example of routinization of events of ENGOs, together with others such as their choice of strategic alliances and ideological cohesion with respect to their relationships with the EU and national governments (Kousis, della Porta, Jimenez, 2008). This is once again most clearly seen with respect to Birdlife Malta’s privileged position as consultee of the European Commission on hunting and trapping, together with its membership of the Government-appointed Ornis Committee.

Indeed, ‘it is evident that Maltese ENGOs feel a stronger sense of closeness and prefer working with NGOs of similar ideological affiliation’ (Briguglio, Michael and Brown, 2009: 63). As a respondent interviewed in another research (ibid) had observed,

‘as from Malta’s accession in the EU, various environmental NGOs in Malta are not collaborating with other organisations that are not strictly environmentalist. This strategy runs counter to previous strategies such as the victorious Front Kontra l-Golf Kors coalition which incorporated various social, environmental, political, cultural and religious NGOs and parties’ (ibid: 64-65).

This was also clearly shown in the interviews carried out in this study and was also highlighted in a debate amongst civil society activists held by erstwhile radical ENGO Zminijietna in 2008. During this debate, Green Party Chairperson and European Parliament candidate Arnold Cassola observed that in Malta NGOs feel threatened by political parties, and that whilst other ENGOs in the EU publicly declare which candidates have the greenest credentials, this was not the case in Malta. He also observed

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45 Cassola had previously occupied the post of General Secretary of the European Green Party. As a result of holding dual Maltese-Italian citizenship he had also been an Italian Member of Parliament with the Greens.
that EU and Government funding to ENGOs can lead to institutionalisation of the latter and to a divide between large and small ENGOs. The latter observation was also made by Zminijietna activist David Pisani who appealed for alliances amongst NGOs (Zminijietna – Voice of the Left, 2008).

Hence, though this study is inconclusive as regards institutionalisation of Maltese ENGOs through Malta’s EU accession, it notes that following EU accession, some ENGOs – in particular some conservationist and sustainable development ones, eventually altered their strategic alliances and distanced themselves from radical ENGOs and the Green Party. Yet, also judging by the case studies, this does not mean that such ENGOs necessarily became less antagonistic on their respective issues. The vociferous activism of ENGOs such as Birdlife Malta and Flimkien għall-Ambjent Ahjar are two cases in point. This vindicates the stance of Rootes (2007a), who argues that institutionalisation does not necessarily result in ENGO silence. At the same time, the case studies show that at a Maltese level, ENGO institutionalisation does not necessarily have an overdetermining role in terms of substantive impact on policy.

10.6 Europeanization

This study theorizes the EU as being characterised by a hegemonic process of Europeanization, which can also have dislocatory effects due the ‘disruption’ of existing hegemonic formations (Howarth, 2000: 111), thus resulting in new discursive opportunities through floating signifiers. EU accession is a case in point. New space is created for antagonism and articulation of demands with differentiated and uncertain outcomes. Similar to the national State, the EU is characterised by the condensation
antagonistic forces (Poulatnzas, 2000: 151), even within the EU institutions themselves. Hence civil society actors such as social movements in general and ENGOs in particular can shape EU policy, though they are one actor out of many. It was previously argued that the nodal points based on economic competitiveness and on environmental sustainability and protection, feature prominently in EU politics, and that even though these are often signified in line with neo-liberal ideology, the economic logic does not feature in all EU environmental policies – the Birds Directive being a case in point. The most influential environmental ideologies at EU level are those of ecological modernisation, sustainable development and conservationism. Thus ENGO empowerment can be enhanced when it involves discourse related to EU nodal points.

It has also been argued that even though most ENGO activism takes place at national level, such organisations also make use of political opportunities within the EU (Börzel, 2008: 232; (Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001, 344-5), Maltese ENGOs articulated their claims to create a ‘boomerang effect’ (Johnston, 2011: 186-7), so that national state would be in conformity to EU legislation. In this regard, according to Boissevain (n.d.),

‘Malta’s membership of the European Union since 2004 has provided environmentalists with considerably more political leverage and opportunities’ (8).

Boissevain compares this with the situation of ENGOs in Spain, Portugal and Italy. At the same time, the EU gains valuable information from ENGOs on implementation and adherence of environmental legislation, which was shown above in various examples of procedural impacts. Boissevain adds that pressure from change has also come from other
‘outside’ sources, such as the UN and international ENGOs, as well as from ‘below’, namely from local ENGOs themselves, also including grassroots action groups (ibid).

With regard to development projects, ENGOs referred cases to the EU when lobbying at a local and national level was deemed as not being effective enough. In the case of the Qui-si-sana car park proposal, the Qui-si-sana Residents’ Association resorted to the EU, with the support of the European Greens, in their appeal for an environment impact assessment for the project, yet such lobbying was not successful. Conversely, the European Commission vindicated the same ENGO and FAA for the holding of an environment impact assessment for the Fort Cambridge project. As regards the rationalisation process, various ENGOs and AD failed to convince the European Commission that the Government’s plans were not in line with the SEA Directive. As shown previously, in these three cases, ENGOs were only successful as regard the Qui-si-sana car park development, despite the lack of EU support.

As regards hunting and trapping, Malta’s EU accession definitely had a strong impact on the lobbying of ENGOs. Birdlife Malta, in particular, and in association with its European counterparts, lobbied through the European Parliament (as did Malta’s Green Party through the European Greens) and to the European Commission – which, in turn, took the case to the European Court of Justice. The Birds’ Directive acted as a signifier for discursive alliances between the European Commission and the environmental movement. Even though hunting and trapping persisted in Malta, EU accession
effectively opened up lobbying avenues for ENGOs and brought about increased regulation and surveillance.

The bluefin tuna issue was also characterised by ENGO lobbying within EU (and ICCAT) structures. Yet this was carried out by ENGOs organised at an EU and global level (WWF and Greenpeace). Maltese ENGOs relied on the formers’ lobbying. Hence Europeanization in terms of regulations (though being relatively weak) took place despite Maltese ENGOs. The lack of formal lobbying within EU structures also characterised Maltese ENGOs with respect to the hegemonic climate change issue, even though they were active at national level. As was the case with ENGOs active against bluefin tuna fishing, the various Maltese ENGOs who spoke up on climate change relied on the lobbying of EU and global ENGOs, for example through the Green 10 alliance. Such lobbying was effective as it led to an EU regime on climate change adaptation. Hence, if Mark Leonard (2005) said that in the EU ‘you can have a population of just 400,000 and be part of the biggest economy in the world’ (8), one can add that one can also be part of the biggest ENGO lobbying alliance in the world, with sensitizing, substantive, procedural and substantive impacts, depending on the issue at stake.

From what was already explained above, it is evident that the EU had an impact – at times dislocatory - on Malta’s environmental politics. Yet, as stated above, this took place in a social formation characterised by overdeterminations such as the hegemonic political influence of the Nationalist and Labour parties; the nodal point of economic growth and competitiveness within neo-liberal ideology; and an increasingly active civil
society, also including ENGOs. The EU could be singled out for changes such as those taking place in environmental legislation, yet, as Roderick Pace (2006) points out,

‘the EU offers micro-states opportunities, most of which are not available in a non-membership context, but it is up to the states themselves to make efficient use of them’ (48).

10.7 Conclusion

This chapter has brought together the analyses of the case studies under investigation. The construction of hegemonic formations on such specific issues was substantiated through the analysis of sensitizing, procedural, structural and substantive impacts, and in turn this was also analysed in relation to institutionalisation and Europeanization. It was shown that even though ENGO empowerment was generally enhanced, this process was uneven. The next, concluding, chapter will engage with the main findings of this study.
11. Conclusion

11.1 Overview

This thesis has investigated whether EU Accession has influenced civil society empowerment in Malta, with specific reference to Environmental NGOs (ENGOs). In this regard, the thesis adopted post-Marxist Discourse Theory together with various concepts from other theoretical perspectives. These include Althusserian Marxism and the Strategic-Relational Approach as well as theories of environmental politics which are influenced by Political Process Theory and by theories of Europeanization. For this scope, discourse analysis was applied in order to engage with ENGO respondents through interviews and with specific environmental issues through case studies. In order to verify whether the main aims of the study have been reached, the research questions will be replied to in the next section. This is followed with a discussion on methodological implications and on the sociological significance of the thesis.

11.2 EU accession and the empowerment of Maltese ENGOs: Replies to research questions

11.2.1 Has EU accession effected the lobbying of ENGOs?

This research has shown that EU accession has generally had an effect on the lobbying extent and approaches of ENGOs. Such lobbying can be effective at both national and EU levels, but this depends on the type of ENGO and on the issue at stake, which, in turn, are related to various overdetermining factors such as economic, political and ideological
ones, as well as dislocatory factors, in the construction of hegemonic formations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Howarth, 2000; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000).

Malta’s EU membership had the dislocatory effect of providing discursive opportunities which were previously unavailable. This effect was also evident in relation to the crisis-laden articulation of climate change and fishing of bluefin tuna. ENGOs tended to use the EU as a gateway for empowerment, and considered lobbying at an EU level as being of major importance especially when lobbying at a national level is unsuccessful (Börzel, 2008: 232; Johnston, 2011: 186-7; Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001, 344-5).

Different types of ENGOs, which have been classified as local, conservationist, sustainable developmental and radical were involved in antagonisms related to development projects. Despite the fact that they did not always find support from EU institutions or backing through legislation, they had more lobbying tools at their disposal as a result of Malta’s EU accession. However, one cannot conclude that lobbying on an EU-level is necessarily more effective than lobbying on a national level. Chains of equivalence and nodal points on other specific development issues were already being formed prior to Malta’s EU accession, with considerable sensitizing, and at times substantive, impacts. Besides, following Malta’s EU accession, the relatively few substantive impacts related to development projects, which included stopping them, seemed to have no relationship to Malta’s EU accession.
Lobbying with regard to hunting and trapping was significantly influenced by Malta’s EU accession in a context of increased regulations and surveillance on this matter. Discursive articulation based on the signifier to stop spring hunting and trapping in line with the Birds’ Directive was carried out by conservationist Birdlife Malta, other ENGOs including Birdlife’s European counterparts, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and arguably, the European Courts of Justice. ENGOs therefore experienced increased procedural opportunities through new structures, in relation to an issue with a high degree of sensitization across the EU.

As regards lobbying on the bluefin tuna issue, the Maltese conservationist ENGOs active in the field had limited involvement, and greatly relied on the activism of ENGOs organised at European and global levels, which in turn, had mixed results within EU and ICCAT structures. Here, Malta’s EU membership was influential in the provision of civil society and institutional gateways.

Different Maltese ENGOs (sustainable development, conservationist, radical) were active in the climate change issue, and they also relied on lobbying of EU and global ENGOs with regard to various aspects relating to this issue. Despite the different ideological claims made by different ENGOs, what united them was their partial surrender in terms of identity (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), which resulted in a hegemonic nodal point calling for targets to reduce CO2 emissions.
11.2.2 Has EU accession enhanced the empowerment of ENGOs?

This study analysed factors which characterise ENGO empowerment through a typology of external impacts (Giugni; 1995; van der Heijden 1999; Carter 2001; Rootes 2007a) to substantiate claims regarding hegemonic formations. From this research it also transpired that ENGOs with different ideologies had different perceptions of factors related to empowerment.

Both the case studies and interviews indicated that Malta’s EU accession had an impact on Malta’s environmental politics, and that empowerment of ENGOs was generally enhanced - especially through the possibility of using the EU as a further resort and on the EU influence on structures and legislation. However, this was an uneven process which reflected not only a plurality of overdetermining factors, nodal points and hegemonic formations, but also different types of ENGOs. Indeed, this research shows that conservationist ENGOs were the most optimistic as regards empowerment through EU accession, followed by sustainable developmental, radical and local ENGOs respectively.

Apart from the ideologies and strategies of ENGOs and respective chains of equivalence, other overdetermining factors in the construction of hegemonic formations included the construction of nodal points by adversaries of ENGOs, the political dominance of the main political parties in Malta; the articulation of economic interests and Malta’s particular adaptation to new opportunities within an EU context. Such factors were case-
specific. Indeed, as this research has shown, it is one thing to lobby for adherence to the Birds Directive, and another to lobby against overdevelopment.

The fact that local ENGOs were the least optimistic as regards their empowerment through EU accession shows that being a moderate ENGO is not enough to achieve empowerment. As argued earlier, this could be related to the fact that not all moderate environmental ideologies have equal prominence by the EU. The most influential environmental ideologies in the EU are ecological modernisation, sustainable development and conservationism, which, in turn, have to contend with neo-liberalism. In this regard, ideological proximity to and, at times, ideological consent (Althusser, 1984) with EU policy can create hegemonic formations as in the case of climate change, particularly if the issue is not much overdetermined by Maltese political adversarial forces.

Localism is much less influential at EU level. Hence, the EU was not a source of ENGO empowerment in relation to development projects. Indeed, in most instances, the nodal point based on the Maltese developmental discourses of economic growth and neo-liberal ideology prevailed, in an example of environmental class conflict (Layfield, 2008). In the one-off instance where ENGOs were successful, the support of representatives of the ruling Nationalist Party was an overdetermining factor. This revealed splits within State structures, which in turn are characterised by condensation of antagonistic forces (Poulantzas, 2000: 151). However, it is important to note that even here, ENGOs referred
to EU legislation to substantiate their lobbying, and had more legislative tools at their disposal than was the case prior to Malta’s EU accession.

Neo-liberal ideology also formed part of the nodal point that prevailed in the bluefin tuna issue, which likewise, exemplified environmental class conflict. This time it was articulated together with nationalistic discourse. Relative lack of activism of Maltese ENGOs and an absence of an environmentalist hegemonic formation within the EU were detrimental to environmentalist demands. The nodal point which combined neo-liberal ideology with the “national interest”, which, in turn, was supported not by big business, and by the Nationalist and Labour parties, prevailed.

Conversely, EU accession had strong influence with regard to ENGO empowerment in relation to climate change. The ‘Reduce CO2 emissions’ signifier sensitized the political agenda in both the EU and Malta, and reflected substantive, procedural and structural impacts. The nodal point around the political discourse on climate change was articulated in a manner that was mainly in synch with moderate ideologies of sustainable development and ecological modernization.

The largely unresolved hunting and trapping issue did not result in a Maltese anti-hunting hegemonic formation, but it did provide ENGOs with comparatively strong legislative, ideological and policy gateways within the EU (Börzel, 2008: 232; Johnston, 2011: 186-7; Dimitrakopoulos and Richardson, 2001, 344-5), particularly for Birdlife Malta, which experienced institutionalisation (Rootes, 2007a). This issue was not characterised by
conflicts revolving around class or economic interests. Yet, the Maltese pro-hunting lobby was an organised and influential political constituency, and was influential on both the Nationalist and Labour parties, within a nationalistic, traditionalistic and confrontational nodal point.

Hence, the above arguments show that procedural impacts were mostly related to consultation by EU and State structures with ENGOs. EU accession also ensured that access to environmental information was guaranteed and that the European Commission relied on information provided by ENGOs. ENGOs themselves – particularly those with ideologies of conservationism and sustainable development - tended to emphasize the importance of state cooperation and civil society participation as main sources of empowerment, together with other factors such as the possibility of access to financial resources. On the other hand, radical and local ENGOs, which declared to be least close to Maltese State and EU structures, also declared to be least close to other ENGOs.

Structural impacts included changes both within state structures and within the environmental movement. As regards changes within the former, in areas such as climate change, development and hunting and trapping, the consultation referred to above (albeit, in most cases, through selective representation) was institutionalised within State structures in Malta, and EU membership played an important role in this regard, also by providing access to EU structures that was previously unavailable. As regards changes within the environmental movement, four new and very active ENGOs (two conservationist, two local) were formed following Malta’s EU accession. Some Maltese
ENGOs also experienced a degree of institutionalisation in the process. This is elaborated upon in a specific section below.

As regards substantive impacts, legislative changes in relation to EU accession took place, albeit with mixed results in an uneven process. As shown above, regulation on climate change, for example, was then binding within the EU. The same can be said on the Birds’ Directive, though there were unresolved issues related to interpretation and implementation. Regulations on fishing of bluefin tuna was not so well developed, while the relatively undeveloped EU regulations on development projects had minor substantive impacts on specific Maltese issues under analysis. Given that the latter two issues confirmed that being a moderate ENGO does not necessarily guarantee substantive impacts, it is important to reiterate that such impacts involve an interplay of various overdetermining factors in the construction of hegemonic formations.

As shown previously, the case studies of this thesis confirm van der Heijden’s (1999) conclusions that impacts of the environmental movement are increasingly sensitizing and procedural. Yet, ironically, ENGO respondents in this study did not tend to highlight sensitizing impacts as main sources of their own empowerment, even though they acknowledge the importance of sensitizing tools such as the media. The case studies clearly show that ENGO articulations have resulted in nodal points which partially fix meaning. However, there are different degrees of sensitization. For example, environmentalist claims on the bluefin tuna issue did not really sensitize Maltese authorities, despite the Maltese press coverage of activism of European and global
ENGOs. Perhaps the low-key activism of ENGOs in Malta was interpreted by political elites as being of minor political threat. Conversely, ENGO activism on bird hunting was constant and largely helped sensitize EU institutions, yet, once again, Maltese political elites were not as sensitized by environmentalists, say, as on the climate change issue. As shown previously, this can be explained through the political influence of the nationalistic, traditionalistic and confrontational nodal point involving the hunting lobby. Prior to EU accession, ENGOs did have sensitizing impacts – particularly in areas such as land development - not to mention some successes.

Hence, as regards sensitization, EU accession was overdetermined together with other factors such as the strategies of ENGOs themselves, political factors, economic interests, and the usage of floating signifiers resulting from dislocation, depending on the issue at stake.

11.2.3 Has EU accession led to the institutionalisation of ENGOs?

Institutionalisation was an aspect of civil society empowerment that was discussed in this thesis. It was argued that empowerment of ENGOs can lead to their institutionalisation, though further research is recommendable in this regard.

This study showed that paradoxically, Maltese ENGOs had mixed perceptions on whether they were institutionalised, with ENGO ideology playing an important role. Indeed, the ENGOs which perceived the greatest degree of empowerment, namely conservationist ones, were the least likely to agree that ENGOs had experienced institutionalisation. Radical ENGOs, on the other hand, were most likely to agree that
institutionalisation was affecting ENGOs. Other ENGOs had mixed perceptions. Institutionalisation seemed to be perceived as a sign of weakness (Rootes, 2007a: 624). Here it is interesting to observe that conservationist ENGOs – unlike others - claimed not to rely on self-financing (as opposed to other forms of income) and to have the most positive relationship with the Maltese state. They are close to EU institutions and ENGOs, they claim to be politically non-affiliated, and have bureaucratic-democratic structures.

As shown above, one particular conservationist ENGO, Birdlife Malta, witnessed increased empowerment and institutionalisation through Malta’s EU accession. As an active member of the mother-Birdlife organisation, it lobbied the European Parliament and the European Commission. As regards the latter it had the role of consultee. It also had an official role in Malta’s Ornis committee. It also benefitted from EU and state funding and form management of public land, though this was also experienced by other conservationist and sustainable developmental ENGOs. It witnessed a change in internal organisational structures (Giugni, 1995: 209) and became more professional and conventional, following a route similar not only to its mother organisations, but also to that of global ENGOs such as FoE, WWF and Greenpeace (Van der Heijden, 1999; Carter, 2001; Rootes, 1999, 2007b). ENGOs such as Birdlife may therefore have been in a more ideologically advantageous position, and may have had more resources to create chains of equivalence and nodal points through wide alliances even at an EU level. Yet, as this thesis has shown, this does not necessarily result in hegemonic formations.
The least empowered and least institutionalised ENGOs, namely radical and local ones, had the closest links to Malta’s Green Party, and, at times, also had relationships with other parties. Yet they felt the least close to Malta’s state, to EU institutions and to other ENGOs. Radicals, in particular, claimed a negative relationship with other Maltese ENGOs. This is a far cry from what was the case in successful pre-EU accession environmental campaigns such as the Front Against the Golf Course. Radical and local ENGOs also have democratic structures and are self-financed, and therefore did not experience a change in internal structure following EU accession.

It is not surprising that, as shown in this study, radical ENGOs were amongst the least empowered and institutionalised in Malta. After all, they articulated discourse which went beyond the dominant environmental ideologies in the EU and Malta, let alone neoliberalism. As discussed previously, local ENGOs, though being moderate, did not share the same degree of ideological consent with EU structures as was the case with conservationists and sustainable developmental ENGOs. Besides, they had to contend with the massive political influence of big business developers in Malta.

Another important finding with regard to institutionalisation of ENGOs was that whilst in the first years of EU accession it was a common occurrence to have broad alliances amongst different types of ENGOs (and the Green Party), this became less common as time passed by. As argued previously in this study, as pressures for institutionalisation increased – as is the case in other Southern European EU member states (Kousis, della Porta, Jimenez, 2008), it was less likely to have alliances characterised by both a plurality
of ideologies and by inclusion of the Green Party. ENGOs themselves pronounced a greater degree of closeness with similar ENGOs.

Thus, environmental antagonism, and the potential for broad environmentalist chains of equivalence might have been dealt with a blow through the institutionalisation of ENGOs. Yet, is this the case, when antagonism remains a key defining factor of many ENGOs in Malta? Birdlife’s consistent antagonism with the hunting lobby is a case in point. Indeed, in a context of institutionalizing processes, some ENGOs ‘remain vital and resist the complete co-optation that would render them toothless’ (Rootes, 2007a: 633). Therefore, moderate and radical environmentalism remain symbiotically related through a ‘creative tension’ (Carter, 2001: 147), sometimes even within the same ENGO itself.

11.3 Methodological Implications

This section deals with implications regarding the research process itself and to the main findings of this thesis. In particular, an evaluation of the methodology and research methods, including their limitations, will be put forward.

It was earlier explained how that this study adopts a constructivist approach, which, analyses how reality is defined and which gives primacy to politics (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 9) by analysing hegemonic struggles in relation to ENGOs and specific environmental issues. Hence, this chapter will not repeat the realism vs. constructivism debate, which was already dealt with in the literature review chapter.
This methodology bore fruit, for example through the case studies, as it enabled the analysis of environmental politics which shows that environmental issues are tackled not simply because they are scientifically-proven crises, but more so because of the way they are interpreted and articulated. It is the construction of hegemonic formations which enables determined action on particular issues.

The constructivist approach was also very fruitful in showing that there is no such thing as a monolithic environmentalism. Both the interviews and the case studies showed that despite commonalities among ENGOs, they construct the social world in different ways, and this has much to do with their respective ideologies. The fragmentation of the environmental movement is also witnessed among ENGOs themselves. An ENGO may be relatively institutionalised – as is the case with Birdlife – but this has not stopped it from being antagonistic regarding hunting and trapping. Conversely, radical ENGOs may not be institutionalised, but this does not completely prevent them from participating in consultative structures, particularly on issues such as development of land.

Notwithstanding the above, some limitations on the research methods could be identified and discussed. One of these is related to my choice of interviews. Would the study have been more valid had I also interviewed other elites, such as State representatives? I deliberately chose to interview ENGO representatives, and not other elites, because I assumed that the ideological differences amongst the ENGOs would provide me with adequate data in reply to my research questions. On the other hand, I believed that interviewing, elites from the State would have probably resulted in an over-emphasis of
ENGO empowerment. Instead, I chose to supplement interviews of the ENGO representatives with case studies, through which I could verify whether their responses of were applicable to specific case studies.

The same applies for case studies. The selected case studies cannot be considered to be representative of all environmental conflicts in Malta. Other case studies may have had different overdetermining factors, and, consequently, different results. However, the case studies featured in this study complement the analysis of the interviews with the ENGO representatives. As already explained earlier in this study, I also deliberately chose specific case studies over others in order to be as holistic as possible, thus representing a mix of intensity of EU legislation; different forms of activism of Maltese and EU ENGOs respectively; the interplay of national, European and global environmental politics; and different outcomes.

Two other limitations which were clearly constrained by practical considerations were those related to timeframe and the choice of variables. As regards the former, I set a cut-off date, namely 2009, although exceptionally, I made reference to important events in 2010. Extending the time frame beyond these years was not practical. However, the analysis covered the first 6 years of EU accession and this is considered to be a long-enough timeframe to analyse the effect of EU accession.
As regards limits of choice of variables, more importance was given to ENGO ideology over ENGO size, though the latter was also considered, for example when analysing institutionalisation.

In view of the above limitations, further research in this area may include extension of the timeframe, the inclusion of the perspectives of State elites, and quantitative studies. As regards the latter, for example, representative samples can be identified and respondents can be asked whether ENGOs have made a difference to their quality of life and environmental concerns, and whether they can relate this to Malta’s EU accession.

11.4 The Sociological Significance of this study

This study has various sociological implications which are also of relevance to social policy in general and environmental policy in particular.

A major implication is that even though environmental concerns such as climate change and extinction of species may exist externally to thought, they do not ‘constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive conditions of emergence’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 108). In short, an issue needs to be socially constructed to make it relevant to the policy agenda.

In this regard, this thesis has shown that whereas the crisis-ridden scientific discourse on climate change was evident in how the issue was articulated within the broad chains of equivalence on the issue, resulting in comprehensive targets at an EU level, the same cannot be said on fishing of bluefin tuna, which has been characterised by much weaker
legislation, despite related scientific claims. The political dynamics of both issues were clearly different. The objective “reality out there”, was tackled in relation to the construction or otherwise of nodal points and hegemonic formations. This also overdetermined why specific climate change targets were decided upon. In turn, however, such targets were less ambitious than what was demanded by environmentalists using scientific discourse. Interestingly, there were also differences within the environmental movement itself regarding what should be done. Gaia theorist Lovelock (2007) argues – scientifically - that the living Earth will survive without us humans, and that the best we can hope for at this point in time is a sustainable retreat, while Eco-Socialist Kovel (2007) believes that only by eliminating capitalism could we resolve the climate change crisis. Ultimately, it is through the politics of climate change that a hegemonic formation with specific targets was formed, where partial surrender of different identities (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) played an overdetermining role. Similarly, it would be through hegemonic struggles that such targets could be altered.

Along the same lines, the legal, the objective, factual existence of an EU Birds Directive, was not enough to stop spring hunting and trapping in Malta, even though the environmental movement legitimised its claims through it. Political antagonism on hunting and trapping remains rife in Malta. Similarly, as regards development of land, statistics clearly show that Malta is overdeveloped, but this did not depoliticize the issue into a politics without adversaries (Mouffe, 2000) with a consensus to stop overdevelopment. Indeed, ENGOs were not successful in creating a hegemonic formation in this regard.
Hence, social movements as social agents and sociology as an academic discipline have important roles to play in respectively articulating discourses for social change, and in analysing why some issues make it to the policy agenda and why others do not. In this regard, Post-Marxist discourse theory provides a discursive dimension to the analysis of power.

This study has also shown that the activism of such social agents is always context specific, even though there are various commonalities regarding the dynamics, opportunities and challenges of social movements in general and ENGOs in particular. Examples may include institutionalisation, co-optation and alliance-building. Thus, Maltese ENGOs operate in a globalised and Europeanized context, yet they are active in specific hegemonic formations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) characterised by their own overdetermining factors, which cannot be analytically predetermined (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 4).

For example, it is through concrete research that this thesis has shown that dominance of two parties was often an overdetermining factor in Maltese policy-making on environmental issues. The relative success (or lack of it) of ENGOs in the construction of nodal points and in different types of impact on specific issues was often related to this factor, among others. This might result in a policy-paradox. What if a significant number of Maltese people agree with certain issues proposed by ENGOs, yet do not reflect this through their vote during general elections? Is this the case particularly on issues related
to land development and hunting and trapping? In his analysis on the impact of social movements in recent uprisings around the world, Castells (2012) provides food for thought in this regard.

‘What the elections show is that the new politics, present in the movement, and the old politics, present in the institutions, are disconnected in the minds of the citizens who will ultimately have to decide if they dare to reconcile their feelings with their vote’ (140).

This thesis did not attempt to and cannot resolve this paradox, but it is likely that this will keep haunting Maltese environmental antagonisms in the years to come.

11.5 Overall Conclusion

A major conclusion that can be derived from this thesis is that EU accession has generally enhanced the empowerment of Maltese ENGOs, but this process was uneven, was combined with other overdetermining factors and depended on different issues and on different types of ENGO.

ENGOs had greater access to opportunities that were unavailable prior to Malta’s EU accession. The construction or otherwise of hegemonic formations related to the empowerment of ENGOs was related to sensitizing, procedural, structural and substantive impacts.

Empowerment through hegemonic formations was not common, but ENGOs were successful in constructing nodal points and in benefitting from different types of impacts, especially sensitizing and procedural ones.
Another important conclusion is that even though ENGO empowerment could also be related to their institutionalisation, this process is not pre-determined and does not exclude antagonism of such ENGOs to State structures and other social agents. Besides, the environmental movement remains characterised by both moderate and radical ideologies. Their ‘creative tension’ (Carter, 2001: 147) is here to stay.
Appendix ‘A’: Letter to ENGOs

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently carrying out research amongst Maltese Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (ENGOs) for my doctoral degree in Sociology at the University of Malta. In this regard, my dissertation is entitled “EU Accession and Civil Society Empowerment: The Case of Maltese ENGOs”. The supervisor of this dissertation is Prof. Joseph Troisi (Department of Sociology). This research is approved by the University Research Ethics Committee.

For this purpose, I would like to separately interview two representatives of your organisation in order that I may obtain first-hand information through direct experience of your ENGO on the issue in question.

The questionnaire will have a semi-structured format, whereby questions are set in advance, but replies may lead to further discussion, and the interview will take around 1 hour.

Questionnaire data will be treated in strict confidentiality and it will be used solely for research purposes. Your representatives will be provided with a consent form giving all details and contacts about the research study for your records. Besides, your representatives will be free to quit the study at any point in time and for any reason.

Your contribution is of great value to this research, whereby sociological knowledge on the issue in question will be generated, which can be of benefit not only to the academic community but also to policy makers and NGOs. You will have access to the results of the research once the study is finalised.

Should you require further information or assistance please email michael.briguglio@um.edu.mt or phone 23402296 or 99894634.

Whilst thanking you in advance, I give you my best regards,

Michael Briguglio
Appendix ‘B’: Questionnaire

EU Accession and Civil Society Empowerment: The Case of Maltese Environmental NGOs

1. When was your organisation formed?
2. What are the aims of your ENGO?
3. Is your ENGO moderate or radical?
4. How many members does your organisation have? And how many activists? And employees?
5. What is the social background of your members?
6. What are the main sources of income of your organisation?
7. Do you obtain any resources from the Maltese State?
8. Do you obtain any resources from the EU?
9. Do you obtain any resources from business/es?
10. How are decisions taken in your organisation?
11. Is environmental protection more important than economic growth?
12. What strategies do you envisage to tackle environmental problems?
13. How do you mobilise public opinion?
14. On what levels are you active? (Local, National, European, Global).
15. What is your relationship with State institutions?
16. What is your relationship with other ENGOs?
17. What is your relationship with political parties?
18. What is your relationship with non-environmental NGOs and other civil society organisations?
19. Does society need change? Can you elaborate?
20. How can ENGOs be empowered?
21. Do any factors constrain the empowerment of ENGOs?
22. If one compares the last few years with previous years, has your organisation experienced empowerment? Why? Does this count for the environmental movement as a whole?
23. Has EU accession influenced the way you deal with (a) the Maltese State; (b) EU institutions; (c) other ENGOs; (d) other Civil Society organisations? If yes, in what ways?
24. Has EU legislation influenced your lobbying strategies?
25. Is lobbying at an EU-level more effective when compared to lobbying at a national level?
26. Has EU accession influenced the Maltese State?
27. What is your relationship with other EU actors such as NGOs and political parties?
28. What is your relationship with EU institutions?
29. How do you consider the EU in relation to environmental issues?
30. Can we speak of Europeanization of environmental policy?
31. Which are the strongest influences on environmental policy in Malta?
32. Which are the strongest influences on environmental policy in the EU?
33. How does Malta compare with other EU countries in environmental policy?
34. Has the Maltese environment benefitted from Malta’s EU accession?
35. Has EU Accession empowered your organisation? Can you elaborate? Does this count for the environmental movement as a whole?
36. How empowered is your organisation compared with other EU ENGOs?
37. Has EU membership effected Maltese ENGOs in the same way?
38. Have ENGOs become institutionalised?
39. Would you like to add anything that was not discussed during the interview?
Appendix ‘C’: Consent Form

Name of researcher: Michael Briguglio

Address: Louisville Court, Flat 2, Depiro Street, Sliema SLM2031, Malta
Phone Numbers: 21331736 99894634

Statement of purpose of the study: The research, which will be carried out in part fulfillment of the degree of Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of Malta, aims to investigate EU accession and civil society empowerment, with specific reference to Maltese Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations.

Methods of data collection: The data will be collected through discourse analysis, which, amongst other research methods, includes semi-structured interviews.

Use made of the information: The data collected through the interviews will be transcribed and used for analytical purpose in an attempt to answer the research questions that the study set out to explore.

Guarantees:

I will abide by the following conditions:

(i) Your real name will not be used in the study.

(ii) Only the supervisor and examiners will have access to the data

(iii) You will remain free to quit the study at any point and for whatever reason. In the case that you withdraw, all the records and information collected will be destroyed.

(iv) Deception in the data collection process will not be used.

(v) You will have access to the results of the research once the study is finalised.

I agree to the conditions.

Name of participant: __________________

Environmental NGO: __________________

Position in Environmental NGO: __________________

Signature: __________________ Date: ________________

I agree to the conditions.

Researcher: __________________ Date: ________________
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