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Accountability in transgovernmental networks

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CHAPTER IV

Methodology and Analytical frame

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we have formulated expectations regarding accountability types across varieties of transgovernmental networks. In this chapter we will make clear how we will assess if these expectations hold. We will provide an outline of the research design. We will discuss the methodological choices. These are based on the research question set out in the first chapter of this dissertation:

What is the effect of transgovernmental networks on the principles and practices of democratic accountability within national central governments?

In previous chapters we have discussed how this question pertains to combining a concept on a new setting; accountability in transgovernmental networks. This gives way for a research approach that is qualitative in nature. In this chapter how this question shall be answered will be discussed. Which methodological choices have been made and what techniques have been used. The rationale behind these choices is discussed. First, we shall go into the overall aim of the study: theory building and testing. Second, the overall design, which is a multiple case study, will follow this discussion. Given the theoretical framework we have distinguished different varieties of transgovernmental networks. These were coupled with accountability types. Third, the reasoning for sampling varieties will be addressed after this. This will be followed with a discussion on the different techniques: participant observation, interviews and document analysis that will be deployed in this research. We will address how these methods and techniques will help gather the data needed to assess the expectations. As the expectations are derived from theory, we need to create an analytical frame that helps us determine how and when the expectations hold. The operationalisation of the concept of accountability and how it will be addressed in this dissertation will be presented after the techniques. We conclude this chapter with a summary of the methodological choices before moving on to the empirical chapters.

4.2 Explanatory theory building and theory testing

The aim of this research is to add nuance to discussions regarding accountability in TGNs. Currently, these discussions centre on conceptions of traditional democratic accountability. In other words, the presumption that as civil servants participate in TGNs they need to adhere to democratic accountability as in relaying information to those politically responsible. The perceived democratic deficits that TGNs might have been fueling the discussions among scholars. These deficits have been summed up by Papadopoulos (2007): the weak representation of citizens, a lack of visibility from the democratic circuit, the importance of peer-to-peer accountability, as well as the multi-level aspect of TGNs. In this research the idea is to see how accountability is actually construed in practice. By making use of academic work on both accountability, TGNs and networks in general expectations were devised. The focus on traditional democratic accountability we argue is too limited. By broadening our research to include other types of accountability, nuance can be added to the debate.

Neglecting the types of accountability in discussing accountability in TGNs also means that this research moves in the direction of uncharted waters. By combining theories that have been devised in different context and applying this to a new context, the explanatory nature of this research is easily detected. In this we follow King, Keohane and Verba (1994) who argue that in the development of theory awareness of prior work on the subject is essential.

To reach the goal of this study a novel approach, combining literature and applying it to a new context, is utilised. By offering a first assessment of innovative expectations derived from existing theoretical perspectives both theory building and theory testing is employed. The explanatory nature embedded in this study is seen in four parts. First, the combination of three strands of literature: network governance, TGNs, accountability, and the creation of a theory based on these. Second, the micro level foundations to the subject matter of TGNs taking centre stage as an explanatory factor and operationalizing these foundations. Third, the open-ended and reflexive method exemplified by the techniques, observations interviews and document analysis. Each of these parts is conducted to fulfil the need for inference (King, Keohane and Verba: 1994). The first part is made explicit in chapter II and III. The other two parts shall be discussed in this chapter.

The micro level approach of this research is undertaken because accountability is a relational concept (see Bovens, 2007). In this we follow the work by Joshi (2014) and Hupe and Hill (2007) who both attest that context not only matters but that it can determine outcomes. The interpretation of accountability lies within the relationship between actor and forum. Therefore, in this research a focus will be placed on the participants of TGNs and their relation to the mechanism of accountability. The focus on micro foundations, in essence on participants in TGNs, is neglected in research with the notable exception of Papadopoulos (2018). Like Papadopoulos, unravelling the black box of TGNs should include data from precisely these foundations first. Unlike Papadopoulos' study, venturing out to include more than one case has the opportunity to create a more structured and generalizable result. The micro foundations will help determine how actors in TGNs establish routines regarding accountability. Moreover, we agree with the notion held by Tetlock (1985) that: "(...) the specific norms, values and ideologies to which people are held accountable differ dramatically from one situation to the next" (1985: p. 307). The situation would thus determine the outcome. To put it plainly the context of the TGN determines the type of accountability deployed. This reasoning demonstrates the effects-of-causes approach this research takes. This effect-of-causes approach is centered around a research goal to "estimate average effects" (Mahoney and Goertz, 2006: 231). This approach differs from a causes-of-effects approach that has a research goal to explain the outcome. The causes-of-effects approach is backtracking to understand outcomes. The effects-to-causes approach is trying to explain which outcome we could expect based on the identified causes. This approach is in line with the work of King, Keohane and Verba (1994) as they state that:

“(..)the best scientific way to organize fact is as observable implications of some theory or hypothesis. Scientific simplification involves the productive choice of a theory (or hypothesis) to evaluate; the theory then guides us to the selection of those facts that are implications of theory” (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994: 46).

By devising our own theory and complementing this with expectations the ability of inference is created. The expectations based on theories offer the opportunity “using the facts we know to study the facts we do not know” (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994: 46). Having constructed a typology based on facts on TGNs, and network governance, we understand there to be different varieties of TGNs. Based on the assumption that context determines outcomes we need to assess these differences in order to assess our expectations. This variety will help in questioning our foreknowledge in essence the assumptions that are in the theories we use.

In the work by King, Keohane and Verba (1994) there is an understanding that statistical inference is the gold standard of scientific inference and that this is also possible in qualitative research. This research will diverge from that assessment as we first investigate the external validity of the causal claims of the theoretical framework. In this we follow the reasoning provided by McKeown:

“What matters here is that a causal mechanism has been identified, and the researcher has some framework within which to begin to investigate the external validity of the causal claims. Such a framework permits initial judgments about which cases are theoretically “near” the case in question and whether similarities and dissimilarities in causal patterns in different cases are in line with or diverge from initial understandings of how similar the cases are” (McKeown, 1999: 184).

This type of analysis will allow for causal inferences in qualitative research (Plümper et al. 2019). This will allow for both theory testing and building. The position of King, Keohane and Verba (1994) is focused on improving theories rather than constructing new ones. However, this research aims to connect theories to build a new one. We make use of the notion forwarded by Diesing (1992) that it is the purpose of research to create hypothesis based on foreknowledge, which in turn direct us to certain passages, that subsequently will lead to other passages which will eventually lead to the researcher interpreting these passages to fit in a connected and coherent story (1992:108). In order to do so and see whether the assumptions of the theoretical expectations hold we need to study different varieties of TGNs.

4.3 Multiple case study

As both context and understanding of the different types of transgovernmental networks are key to the conceptual framework (see table in Chapter III), a qualitative approach of case studies is chosen. Moreover, a multiple case study is selected as four varieties of

transgovernmental networks are assessed. The effect of governance style and function of the network on the type of accountability relationship within a TGN, transcends a single case. For this reason, comparison between the different cases is necessary. This will enable determining whether the expectations are corroborated in empirics. A comparative case study is best suited because of its ability to study a specific phenomenon in its natural context and the ability to see overarching patterns (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

Chapters V, VI, VII and VIII will each feature one of the varieties identified in the typology. Each having the characteristics necessary to assess the expectations. The expectations focus on the extreme cases that would yield towards a predominance of one accountability type over the others. By applying established theory in a novel combination to a new context, the understanding of accountability in TGNs shall be expanded. For this, awareness of the context that is specific to transgovernmental networks is key. A case study is particularly suited for this aim (see Yin, 2015: 194). Studying accountability in TGNs by actually seeking out what is done and why, is instructive to this research. An in-depth investigation into real-life settings of TGNs is therefore necessary.

With the phenomenon of transgovernmental networks being specific and the limited amount of empirical knowledge of the functioning of these TGNs we are directed towards studying it in its natural context. In addition, we make use of the concept of accountability in a new setting. Because of this we want to explain a process of change for which a detailed description, in order to seek out causes of the process, is necessary. Specifically with regards to the interpretation of the civil servants within TGNs concerning the relational concept of TGNs this is important. They are key to understanding accountability within the context of TGNs. This combined fills the traits commonly associated with case study research (see Swanborn, 1996 and 2010). A case study is research on a particular social phenomenon, conducted in a natural context, conducted in the boundaries of a (few) social systems, the usage of several data collecting techniques within a specific time period, explaining processes of change of a particular phenomenon by construing a detailed description of stability and change of the causes of the processes, testing results with the people involved in the processes (Swanborn, 1996: 22).

The specific nature of transgovernmental networks has been addressed in chapter II. This nature has been theorized to yield certain expectations. By having the ability to focus on the peculiarities of the networks because of the choice to conduct detailed case studies of TGNs, the context of the entire relationship of accountability will become clear. Moreover, as accountability is a relational concept, interest should lie with the interaction within the case. By this we will be able to address the call by Yang (2012) who states that: “What is useful for future research is to focus on the interactivity between accountability structure and human agency—instead of treating accountability as exogenous to actors, future research should take it as endogenous” (Yang, 2012: 256). By means of case studies we will be able to do just that.

Given that the expectations are founded upon a theorized conception of manoeuvring by a network participant between the function and the governance style of the network, this can be studied best in an in-depth bottom-up way.

In addition to the explorative goal, we would like to use a multiple case study design to explain a process of change in accountability because of transgovernmental networks. According to Yin (2015) in case studies with an explanatory aim, validity issues especially arise. The validity of research could be threatened because it implies looking for causal relations whilst maintaining a connection with the complexities of the case. To overcome this, a multiple case study is adopted. Multiple case studies would allow to contrast results best as they can seek out contrasting results whilst offering the ability to compare on the basis of similarities. Especially as case studies offer the opportunity to isolate one particular issue (Noor, 2008). In the words of Noor (2008):

“Case study is not intended as the study of the entire organization. Rather is intended to focus on a particular issue, feature or unit of analysis” (Noor, 2008: p. 1602).

In this research an emphasis on a rigorous qualitative approach in order to shed light on mechanisms of accountability is used in the analysis.

Although often assumed that case studies are not fit to address a wider range than the studied case, we follow Flyvberg (2006) as he argues that opting for multiple cases, and through a focus on falsification we could very well generalize based on case studies. However, to do so, we need to “maintain a maximal openness towards unknown aspects, and to ‘let the object speak’” (Swanborn, 2010; 17). The importance of the latter is not lost in this study. As stated, this research has the aim of theory building and testing. Theory building is about being made adamantly aware that there is the theorizing about practice and there is practice (Longhofer, Floersch and Hartmann, 2017). The choices for data collection (explained in detail below) are reflective of this assessment.

In this research we have chosen a qualitative approach. This is because accountability cannot be measured in a quantitative way given the research aim. Accountability is context dependent, and a relational concept. Because of this interaction between the participant of the TGN and the forum devising this relationship and filtering out the perspectives of the forum provide the insight to understand accountability in the context of transgovernmental networks. Moreover, the three-step process of accountability: information, debating and sanctioning (Bovens, 2007; Mulgan, 2003), informs researchers that the overall relationship needs to be assessed not as distinct features but in cohesion to one another. Furthermore, even though Brandsma (in: Bovens ed 2014) and Brandsma and Schillemans (2012) discuss the possibility of quantitative research in accountability studies, it will not serve the aim of this study. We agree with Brandsma (in Bovens, 2014) in his assessment that quantitative

studies might be deployed if the aim is to detect the intensity of accountability relationships, or deficits or overloads. But the inner working of the accountability mechanism in a specific context needs to be addressed in a qualitative manner. Moreover, this study aims to find out how accountability is apparent within the context of TGNs. Because of this we take a fact-finding approach regarding accountability practices in TGNs in a qualitative manner. This is reflected in the research choices and will be addressed below.

4.4 Case Selection

In this dissertation we propose that different types of TGNs will manifest in different types of accountability. We expect the distinction to be based on the function of the network (Slaughter, 2004; Lavenex, 2008), the governing style of the network (Provan and Kenis, 2008) as well as the direction and degree of control (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987). A typology distinguished nine varieties of TGNs. Four of the nine varieties are the best combinations of function of a network and governing style to expect a distinct accountability type to be dominant. These four varieties therefore form the core of the empirical assessment.

As such, the cases are selected based on function and governance style of the TGN. Moreover, we make use of maximum variation sampling.

“A maximum variation sample is constructed by identifying key dimensions of variations and then finding cases that vary from each other as much as possible” (Suri, 2011: 67).

By doing so we will be able to compare between the cases. We can do so because we can refer to: “Important shared patterns that cut across cases and derived their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity” (Palinkas et al., 2015). By focusing on the extremes in the typology, the case selection is a form of maximum variations. This allows for research into all angles to the same phenomenon (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016). Moreover, by choosing the extremes of the typology we are mindful of the position held by Romzek and Dubnick (1987) that hybrid forms or mixtures of accountability can occur. The prevalence of one type of accountability is likely to exist in the outer corners of our typology which is why we opted for these.

Next to the selection of the empirical cases the decision was made to study the phenomenon based in a single country. This was done for five specific reasons, one this study focuses on democratic accountability designed for a specific political system, second accountability is a relationship that stems from the voter to the civil servant, third context determines this relationship, fourth bearing in mind cultural and structural differences a focus on a single country in determining the entirety of the relationship is essential, and fifth because due to the variety in TGNs we needed to assess we wanted to keep other factors as much *ceteris paribus* as possible to be able to determine a causal explanation.

For this research the Dutch participants to TGNs were interviewed and observed. The choice to study the Netherlands specifically was made because:

- The Netherlands is described as pace setter and pusher of Europeanisation in networks of policy making beyond national borders (see Börzel, 2002).
- They have held the above position for a long time as they are founding members of the European Union.
- The Netherlands is a country with *strong regulators* which is seen as a necessary condition to offer action capability to become pace setters in international contexts (see Zaun, 2016).

Although for future research into this subject, including other countries is beneficial, it would go beyond the scope for this study to include more. Based on the theoretical frame we have distinguished four cases and to which accountability type they would yield. These cases are highlighted in the table below:

Table 4.1: Cases in the TGN varieties

Degree of authoritative element / control actions	Characteristic	Degree of autonomy/ source of control		
		Low/internal		High/external
Low High		Information network	Enforcement Network	Harmonisation network
	Participant Governed	Professional accountability	Professional or political accountability	Political accountability
	Lead Organisation Governed	Professional accountability or bureaucratic accountability	All	Political or legal accountability
	Network Administrative Governance	Bureaucratic accountability	Bureaucratic or legal accountability	Legal accountability

To assess if the expectations are corroborated in empirics, we will have to be clear on what basis we will assess if the transgovernmental network that we study actually is a case of the particular category. Because the networks of interest are either an information or a harmonisation network we have focused here on these dimensions. In addition, as the critical cases are either participant governed or network administrative governed, we will also provide the indicators for these. The indicators have been derived from the literature as we have discussed in chapter 2 and 3. The table 4.2 will serve as a tool for analysis.

Table 4.2: Indicators maximum variation cases

Dimension	Indicator
Information network	Voluntary network; process oriented; dissemination of data, information and/or best practices
Harmonisation network	Voluntary network; aimed at harmonising rules and guidelines; they take a proactive role in the creation of standards, benchmarks and regulation.
Participant governed	Governance structure hinges on collaboration between participants on a peer-to-peer basis, no entity in the governance structure that coordinates or supports, focus on active participation members, face-to-face contact, decentralized.
Network Administrative governed	An external administrative entity is set up to help steer and coordinate the network, network administrative organiser works as a broker, centralized.

We used these indicators to select the cases. In table 4.3 we have included the cases based on the above stated criteria. We will briefly discuss why we have chosen these cases but will provide more detail regarding the reasons for this in the respective chapter of the individual cases.

Table 4.3: Selected cases

	Case	Reasoning for selecting case
Information network/ participant governed	IMPEL (The European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law)	“The core of IMPEL’s activities take place within a project structure and concern awareness raising, capacity building, peer review, exchange of information and experiences on implementation, international enforcement collaboration as well as promoting and supporting the practicability and enforceability of European environmental legislation.” (IMPEL, 2020) There is no entity within the structural make-up of the network that coordinates or supports to the extent that is becoming a key player itself.
Information network/ network administrative governed	Ereg (Association for European Vehicle and Driver Registration Authorities)	The aim of the network is to help authorities regarding vehicle and driver registration to work as effectively as possible and do so by disseminating best practices, experiences and knowledge. The network’s work is coordinated from a network administrative governance style. An external administrative entity was set up to facilitate and govern the activities of the network.
Harmonisation network/ participant governed	WENRA (Western European Nuclear Regulatory Association)	The aim of the network is to establish harmonised and implemented safety reference levels among all participating organisations. The network has a structure composed of technical working groups and annual meetings. Without an overarching network administration nor a lead organisation.
Harmonisation network/ network administrative governed	EA (European co-operation for Accreditation)	The network’s aim is to create coherent accreditation across the European Union. They have created a formalized structure with full time employees to coordinate to ensure this aim is reached.

4.5 Data collection

This research makes use of three data gathering methods: participant observations, interviews and documents. We make use of three different data gathering methods in order to be able to determine whether the evidence leads to a similar set of explanations. This automatically means that the analysis is conducted during the data collection process, which is key to case study research (Yin, 1981). The triangulation of data derived from the different methods is a way to bolster validity. However, there are further reasons as to why these techniques have been adopted in this study. First, document analysis is used to understand the governance structure of the network. Second, regarding participant observations we understand context to be paramount to accountability as a mechanism, which is why we need to be able to see this context. Third, the technique of semi-structured interviewing is chosen because this offers us the perspective of those in charge of constructing and interpreting the relational concept of accountability. In the following section a more detailed description of the methods regarding the techniques chosen is discussed.

4.5.1 Participant observations

Regarding participant observations, context is understood to be paramount to accountability as a mechanism, which is why we need to be able to see this context. The purpose of this research is to uncover the workings of the networks and how this relates to the mechanism of accountability. The descriptive nature of this research is emphasized by the strategies used in the methods of data gathering, which allow to go beyond simply chronicling the facts. By conducting a participant observation, a focus on the direct interactions between participant of the transgovernmental networks can be placed. This in turn will enable understanding of the implications of these interactions on accountability as a mechanism (Berg, 2001: 136).

The potential that this method offers is great (Burnham et al, 2004). This method offers the opportunity to submerge in a setting. It will provide the opportunity to the researcher to see how people interact (Rhodes, 't Hart and Noordegraaf, 2007). Observations offers researchers a wealth of information that is hard to come by with any other type of research technique. Interactions within TGNs are not well studied to date which is a reason to use this technique. Moreover, the interpretation and conduct of actors in an accountability relationship offers key information to studying accountability between an actor and a forum.

Unlike ethnographical classical observations, in this study the opportunity to submerge for a longer time into a department is not an option. Nor is there a need for it. As the focus is on accountability of transgovernmental networks, observing when TGNs actually convene is what needs to be studied. This offers the opportunity to study where the interaction takes place. During observations, the role of the researcher was less visible as the participants observed were themselves not part of the setting on a day-to-day basis. The participants of TGNs attend meetings of a day or a few days, during the course of the year. In this research

four different observations of two networks (IMPEL and EReg) were undertaken. In total 11 full working days comprised the observations. These observations were of working group meetings and one annual meeting.³

Table 4.4 Observations per case

	IMPEL	EReg	WENRA	EA
Observation annual meeting	0	1 (duration 3 days)	0	0
Observation working group sessions	2 (duration 7 days)	1 (duration 1 day)	0	0

Observations of TGNs are used to determine how information is transferred to the network, what is discussed and how it is discussed. The transmission of information is part of the process of accountability. Observations help answer questions such as what type of conduct, as well as how account is given within the TGN. Furthermore, discussions on how information of the activities are shared by the participants of TGNs help disseminate how account is given to the home organisations of the participants. Additionally, observations offer the unique opportunity to see interactions and discussions of participants. This helps construe a clearer picture of the governance style and function of TGNs. How these formal characteristics affect the work and interactions of TGNs will help see the ability of these to influence accountability styles.

To understand the workings of a TGN, being present when participants convene in meetings organised by the TGN is crucial. In addition, given that the research question refers to an accountability line back to a national central government, and the choice for the Netherlands to be that line, the observations needed to include Dutch participants. Moreover, the TGN meetings selected for this research, should exemplify meetings that are used to come to decisions on the development of the network in terms of topics and on results. For the observations it is vital to have a view of the different types of meetings of a TGN. Meetings on a strategic level for instance have a different type of decision making structure than at technical level meetings. The subjects discussed can prove instructive to the type of accountability deployed. The difference in perceptions to accountability could relate to these differences as well. How TGNs organise meetings and what is discussed where, and by whom is also indicative for the type of governance style.

There are roughly two types of meetings in TGNs. The first type is that of a general meeting in which results, and reports of the different working groups are shared. This is the annual or general meeting, which occurs once a year. In most TGNs this meeting also represents the highest decision-making body of the organisation. In this type of meeting the participants convene to outline the strategy of the TGN in the upcoming year(s). This type of meeting

³ Observation 1: 18-21 2016 September; observation 2: 18-20 January 2017; observation 3: 20 feb 2018; observation 4: 2-4 May 2018

is designed to allow participants to have oversight over TGNs, they do so by for instance electing the board of the TGN which is responsible for the day-to-day operations. In addition, achieved results and the financial accounts are discussed during these sessions. Participants of these meetings are allowed to make decisions on behalf of the home organisation, they cast their votes as a representative of the home organisation. Oftentimes these participants constitute or represent the executive level of their respective home organisations. During one of the observations the executive level representatives were often supported by administrative level staff from their home organisation. The supporting staff at the annual or general meetings are often involved in the second type of meetings in TGNs.

The second type of meetings in TGNs are more content-based meetings. During these meetings, participants meet in working groups. Experts on specific topics related to the general objective of the TGN, are discussed. For example, the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL) has the general objective to ensure a more effective application of European environmental law. One of the specific topics the network focuses on is nature protection. As part of this topic, meetings are held regarding the creation of a planning tool that could be used for inspections of Natura2000 protected sites (Holzgraefe, 2017). The development of the tool is discussed by experts with knowledge of both the necessary legislation, f.i. the Birds directive and the Habitat directive, and experts with understanding of the practicalities related to conducting inspections.

The discussions held in work group sessions are primarily based on the practicalities of policy implementation. The level of technical expertise is higher in these meetings of TGNs than in the first type of meetings. This second type of meetings occur more often but access is more difficult given the need for detailed and open discussions. Sensitive and confidential information of the home organisation of the participants is shared readily during these meetings. The type of information shared includes policy choices and operational procedures. The participants of these meetings are often policy experts at the administrative advisory level. It is however very much dependent on the topic as well as the home organisation what type of background the participant partaking in these meetings have. Some meetings could cover issues that are fundamental to a home organisation or are seen as highly salient, if that is the case an executive level civil servant might be attending the meeting. In case the meetings are more technical in nature this is unlikely the case.

In this dissertation both types of meetings are observed divided over two cases: IMPEL and EReg. This has been done because the different types of meetings offer insight into different aspects needed to assess the research question. The first type of meeting, the annual meeting, provides insight into how results of the working groups are shared, how decisions are made regarding the networks strategy which includes its mandate. This type of information is used to assess the type of function the network holds. In addition, the annual meeting offers the opportunity to determine the governance style. The statute of a network is put to use

during an annual meeting. This allows the researcher to judge how the written rules of a TGN are practiced. Next to that, this type of meeting also indicates how the different phases of accountability (Bovens, 2007) are used.

The second type of meeting, the working group sessions, occur more often. They determine the pace of the network. An example of this is the development of the IT tool for planning inspections, when this is implemented by the different home organisations the contribution of IMPEL is undeniable. The success of working groups is dependent on their ability to yield results. This type of meeting thus enables the assessment of the function of the network. The type of governance style of a TGN can also be determined based on these meetings as the dynamic of the participants provides the evidence. During the observations of these meetings preparations for the rendering of account regarding the activities of the working groups can also be assessed. For instance, when participants consider the goals of the meeting, or how they want to convey their results and to whom, provides crucial information regarding the accountability relationship they perceive.

Gaining access to the meetings proved difficult. In any observation study the point of access is often a case of “more often beggars than choosers” (Fine and Schulman, 2009). However, invoking a convenience sample was out of the question for this research, in essence we had to be choosers. A purposive sample of four varieties was drawn. Fortunately, access for two of the four varieties could be provided. In order to gain access, we made use of a snow balling technique. Asking a transgovernmental network for access was done via first sending e-mails requesting an interview. At the conclusion of the interview the respondent was then asked if an observation could be possible. Often requests for observations were met with the offer to provide contact information of different actors within the network to interview. In the case of WENRA and EA observations were not possible given the content and nature of the policy field. Both WENRA and EA deal with issues that are sensitive in nature, in the case of WENRA this is about nuclear safety requirement negotiations whereas the sensitivity in the work of EA lies with confidential information of organisations for instance. The work of IMPEL and EReg was open to the researcher to study on two occasions each. This offered a unique insight. This is exemplified in the empirical cases included in chapter VI and VII. Because transgovernmental networks by default work internationally this meant observations were too. This meant that joining a meeting came at extra costs. The exercise is also time consuming but as said the value added cannot be stressed enough.

Participant observations have the ability to explicitly make the link between researcher and researched visible. Before the start of each observation all participants to the meeting were send an e-mail that the researcher would attend. At the start of the observation the researcher was introduced by the respondent with whom the researcher had the initial contact. Participants were given the opportunity to question the researcher on her topic, after which the meetings started. During the formal meetings the researcher took notes on her laptop.

This was inconspicuous as other participants made use of their laptops as well. During a meeting where no laptops were used the researcher switched to paper and pen note taking. As effective observations are fulfilled by “seeing as much as possible” (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011: 81) and taking into consideration that the position of the researcher needs to be reflected upon, confessional tales (Mulhall, 2003: 312) were adopted as a method. Confessional tales is a way of taking field notes which also include the personal experiences and methodological confessions of the researcher (Mulhall, 2003). It highlights the position of the researcher and is transparent of the interpretation of the observed activities.

The choice for participant observation was made as it can be used as “a yardstick against which to measure the completeness of data gathered in other ways, a model which can serve to let us know what orders of information escape us when we use other methods” (Becker and Geer, 1957: p. 28). When conducting qualitative research and one based on theory building, the need for multiple sources of information, given the structure provided for by the context, is preminent. Bearing in mind that the theoretical framework is guiding our research, the option of a less structured observation is the best solution in balancing the level of openness necessary for conducting a first assessment of a conceptual theory (Mulhall, 2003). The observations will be analysed and assessed based on the theoretical framework and the defining elements distinguished. Given the centrality of the concept of accountability a semi-structured approach was chosen. The instruction of the researcher was to record what was happening. The definition by Bovens (2007) including the process steps where however in the back of the mind of the researcher. The defining process consisting of three fases: information, debating and sanctioning, structured the observation. However, given the interactive nature of communication revolving around accountability was considered important, this too was made part of the set-up by which to observe specifically. The observations themselves were conducted during the formal meetings of transgovernmental networks. But also included meetings during lunch, dinner and at social gatherings surrounding the main formal meetings of the TGNs. The dynamics of the network proved to be especially visible in these type of interactions. As we adopted a yo-yo fieldwork approach we could compare between observations and establish patterns and refine our frame during the observations.

Aware of the fact that a researcher cannot be everywhere, and therefore will not be able to observe everything a special interest was placed on the Dutch participants, as they are key for the assessment to the expectations. Field notes were not taken during the more social activities as this would exemplify the researchers position and thus possibly hinder observation. Notes of these activities were taken at the end of the day. With regards to interactions between the researcher and the researched, the researcher is not involved in the formal meetings unless directly addressed. During the more social events, the researcher is involved by asking questions that relate to the topic of the conversation between participants. At times in one-on-one conversations the researcher also asked for follow up information regarding points addressed in the meeting.

In this research observations are used as they offer a unique insight into a social relationship namely: accountability. Observations offer a big part of that understanding but not the entirety for that we need information from different techniques as well which we will address now.

4.5.2 Interviews

In this research interviews have been conducted with participants of the various networks. The method of interviewing is employed as this offers the valued perspective of those in charge of constructing and interpreting the relational concept of accountability. By firstly assessing participants of a particular TGN, we can identify which actors might be relevant. These actors are approached by means of semi-structured interviews. Noteworthy is that when participants were approached, the topic of this study: accountability, was met with wariness. Anonymity was asked for and some occasions interviews with employees were denied. To ensure that this research would be able to come by the information of these participants a semi-structured in-depth approach was taken (Guion, Diehl and McDonald, 2011). This means that during the interviews the interviewees were instructed to provide overviews. This was done by asking broad questions such as: *Could you describe how you prepare for a meeting of the TGN?*, but also included pauses as an interview technique. By adopting these strategies, the interviewee is able to tell a story.

In addition, in-depth interviewing helps in this research particularly as knowledge of TGNs is lacking in empirical data. Knowing the proper questions to ask is difficult when the context that shape the topic studied is still a black box. By offering the interviewees to shape and explain the context, the opportunity of following up with a clearer understanding of context arises. Additionally, interviews are used to ask follow-up questions regarding the formal procedures of accountability we have already disseminated from either document analysis or observations. It provides the opportunity to ask question regarding how accountability is set up according to those involved. Their interpretation is crucial for the micro level approach of this research.

Contact with interviewees was first established by reaching out to either a personal e-mail account of a known Dutch participant of a network, or we have e-mailed the general network e-mail account with a request to get in touch with a Dutch participant. In case we were able to identify a Dutch participant but had no work e-mail address we made use of the social platform LinkedIn, to send direct messages. In this e-mail an introduction to both the researcher and the topic was included. In addition, an attachment was sent which elaborated on the topic of the project as well as the background of the researcher and how she might be reached. As in the early stages of the research we found people to respond with questions relating to confidentiality and anonymity. A decision was made to include the option for both confidentiality and anonymity in the description of the research in the attachment. Respondents were hesitant on talking about accountability and had a perception that the research would focus on non-compliance. Those willing to discuss their participation asked

for their interviews to be anonymized. All respondents have been anonymized but with the permission of all respondents the network in which they partake may be referenced. Although this restricts references to particular identifiable events and has an effect on replicability, we believe the opportunity to foster an open conversation would outweigh these. The respondents have however been recorded (audio only), with their permission. One respondent did not want to be recorded. The respondent did allow the researcher to take notes but asked if they could be sent for review before the start of the analysis. We have agreed to this procedure as the respondent played a vital role in the transgovernmental network. In this particular case, approval on the content of the notes strengthened the mutual understanding of the subject. All but two interviews were held at the offices of the respondents. One interview was held in a restaurant of a train station in the Netherlands and one was held in one of the buildings of Leiden University. The choice of location was left to the respondents in order to accommodate them and for them to be able to speak freely.

This research is based on 27 interviews with a combined duration of 18 hours and 54 minutes. As said, it proved difficult to research who participates in TGNs, in addition to the difficulty of finding TGNs that fall into the categories to assess the expectations. Non-response to emails for contact was high, declining cooperation was as well. In one case an organisation stated that the burden to free employees for interviews was deemed too high. This resulted in a lower number of interviewees. The referral of possible respondents to their supervisor to ask for permission was particularly noticeable in the network of EA. Nevertheless, the respondents of this network offered a unique inside look at the accountability mechanism deployed. It should be mentioned that the networks selected in this dissertation differ in size. This relates to the number of working groups, topics covered and number of participants. The biggest network is IMPEL, followed by EReg. At quite a distance in terms of size the smallest networks WENRA and EA can be found. To be able to comprehend the work conducted in the networks an effort was made to interview participants of the different types of meetings and cover the scope of the network. This was achieved in all cases.

In addition, in the initial stages of this research respondents from different TGNs than the ones included in the empirical cases were also interviewed. In some cases, initial cooperation was rescinded, and in other cases the TGNs did not fit the category necessary for the assessment. Interviews held with respondents of three other TGNs could not be used. The respondents of these interviews rescinded their cooperation because of fears that a focus on accountability would mean a focus on deficit, this in turn would create problems for their work environment. In accordance with their wishes and obvious ethical considerations the choice was made to exclude these interviews. However, these interviews did prove valuable as they provided proof for the feasibility of the study. The interviewees provided evidence for the different types of TGNs based on a division in both function and governance style. One of the TGNs operates in the domain of IT, is participant governed with an information function. One of the respondents participated in a TGN concerned with the application of common market principles. Whereas the third TGN dealt with issues regarding auditing, with

an information function but lead-organisation governed. The informality regarding decision making in TGNs and the loose link with accountability towards the national line was also established. This was the case for each of the interviews, although how the interviewees went about providing account did differ. This has informed the decision to select cases that would closely resemble the outer corners of the typology. The value of these additional 4 interviews was in the ability to use these as probing cases. It helped determine difficulties in assessing whether or not TGNs would fit a particular category and whether the typology was sufficient. These 4 interviews were not recorded upon request of the respondents. Notes, which were shared with the respective respondents, have been made regarding the interviews.

The interviews included in this research were conducted based on the technique of semi-structured interviews. The questions were devised based on the theoretical concept of accountability as described by Bovens (2007). The different steps of the accountability relationship were all addressed in the structure of the interview. The choice was made to not opt for a structured design as this would leave out the possibility of detailed accounts and narratives that would disclose the practice of accountability (Whiting, 2008). Given that we are also dealing with a concept that carries emotional baggage (Romzek, 2015), an intimate and open setting that semi-structured interviews can provide are best suited. Candid conversation on a value laden concept is best addressed in such a manner. This ensures that the interviewer and the interviewee can address the issues they feel are important to discuss. This technique is especially helpful when motivations for a particular procedure are asked. In addition, by the freedom to ask questions in a more focused way, context is more easily grasped. These interviews have been analysed based on the elements of the accountability types. The process of accountability in the different cases, is determined based on the answers by respondents. By combining the different aspects of this design, we will then be able to assess the implications of these arrangements.

It was desirable to interview participants of TGNs at the administrative level as well as the executive level of home organisations involved. This allowed for both the operational activities as the strategic aspects of the work of TGNs to be assessed. The administrative level included respondents who mostly attended the workgroup sessions, at which their technical expertise is most welcome. Because the pool of participants to TGNs is limited for some of the cases, and confidentially needs to be safeguarded, detailing the functions of participants is highly restricted. The expertise and functions of some of our respondents are so specific that disclosing these would reveal their identities. With these restrictions in mind, the background of the respondents can be described on a more abstract level. The respondents all have attended meetings for the respective TGN during the research period. They are all employed by the home organisation in the Netherlands, and as part of their job they partake in sessions for a TGN. At their respective home organisations, they are policy makers. They formulate policies and create guidelines to implement policies. Moreover, they ensure the proper execution of policies because they conduct inspections or audits themselves. In general terms, for a working group of EReg where the topic of Data protection is discussed, administrative level

experts with knowledge of the GDPR⁴ and an understanding of the operational procedures of vehicle and drivers' registration would likely attend.

The executive level included respondents that are involved with the strategic aspects of the work of TGNs. In their home organisations those respondents are in a position of management. They have been given the authority to vote on behalf of the home organisation in international network settings. In cases where a single home organisation is involved in the work of a TGN, the executive level respondent(s) often coordinate the work of the home organisation in the TGN. They oversee who attends meetings and have a general idea on what the activities of the working group sessions of the TGN entail. In case multiple home organisations are involved in the work of a TGN this coordinating aspect is limited to the own organisation.

Both types of respondents were selected based on the criteria that they were currently and actively involved in meetings of the TGN. Given the focus on the Dutch accountability line other criteria was that the respondents worked for a Dutch home organisation. Although transparency is important in relation to methodological choices, so is the protection of the anonymity of respondents. Because of this clarifying the type of respondent per case is not feasible. Nevertheless, in the table below an overview of respondents per case is provided.

Table 4.5: Number of respondents per case

	IMPEL	EReg	WENRA	EA
Respondents	11	7	4	4

Even though in this research a theoretical framework was devised that was instructive in the creation of the topic list, it does not drive the results. Searching for similarities and dissimilarities is key to assess the expectations. By using semi-structured interview technique, we allow ourselves the freedom to “bring our and resolve apparent contradictions” (Horton, Macve and Struyven, 2004:430). Moreover, it allows researchers to reveal certain issues that were not identified beforehand and could be followed up by further questioning either in a follow up interview or by means of a different research technique such as observations or document analysis (Horton, Macve and Struyven, 2004). The focus of the research was thus based on the general understanding of accountability provided for by Bovens (2007).

4.5.3 Document analysis

This research will also make use of document analysis. This final method will be used to establish the formal lines of accountability. It both serves as input for the observations and interviews as well as that it enables us to investigate the formal characteristics of the TGN. With the latter we refer to both governance style and function. The governance style can be determined based on inaugural documents as these often list the components of the networks

⁴ General Data Protection Regulation

and the decision-making process. Next to inaugural documents such as statutes, we have looked at newspaper articles references on the specific TGNs documenting the activities or results of these networks. Thirdly, academic articles on the cases studied have been examined. These offered insight into the technical work of the TGNs. Reports by TGNs have been analysed with reference to the definition of accountability by Bovens (2007) and the defining elements of the types as described above. And finally, reports of the home organisation of participants, such as annual reports have been cross checked for references to the TGN.

Making use of documents in this research is essential as it can determine the formalisation of accountability lines by transgovernmental networks. Where both interviews and observations deal with the empirical or real-world assessment of accountability in these settings, documents shed light on how accountability is formally structured. The documents analysed relate to network inception documents such as statutes. Statutes explain the governance structure, state the role and obligations of participants and other organisational aspects. This would measure the level of formalised accountability.

Reports on activities of the network shed light on how account is given. Authorship but also to whom the document is directed shows how the mechanism of accountability is institutionalised in the transgovernmental network. Reports about activities include minutes, annual reports, up-dates on projects, project reports, newsletters and social media articles. Most of the documents originated from the TGNs or member organisation participating in these TGNs. Three different sources of documents were also included. First, academic literature on the TGNs studied was also included when available. Second, by using a database of newspapers and professional news articles, specific mentioning of the work of the TGNs studied were also able to be included. Third, documents stemming from the European Union (European Commission, European Parliament) specifically mentioning the work of the TGNs were also used for the document analysis.

For each type of document a search strategy was devised. Firstly documents authored by the network are predominantly found on the website of the TGN itself. Inaugural documents such as statutes can be found on these websites, although for two of the cases the general registry for organisations in Belgium needed to be accessed to find these. This was because the networks were registered as an association under Belgian law. A copy for the statutes was not available on the website of the TGN but it could be accessed via the registry website.

Documents authored by the TGN are varied. The type of documents used for this dissertation which are authored by TGNs are: a. reports on the activities of the working group sessions, b. rules of procedure, c. speeches by chairman or coordinators of the TGN, d. reports on the annual meeting of the TGN, e. internal reviews of the work of the TGN, f. operational documents such as reimbursement forms, g. annual (financial) reports, h. policy documents, i. press releases, j. mission statements, k. strategy documents or work programmes, l. terms of reference documents regarding activities of the TGN, m. memoranda of understanding with

other organisations, n. outreach and training material of the TGN, o. organisational charts, p. visual presentations or videos of the work of the TGN, and q. newsletters of the TGN.

Secondly, this dissertation makes use of news articles regarding the work of the TGNs. The search engines Factiva and Nexis Uni were used. Key words that were used in the search engine were specific to the cases. For the EReg case for instance the key words used were:

1. EReg AND network
2. EReg AND network AND EU
3. EReg AND association AND EU
4. EReg AND European Union
5. EReg AND authorities
6. EReg AND drivers' license
7. EReg AND vehicle.

The search strategy for the other cases were similar regarding the first four keyword combinations but the last three combinations were altered to include the specific activities of the TGN. For instance, for EA the choice was made to include accreditation, and mutual recognition. For IMPEL, the names of the different topic groups were used. For WENRA keywords such as nuclear, and the names of the topic groups were used.

After the initial search the articles were scanned by reading the first sentences regarding relevance. When an article detailed the activities or results of the network, an article was deemed relevant. When an article described the interactions with other organisations such as the European Commission with regards to the TGNs goals this was also considered relevant.

Thirdly, academic literature regarding the work of the TGNs is also included in this dissertation. The search engine Google Scholar was utilized for this. Keywords that were entered into the search engine were again tailored to the different cases. For example, with regards to the case of IMPEL, the following keywords and combinations were used:

1. IMPEL AND European Union
2. IMPEL AND transgovernmental network
3. IMPEL AND EU AND network
4. IMPEL AND network AND accountability
5. IMPEL AND network AND deficit
6. IMPEL AND network AND waste
7. IMPEL AND network AND illegal hunting
8. IMPEL AND network AND water management
9. IMPEL AND network AND industry
10. IMPEL AND network AND nature protection
11. IMPEL AND network AND natura2000
12. IMPEL AND network AND environmental law

The keyword combination of the first five were similar for the other cases. The other keyword combinations were adapted to fit the other cases. The names of topic groups and general themes of the TGN were included as a keyword.

Fourthly, this dissertation includes external documents by the European Commission and home organisations. For the documents authored by the European Commission the website Eurlex was used. Documents authored by the home organisation were accessed via the publicly accessible websites. In addition, the ministries which carry responsibility for the work of the home organisation were also checked. Keywords that were entered in the search bar of the respective websites were initially solely the acronym of the network. This did not lead to many hits for especially the websites of the ministries, the keywords were broadened following the keyword combination followed for the academic articles but translated to Dutch. When the number of documents still was quite low, the choice was made to access all annual reports and crosscheck by using the command Control+F on the names of the TGNs selected for this dissertation. Table 4.4 shows the number of documents used per case and per type of document.

Table 4.6 : Types of documents per TGN

Type of document	IMPEL	EReg	WENRA	EA
Documents authored by network (including statutes)	67	31	119	113
News articles	8 Nexis Uni, 82 Factiva	4 Nexis Uni, 29 Factiva	6 Nexis Uni, 141 Factiva	15 Factiva
Academic literature on the work of the cases	32 Google Scholar	3 Google Scholar	24 Google Scholar	10 Google Scholar
External documents (European Commission, Home organisation)	7 (Eurlex) 8 (I&W) 10 (LNV)	8 (Eurlex) 14 (RDW)	34 (Eurlex) 4 (ANVS)	7 (Eurlex) 10 (RvA)
Total	214	89	328	155

The documents were assessed based on our theoretical understanding of accountability, supplemented with the information that we derive from the other techniques and then set against the expectations formulated. If documents were available online through the website of the transgovernmental network we would make use of those directly. For information only available to participants of the network we asked for the information either through the network administration or via established contact. One respondent put the researcher on the e-mailing list of an internal newsletter that was only available to employees of a Dutch governmental organisation which has subsequently also been used for assessment. The difficulty with studying documents regarding accountability that go beyond the open network is that they are either not accessible or the researcher is unfamiliar with the existence of a particular line of accountability. By using the interviews to probe in which direction accountability is addressed the researcher has been able to assess a broad range of documents.

4.6 Analysis

The methods that were used have provided the necessary material to conduct the analysis. For the analysis we rely heavily on the presented theoretical framework of chapter III. Based on these theories three overarching issues to help determine which type of accountability is prevalent need to be addressed:

1. The questions: How is accountability given? On what is accountability given? and To whom is accountability given?
2. The three steps: information phase, discussion phase, sanction phase.
3. The nature of the relationship: based on the degree of autonomy and the source of control.

These issues are therefore included in the operationalisation of the different types of accountability. Each type has distinct characteristics, and these are reflected in the specific issues raised here. For our operationalisation we make use of the distinctions as presented in the framework by Christie (2018) but have supplemented this with assertions from Romzek and Dubnick (1987) to ensure it fits the purpose of this study best.

The framework by Christie offers “a synthesis of the components of the prominent accountability frameworks published in the field” (Christie, 2018: 80). She has included the works of Romzek and Dubnick (1987), Dicke and Ott (1999), Bovens (2007), Koppell (2005) and Bar Cendón (2000). In addition, she added to the four types of accountability raised by Romzek and Dubnick (1987) by including two other types notably: social accountability and moral accountability. Given that our expectations are linked to the work of Romzek and Dubnick (1987) we focus on the provisions of her framework for the four types rather than the six. Moreover, as we focus so clearly on these four types, we emphasise the distinctions made by Romzek and Dubnick (1987) in this study. The inclusion of the degree of autonomy and the source of control is essential in their attributions of the types. The comprehensive accountability framework by Christie (2018) leaves these out. The above choices have led to the framework below which is loosely based on Christie (2018). This framework represents the operationalisation of the elements of each accountability type. The empirical evidence of the four case studies shall be assessed by looking at the different elements that make out accountability.

Each accountability type has its own set of characteristics. By means of the methods chosen we are able to assess, which elements are reflected in empirics. The results of each case shall be contrasted with the characteristics of each type. We expect to find a prevalence of one type over the others rather than perfect matches. The importance given to the characteristics will thus play a pivotal role in establishing which type is prevailing. How these characteristics will play out in each type of accountability will be explained in the following sections.

Table 4.7: Framework of accountability types based on the work by Romzek and Dubnick (1987), Bovens (2007), Dicke and Ott (1999) and Christie (2018).

	Professional	Bureaucratic	Political	Legal
Definition	Horizontal relationship between an actor answering to a forum in which the source of the control is internal and the level of discretion of the individual actor is high.	Vertical relationship between an actor answering to a forum in which the source of control is internal and the degree of autonomy is low.	Vertical relationship between an actor answering to a forum in which the source of control is external and the degree of control over actions is low.	Diagonal relationship between an actor answering to a formal in which the source of control is external and the degree of discretion is high.
Forum	Professional peers	Supervisor role to actor within bureaucracy	Voters, elected representatives	Courts, auditors from outside the organisation
Relationship	Horizontal	Vertical	Vertical	Diagonal
Source of control	Internal	Internal	External	External
Information on what conduct?	Deference to individual judgment and expertise	Obedience to organisational directives	Responsiveness to external stakeholders (voters)	Compliance with external rules/ mandates
Emphasis	Expertise	Obedience	Responsiveness	Procedure
Techniques of review	Codes of ethics Licensure Outcomes-based assessments Whistle-blowing Registries	Auditing Licensure Monitoring	Markets Outcomes-based-assessments Registries Whistle-blowing	Auditing Contracts Courts Monitoring Registries Licensure
Discussion on what	Results of professional performance Professional rules followed	Forms and procedures followed by administrative action	Results of administrative performance	Acting in full compliance with legally established rules and procedures
Control over actions	Low	High	Low	High
Sanctions	Sanction or recognition for professional involved	Resignation or dismissal	Political criticism or recognition Resignation or dismissal	Revision of the administrative act -sanction or recognition of the official involved Compensation for the citizen

The first type is professional accountability. In this type, the forum is within the same organisational line as the actor. The organisational line here is the home-organisation of the actor. This is not the network, but the organisation for which the actor works on a day-to-day basis. In addition, the forum has no hierarchical relationship to the actor. The relationship is in nature horizontal. Controlling the actor is done internal, meaning within

a singular organisation. The emphasis of the review is on the competence and expertise of the actor (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987). This is also reflected in the high level of discretion offered to the actor. Standards on professional conduct are the measure by which the actor can be reviewed. In case peers have the oversight or influence on registries and licensure these techniques can be included. However, codes of ethics, outcomes-based assessments and whistle blowing are more likely techniques (Dicke and Ott, 1999). The discussion phase will focus on the professional performance of an actor and if the actor has followed professional rules. The possible consequence for the actor is either sanction or recognition of the work of the professional (Bar Cendon, 2000).

The bureaucratic type of accountability has a forum that has a supervisor role in relation to the actor. The forum is in the same organisational line as the actor but has a hierarchical position. The relationship is vertical in nature (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987). Reviewing the conduct of the actor is internal in source. The emphasis in the review is on obedience of the actor to organisational directives. There is a high degree of control over the actor. The following of bureaucratic forms and procedures is what will instruct the discussion phase. The techniques deployed most likely are auditing, licensure, or monitoring (Dicke and Ott, 1999). The sanction in this type might be more severe than in the case of professional accountability as it might be resignation or dismissal of the actor (Bar Cendon, 2000).

The political accountability type has a forum that is external to the organisation for which the actor primarily works. However, there is a link to this organisation. As the actor is employed in the public sector, the actor needs to be responsive to the needs and wishes of the voter (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987). Therefore, the forum in this instance is the voter or by extension elected representatives, the latter being more likely in the case of transgovernmental networks. The relationships' nature is thus vertical and the source of control external. Information on the conduct of the actor must refer to responsiveness to external stakeholders. The most likely techniques that are carried out in order to review are markets, outcome-based assessments, registries and whistle blowing (Dicke and Ott, 1999). The sanctions that can be imposed are political criticism or recognition, and resignation or dismissal (Bar Cendon, 2000).

The fourth and final type we will discuss is that of legal accountability. Like political accountability the forum is external to the primary organisation of the actor. The forum in this instance is at a clear distance to this organisation. The forum can be a court or an auditing body that operates outside of the organisation. The direction of the relationship is diagonal, with the source of control external. Information on compliance with external rules and mandates needs to be offered by the actor. The emphasis in the review is on compliance with procedures (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987). The discussion phase will focus on legality of the conduct of the actor, relation to established rules and mandates (Romzek and Ingraham, 2000). The techniques for review that might be deployed are auditing, contracts, courts, monitoring, registries and licensure (Dicke and Ott, 1999). The level of control over actions

is high. The consequences of this type are: revision of the administrative act, sanction or recognition of the official involved, and compensation for the citizen (Romzek and Ingraham, 2000).

The sources of information have been used to serve different ends for this dissertation. To answer the research question, it was paramount that the type of TGN based on function and governance style could be established. To be able to assess the type of accountability that was put in place we have made use of the dominant definition on accountability by Bovens (2007). This instructed this research to place focus on the different phases of accountability. In table 4.6 we have indicated what source of information was used to establish which finding.

Table 4.8: Sources of information used for findings

	Function network	Governance style network	Information phase	Debate phase	Judgement phase	Method per case
Observation Annual meeting	X	X	X	X	X	EReg
Observation Working group session	X	X	X	X		IMPEL, EReg
Interview Executive level	X	X	X	X	X	IMPEL, EReg, WENRA, EA
Interview Administrative level		X	X	X	X	IMPEL, EReg, WENRA, EA
Documents authored by network	X	X	X			IMPEL, EReg, WENRA, EA
News articles			X	X	X	IMPEL, EReg, WENRA, EA
Academic literature on the work of the networks	X		X		X	IMPEL, EReg, WENRA, EA
External documents (European Commission, home organisation)				X	X	IMPEL, EReg, WENRA, EA

In this dissertation a focus was placed on the mechanics of accountability. By this we refer to what Schillemans (2016: 4) calls “the actual interactions between accountable entities and their accountable forums”. For instance, the interviews were used to ask respondents for descriptions on how they prepare for TGN meetings. To understand where they perceive the mandate to act stems from. By asking questions like, after you come back from a TGN meeting what do you share? and; with whom? we can tease out both the information phase but also what type of information is shared. By offering enough room for a respondent to paint a picture, a researcher can assess the different elements that make up accountability

arrangements. Especially as accountability should be seen as a relationship. Observations are used to check these assessments as well. The researcher made use of the observations to see if references were made to outreach regarding the results of a meeting. Where goals set out? Were there discussions on how to disseminate information about the network meeting? Who is conversing with whom?

In addition, during the observations the researcher was in the right position to assess if the goals set out in strategy documents and the activities mentioned in newsletters and the website were a good reflection of the type of function the TGN holds. Do discussions or topics move beyond the paper reality of what a TGN portrays to be? This is similar to how observations were used to assess the governance style of the TGN. Documents authored by the TGN offered the paper reality, but the observations, and interviews were used to see if the reality is reflected in the perception of the participants and is supported by actions in the meetings of TGNs. To increase the credibility of the analysis, triangulation was used. Information of the different sources was used to determine the different elements of the typology.

For example, to determine the governance style of IMPEL, different source material was assessed. Based on the documents authored by the organisation, we found a secretariat was part of the organisation. The activities employed by the secretariat needed to be determined. This was necessary as to ascertain a specific governance style the coordination structure and the level of organisational support is crucial to understand. Therefore, both respondents in interviews were questioned about the role of the secretariat and the observations were used to see how the secretariat is involved during meetings. To clarify this further, we have reported on this as follows:

IMPEL has a secretariat. It is quite small with currently only 1, 5 FTE (Respondent IMPEL I). They offer a coordinating role to assess the advancement of project for the general meeting. Also, they prepare for the general meeting and facilitate a central point of contact for the network. A side note needs to be made here as the day-to-day management is in the hands of the board which does not include a member of the secretariat (Respondent IMPEL I). In addition, the role of assisting the projects or activities is also limited (Observation IMPEL I, Observation IMPEL II, Respondent IMPEL II, Respondent IMPEL VI).

By making use of different types of sources, activities of the network could be traced. This offered the opportunity to see if the different sources pointed to a similar interpretation of accountability or if there were differences. In the case of WENRA the establishment of Safety Reference Levels (SRLs) is the most important part of the work of the network. A key event in the field of nuclear safety was the Fukushima Daiichi disaster. This ensured that the SRLs established after that disaster and the procedure, could be traced in newspaper articles, documents authored by the European Commission and documents authored by WENRA itself. This offered a difference of perspective to sources used and enable the tracking of

accountability. Also, interviews with respondents were used in this instance to determine how the accountability arrangement on this activity of WENRA is formed.

In cases where different sources contradicted each other the decision was made to include information of both sources. This was for instance the case for the inception of the WENRA network. One respondent presented the establishment of the network as a desire of regulatory bodies to work together. However, in scientific articles the role of the European Commission was mentioned as the driver behind the creation of the network. By means of looking for different sources to back up elements of the process of establishment nuance was provided for. If a claim could not be backed by different material the choice was made to leave out the claim unless the claim was made based on a specific authority.

Usage of a singular source was included in the dissertation if that source was authoritative on the topic. To exemplify, the nature of the work of EA is quite sensitive. This means that transparency is limited. Documents on the work procedures of the network are disseminated via a closed off section of their website, only accessible to participants of the network. Obviously, a website can be checked to see if it has a closed off section, which it did, but what is shared on that closed off section is only visible to those using it. One respondent offered insight in the type of documents shared there, given that this respondent had access to this section, their assessment was included.

In the event findings led to contradictory results, with regards to the type of accountability, all findings were shared. The contradictions are assessed in the concluding paragraphs of each of empirical chapters. The importance of the findings was assessed based on the number of respondents that mentioned the elements of the accountability relationship and how they valued them. This was also supplemented by support offered for each finding by other sources. To illustrate, the case of WENRA provided findings that fit all four of the accountability types distinguished. By discussing the findings and sharing the importance allotted to them by the different sources and emphasis placed on each, determining which line was more prevalent than others could be assessed. However, this case also proved that assessing accountability is a dynamic process and should not be seen as static. Networks develop over time, as in the case of WENRA it became apparent that one line of accountability was becoming increasingly important. As this line was still being developed during our research period, we reflected on this but included a nuance in our assessment that for this research it is still undetermined how this will play out specifically.

4.7 Summary of methodology

To sum up, this research is a qualitative multiple comparative case study with the aim of assessing theory and theory building. By using a maximum variation design based on four cases, that we select by means of dimensional sampling we will be able to assess our

expectations. By making use of three distinct data collection techniques, we can assess the accountability relationship in TGNs from different angles.

The document analysis will provide us with the input for describing the de-jure form of accountability. Whilst both interviews and observations will inform us on the de-facto accountability. This study furthermore is very much theory driven. The elements established in our framework will give us the frame and gauge by which we will be able to analyse. Nevertheless, falsification of our expectations would help broadening our understanding of the phenomenon of accountability in transgovernmental networks.

The inclusion of three distinct techniques enables us to oversee patterns that might not have been observed in research on TGNs so far. Extant literature on TGNs has focused on “deliberative and often informal networking mechanisms designed to attenuate the national interest orientation of member state representatives, in favour of functional best practice, or a common supranational good” (Eberlein and Newman, 2008). Empirical research regarding TGNs has mostly discussed institutional aspects of TGNs such as the role of experts in TGNs, the policy making process in a TGN or the output of TGNs (see Calcara, 2017; Abbott and Kauffmann, 2018; Mastenbroek and Martinsen, 2018). By adopting a semi-structured strategy to deploy our techniques we will be able to consider a larger variety of involved issues than in empirical research on TGNs so far. A semi-structured design is useful for assessing our expectations. As the aim of the research is both theory testing and theory building, we want to seek out possible contradictions to our expectations. In using semi-structured interviews and participant observations we can achieve this.

Being clear on our choices and on what we base these is reflected in our discussion on the theoretical basis that will guide our analysis. The varieties of the TGNs and how we assess the indicators of the dimensions for types of TGNs and network governance is one way in which we will make this clear. The second way in which we clarify our analysis relates to our key subject: accountability. The dissection of the different types of accountability, the definition we have given each and the indicators that follow from these are what structures the final analysis of this. After offering transparency in how we have set out our research we shall now turn to the empirical part of this research. The following chapters will be structured per transgovernmental network. The description of the accountability lines in each will be given before we will compare and analyse the entirety of the empirical material in chapter IX of this dissertation.

