

When Europe meets the local level:

A fusing multilevel compound?

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores to what extent the fusion approach can explain the role of local government in the European integration process. It assesses the efficacy of the fusion approach for the study of local government and subsequently offers insights how to advance the approach by giving it a local government perspective. Among the existing research of local-supranational relations, hardly any attempts have been made to provide a comprehensive, albeit differentiated, theoretical perspective to understand how the local level links into the macro-trajectories of the EU's governance system. Fusion assumes that the transfer of competences from the national to the European level reflect a 'third way' integration between supranational integration and intergovernmental cooperation. In the fusion account, public resources and policy instruments are 'fusing' under a sub-optimal multilevel compound. Existing integration theories focus primarily on the state level, whilst concepts such as multilevel governance and Europeanisation do not explain the evolution of the EU's polity. The thesis shows that the fusion approach accounts for both multilevel realities and for Europeanisation processes in the context of European integration.

The thesis assesses whether the fusion approach is able to explain a) *systemic linkages* between European integration and changes at the local level; b) a *fusion* of competences and accountabilities for policy outcomes in Europe's multilevel compound; c) the *attitudes* of local actors towards the integration process. For the purpose of applying and testing the fusion approach for the study of local government, the study deduces five empirical indicators from the fusion literature and investigates their relevance at the local level in the North West of England and North Rhine-Westphalia. The indicators assess 1) the *absorption* of European legislation and policy by local government; 2) the Europeanisation of local actors' *attention* towards supranational policies and legislation; 3) institutional and procedural *adaptation* processes at all relevant levels of government; 4) vertical and horizontal, as well as direct and indirect, *action* of municipal authorities in relation to EU policies; 5) local actors' *attitudes* towards European policies and governance. The empirical findings are based on qualitative elite-interviews, secondary literature and primary documents. Although there are limitations to the efficacy of fusion for explaining local-supranational relations, as an advanced version of the approach, the thesis delivers insights into the *systemic linkages* between European integration and changes at the local level; the *fusion* of local government and the *attitudes* of local actors towards the EU.

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I say my love, my lies, my hope, my guild
My passion, my fire, my anger and my impatience
My no and my perhaps and my absolute yes
Oh yes I want¹

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I know now there are people who justify this world
Whose mere existence helps other people to live
Who love and love and love
As if it was the easiest thing on earth²

¹ Loose translation of *Das Leichteste der Welt* by Nils Koppbruch

² Loose translation of *Das Leichteste der Welt* by Nils Koppbruch

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ACRONYMS

4NW	For North West
AGMA	Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
AGRI	Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
ALDE	Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe
BBSR	<i>Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung</i> (Federal Institute für Building-, City- and Spatial Research)
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BUDG	Committee on Budgets
CARE	Conservation and Acceptance of Renewable Energy
CAP	Common Agriculture Policy
CDU	<i>Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands</i> (Christian Democratic Union)
CEEP	Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services
CEMR	Council of Municipalities and Regions
CEPLI	European Confederation of Local Intermediate Authorities
CLP	Central Local Partnership
CLUNET	Cluster Network
CONT	Committee on Budgetary Control
CoR	Committee of the Regions
CPMR	Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
CULT	Committee on Culture and Education
CWAC	Cheshire West and Chester County
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
EC	European Community
ECG	European Cooperation Group
ECON	Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs
ECRN	European Chemical Regions Network
EESG	European Economic Strategy Group
ELAN	European Local Authorities Network
EON	European Officers Network

EP	European Parliament
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ERRIN	European Regions Research and Innovation Network
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EURADA	European Association of Development Agencies
FAMM	<i>Familie Arbeit Mittelstand Münsterland</i> (Family Work <i>Mittelstand</i> Munsterland)
FDP	<i>Freie Demokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> (Free Democratic Party Germany)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
GOs	Government Offices for the English Regions
HerO	Heritage as Opportunity
IMCO	Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection
ITRE	Committee in Industry, Research and Energy
JURI	Committee on Legal Affairs
LEADER	<i>Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale</i> (Links between the rural economy and development actions)
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LGA	Local Government Association
Lib Dem	Liberal Democrats
LMC	Local Management Committee
MBME	<i>Ministerin für Bundesangelegenheiten, Europa und Medien des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen</i> (Minister for Federal Affairs, Europe and Media of the <i>Land</i> North Rhine-Westphalia)
MBO	Merseyside Brussels Office
MBWSV	Ministerium für Bauen, Wohnen, Stadtentwicklung und Verkehr des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalens (Ministry for Building, Housing, Urban Development and Traffic of the <i>Land</i> North Rhine-Westphalia)
MEPs	Members of the European Parliament

MLG	Multilevel governance approach
MWME	<i>Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Mittelstand und Energie des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen</i> (Ministry for Economy, <i>Mittelstand</i> and Energy of the <i>Land</i> North Rhine-Westphalia)
NAT	Commission for Natural Resources
NWøE	North West of England
NRW	North-Rhine Westphalia
NUTS	Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistique
NWBLT	North West Business Leadership Team
NWBO	North West Brussels Office
NWRA	North West Regional Association
NWREP	North West Regional European Partnership
NWRLB	North West Regional Leaders Board
NWUA	North West Universities Association
QUANGO	Quasi-governmental organisation
RDA	Regional Development Agency
REGI	Committee on Regional Development
RLB	Regional Leaders Board
SNA	Subnational authority
SME	Small and medium sized enterprises
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> (Socialdemocratic Party Germany)
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on Functioning of the European Union
TRAN	Committee on Transport and Tourism
UK	United Kingdom
UK	United Kingdom Permanent Representation to the EU
ZENIT	<i>Zentrum für Innovation und Technik in NRW</i> (Centre for Innovation and Technique in NRW)

‘Theory generates pluralism, pluralism produces choices, choice creates alternatives, alternatives formulate debate, debate encourages communication, communication creates awareness, awareness minimizes dogmatism and, in this way, there is a propensity to develop a greater and better understanding of social phenomena.’ (Chrysochoou, 2001: 5)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and objective

This thesis explores a new dynamic and comprehensive perspective for the study of local government that is based on the fusion approach as a theoretical macro-framework through which changes of local government may be explained and linked to the evolution of the EU. The thesis' research question is:

To what extent can the fusion approach explain the role of local government in the European integration process?

By addressing this question, it is potentially possible to advance the well-developed body of fusion literature by explicitly introducing a local government perspective, and thereby contributing to European integration theory. The assessment of the theoretical and empirical relevance of fusion for local-supranational relations translates into the following research objective:

The exploration and development of the fusion approach to the study of local government.

In order to achieve this objective, fusion's efficacy is tested against three hypotheses: 1) that the fusion approach is able to explain the systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level; 2) that local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle to exert joint control over public policies; 3) that the fusion approach is able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration. For the assessment of the three hypotheses, the thesis deduces five empirical indicators from the fusion literature and applies them to local authorities in the North West of England and North Rhine-Westphalia.

The fusion thesis was first introduced by Wolfgang Wessels in 1992 in an article entitled '*Staat und westeuropäische Integration. Die Fusionsthese*' (Wessels, 1992). The fusion thesis was published for an international audience in 1997: 'An Ever Closer Fusion? A Dynamic Macropolitical View on Integration Processes' (Wessels, 1997). Wessels used the thesis to explain the evolution of the European Union (EU) and the integration of

European states under a joint governance framework. Fusion is a theory of or an approach to European integration dealing with the reasons for and the ways in which policy-making competences are transferred from the national to the European level. Fusion goes beyond mere cooperation and a horizontal pooling of sovereignties and involves a merging of public resources and policy instruments from multiple levels of government, whereby accountability and responsibilities for policy outcomes become blurred. Various other works have subsequently been based on the fusion thesis and together they constitute a substantial body of literature that can be called the fusion approach.

The fusion approach has been developed significantly over time and expanded its focus from the national to the regional level of government. Although some twenty years after fusion was first introduced, it has yet to be applied in any systematic way to the role of local government in the European integration process. This is rather odd given that over these fifteen years cities, counties and municipalities have assumed an increasingly essential role in the delivery of EU policies and have become pro-actively engaged in EU affairs.

In the light of this omission in the work that has been undertaken using a fusion approach, this thesis seeks to explore the efficacy of the fusion approach for the study of local government. It also seeks to advance the approach by giving it a local government perspective.

This thesis is set within the framework of the increasing involvement of subnational actors in EU policy processes and the emergence of a European multilevel governance system. European integration has caused emerging patterns of interaction between the local and European level that in turn affected European governance. However, a comprehensive theoretical approach to the study of local government in the context of European integration is still lacking. Among detailed empirical studies on the Europeanisation of local government, hardly any attempts have been made to explain how the local level links into the macro-trajectories of European integration. It is important to fill this gap in integration studies by exploring the 'bigger picture' of local-supranational relations and by engaging with a theoretical framework into which empirical micro-studies can be linked.

This first chapter of the thesis begins by providing a short overview of the emerging patterns in the relations between local and European level of government (see 1.2). It then justifies the selection of the fusion approach for the purpose of this study (see 1.3) and

briefly outlines fusion's main features (see 1.4). This is followed by methodological considerations of how to achieve the study's objective (see 1.5).

1.2 Emerging patterns of interaction between local and European actors

Over the last two decades, subnational mobilisation has emerged as a result of the European integration process and in particular the EU's regional and cohesion policy, which has triggered emerging patterns of interaction between the local and European level. EU regional policy dates back to the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and has main objectives of overcoming disparities across European regions. To give effect to the regional policy, in the 1968 the Directorate-General for Regional Policy was created in the European Commission and in 1975, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was established for the purpose of investing in job creation, competitiveness, economic growth, improved quality of life and sustainable development. In 1986, regional policy was complemented by the EU cohesion policy in the Single European Act. The cohesion policy provides a framework for financing projects and investments with the objectives of strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion across Europe and of developing disadvantaged regions (Article 174 TEU). Today, the main instruments of the regional and cohesion policy are the ERDF, the European Social Fund (ESF)³, which comprise the main European Structural Funds, as well as the Cohesion Fund (European Commission, 2013).

In 1988, the Commission reformed the Structural Funds and introduced the partnership principle to decentralise the delivery of funding programmes⁴. National governments remained in control over the final decisions on the allocation of funds, but they were expected to work in partnerships with local and regional authorities (and other societal actors). The partnership principle provided local actors across Europe with a formal role to build proactive relationships with supranational institutions. Consequently, European

³ For 2000-2006, the Structural Funds were distributed according to three priorities: to promote the development and structural adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind (Objective 1); to support the economic and social conversion of areas experiencing structural difficulties (Objective 2); to support the adaptation and modernisation of education, training and employment policies and systems in regions not eligible under Objective 1 (Objective 3). For 2007-2013, the priority objectives were redefined to: Convergence Objective (former Objective 1); Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective (former Objective 2); and European Territorial Cooperation Objective (former Objective 3).

⁴ According to Council Regulation (EEC) No 2081/93, Article 4.1: 'Community operations shall (...) be established through close consultations between the Commission, the Member State concerned and the competent authorities and bodies - including, within the framework of each Member State's national rules and current practices, the economic and social partner, designated by the Member State at national, regional, local or other level, with all parties acting as partners in pursuit of a common goal. These consultations shall hereinafter be referred to as the "partnership". The partnership shall cover the preparation and financing, as well as the ex ante appraisal, monitoring and ex post evaluation of operations.'

regional and cohesion policy offered a strong incentive for local authorities to turn their attention to Brussels in order to acquire significant resources from the ERDF and the ESF (Bache, 2004: 166 *et seq.*; Bache, 2008: 23; Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997: 1 *et seq.*). The interaction between local and European actors fostered the development of a compound polity that is commonly referred to as multilevel governance (Bache *et al.*, 2011: 125-126).

As cohesion policy and the partnership principle provided local governments with legitimacy and opportunities to engage in European affairs (Conzelmann, 1995: 134-135; John, 2001: 69), local authorities started to participate more within transnational organisations and networks (Marshall, 2005: 669). In particular, EUROCITIES and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) provided local actors with effective platforms to promote their preferences and practices amongst other member states and at the European level (Marshall, 2008: 101, 109).

Though the CEMR was founded as early as 1951⁵, only during the 1990s did it become fully acknowledged by the Commission. As the CEMR brings together municipal associations of all member states, it is the largest and most comprehensive organisation⁶ to forward general local concerns and political preferences within official hearings, committees and expert groups of the Commission and the European Parliament (EP) (Leitermann, 2006: 336; Münch, 2006b: 369; Struve, 2006: 343). EUROCITIES was formally established in 1991 and has become a major agent for cities⁷ (Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008: 177 *et seq.*).

During the 1990s, the movement towards the ‘completion’ of the Single Market created a number of directives and regulations that affected the practice of municipalities and triggered further engagement with EU policies. This movement coincided with the increasing importance of cohesion policy for local government who were involved in the delivery and design of EU-funded programmes (Münch, 2006a: 127; Rechlin, 2004: 16 *et seq.*). More and more local authorities adapted their politico-administrative structures, opened offices in Brussels, participated in networks and developed strategies to promote

⁵ The founding members came from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland.

⁶ Its members are over 50 national associations of towns, municipalities and regions from 40 countries. Together these associations represent some 150,000 local and regional authorities (see CEMR – Introducing CEMR).

⁷ The origin of Eurocities date back to an initiative of sixcities, namely Barcelona, Birmingham, Frankfurt a. M., Lyon, Milan and Rotterdam. EUROCITIES comprises cities with over 250,000 inhabitants and works through six thematic forums and around 50 working groups. For a detailed overview of the CEMR and EUROCITIES see Heinelt und Niederhafner, 2008.

their preferences on the European stage (Fleurke & Willemse, 2006: 85; Marshall, 2005: 669; Martin, 1997: 63; Schultze, 2003: 135; Sturm & Dieringer, 2005: 282).

The horizontal and vertical engagement of local actors was stimulated by the Commission through European policy initiatives. Since 1991, the INTERREG programme has been financed with the Structural Funds to support cross-border (INTERREG A), transnational (INTERREG B) and interregional (INTERREG C) cooperation.⁸ Additionally, action and framework programmes are designed to tackle specific issues, such as the Environment Action Programme, Youth In Action, Europe for Citizens, Lifelong Learning⁹, Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE), Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP), and the Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development. Finally, the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) also financed programmes for rural development, such as the LEADER initiatives.

In addition to policies encouraging the European engagement of local authorities, the Committee of Regions (CoR) was established in 1992 by the Treaty of Maastricht, and provided formal participation rights in EU policy-making to regional and local representatives (Rechlin, 2004: 31; Wollmann & Lund, 1997: 62).

Such was the scale of the developments described that by the end of the 1990s Goldsmith and Klausen (1997: 251) proclaimed a new stage of local-supranational relations, leading to a shift of integration studies away from the focus on supranational and national levels towards local governance.

Throughout the 2000s, a number of initiatives have further illustrated the intention of the Commission, and increasingly also the EP, to intensify cooperation with cities and municipalities. The White Paper on European Governance of 2001 sought to enforce true partnership integrating different levels of government through systematic dialogues with regional and local representatives (Atkinson, 2002: 782 *et seq.*; Karvounis, 2011: 215 *et seq.*; Reilly, 2001: 1). In 2009, the White Paper on Multilevel Governance, which was issued by the CoR to draw attention to local and regional government, stated:

Multilevel governance is not simply a question of translating European or national objectives into local or regional action, but must also be understood as a process for integrating the objectives of local

⁸ INTERREG I (1991-1993), INTERREG II (1994-1999), INTERREG III (2000-2006), INTERREG IV (2007-2013).

⁹ This includes sub-programmes, such as Comenius for Schools; Erasmus for Higher Education; Leonardo da Vinci for vocational education and training; and Grundtvig for adult education.

and regional authorities within the strategies of the European Union. Moreover, multilevel governance should reinforce and shape the responsibilities of local and regional authorities at national level and encourage their participation in the coordination of European policy, in this way helping to design and implement Community policies. (CoR, 2009)

With the Lisbon Agenda, which was created in 2000,¹⁰ and its successor Europe 2020¹¹, which was launched in 2010, the local level also gained in significance within the design and implementation of the EU's strategic plans. As the cohesion policy for 2007-2013 was subordinated to the Lisbon priorities, such as economic competitiveness and growth, and subsequently to the new Europe 2020 strategy (BBSR, 2011), the ideas of partnership and dialogue also entered the EU's economic strategies. As a consequence, the local level has gradually taken a greater role for the delivering of policy goals (Van Bever, Reynaert & Steyvers, 2011b: 236 *et seq.*).

Europe 2020 has attracted a strong interest as a framework to which local authorities relate their own policies. Europe 2020 states: 'All national, regional and local authorities should implement the partnership principle, closely associating parliaments, as well as social partners and representatives of civil society, contributing to the elaboration of national reform programmes as well as to its implementation.' (European Commission, 2010). The Commission emphasised the inclusion of local authorities into the implementation of the strategy:

Dialogue between national, regional and local government will bring the EU's priorities closer to people, strengthening the feeling of ownership needed to get everyone involved in moving Europe towards the 2020 targets. In many EU countries, the regional or local authorities are responsible for policy areas linked to the Europe 2020 strategy such as education and training, entrepreneurship, labour market or infrastructure. (European Commission, 2012b)

In addition to the Lisbon Agenda and Europe 2020, the Lisbon Treaty has indicated clearly local government's increasing role in EU affairs, and manifests the constitutional recognition of a 'Europe of four levels' (Hoffschulte, 2006: 63). For the very first time, the EU refers the right to local self-government within its treaties (Art. 4.2 TEU):

The Union shall respect the equality of Member States before the Treaties as well as their national identities, inherent in their fundamental structures, political and constitutional, inclusive of regional and local self-government.

¹⁰ The European Council set out the strategic goal for the EU 'to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'. (Lisbon European Council Presidency Conclusions, 23 – 24 march 2000)

¹¹ Europe 2020 seeks to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. By 2020, 75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed; 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in research and development; CO2 emissions should be reduced by 20 per cent; share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree; and 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty (European Commission, 2010).

Whilst the principle of subsidiarity used to refer only to the member state level, the Lisbon Treaty also for the first time extends subsidiarity explicitly to the regional and the local level (Art. 5.3 TEU):

Under the principle of subsidiarity, in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence, the Union shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level.

Article 2 of the Protocol on the Application of the Principle of Subsidiarity and Proportionality (of the Lisbon Treaty) requires the Commission to ‘take into account the regional and local dimension’ within the consultations for legislative acts.

Notwithstanding the increasing acknowledgement of local government at the European level, in many cases effective cooperation and the incorporation of local government into EU policy-making still lacks firm commitments (Grimm, 2011: 1528 *et seq.*; Guderjan, 2012). National governments remain in control over local government and over their ability to participate effectively in European affairs (Atkinson, 2002: 785 *et seq.*). And yet, new opportunities offered by the multilevel partnerships have increased the potential for local governments to promote their interests. Local actors bypass the state level to gain autonomous channels of access to EU policy-making (Goldsmith, 2003: 121 *et seq.*; Schultze, 2003: 124). Central states have lost their monopoly over European policy and cannot exclude subnational authorities from EU policy-making anymore (Keating, 1999: 8 *et seq.*; Schultze, 2003: 135). Jeffery (2000: 5) suggests:

A central state monopoly over European policy in a climate of deeper European integration and growing sub-national mobilization is unsustainable and liable to be breached. The maintenance of such a monopoly would presuppose that it is possible to exclude SNAs from European policy-making processes, or at the very least to control their conditions of entry to such processes. This is not the case.

European governance has developed beyond the traditional domination of national governments (Fairbrass & Jordan, 2004). European engagement of local government may be constrained by political or bureaucratic resistance from national executives, but socio-economic pressures and supra- and subnational trends foster stronger multilevel cooperation (Guderjan, 2012: 120). As John (2001: 71) states:

...European-level institutions and policies transfer ideas and working practices in a manner that moves local decision-making away from national and hierarchical forms of politics towards more negotiated and interdependent practices that blur the impact of tiers of government and involve a wide range of interest groups.

Local authorities across Europe have entered the European *Politikverflechtung*, a compound, blurred governance arrangement, and contribute to European integration (Derenbach, 2006: 77-78). They interact with each other through transnational partnerships and feed innovative policies into the EU's agenda (John, 2000: 882; 2001: 72). According to Schultze (2003: 135), 'this participative mode of governance, which has superseded earlier forms of hierarchical and cooperative governance, implies significant changes to the 'logic of influence' in EU decision-making and a triangulation of relationships in the evolving EU polity.' Thus, in contrast to the simple polities of unitary states, the EU represents a compound polity characterised by multiple levels and modes of governance (Bache *et al.*, 2011: 123). The question is to what extent and in which ways are local governments part of the European multilevel compound? As the next section explains, the fusion approach offers a valuable framework for providing some answers to these questions.

1.3 Why fusion?

With regard to the lack of a comprehensive theoretical approach to the study of local government in the context of European integration, this thesis seeks to address the 'bigger picture' of local-supranational relations. The following explains why the fusion approach has been chosen as the theoretical framework that is applied for the study of local government.

Explaining European integration is a major challenge to political research, because European governance differs from the traditional government structures of nation-states.¹² There are hierarchical structures within the EU, but European supranationality is strongly characterised by formal and informal 'networks and interdependencies in an ever-changing environment' (Goldsmith, 2003: 129). This involves the evolution of a system of governance, the Europeanisation of its member states and the development of mutual relations between the governance system and its members. In order to assess the transformation of states and the creation of institutions and loyalties, integration theorising

¹² Theories of European integration stipulate the conditions and mechanisms under which competencies and boundaries shift between levels and agents of governance in the European multilevel system (Schimmelfennig, 2010: 37).

has to combine various theories and approaches and broaden the focus rather than narrowing it down (Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997: 5 *et seq.*).¹³

The fusion approach provides such an ‘agglomeration’ of approaches that does not exclude but shares assumptions and insights of other approaches (Mittag, 2011: 129). At the same time, it offers useful insights and conceptual tools to ‘think bigger’ in the study of European integration (Miles, 2011a: 187-188). The fusion approach, developed mainly by Wolfgang Wessels (1992, 1997, 1998, 2003; Rometsch & Wessels, 1996) and Lee Miles (2005, 2007, 2009), explains the evolution of European governance and provides empirical indicators to assess the corresponding changes within member states. Such a theoretical framework is needed to allow causal and testable explanations of why and how local governments integrate with the EU.

The thesis shows that despite their value insights into integrative processes and structures, neither state-centric and neo-functionalist theories nor the multilevel governance approach (MLG) or Europeanisation concepts are able to provide a comprehensive macro-perspective that combines the trajectories of European integration with the consequential dynamics at the local level of government (see chapter 2).

The problem with state-centric and intergovernmental concepts of integration is that they do not account sufficiently for subnational governments’ role. They address primarily debates about shifts of power amongst the European and the national levels. The study of local government, however, requires focusing on the interplay between actors and institutions from various levels including subnational government (Guderjan, 2012: 108).

MLG offers valuable insights for the objective of this study (see 2.6.2), as it suggests that interconnected political arenas have evolved, and power and competencies have spread across multiple centres of governance (Hooghe & Marks; 1996; 2001; 2003; 2004; 2010). MLG type I focuses on the shift of jurisdictions and powers amongst a few levels of government with a clearly defined, stable and non-overlapping allocation of authority. This understanding of multilevel governance is too narrow to describe the complexity of multilevel governance, as the EU has developed as a ‘complex set of overlapping and

¹³ Broadly speaking the theories of nation and state building use structural explanatory logic/dynamic, in that state structures are frameworks within which actors may take initiatives. Integration theory uses a functional, deterministic and institutional logic/dynamic: action creates more activity, and experience spreads to other areas and organisations as actors develop their own interests and strategies. Theories of organisational change, networks and learning processes combine institutional and individual logics/dynamics. (Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997: 11)

nested systems of governance involving European, national, regional and local actors, and networks' (Loughlin, 2001: 20).

MLG type II suggests that decision-making authority is dispersed across numerous levels and that jurisdictions are task-specific and intersecting within flexible governance arrangements (Hooghe & Marks, 2004: 17 *et seq.*; 2010: 18 *et seq.*). This assumption of a polycentric mode of governance under which decisions are made collectively across a larger number of collaborating levels, groups and actors, is close to the idea of a fusing Europe in which the responsibility for policy outcomes are blurred rather than clearly distributed.

In contrast to the fusion approach, MLG has not developed into a full-fledged theory of European integration and thus does not explain the casual links between the evolution of European governance and responses of subnational governments. MLG was not designed to address some of the 'bigger' themes of integration, such as its origins and driving forces, the multi-sectoral nature of EU-policies and the constitutional and normative settings determining multi-level governance (Fairbrass & Jordan, 2004: 152; Jordan, 2001: 195 *et seq.*). Instead of dismissing MLG, Lindh *et al.* (2009: 37) argued that MLG is inherent in the fusion approach. Like MLG, fusion accounts for the shift of decision-making capacities from discrete territorial levels towards compound, overlapping networks (Bache, 2008: 28; George, 2004: 115), and assumes horizontal and vertical interaction amongst actors and institutions from multiple levels. The fusion approach complements the structural logic of MLG by a deterministic, functional logic of European integration (Wessels, 1992: 38 *et seq.*). Fusion is considered to provide a more adequate account for linking the EU's macro-trajectories to corresponding changes at the local level. As chapter 3 demonstrates, fusion also offers a set of empirical indicators for the study of local government.

Europeanisation concepts play an important role for local government in the context of European governance. However, they do not constitute explanatory theories of integration (Olsen, 2002: 921 *et seq.*). Instead, Europeanisation is the result of integration and addresses the corresponding adaptation of activities and institutions within member states (Börzel & Risse, 2000: 1; Vink & Graziano, 2007: 3 *et seq.*). Radaelli (2003: 3) notes:

Europeanization would not exist without European integration. But the latter concept belongs to the ontological stage of research, that is, the understanding of a process in which countries pool sovereignty, whereas the former is post-ontological, being concerned with what happens once EU-institutions are in place and produce their effects.

The fusion approach provides an explanatory framework that can embed Europeanisation processes at the local level within the macro-context of European integration. Fusion does not only explain why Europeanisation takes place within member states (Miles, 2011a: 189), it also defines Europeanisation explicitly as a shift of actors' attention and action towards the EU (the politics of Europeanisation). This shift occurs as the corresponding institutional and procedural adaptation processes (the polity of Europeanisation), and as a socialisation of actors' attitudes (Lindh *et al.*; 2009: 38 *et seq.*).

The fusion approach goes beyond a description of the EU's multilevel realities and Europeanisation processes at the local level by providing explanations for the evolution and changes of the EU's governance system. As member states follow diverging interests, European integration is characterised by asymmetrical, differentiated processes. This is expected to be even more the case for the large number of cities, counties and municipalities across Europe. 'Grand' theories of integration, such as federalism and neo-functionalism, struggle to explain the institutional asymmetry and fragmentation of differentiated integration. Governance related approaches, such as MLG, policy networks and Europeanisation, account for asymmetric patterns of the European polity but they are not specific enough to comprehensively explain the reasons and nature of differentiated integration (Dyson & Sepos, 2010: 17-19).

Fusion accommodates the idea of a 'differentiated Europe' that is the result of a functional 'fusion' of the making and delivery of public policies within specific policy areas. Thereby, European governance develops through a legal constitution (legal treaty-making), as well as through mutually reinforcing learning (the so-called living constitutions) (Miles, 2011b: 78). As Miles (2011a: 197) suggests:

Yet, a focus on a living constitution, prompted by fusion processes, not only help to further refine a quasi-constitution of sorts, it also provides the means with which differentiated approaches and blurred symmetries are tested out in practice and come to be accepted by political elites in the EU. Fusion approaches are not incompatible with notions of differentiated integration; rather fusion approaches can provide one of the means to understand, and deliver differentiated, as well as uniform, arrangements. Of course, there may be some that argue that this may be a source of weakness since fusion approaches incorporate an underlying conceptual flexibility that can accommodate ideas of differentiation; however, for this author, any conceptual approach that seeks to conceptualise the evolution of the EU must be able to capture its organic complexity. In this respect, fusion approaches have much to offer.

The fusion approach offers a dynamic analysis of European integration and governance, as well as of changes within member states, and has therefore been chosen to inform the study's theoretical background.

1.4 What is fusion?

The research objective is the exploration and development of the fusion approach to the study of local government. This section provides a short overview of the fusion approach to gain a better picture of the thesis' objective. According to Miles (2009):

If existing EU scholarship equated with 'thinking bigger' is surveyed, then one body of work that may offer food for further thought is that of fusion; an approach (or perhaps more accurately a set of approaches) that offers numerous conceptual tools to understand both trajectories of European integration and the perspective and adaptation of participating political elites. Collectively, these approaches produce an understanding of the EU as a system of governance as a 'fusing Europe' that may not only provide conceptual tools to explain future EU evolution.

The fusion approach is the attempt to explain European integration in a delimited area over a certain period of time. Consequently, Wessels (1992, 1997) developed the fusion thesis as a comprehensive and dynamic middle range theory that includes analytical indicators to assess the evolution of European governance and the corresponding Europeanisation of member states. Rather than describing the European system of governance, fusion explains changes in the course of European integration (Diedrichs *et al.*, 2011: 11).

Fusion is not necessarily a revolutionary new approach to European integration, but is distinct from other integration theories in its account for a 'fusion' of resources and decision-making capacities amongst levels of government and administrations. As the European polity grows and differentiates its procedures and mechanisms to include government and non-governmental actors from all member states, accountability and responsibilities for policy outcomes become blurred. Under a synthesis of intergovernmental and supranational integration, member states do not dissolve into one European state but merge their policy instruments, powers and competences under a shared system of governance (Schneider, 2011a: 24 *et seq.*; Wessels, 1997: 274; 2000: 123).

At the heart of the fusion approach lies the assumption that under the growing European and global economic interdependences, the (West) European nation state is no longer able to deliver the expected welfare to its citizens on its own. In order to fulfil these welfare needs, national governments pool their sovereignty in a supranational arena and merge their resources in common and shared institutions with complex procedures. The evolution of a supranational governance system represents an incremental step towards the transformation of nation states.

European integration does not lead to a clearly defined *finalité politique*, but is an open-ended process driven by political elites that protect their national sovereignty, whilst acknowledging the need for supranational solutions in order to deliver economic welfare and other desirable policy outcomes. As a consequence, the EU develops as a ‘third way’ type of governance between mere intergovernmental cooperation, which would be insufficient, and a European federal state that would threaten national sovereignty.

Two trends are important to the logic of the Union’s evolution since the 1990s. First, European integration leads to an incremental socialisation of the involved political elites, which in turn push for further integration. Secondly, political actors develop a preference for differentiated integration varying amongst different policy fields and polity arrangements. The result is a fusion of competences amongst subnational, national and supranational levels, wherein accountabilities for policy outcomes become blurred (Wessels, 1992; 1997; Miles, 2007: 4 *et seq.*).

Fusion emphasises systemic linkages of competences and responsibilities amongst subnational, national and supranational actors and institutions (Miles, 2005: 46; 2011a: 194-195). The account for overlapping patterns of interaction amongst various levels within Europe’s blurred multilevel compound is inherent to fusion. Although the fusion thesis set out to explain developments at the national level of government, it offers significant insights into integrative processes beyond national politics. The fusion approach has, for example, been applied for the study of European engagement within Nordic regions (Lindh *et al.*, 2009). Chapter 2 discusses relevant bodies of the fusion literature in depth and chapter 3 operationalises them for the study of local government.

1.5 How to apply and explore fusion

1.5.1 Three hypotheses

This thesis sets out to explore the efficacy of the fusion approach to the study of local government. To achieve this objective, three testable hypotheses (see 3.3) are used to assess fusion’s efficacy. The hypotheses are:

1. *That the fusion approach is able to explain the systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level.*

There is evidence that there is a growing and broadening impact of EU policies on local authorities, leading to a Europeanisation of local government and subsequently to adaptation processes and responsive mobilisation towards Brussels (see Miles, 2011a: 194-195; Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 351; Wessels, Maurer & Mittag, 2003: 14).

2. *That local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle to exert joint control over public policies.*

Institutions and procedures at different levels are expected to grow and diversify (see Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 328 *et seq.*). This hypothesis tests whether local actors are included in the design and making of EU policy outcomes via formal channels (adaptation indicator) and informal interaction with EU institutions (action indicator).

3. *That the fusion approach is able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration.*

According to the fusion approach, local actors show preferences for: sectoral integration according to beneficial policy outcomes (*performance fusion*); third way integration between intergovernmental cooperation and supranationalism (*political fusion*); and engaging with the EU's inclusive politico-administrative arrangements (*compound fusion*) (see Miles, 2007: 28 *et seq.*).

Whilst not denying the value of measurable research outcomes, this thesis is driven by 'theory-exploration', rather than by a positivistic approach¹⁴. The author shares Chrysochoou's (2001: 7) view that 'as problems of recognition, classification and

¹⁴ '...integration theorists, instead of exhausting their analytical talent applying the logic of 'strict' science in the ever-changing social and political environment of the European Union (EU), should strive for a more profound understanding of the existing and emerging constitutive public spheres and political spaces of the larger entity. This is by no means a negation of disciplined social inquiry or a more or less implicit attack on empirically grounded social research. It is merely to make the point that 'the value of theory is not determined by any rigid criteria', and that narrow training, rationalist rule application and the employment of an overly 'scientific' procedure that rests on the illusion of ethical neutrality in social inquiry are not the most appropriate methodological blueprints of enriching our understanding of European integration as an essentially political phenomenon.' (Chrysochoou, 2001: 8)

definition have not been solved in the social sciences, its theory is not defined by its ability to ‘prove’, but rather to ‘illustrate’.’ Although chapter 7 examines fusion’s efficacy against the three hypotheses, the author is aware that exploring theoretical capacities leaves room for different interpretations, depending on theoretical points of view.

The fusion approach has been designed to explain integrationist developments at the European, national and regional levels. This thesis suggests and seeks to demonstrate that the approach can be both utilised and advanced by giving it a local government perspective. Of course, local actors exercise a more limited role in the EU political system than do EU and national level political actors, but nonetheless cooperative patterns between the local and European levels have emerged that meet the idea of a fusing multilevel compound.

1.5.2 Five indicators

In order to apply the fusion approach for the study of local government and to test the three hypotheses, five empirical indicators are developed in chapter 3 (see 3.2). What can be called the five ‘As’ are derived from the fusion literature but are assembled and modified for the specific purpose of this study. The indicators combine various dynamics derived from relevant bodies of the fusion approach and cover major integrative aspects in politics, polity and policies¹⁵:

1. The *absorption* of European legislation and policy by local government.
2. The Europeanisation of local actors’ *attention* towards supranational policies and legislation.
3. Institutional and procedural *adaptation* processes at all relevant levels of government.
4. Vertical and horizontal, as well as direct and indirect *action* of municipal authorities in relation to EU policies.
5. Local actors’ *attitudes* towards European policies and governance.

¹⁵ Politics involves the attitudes and preferences of local policy-makers, and the resulting engagement with European governance; polity focuses on institutions and formalised procedures; and policies comprise implementation and impact of EU initiatives on local government (see Ladrech, 2010). Thus, politics relates to the process in which power is exercised and policies are created (Versluis, van Keulen & Stephenson, 2011: 13).

The first two indicators cover a top-down perspective, aiming to assess to what extent and in what fields of municipal tasks EU policies are affecting local authorities (*absorption*), and consequently how far this leads to an awareness of the EU as an important point of reference for the local practice (*attention*).

In order to assess in how far competences between the local and European levels have fused, the third indicator focuses on the establishment of formal procedures within government structures to involve local actors in EU policy-making. Institutional *adaptation* is potentially subject to the European, national, regional and local levels.

Notwithstanding the relevance of formalised procedures, the fourth indicator examines how such channels are part of bottom-up engagement of local government. As such it explores the *action* of local actors across a wide range of policy fields in which local government attempts and effectively exerts influence over policy outcomes. Such activities include vertical strategies, either directly addressing European institutions or indirectly acting through regional and national government, as well as horizontal cooperation with other municipalities in order to exchange innovative practice or political positions, which subsequently feed into EU policies.

The fifth indicator investigates whether local policy-makers and officers have developed a preference for integrating with Europe. Fusion provides a set of assumption behind actor's incentives to engage in EU policy-making. By looking at the *attitudes* of local actors, this study seeks to explain how and why local government engages pro-actively within European politics and policies.

1.5.3 Two regions and fourteen municipalities

The challenges of European integration have different logics for local authorities within different member states. For example, the extent to which local governments can influence and promote policies depends significantly on their national backgrounds (De Rooij, 2002: 449). The constitutional position of municipalities, their degree of autonomy or the centralisation of competences all have significant implications on the ability of local government to fuse with the EU. The comparison of more than one case provides an empirical basis examining and developing the explanatory capacity of a political theory (Burnham *et al.*, 2008: 70; Hopkin; 2010: 285-286).

In order to examine the value of the fusion approach, this study is designed to compare local government within England and Germany. More specifically, the three hypotheses are examined against local government in two regions of different member states: the North West of England (NWoE) and North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW).

The empirical application of the fusion approach is based on a ‘most-similar’ research design (see 3.4). The independent variable is the politico-administrative system of the two regions being studied. The extent to which the application of the fusion approach meets the hypotheses is the dependent variable. It is expected that different governmental arrangements determine fusion dynamics of local government in both cases. In a most-similar research design the intervening variables are chosen to be similar across the compared cases in order to control their impact and isolate the effect of the independent variable. The intervening variables of this study are the socio-economic profiles of the investigated regions and local authorities.

With regard to the independent variable, England and Germany are distinct in their regional structures, degree of centralisation and the autonomy of local government. English regions and local authorities are strongly controlled by the central UK government. For coordinating policies and formulating preferences towards the EU, central government remains the major stakeholder. In contrast to the English model, in Germany the principle of local autonomy is constitutionally protected (Bock, 2004: 535). Germany is characterised by a clear federal structure¹⁶ with constitutionally guaranteed powers and competences at the level of the *Länder* which are not only deeply involved in national decision-making but also strongly engaged on the European stage (Ladrech, 2010: 101 *et seq.*).

In order to have intervening variables with similar characteristics and to narrow down the focus of the study, local authorities with similar socio-economic profiles have been chosen in order to compare how the politico-administrative structures and regional governance arrangements affect fusion dynamics at the local level. So, both the NWoE (see 4.6.1) and NRW (see 4.6.2) are characterised by declining industries and structural change, and consequently a tradition of European engagement with the EU’s structural policy.

¹⁶ Also often referred to as cooperative federalism.

Both regions include major cities as well as rural counties. The investigated authorities in the NWoE are Cumbria, Halton, Lancaster, Manchester and Stockport, focusing particularly on Liverpool City and Cheshire West and Chester County (CWAC) (see 4.7.1). In NRW, the selected localities are Borken, Cologne, Dortmund, Hagen and Iserlohn, with special emphasis on the City of Essen and the County of Steinfurt. Liverpool and Essen, as well as CWAC and Steinfurt show similar characteristics in terms of size and socio-economic structures (see 4.7.2).

As this study seeks to provide an understanding of fusion processes, qualitative interviewing is the main source used as a means of investigating the empirical indicators and of testing the three research hypotheses (see Vromen, 2010: 255). Elite and semi-structured interviews offer detailed insights into policy processes and organisational procedures. The main target group for the interviews are local officers responsible for European issues. In addition to European policy and funding officers in all fourteen investigated authorities, local policy-makers, Members of the European Parliament, Committee of the Regions members, leading officers at the regional level and representatives from municipal umbrella associations were also interviewed. Primary and secondary literature and online research are useful to triangulate the findings of the interviews (see Burnham *et al.*, 2008: 232), and to provide background information about the investigated cases and European policy and polity processes (see 3.3.3).

1.6 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. After this introduction to the thesis, chapter 2 introduces relevant aspects of the fusion literature – the macro-fusion thesis, institutional fusion, the micro-fusion perspective and the micro-fusion framework – and discusses them in relation to local government, multilevel governance and Europeanisation concepts.

Chapter 3 outlines the study's methodology and generates the five empirical indicators to apply the fusion approach for the study of local government. It further explains how the fusion approach is tested against the research hypotheses, two cases studies and the empirical data.

In chapter 4, the case studies are introduced including the status and structures of local government in England and Germany, their general regional context, the expected fusion

dynamics, the actual regions of the NWoE and NRW, as well as the investigated local authorities.

The empirical chapters 5 and 6 apply the five indicators and analyse the fusion dynamics in the two regions before chapter 7 then compares the findings of chapters 5 and 6, draws conclusions about the efficacy of the fusion approach based on the three hypotheses, and offers suggestions how to advance the fusion literature by a local government perspective. The thesis ends with the conclusive chapter 8 that summarises the previous chapters and provides prospects for a future research agenda and potential practical implications of this thesis' findings.

CHAPTER 2: THE FUSION APPROACH

2.1 Introduction to the fusion approach

This thesis seeks to assess to what extent the fusion approach can explain the role of local government in the European integration process. For this purpose, this chapter provides a detailed outline of the relevant bodies of the fusion literature that are applied to the study of local government.

The fusion approach made its first appearance in an article entitled *Staat und (westeuropäische) Integration. Die Fusionsthese* by Wolfgang Wessels in 1992. The article addresses the need for a dynamic middle-range theory to explain the developments of the European Community (EC) and the West European states after World War 2. Since the publication of this article, the fusion approach has undergone considerable conceptual developments in response to the evolution of the EU (Diedrichs *et al.*, 2011: 11).

The fusion approach provides a dynamic perspective on European integration, which is inherent in the word ‘fusion’ referring to progress, regression or (de)construction (Mittag, 2011: 128). Rather than characterising the nature of the European system of governance, fusion comprises dynamics of change in the course of European integration (Diedrichs *et al.*, 2011: 11). Fusion is not a revolutionary new idea and the various insights that it presents have been observed previously. Based on a continuing empirical analysis, however, it offers not only accentuations but also significant explanations beyond previous theories¹⁷ (Schneider, 2011a: 28, 72). In the light of an expanding European policy and polity, fusion has the analytical and empirical capacities to address the ‘bigger picture’ of European integration (Miles, 2011a: 187). It accommodates the differentiated integration of the EU through a legal communitarisation, as well as integration through mutually reinforcing learning processes and interaction (the so-called ‘living constitution’) (Miles, 2011b: 78).

Four bodies of the fusion literature have been chosen as the most developed concepts to explain the EU’s evolution and responsive dynamics of the member states and to offer analytical tools for the study of local government:

¹⁷ For a detailed discussion about the theoretical capacities of the fusion thesis, see Schneider, 2011a.

1. In the *macro-fusion thesis* or just fusion thesis, Wessels developed a middle-range approach to study European integration. He has commented that: ‘the focus of EU studies should be the evolving political system, its institutional structures and procedures, as well as the involved informal policy networks within which binding decisions are prepared, made, implemented and controlled.’ (1997: 270)
2. *Institutional fusion* is used to explain how European institutions and the member states react, interact and adapt to the challenges of the new EU polity (Rometsch & Wessels, 1996; Wessels, Maurer & Mittag, 2003).
3. The *micro-fusion perspective* analyses the reactions, adaptations and preferences of national elites towards integration (Miles, 2005).
4. The *micro-fusion framework* links the concepts of institutional fusion and the micro-fusion perspective to provide tools for empirical studies at member state level. It introduces five operational indicators: 1) the Europeanisation of attention and actions of policy-makers, 2) institutional adaptation of national procedures and mechanisms, 3) an output-related attitude of actors towards integration, 4) actors’ preference for the evolution of the EU, 5) actors’ preference for the EU’s compound policy (Miles, 2007).

The chapter argues that MLG and Europeanisation are complementary concepts to the fusion approach with a strong relevance for the study of local government. It discusses the synergies between MLG and Europeanisation concepts and fusion, as well as why fusion is considered to be a particularly useful approach for the study of local government and European integration.

2.2 The macro-fusion thesis

2.2.1 Overview

The macro-fusion thesis seeks to explain macro-political trends of European integration and the evolution of the West European state. It stems from Wessels’ attempt to discover a ‘global’ approach that links the findings of individual research areas, instead of having

isolated, partial concepts about single institutions, policy fields or actors. The macro-fusion thesis provides the basis for the subsequent fusion approaches and was first introduced in German in 1992 (Wessels, 1992). It gained international attention in 1997 when it was given a wider audience via the *Journal of Common Market Studies* (Wessels, 1997).

As integration theory links the whole or the totality to its parts or substructures (Chrysochoou, 2001: 11), the fusion thesis explains processes in inner- and intra-state relations in the context of a supranational polity. This focus centres on the dynamic relationship between European integration and the transformation of the (West) European nation state rather than characterising the system of European governance (Diedrichs *et al.*, 2011: 11-12; Schneider, 2011a: 28-29). The fusion approach highlights the interwoven relations between internal and external politics (Mittag, 2011: 130).

Fusion belongs to the body of integration theories¹⁸, as it seeks to explain why and how policies are transferred from the national to the European level and why European rules and competences are expanding. Whilst intergovernmental approaches assume that integration is controlled by national governments, supranationalists suggest that the supranational polity has escaped national control and has become a driver of integration transforming the member state itself (Schimmelfenning, 2010: 37-38). The fusion approach acknowledges the synthesis of intergovernmental and supranational logics. States do not become one entity but fuse their policy instruments, powers and competences under a shared system of governance which provides them with control over decisions (Schneider, 2011a: 24 *et seq.*).

The term fusion refers to phenomena beyond mere cooperation and a horizontal pooling of sovereignties and describes patterns of growth and differentiation. Fusion is a merging of public resources and decision-making capacities from several levels of government and administrations, whereby accountability and responsibilities for policy outcomes become blurred. As multiple levels are merging together, this process is crisis-proof and can hardly

¹⁸ Whilst scholars consider fusion to be an approach rather than a fully-fledged theory, intergovernmentalism, federalism and neo-functionalism are commonly referred to as integration theories. However, intergovernmentalism, federalism and neo-functionalism neither constitute classical theories but are informed by strategic objectives on integration.

The fusion approach meets the requirements of a theory as it delivers causal explanation; its logic has been validated over time; and it provides projections for the future to inform political decisions (Schneider, 2011a: 44-48).

Regarding the current Euro-crisis, fusion predicts a high risk to reverse integration, as well as the tension between national and supranational exits of the crisis.

As this thesis does not further engage with the discussion about fusion's efficacy as a full-fledged theory, the author refers to the 'softer' notion of fusion as a theoretical approach.

be reversed under ‘normal’ circumstance (Schneider, 2011a: 26 *et seq.*; Wessels, 1997: 274; 2000: 123). As the EU and its member states become increasingly interdependent without establishing clear divisions of competences, the European multilevel compound compares to the idea of an ‘interlocking’ or ‘messy’ federalism’, or a *Politikverflechtung* (Chrysochoou, 2001: 19).

The macro-fusion thesis aimed to offer a framework into which micro-studies can be integrated by drawing conclusions from individual case studies or institutional analysis. The innovation of an open-ended integration process, like the evolution of the EU, had been underestimated in the analysis of traditional state-related concepts (Wessels, 1997: 270), and the few dynamic theories on European integration had failed to interpret the change of the context in which states act.

Neo-functionalism had highlighted the significance of ‘spill-over’ effects for the evolution of the European governance system, but it underestimated the role of inner- and inter-state conditions that drive integration. Intergovernmentalism struggled to explain why member states chose common supranational institutions to solve their problems. Due to the lack of theories on inner- and intra-state developments, Wessels combined the analysis of transformation of nation states with studies on European integration (Wessels, 1992: 38-41). Unlike federalism and neo-functionalism (Dyson & Sepos, 2010: 17), the fusion approach accounts for asymmetrical patterns of differentiated integration. Fusion’s synthesis of existing approaches is not a ‘sell-out’ but a ‘third way’ synthesis of added complexity and value (Schneider, 2011a: 63):

Unlike the classical integration theories, its assumptions cannot be reduced to a limited number of variables. Instead, it is based on a wide range of estimations and argues more subtly than many other theories (Mittag, 2011: 129)

The macro-fusion thesis acknowledges three major dynamics marking the integration process: first, the extension and widening scope of European governance towards a state-like agenda; secondly, a transfer of competences from states to European institutions providing them with the right to formulate binding policies; thirdly, the expansion and differentiation of supranational institutions and procedures, accompanied by a multi-faceted incorporation of national governments and administrations (Wessels, 1992: 36 *et seq.*). The next section outlines three macro-political trends that are closely linked to these three dynamics.

2.2.2 Macro-political trends

According to the fusion thesis (Wessels, 1997: 285), three macro-political trends – fusion I, II and III – explain European integration and the transformation of the west European state. As the EU evolves and transforms the European nation state, and with it local authorities, the following trends provide the overall context in which integration takes place.

Fusion I: Dilemma of the welfare state: the erosion of the virtuous circle

The fusion thesis does not assume that the EU develops towards an ‘optimal’ kind of a European state form. European integration is the result of historic events, coincidences and even political resistance, since national governments are not always committing voluntarily to the evolution of European governance¹⁹.

After the Second World War, west European parliamentary democracies increasingly became responsible for the material wellbeing of their citizens and of public services. Hence, the ability to provide a high level of welfare became the source of states’ legitimacy and political stability. States need a high economic performance and growth, which their governments and administrations cannot generate on their own. As a result, states opened up their economies and became dependent on regional and global interdependences and decisions. At the same time, the effectiveness of national economic and political instruments reduced, which in turn led to an erosion of the powers of parliamentary democracies.

Whilst the European welfare states have increasingly been becoming responsible for allocation (regulatory), distributional (welfare) and stabilisation (macro-economic) policies, their ability to use effective instruments has diminished because the national economies adapt to and depend a global context. This process has spilled over to further core areas of national sovereignty, such as external and internal security policy. The only

¹⁹ Fusion is regarded as an elite-driven process and its legitimacy is primarily based on functional outputs, but also on democratic elections within member states (Wessels, 2000: 135). The Union’s legitimacy is derived from its ability to provide economic growth and welfare and ‘real’ representation of citizens through the EP. Participation of a broad variety of representatives from different levels and functional groups provide an additional source of legitimacy (Wessels, 1997: 291 *et seq.*). For a detailed discussion of the legitimacy of European integration in the context of fusion, see Schneider, 2011b.

way to regain sovereignty on developments outside of the governmental realm of control is by establishing joint European institutions with adequate problem-solving instruments.

Paradoxically, the desire to regain sovereignty has led to a loss of sovereignty to a supranational arena, which causes *de facto* erosion, as well as *de jure* erosion. The ‘virtuous circle’ - the mutual reinforcement of economic growth, the evolution of the welfare and service state and political stability - was broken and turned into a ‘vicious circle’. States promote their own erosion in order to deliver the expected performance (Schneider, 2011a: 30-31; Wessels, 1992: 41-43; 1997: 273, 285 *et seq.*; 2000: 124-126).

Fusion II: Multilevel dilemma - ‘third way’ exit between intergovernmental cooperation and a federal solution

The dilemma for European welfare states is not a particularly new insight. However, the fusion thesis emphasises a second dilemma causing the evolution of common supranational institutions and procedures. Two major exit strategies out of the vicious circle are competing – the intergovernmental and the federal solution.

Because intergovernmental cooperation would not create an effective means to provide long-term economic stability, national governments have subscribed to a ‘fused federal state’. Without the sanction and control mechanisms of the latter, it would not be known if states were implementing and following common policies adequately²⁰. Even the most intensive intergovernmental cooperation would not be able to overcome the fear of getting outsmarted and misled by partners. The joint use of political means is a rational choice of governments, by which efficient decision-making processes and effective applications of means justify the loss of sovereignty:

In search of efficient and effective institutions and procedures for the use of important public instruments on the European level, states thus get stuck between a *de facto* erosion (intergovernmental exit from the multilevel dilemma) and a constitutional erosion (federal exit...) (Wessels, 1997: 287)

Despite the need for effective policy-making, as expected by traditional federalists, national policy-makers would not go as far as to transfer all their autonomy. National elites do not seek to replace their nation states by a federal one, because they think of the nation state as being obsolete. Instead of giving up their nation states, they relocate state activities to an inter-state arena out of self-interest to regain sovereignty over the welfare of their

²⁰ See also prisoner’s dilemma and free-rider problem.

citizens. Even though national governments may not necessarily be in control or aware of it, national governments seek to stay the ‘masters of the treaties’ and to keep a high degree of sovereignty by continually participating in supranational policy-making. This reaction is also referred to as ‘sovereignty reflex’ (Schneider, 2011a: 30; Wessels, 1992: 43-45; Wessels, 2000: 128).

The result of this dilemma is a preference for a third-way integration with strong supranational institutions and procedures to pursue national policy goals through collective modes of governance and joint problem-solving within a larger management system (Chrysochoou, 2001: 8; Wessels, 1997: 187). As Wessels (1997: 273) put it: ‘we can witness long-term trends of considerable structural growth and differentiation, which are sometimes overshadowed by cyclical ups and downs. The major feature of this process is a ‘fusion’ of public instruments from several state levels linked with the respective Europeanization of national actors and institutions.’

Fusion III: Functional spill-over

The last macro-political trend draws on insights from works on ‘co-operative federalism’ and the ‘*Politikverflechtungsfalle*’ by Scharpf (1985) by focusing on unexpected consequences of European integration. For the purpose of compensating the *de facto* and *de jure* loss of sovereignty, national governments drive the expansion of procedures in order to participate in and to shape EU decision-making. In this way national actors are not ruled out, but become intensively (and differentiated) involved in supranational processes - for example, formally in the Commission’s ‘comitology’, as well as through informal channels and contacts²¹.

There are two elementary forms of decision-making through which each state can find its essential interests represented: quasi-constitutional decisions made unanimously via package deals, and consensus building under the pressure of potential majority votes (Wessels, 1992: 45-47; 2000: 129-130). Balancing costs and benefits according to individual national interests²² reinforces functional spill-over and enlarges the scope of common activities to further policy fields (Wessels, 1997: 288).

²¹ Intermediary groups constitute further players who proactively promote their preferences through various channels.

²² Interests are not identical for each member state, but differ in their prioritisation dependent on the policy area.

The evolution of joint committees indicates how national governments and administrations, as well as other public and private actors, are merging public resources within a growing number of policy fields. Comitology committees have become the main driving force for the fusion of public instruments, and the Commission's joint management (or partnership approach) now includes not only national, but also regional and local levels of government (Wessels, 1998: 216 *et seq.*).

The shape of European governance is the result of continual tensions between effectiveness and efficiency and the claim for national participation and influence²³. There is a constant need for institutional reform leading to more complex packages. Instead of a 'zero sum game', as assumed by realism for the international system, a global balance is achieved representing a 'positive sum game'.

The macro-fusion thesis does not assume that institutional reforms are part of an irreversible development towards a European federal state. Due to the preference for efficient common problem-solving strategies coupled with the desire for a 'fair' balance of interests, the Community is not able to guarantee optimal solutions, but is under constant pressure to adapt and reform its capacities (Wessels, 1992: 47-48). A functional spill-over causes the expansion of the EU's policy scope from 'low politics' towards issues of 'vital interests'²⁴ (Wessels, 2000: 132).

2.2.3 Macro-Fusion indicators

After outlining the macro-political trends (fusion I, II and III) behind the evolution of the EU, it is important to focus on the empirical evidence with which Wessels underpinned his assumptions of a fusing Europe. This section of the chapter looks at the five indicators Wessels introduced in the macro-fusion thesis in order to detect and confirm essential trends of European integration: 1) the growth of binding outputs; 2) the broadening scope of public policies; 3) the transfer of competences; 4) institutional and procedural differentiation; 5) the involvement of intermediary groups.

²³ The current Euro-crisis and the corresponding initiatives for new procedures and polity provide a good example herefore.

²⁴ For example, external and security policies, environmental issues, monetary and financial policies.

According to their relevance for the research of local government, these indicators inform this study's own empirical tools. It is possible thus to link the micro-trends at the local level to the macro-trajectories of European integration.

1. The growth of binding outputs

The EU's quasi-legislative and binding output is an essential feature of European integration and is growing considerably over time. The Council, the Commission and increasingly the EP, are intensively preparing, taking, implementing and controlling binding decisions on a broadening scale of public policies that comes close to or even exceeds the legislative activities of many member states.²⁵

The Union's output includes non-binding 'soft' laws, such as action programmes (see 1.2), particularly in relation to economic and social policy (former pillar one) but also in the fields of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (former pillar two) and the Area of Freedom Justice and Peace²⁶ (former pillar three). Policies in areas which are beyond the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the EU can still have a relevant impact.

Local authorities in most member states are responsible for the implementation of much EU legislation. The binding policies that affect local governments would be expected to indicate a growing role of local authorities within the integration process. Also, some policy initiatives, including regional and cohesion policy, potentially lead to an increasing involvement of the local level (see Wessels, 1997: 277 *et seq.*).

2. The broadening scope of public policies

Not only the number of binding decisions, but also the policy areas in which outputs are produced, have grown considerably over time. Since Maastricht the scope of policy areas that are within the competences of the Union has moved beyond the traditional economic provisions of the first pillar – for example, environmental policy and consumer protection – and comprises parts of the core areas of national sovereignty, such as citizenship, monetary autonomy, external defence and internal order²⁷ (Wessels, 1997: 278).

²⁵ Additionally, the EU's budgetary means have increased over time.

²⁶ Area of Freedom Justice and Peace used to be Justice and Home Affairs before the Lisbon Treaty.

²⁷ In contrast to other international organisations, the EU agenda involves a high political level – the heads of governments through the European Council, and (except for the ministers of defence), each important minister within the increasing number of formations of the Council.

Like the growth of binding outputs that affect the local level, the increasing scope of policy areas relevant for local governments represents a valuable indicator for the state of local-supranational relations.

3. The transfer of competences

The transfer of competences from the national to the European level has been an essential dynamic in the evolution of the EU. Since the 1970s, this has continuously happened through treaty reforms and legal decisions of the Court of Justice. Because integration is driven by package deals, competences have not been clearly divided between the national and the supranational level but rather have been located at several levels in a messy, ambiguous way.

Although the Maastricht Treaty introduced provisions to limit the transfer of competences, such as the principle of subsidiarity, the EU's sphere of influence is much broader than provided for in the treaties. Member states have been affected in some of their core areas of sovereignty with and without a *de jure* transfer of competences (Wessels, 1997: 279).

In the Lisbon Treaty, the member states sought to establish a clearer division between national and supranational competences (see Articles 2-6 TFEU). Even though local representatives have hardly any influence on the transfer of competences, significant decisions about their practice are made at the European level. Article 5 (TEU) of the Lisbon Treaty expands the application of the principle of subsidiarity to the regional and local level and provides local government with the potential to prevent interference in their core competences in the Court of Justice. According to the macro-fusion thesis, further transfers of control over public policies from the local to the European level can be expected.

4. Institutional and procedural differentiation

European integration is characterised by the evolution of supranational institutions and the growing differentiation of decision-making procedures. As national policy-makers have turned their attention towards Brussels and sought access to EU decision-making, new formal arrangements have been introduced. It is in the mutual interest of both Commission and national governments to interlock relevant actors for the purpose of providing a calculable management. So, they can prepare, make, implement and control decisions

together. National actors are not crowded out or replaced by the evolving supranational institutions, but are incorporated intensively as they push for access.

As a consequence of the push from national (and other) actors, there is an unavoidable differentiation and expansion of supranational bureaucracy and complex procedures, such as the co-decision or the budgetary procedures. Other examples thereof refer to the expansion of various, highly complex and differentiated committees and working groups through which national governments and administrations participate intensively in European decision-making processes (Wessels, 1997: 280-82).

Local representatives undertake increasing efforts to participate in EU policy-making and to find channels of access to the EU institutions. Institutional differentiation to involve local actors at the European stage would indicate a fusion of local government. The role of the CoR is an example thereof, since local representatives hold seats on it. Local interests are also represented in the Commission's working groups and committees. Although further institutionalisation of local involvement depends on national governments, local representatives push for access to supranational policy-making.

5. The involvement of intermediary groups

The last indicator suggests that an increasing number and diversion of semi-official and informal networks push for access to European institutions. The growing involvement of intermediary groups, such as political parties, media, economic and non-profit interest groups indicates fusion. As Wessels (1997: 284) suggests, Brussels is 'a diversified, atomized and complex political space with many, though not all, national actors. The asymmetry in the involvement of groups of actors as compared to traditional national systems highlights some of the essential features of this new polity.'

The Commission promotes the involvement of intermediary groups²⁸. In addition to traditional interest groups, new semi-public representatives have turned to the EU, such as regional and local authorities many of which maintain their own offices in Brussels²⁹.

²⁸ Even national associations struggle sometimes to compete with huge national and multinational corporations equipped with greater personnel resources and highly active business leaders with personal contacts to the Commission.

²⁹ For a detailed analysis of regional representations see Rowe, 2011.

Regulatory and distributive activities are highly attractive targets of lobbying attempts³⁰ (Wessels, 1997: 282-84).

Local government associations and networks can be described as an intermediate group of particular significance. Local representatives lobby Brussels but, unlike other intermediary groups, they represent elected units of government, implementing and delivering EU policies.

2.3 Institutional fusion

2.3.1 Overview

Based on the macro-fusion thesis, the concept of institutional fusion was developed through the works of Rometsch and Wessels (1996), and Wessels, Maurer and Mittag (2003) as a means of analysing the responses of member states to European integration. Institutional fusion explains how European institutions and the member states react, interact and adapt to the challenges of a new polity. Whereas the macro-fusion thesis offers insights into the underlying logics of integration, institutional fusion is more focused on institutional development and as such provides this thesis with the means of exploring the links between the evolution of European governance and the corresponding changes of local government.

In line with neo-institutionalist and path-dependency approaches, institutional fusion assumes that institutions matter, since they ‘lock in’ national interest formation and condition subsequent policies along existing lines (Wessels, Maurer & Mittag, 2003: 33 *et seq.*). Institutional fusion picks up the idea of political institutions from different levels fusing their competences and powers in order to prepare, make, implement and control binding decisions for public policies on a broadening scale and with growing intensity (Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 20).

According to institutional fusion, (west) European states have created – and continually reformed – institutions and procedures beyond their own borders. In turn, this has had a substantial impact on their own politico-administrative systems. The European multilevel

³⁰ The involvement of intermediary groups is functional according to the policy area. For example, most groups have no direct interest in CFSP or JHA, and therefore, do not engage in these fields.

system has created a ‘loop’ of adaptation, whereby national institutions change according to a demand ‘pull’ from Brussels, which is the result of a previous ‘push’ from national actors (Wessels, Maurer & Mittag, 2003: 3 *et seq.*). The loop does not stop there as Wessels, Maurer and Mittag (*ibid.*) stress: ‘Through various loops of push-pull dynamics between the European and the national levels, the struggle for a voice has even increased the institutional and procedural differentiation in the national as in the European arenas.’

National institutions are not willing to give up their independence, but will participate in the joint system as long as it serves their objectives. Still, competences and accountabilities for the use of state instruments cannot be precisely located anymore. Neither an evolution towards a federal union nor a backlash to mere intergovernmental cooperation seems likely. Yet the European and the national levels are further fusing, increasing the complexity, heterogeneity and lack of transparency of the joint polity (Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 364 *et seq.*).

This affects member states in three simultaneous ways that are outlined in the following section of this chapter:

- Member states become Europeanised
- National and European institutions fuse vertically and horizontally
- Member states do not converge towards a common state model but do develop along some similar patterns through horizontal exchange

2.3.2 The impact of European integration on member states

Europeanisation

The strong impact of European legislation and policies on member states leads to a Europeanisation of their institutions and actors. As their attention shifts towards Brussels, they adapt their structures and strategies to participate effectively in EU decision-making and to influence policies that have a strong impact on their domestic rules. As well as a ‘conscious’ (re)orientation towards Brussels, domestic actors become socialised and change their preferences and beliefs according to the values, norms and principles of the new system (Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 351; Wessels, Maurer & Mittag, 2003: 14).

The Europeanisation of local government informs the first hypothesis of this study: that the fusion approach is able to explain the systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level. The growing impact of EU law and policies triggers a Europeanisation of local policy-makers and officers, which subsequently adapt their administrations and develop a bottom-up approach to promote their interests. Such systemic linkages would indicate a relevance of the fusion approach for explaining the change of local government but not automatically a fusion of local government.

Fusion

National and European institutions do not act independently from each other, but fuse vertically and horizontally in a common policy cycle and under a supranational polity. As institutions of the national and European levels extend and intensify their cooperation, exchange views and exert jointly competences over the use of state instruments, they become more and more interdependent, whereby the responsibilities for policy outcome become blurred (Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 328 *et seq.*).

A fusion of local government is reflected by the second hypothesis of the study: that local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle to exert joint control over public policies. Fusion takes place when local and European actors interact intensively and manage jointly public policies. Whilst national and European level have become interdependent, local-supranational relations are expected to be more limited in scope and to be strongly dependent on national and regional governments. The creation of the CoR indicated a growing role for subnational representatives in the European policy cycle, and in 1996, Rometsch and Wessels (362) predicted:

Although they cannot really be counted as the ‘winners’ of the integration process, they can be considered as forceful ‘latecomers’ who are slowly approaching an institutionalized status in EC decision-making. It will to a large extent depend on their own creativity and effectiveness in the upcoming years to extend this position.

Convergence

The Europeanisation and fusion of national institutions has not led to convergence of domestic polities towards one common (state) model or a *finalité politique*. Member states do not lose their specific historical, political and constitutional features, but are flexible enough to deal with the challenges of European integration. There are hardly any cases where member states compete for effective institutional arrangements. Nonetheless, within

certain limits there are common patterns among member states, such as a trends towards decentralisation of power, flexibility, sectorisation, high administrative coordination and low parliamentarisation (Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 328 *et seq.*).

In the light of the enormous diversity of municipalities across the EU, convergence is even less likely than for national governments and the corresponding decisions not within the range of their powers. Horizontal exchange of best-practice, however, contributes potentially to the development of similar practices. Additionally, local authorities may develop similar institutional adaptation processes in response to European policies.

2.4 The micro-fusion perspective

2.4.1 Overview

While the macro-fusion thesis explains the evolution and long-term trajectories of European integration and institutional fusion focuses on the responses of member states, the micro-fusion perspective looks at the attitudes of state actors and the formulation of national preferences towards the EU's policies and its polity. The micro-fusion perspective relates to the third hypothesis of this study: that the fusion approach is able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration. The micro-fusion perspective comprises three differing, yet complementary concepts of how domestic policy-makers perceive the integration process – performance fusion, political fusion and compound fusion³¹ (Miles, 2005: 28 *et seq.*; 2011: 83 *et seq.*). The following outlines all three concepts and links them to the study of local government.

2.4.2 Performance fusion: output-related mentality

As explained above (see 2.2.2) by the macro-fusion thesis, the turn of the virtuous into a vicious circle caused European welfare states to open their economies and to promote processes that reduce their autonomy and lead to their own erosion. Based on this observation, performance fusion assumes that national political elites join the EU and support the integration process because they expect the EU to deliver economic benefits.

³¹ Fusion perspective assesses more the preferences of national elites than the effectiveness of national policy strategies.

National policy-makers adopt a ‘performance-related integration mentality’ according to which they are willing to pool sovereignty in a common problem-solving arena and accept the obligations of EU membership in order to strengthen and complement their policy objectives and instruments. Rather than the vision of an integrated Europe, pragmatism makes national policy-makers commit to European integration³²:

Once a country becomes a full EU member, the Union’s future success becomes an infused part of that state’s national interest. Consequently, the member states have a stake in ensuring that the Union succeeds in the future in order to protect domestic policy outcomes even if this affects daily politics at home. (Miles, 2005: 33)

The idea of performance fusion does not only apply for actors at the central level of state, but also for local policy-makers. In line with a performance-related logic, local governments are expected to support integrating within the EU, if it proves beneficial for them.

2.4.3 Political fusion: ‘third way’ integration

Policy-makers adopt an output-related view on how the EU should develop in the future. In line with fusion II, political fusion suggests that national actors prefer a third way exit between intergovernmental cooperation (*de facto* erosion) and a European federal state (constitutional erosion). The majority of policy-makers are ‘pro-supranational integration, yet federo-sceptic’³³ (Miles, 2005: 35).

Supranationalism gives member states the potential to achieve common objectives that they could not attain on their own. Whereas federalism is mostly associated with a finality of pooling sovereignty, supranationalism has less of a symbolic and threatening connotation to national elites. In certain policy fields supranational solutions are preferred and in other areas the preference is for intergovernmental arrangements. National governments may not know how the EU should develop in the future, but, as Miles (2005: 34 *et seq.*) comments, they are clearer about how European governance should not evolve.

³² Popular support to the EU is also output-related, since national elites forward their perspective to their citizens, who then balance the benefits of integration against the constraints of national sovereignty.

³³ Federal enthusiasts represent a minority among the member states.

Political fusion seems to be of less significance for the attitude of local actors, as local representatives have hardly any influence on the developments of the EU. And yet, they may have developed certain political preferences, for example regarding the transfer of competences. Like many national actors, their local counterparts may have more of an idea how the EU should not develop in the future rather than a clear political vision.

2.4.4 Compound fusion: a compound polity

According to compound fusion, national policy-makers see the EU ‘as a kind of state-like administrative system that works in conjunction with the existing nation states rather than serving to replace the latter. This is labelled a compound fusion.’ (Miles, 2005: 38)

National governments and administrations, as well as other public and private actors, realised that the EU offers them advantageous channels and instruments that can serve their own interests³⁴. In consequence, not only the elite at the national level, but also agencies and relatively low elite specialists from multiple institutions, have increasingly turned their attention to Brussels and participated through networks constituting a form of ‘horizontal fusion’. This has been partly driven by the establishment of new institutional and procedural arrangements, which have provided intermediary groups with greater influence on policy outcomes³⁵ (Miles, 2005: 38 *et seq.*).

The EU’s compound polity is not fully developed yet and instead of having all groups of actors involved in the European policy-cycle, the existing elites decide who are the real representatives that are allowed to enter the EU policy-making cycle. Clear-cut divisions of competences between EU and member states, as in a federal solution, do not meet the realities of the European polity compound (Miles, 2005: 41).

A growing number of local representatives show a strong preference for participating in the ‘Brussels’ game’ to promote their interests. The CoR represents the most obvious institution to include regional and local actors. The evolution of EU level advisory and comitology committees indicates the growing involvement of actors from all relevant domestic levels from the national to the local one (Wessels, 1998: 216 *et seq.*).

³⁴ The acceptance of the compound fusion of competences and resources relies upon the Union’s ability to deliver the expected political and economic results without interfering with key national interests.

³⁵ Thereby, EU institutions have developed into actors with their own political weight to influence the policy agenda and outcomes.

With regard to the high number of local authorities across the EU, not all local governments can be equally represented in Brussels. Therefore, local government associations and networks are for the most part accepted as the main agents of municipalities. Compound fusion offers a promising insight into the attitudes of local actors towards the EU's inclusive, but blurred system of governance.

2.5 The micro-fusion framework

The micro-fusion framework suggests not only looking at the institutional and activity side of national governments, but also assessing the attitudes and priorities of national policy-makers that inform their policy objectives. Rather than introducing a new approach, the micro-fusion framework clarifies the synergies between the macro-fusion thesis, institutional fusion and the micro-fusion perspective and offers five indicators for empirical micro-studies of national governments³⁶ (Miles, 2007; 2011: 75 *et seq.*):

Institutional fusion I: Europeanisation of actors' attentions and activities, which means a changing and increased focus towards EU policy-making (politics of Europeanisation).

Institutional fusion II: horizontal and vertical adaptation of national institutions and procedures to cope with EU affairs (polity of Europeanisation).

Fusion perspective I: adaptation of a performance-related mentality (performance fusion)

Fusion perspective II: preference for third-way integration between intergovernmental cooperation and a supranational federal state (political fusion)

Fusion perspective III: preference for the EU's inclusive policy compound (compound fusion)

³⁶ In particular, the introduction of two indicators derived from institutional fusion provides more clarity for the application of fusion.

As elaborated in chapter 3, the five indicators of the micro-fusion framework inform the indicators of this study (the five As) which assess the Europeanisation of local actors' attention, local actors and their EU-related activities (though as two separate indicators), institutional adaptation at various levels and the attitudes of local actors towards European integration.

2.6 Multi-level Governance, Europeanisation and fusion

2.6.1 Overview

Instead of narrowing down the focus, the study of European integration gains from combining different approaches (Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997: 10-11). Fusion offers insights into the relationships between the structures of European governance and its impact on actors and institutions within this system. It provides the flexibility to incorporate analytical ideas from other concepts, or as Mittag (2011: 129) states:

...the fusion perspective does not bring about a 'closed' theoretical construct, but rather an agglomeration of similar assumptions and approaches. Moreover, it does not exclude particular theory elements but shares co-existence of different assumptions and strategies in a constructive way.

This part of the chapter argues that fusion shares relevant insights with the multilevel governance approach (MLG) and Europeanisation concepts for the study of local government. Although the fusion approach is considered to offer a more comprehensive and differentiated framework to explain local-supranational relations, the following sections discuss the value and weaknesses of MLG and Europeanisation and highlights the synergies amongst the different perspectives.

2.6.2 Multilevel Governance and fusion

Amongst the established approaches that conceptualise the nature of the European governance and the corresponding impact on its member states, MLG is the most obvious one to account for the emerging role of local governments as it focuses on changes in horizontal and vertical relations amongst actors at supranational, national and subnational

levels³⁷ (Bache, 2008: 21). In multilevel governance, actors do not just communicate with the adjacent level, instead officials from various levels, including the local one, form their own policy community and interact across all tiers. Such interaction operates within a constitutional context with formal allocation of jurisdiction, which provides opportunities and limits to multilevel governance (Hague & Harrop, 2007: 281-282).

The initial idea of MLG was based on empirical studies of the EU's structural policies during the early 1990s (Marks, 1993). Hooghe and Marks (1993; 2001; 2003; 2004; 2010; Marks, Hooghe & Blank, 1996) advanced the argument that in the course of European integration interconnected political arenas have evolved. As opposed to taking a state-centric approach, power and competences are allocated at multiple centres of governance. EU institutions, particularly the Commission, have fostered growing involvement of subnational authorities within European policy-making. MLG assumes that national governments remain key players, but that their influence has partly shifted to the supranational and the subnational levels of government.

MLG accounts for the interaction of multiple actors within vertical and horizontal networks under a complex system of governance (Benz, 2010: 215). Subnational actors operate in interconnected policy arenas across different levels (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 3-4, 77 *et seq.*), and they build direct relations with supranational institutions. As the traditional state hierarchies are bypassed, the gate-keeping role of national governments is challenged to various degrees according to different policy fields (Bache & Flinders, 2004b: 37). As Bache (2008: 28) has suggested:

It is a strength of multilevel governance that it draws on ideas and concepts from across political science and contributes to a growing awareness that many contemporary issues and challenges require analysis that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries. Most specifically, multilevel governance crosses the traditionally separate academic terrains of domestic and international politics to emphasize the blurring of the distinctions between the two through the process of European integration.

Notwithstanding the overall relevance and the great popularity of MLG, the idea of multilevel governance has been challenged in the academic literature. Jeffery (2000: 3), for example, has criticised the MLG approach for its failure to address the actual influence that subnational governments exert in EU policy-making, and the motivation and attitudes of subnational mobilisation. According to Jeffery, MLG describes the 'physical manifestation' of subnational involvement in EU business, but he argued that an approach accounting for the rationales of subnational mobilisation also has to consider intrastate

³⁷ 'Multilevel' indicates vertical interaction amongst territorial level and 'governance' horizontal interaction between governmental and non-governmental actors (Bache & Flinders, 2004a: 96; Bache, 2008: 24).

factors, such as the constitutional position of subnational government, as it is done in this thesis.

Similar criticism was also raised by scholars such as Fairbrass and Jordan (2004: 152), who stressed that MLG fails to explain the ‘causal motor of integration’ without giving clear reasons for subnational mobilisation or testable hypotheses explaining integration and the creation of MLG (Jordan, 2001: 201).

Further critiques have even questioned the existence of a fully-fledged European multilevel governance system as assumed by MLG. Despite the growing influence of subnational governments, multilevel governance is neither static nor ever-lasting but subject to changing dynamics in time and asymmetries of power relations between different levels across member states and policy areas. Such a dynamic included the European regional and cohesion policy where the allocation of resources is decided upon above the subnational level (Jordan, 2001: 195; Lawrence, 2010: 788).

Considering the strong centralisation of power in Britain, Bache (1998) suggested the notion of ‘multilevel participation’ rather than multilevel governance to meet the realities of British local government. Subnational actors are responsible for the implementation of legislation, acquire funding and are involved in decision-making processes, but only a few authorities engage in EU affairs and have little influence over policy outcomes (Bache, 2008: 31; Martin & Pearce, 1999: 46).

The British example shows that the allocation of power is a crucial determinant of multilevel governance. The level of subnational influence varies across the member states depending upon their constitutional position and the attitude of national governments (Fairbrass & Jordan 2004: 163). Benz and Eberlin (1999: 332) argued that multilevel governance did not lead to an interaction and interlocking of politics, but rather that institutional and power-related tensions between different political arenas set structural limits to the formation of multilevel governance³⁸. Loughlin (2001: 20) suggested that rather than focusing too much on levels of government, MLG needs to account for the ‘complex set of overlapping and nested systems of governance involving European, national, regional and local actors, and networks’.

³⁸ Benz and Eberlin further suggested that whilst the exclusion of new actors from policy-making would improve organisational effectiveness, the push of new actors for access can destabilise and change existing institutional patterns.

On a more differentiated account, Benz and Eberlin (*op. cit.*: 333) expected multilevel governance to develop through patterns of ‘loose coupling’ on an informal basis without relying on binding mandates or formal decision-making. Instead of focusing on resource dependencies, control mechanisms and power, multilevel governance rather needs to be understood in the context of cognitive (instead of political), communicative and negotiation processes, as well as of coalition- and network-building.

As a response to the criticism on MLG, Hooghe and Marks (2003; 2004; 2010) advanced two different, yet co-existing, types of multilevel governance (Bache, 2008: 27). Put simply, whilst MLG type I refers to stable state structures (simple polities), MLG type II relates to flexible, *ad hoc* policy-making processes (Bache *et al.*, 2011: 124).

MLG type I relates to a clearly defined, stable and non-overlapping allocation of authority among a few levels of government, as it is the case in federal state arrangements. MLG type I looks at government structures and relates to the organisation of conventional territorial states. Jurisdictions are non-intersecting and durable, and their reform is costly and rare and would involve a reallocation of competences. National governments will remain the central actors in the multilevel governance system, but supra- and subnational actors have been empowered³⁹ within the EU, which is the only supranational type I system.

Under MLG type II, the jurisdiction of authority is distributed across numerous levels, task-specific, intersecting and is subject to flexible governance arrangements. Smaller territorial units cross hierarchical borders and act outside larger jurisdictions. MLG type II refers to a polycentric mode of governance under which decisions are made collectively across a larger number of collaborating levels, groups and actors. The latter mobilise in heterogeneous arenas to collectively deal with joint problems and policies, but their instrumental arrangements do not directly challenge state authority and are embedded within type I jurisdictions (Hooghe & Marks, 2004: 17 *et seq.*; 2010: 18 *et seq.*). In terms of policies, Bache (2008; 2011: 124 *et seq.*) suggests that EU cohesion policy and its promotion of multilevel partnerships have fostered type II arrangements in particular.

According to Benz (2010: 215), the distinction between territorial and functional patterns has been a ‘remarkable step forward’ towards a comparative framework for analysis.

³⁹ In particular, regional government have benefited from decentralisation trends since the 19050s in France Italy, Spain and Belgium. Local empowerment has taken primariaily place in northern Europe.

Nonetheless, MLG does still not clearly explain the mechanisms that lead to multilevel governance and to the corresponding policy outcomes. MLG generates hypotheses where sovereignty shifts from national to supranational and subnational levels and has developed through academic discussions to more differentiated accounts. It has not aimed to explain European integration, but rather emerging governance patterns in a system that was already functioning (George, 2004: 113; also Dyson & Sepos, 2010: 18-19).

MLG has not developed to a full-fledged theory on the EU but remains more of a descriptive account that gains by putting it in the context of the EU's major trajectories (Fairbrass & Jordan, 2004: 152). This section of the chapter argues that the fusion approach provides such a context. Since MLG only focuses on partial developments of European integration and governance (Miles, 2011a: 188), fusion presents a valuable complement to MLG. Both approaches share the assumption of powers moving upwards to the EU and downwards to subnational actors, as part of European integration and a transformation of the European state. They both acknowledge that domestic and international politics have become interconnected with subnational actors operating outside their national borders (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 4).

As Lindh *et al.* (2009: 37) argue, 'it is not a question of MLG or Fusion...MLG is rather to be viewed implicitly as a part of Fusion.' Whereas MLG initially focused primarily on the shift of power between levels of government, it enhanced its approach by acknowledging that the allocation of decision-making and resources has increasingly shifted between and from discrete territorial levels towards compound, overlapping networks (Bache, 2008: 28; George, 2004: 115). MLG type II and institutional fusion share an emphasis on moments of functional blurring and horizontal and vertical interaction amongst actors and institutions from multiple levels and policy arenas in a common policy cycle⁴⁰. The notion of governance is implicit to institutional fusion as it assumes that multilevel governance requires coordination and cooperation of multiple levels of government under an increasingly complex framework⁴¹.

Notwithstanding the strong link between fusion and MLG, the latter lacks essential

⁴⁰ Bypassing is only one feature of a blurred system of multi-level governance as assumed by fusion (Lindh *et al.*, 2009: 37).

⁴¹ Benz *et al.* (2000: 19) also observed that the 'hierarchical management by the state is replaced by cooperation between state, local and social actors'.

features that distinguish a theory from a description of changing modes of governance⁴². One might argue that MLG and integration theory are focusing on different phenomena, and therefore cannot be cross-linked⁴³. The fusion thesis combines the analysis of the change of states (structural logic) with studies on European integration (deterministic, functional logic) (Wessels, 1992: 38 *et seq.*).

Fusion closes some of the gaps of the MLG literature by accounting for the origins and driving forces of integration⁴⁴, differentiated and asymmetrical integration across various policy fields⁴⁵, and the constitutional and normative settings determining multilevel governance. Fusion focuses on the responses of member states to the challenges of European integration and offers empirical tools to capture the Europeanisation of local government. It is better able to link the evolution of European governance to the corresponding processes at the local level, whilst it accounts for multilevel realities.

2.6.3 Europeanisation and fusion

Although a single definition of Europeanisation has not been established, its terminology commonly refers to the impact of European integration as the process of creating the EU's polity and the corresponding adaptation of activities and institutions within the member

⁴² As it was discussed earlier in this article, MLG provides a valuable analytical framework, but it was not designed to explain European integration, but patterns of governance in a system already in place (George 2004: 113). MLG provides a description of existing structures rather than giving clear causal explanations for the evolution of the European multi-level governance system and a set of testable hypotheses (Jordan, 2001: 201).

⁴³ 'In the longer term it seems unlikely that the debate between the governance and government approaches will ever be fully resolved to the satisfaction of either side. This is partly because the two paradigms have different ontologies and epistemologies, so advocates tend to talk past one another. But it is also because more and more EU scholars have "given up" on the integration project altogether (Caporaso, 1998: 7), and turned to explaining what goes on within existing structures of the EU rather than their genesis or gradual transformation.' (Jordan, 2001: 204-205)

⁴⁴ Benz (2010: 215) argues that MLG does not clearly line out the underlying mechanisms that are responsible for multilevel governance.

⁴⁵ A 'good theoretical account' of European integration needs to consider that the emergence of multilevel governance is still young and not ever present in all policy areas⁴⁵ (Jordan, 2001: 195).

states⁴⁶ (Bache, 2008: 1; Börzel & Risse, 2000: 1; Vink & Graziano, 2007: 3 *et seq.*). These processes are commonly distinguished between top-down and bottom-up Europeanisation, which does not stop at the national level but also shapes the relations between the EU and local authorities (Schultze, 2003; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009: 312).

Increasingly, works on the Europeanisation of local government have outlined these dynamics in local-supranational relations (Goldsmith, 2011: 34; see also Marshall, 2005; 2008). Three forms of Europeanisation are commonly identified for the local level (Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009: 312; Marshall, 2005: 672-673; 2008; Rechlin, 2004; Van Bever, Reynaert & Steyvers, 2011a: 16 *et seq.*):

1. Top-down Europeanisation refers to the impact of the EU's legal and financial instruments, and the implementation of EU legislation and compliance with criteria to access the European Structural Funds, and even to changes in policies, practice and preferences within local governance.
2. Bottom-up Europeanisation includes the deployment of the new opportunity-structures and the promotion of local concerns, as well as a transfer of innovative local practices to the supranational arena.
3. Horizontal Europeanisation is defined as the cooperation and mutual exchange of best practice and innovations through transnational networks and partnerships.

John (2000: 881 *et seq.*; 2001: 72) puts the downloading, uploading and horizontal processes in a hierarchical relation to each other. On a 'Europeanisation ladder', local authorities gradually ascend as they develop EU-directed activities. The minimum level of Europeanisation includes the absorption in a top-down manner, followed by bottom-up and horizontal Europeanisation. According to John's model, only when European ideas and

⁴⁶ Ladrech (2010: 9 *et seq.*) points out that Europeanisation processes affect all three areas of domestic political activity, namely politics, polity and policies. First, Europeanisation of domestic politics – or what Börzel and Risse (2003: 60) also call the 'politics of Europeanisation' – refers to the expression, support or resistance of individual and collective actors towards state-led policies and other actions. Secondly, Europeanisation of domestic polity, or the 'polity of Europeanisation' (Börzel & Risse, 2003: 60) respectively, means adaptation processes of national and sub-national institutions, administrations, executive-legislative relations, the judiciary, as well as constitutional arrangements. Lastly, Europeanisation of policies describes change and the introduction of new policy instruments and outcomes due to the involvement of the EU in policy areas that used to be exclusively under the control of the member states. The Europeanisation of policies also covers changes of policy style and the shift of policy paradigm within the member states (Ladrech, 2010: 9 *et seq.*).

practices enter the core of local decision-making does local government become fully Europeanised. The fundamental transformation of local governments is therefore not about the short-term effects of implementing legislation and acquiring funding, but about the incorporation of European ideas into the local policy agenda.

Notwithstanding the relevance of top-down, bottom-up and horizontal Europeanisation processes for the study of local government, for a number of reasons a wider theoretical context is required to link them to the overall dynamics of European integration. Europeanisation represents more of an ‘attention-directing device’ than an explanatory theory itself (Olsen, 2002: 921 *et seq.*), and therefore Europeanisation concepts need to be embedded within a wider theoretical context of integration to be able to draw causal explanations of these processes (Bulmer, 2007: 46 *et seq.*).

Whereas European integration is an ontological matter and encompasses the evolution of the EU’s political system and the reasons for the pooling of sovereignty, Europeanisation represents a post-ontological phenomenon that comprises specific processes that follow integration (Radaelli, 2003: 33). As Radaelli (*op. cit.*: 27 *et seq.*) states: ‘concepts are relevant in the context of analytical frameworks, mechanisms of explanation, and theories. Thus, the next step is to make the concept of Europeanisation amenable to empirical analysis and to connect it to the explanation...’

The ‘goodness of fit’ hypothesis provides such a concept by explaining domestic change at the hand of adaptation pressures on domestic polities, policies and politics triggered by European integration (Börzel & Risse, 2000; Börzel, 2005b: 50 *et seq.*). Whilst the distinction between fit and misfit is useful to assess the impact of integration at the national level, it addresses a ‘top-down causality’ without sufficiently accounting for the underlying interaction between EU and member states⁴⁷ (Jeffery, 2003: 99-100).

In order to explain why Europeanisation takes place at the local level, Europeanisation processes need to be linked to a theoretical framework⁴⁸, such as the fusion approach. As the literature on Europeanisation suffers from ‘limited ambitions’ and a ‘lack of clarity’ in explaining their link to the EU’s supranational dynamics (Miles, 2011a: 189), fusion provides a framework that analyses adaption processes within member states in the light of

⁴⁷ Jeffery (2003: 97) also highlights the non-static nature of the EU and its members and the absence of a fixed point to which member states converge.

⁴⁸ As Vink and Graziano (2007: 12) highlight: ‘Theory thus comes in where we need to answer how European policies, rules and norms are affecting domestic political systems.’

integration pressures⁴⁹. Europeanisation represents not only a means through which multilevel governance is accomplished (Pollack, 2005: 348), but also an integral part and even a pre-condition for the fusion of competences and structures between supranational, national and sub-national levels of governance (Miles, 2007: 9).

Europeanisation is deployed as a systemised concept in the theoretical context of fusion. It largely refers to its traditional notion, which is the domestic implementation of EU policies and responsive adaptation to integration in general. In the works on institutional fusion and the micro-fusion perspective, Europeanisation means a shift of actors' attention and action towards the EU (the politics of Europeanisation), the corresponding institutional and procedural adaptation processes (the polity of Europeanisation), and a socialisation of actors' attitudes (Lindh *et al.*, 2009: 38 *et seq.*). To even narrow it down further, Europeanisation in the context of this study is a shift of local actors' attention towards the EU's policies and the corresponding action: 'a growing number of national actors experiencing and acknowledging the significance of EU business, leading to a desire to seek 'voice' and for improved participation in EU for national policy-makers' (Miles, 2007: 8 *et seq.*).

Instead of referring to a general background concept that covers a wide range of phenomena⁵⁰ (Adcock & Collier, 2001: 530), within this work Europeanisation is deployed as a concept that can systematically contribute to the research of defined Europeanisation processes by explicit definitions of the core notions, as advocated by Radaelli and Pasquier (2007: 36). In chapter 3, Europeanisation is defined as part of the five As (see 3.2.2).

2.7 The fusion approach in the context of the thesis

This chapter has outlined selected bodies of the fusion literature and indicated their relevance for the study of local government. This chapter has also shown that the fusion approach provides a synergy of MLG and Europeanisation and complements both

⁴⁹ 'The recognition of differentiation and asymmetry as well as the need to incorporate a broad view of adaptation covering politics, polity and policy dynamics, is a central feature of the evolving work on fusion.' (Miles, 2007: 8)

⁵⁰ Europeanisation as a background concept can be related with a variety of different meanings that are associated with that concept. Europeanisation as a systemised concept represents a specific formulation and definition adopted by a particular academic group (Adcock & Collier, 2001: 530).

approaches by a differentiated framework that explains the evolution of the EU's politico-administrative system⁵¹.

The macro-fusion thesis provides a dynamic perspective of the bigger picture against which integration of national and potentially local government takes place:

1. The turn of the virtuous into a vicious circle in which member states pool their sovereignty to regain control over welfare provision
2. Third-way integration between intergovernmental cooperation and a joint supranational polity
3. Functional spill-over leading to an extension of policy areas and increasingly complex policy-making procedures.

These trends provide the macro-political background of the first hypothesis: that the fusion approach is able to explain the systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level. This can be assessed against the five indicators of the macro-fusion thesis: 1) The output of binding decisions; 2) the scope of public policies; 3) the transfer of competences; 4) institutional and procedural patterns; 5) the involvement and influence by intermediary groups.

The question herein is to what degree the policy-making capacities and accountabilities of local government are merging with those of the European level. Institutional fusion and the micro-fusion framework provide further insights to assess fusion against the second hypothesis: that local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle to exert joint control over public policies. Fusion would imply that

1. The attention and activities of local government become Europeanised due to the growing impact of EU law and policies (*Institutional fusion I*)
2. Local governments adapt their institutions and administrations to cope with EU affairs (*Institutional fusion II*)

⁵¹ MLG and Europeanisation concepts account for significant, yet partial insights of the dynamics in local-supranational relations. Whilst MLG focuses on the structural linkages between different levels of government and governance arrangements, Europeanisation concepts look at processes related to the impact of European integration on the local level.

To find a fusion of the local and European level, both levels would need to interact intensively and manage jointly public policies. Institutional adaptation at the European (national and regional) level is relevant for the purpose of this study, but fusion also involves informal interaction and horizontal integration of local government through joint projects and best-practice sharing.

The micro-fusion perspective and micro-fusion framework allow linking the macro-trajectories of European integration to the attitudes and preferences of local actors, if the third hypothesis applies: that the fusion approach is able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration. These attitudes are informed by:

1. A performance-related mentality (performance fusion, *Fusion perspective I*)
2. A preference for third-way integration between intergovernmental cooperation and a supranational federal state (political fusion, *Fusion perspective II*)
3. A preference for the EU's inclusive policy compound (compound fusion, *Fusion perspective III*)

Wessels (2000: 271-273) concluded that until the mid-1990s Europe's fusion multilevel compound had not reached down to local government either in Germany or in the rest of Europe. According to Wessels, local authorities had up to then not interacted with higher levels of government as substantial partners in the context of multilevel governance. German municipalities had developed only a low European profile and had not introduced adequate resources to overcome a passive/reactive state. As only a small number of specialists were actively engaged in European affairs, the effect of their actions remained marginal. No non-hierarchical multilevel partnership had emerged.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction to the methodology

The research objective of this thesis is the exploration and the development of the fusion approach to the study of local government. Chapter 2 outlined the relevant bodies of the fusion literature and showed why the fusion approach is considered as a promising theoretical macro-framework to study local government in the context of European integration. This chapter enlarges upon the three hypotheses (*systemic linkages, fusion, attitudes*) introduced in chapter 1 (see 1.5.2) against which in chapter 7 conclusions will be drawn to examine fusion's efficacy for the study of local. The chapter also discusses five empirical indicators that are deduced from various works on fusion but assembled and modified to the specific purpose of studying the local level. It then provides an overview of how the indicators will be assessed and it outlines the resources that will inform the empirical chapters 5 and 6.

3.2 Exploring the efficacy of the fusion approach against three hypotheses

For the exploration of the fusion approach to the study of local government, testable hypotheses are required. Three questions stand out as particularly striking in the context of the fusion approach and local-supranational relations: Is the fusion approach able to explain the *systemic linkages* between the macro-trajectories of European integration and the corresponding processes at the local level of government? Is there a *fusion* of local governments with the EU multilevel compound? Does the fusion approach explain the *attitudes* of local actors towards European integration? These questions can be translated into three testable hypotheses (*systemic linkages, fusion, attitudes*) (see 3.3) for assessing to what extent the fusion approach can explain the role of local government in the integration process – that is:

1. *Systemic linkages*

A theoretical framework that seeks to explain the role of local government within the integration process needs to offer a causal logic between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level. The question is

whether fusion explains such systemic linkages. The fusion approach explains the evolution of the EU. For the local level it is assumed that there is a growing and broadening impact of EU policies, leading to a Europeanisation of local government and subsequently to adaptation processes and responsive mobilisation towards Brussels (see Miles, 2011a: 194; Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 351; Wessels, Maurer & Mittag, 2003: 14). The five As provide a strong measurement of systemic linkages as they cover all processes in this causal chain.

Fusion is useful to explain systemic linkages between the macro-trajectories of European integration and change at of local government, if an increasing top-down impact of European policies and legislation triggers a Europeanisation of local actors' attention, institutional adaptation within local authorities and responsive action to engage with EU policies and influence policy outcomes.

2. *Fusion*

The 'openness' of the fusion approach offers a great variety of empirical tools, but it also makes it difficult to distinguish fusion from integration. Unlike integration, fusion does not just refer to a deepening of policy-making under a joint polity, but to a differentiated integration of state and non-state actors through complex channels of participation (Diedrichs *et al.*, 2011: 443-444). The *fusion* hypothesis suggests that local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle to exert joint control over public policies. Thereby, institutions and procedures at different levels are expected to grow and diversify (see Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 328 *et seq.*).

The assessment of this hypothesis relies on the adaptation indicator (see 3.2.3) that focuses on formal channels and opportunities to incorporate local actors in the EU system. In order to confirm fusion, local actors need to be provided with institutional access to EU policy-making either directly, for example in the CoR, or indirectly via national and regional representation. Also, the action indicator (see 3.2.4) captures the 'organic complexity' of European integration that involves interaction and mutual reinforcing

learning processes (the so-called ‘living constitution’) beyond a legal communitarisation (see Miles, 2011a: 197). Fusion of local government is not only subject to formal participation in EU policy-making, but also to informal involvement of local government actors in the delivery and making of EU policies. This includes lobbying strategies at multiple levels of governments for the purpose of promoting local concerns and influencing EU policy outcomes.

In 2000, Wessels (2000: 271-273) concluded that his assessment of local-supranational relations did not confirm a fusion of local government. Over ten years later, this hypothesis is expected to deliver a very differentiated picture across local governments in the NWoE and NRW.

3. *Attitudes*

The third hypothesis engages with fusion’s capacities to explain the views and incentives of political actors behind their involvement in EU policy-making. As this is a strong thematic field in the fusion literature and not well developed with regard to local government, the investigation of local actors’ attitudes towards European integration provides a strong contribution to the study of local-supranational relations. The attitude hypothesis is based on the indicator of the same name (see 3.2.5) and tests to what extent the micro-fusion perspective is correct in assuming that local actors show preferences for performance fusion, political fusion and compound fusion (see Miles, 2007: 28 *et seq.*).

In order to confirm performance fusion, local actors would want to integrate with specific EU policy sectors, such as economic and environmental policies, under the condition that the EU delivers beneficial policy outcomes, such as economic growth, opportunities to participate in EU funded programmes or environmental policies that require coordinated implementation to be effective.

Political fusion can be demonstrated through an attitude that supports supranational integration but seeks to protect local autonomy *vis-à-vis* the impact and constraints of EU law and policies. Whilst at the national level

this reflects a preference for third way integration between supranationalism and intergovernmental cooperation, at the local level, political fusion needs to focus on local actors' attitudes that are generally pro integration but require also provisions that ensure local autonomy, protect local competences and a stronger involvement in the design and delivery of EU policies.

Compound fusion meets the views of local actors, if the latter acknowledge the EU's inclusive politico-administrative arrangements working in conjunction with the domestic structures. Rather than relying on formal participation rights, local actors need to demonstrate that they appreciate to be able to access and to build links with EU institutions and officials as a means of promoting their interests.

The three hypotheses do not only allow evaluating the efficacy of the fusion approach, but they also enable exploring and perhaps even advancing fusion by a local government perspective. Rather than drawing clear-cut conclusions, the hypotheses may leave room for different interpretations, depending on theoretical points of view.

3.3 Deducing the five As

As Wessels (1997: 270) put it: '...we should look for indicators and factors to explain the evolution of a political system in a delimited area over a delimited period of time.' The combination of a theoretical framework and operational tools helps to explain the politics, polity and policy of local-supranational relations⁵², and helps to obtain a bigger, yet differentiated, picture of European integration from a local government perspective. In order to link the assessment of the micro-level of actors to the macro-perspective of European integration, the fusion approach requires further specification for concrete research objectives (Diedrichs *et al.*, 2011: 443-444). Empirical indicators allow the application of theoretical concepts to assess their validity. In the case of this thesis, this means to assess to what extent local governments are fusing with the EU against the three hypotheses.

⁵² The indicators cover relevant political actors and their preferences towards the EU, and bottom-up action, such as individual and organised local mobilisation (politics); constitutional, institutional and procedural adaptation within the integration process (polity); and lastly, the top-down impact of European initiatives affecting policy agenda, tasks and instruments (policy) (Ladrech, 2010).

The following generates five empirical indicators – the five As – that are based on relevant bodies of the fusion literature (see chapter 2) but modified and reassembled for the purpose of studying local governments. The indicators are informed by the macro-fusion thesis (see 2.2) that is a theory of nation and state building, explaining the functional, deterministic and institutional structure in which action takes place. Institutional fusion (see 2.3) underpins the indicators with logics of organisational change, networks and learning processes so as to examine institutional adaptation, as well as individual and organised European engagement of local actors. The micro-fusion perspective (see 2.4) provides explanations of actors’ attitudes towards European integration, and the micro-fusion framework (see 2.5) delivers a set of fusion indicators that underpin the majority of this thesis’ own indicators.

The indicators are not only designed to include those aspects of the fusion approach that are considered to be relevant for the local level, but also major dynamics within local-supranational relations. The five As focus on:

1. The *absorption* of European legislation and policy by local government.
2. The Europeanisation of local actors’ *attention* towards supranational policies and legislation.
3. Institutional and procedural *adaptation* processes at all relevant levels of government.
4. Vertical and horizontal, as well as direct and indirect *action* of municipal authorities in relation to EU policies.
5. Local actors’ *attitudes* towards European policies and governance.

The empirical findings will allow drawing three different scenarios for each indicator: *infusion*, *clustered fusion* and *defusion*. Whilst *infusion* describes a highly optimistic scenario with a positive assessment of the five As; *clustered fusion* refers to substantial, but differentiated findings for the indicators; and *defusion* is a negative scenario with very limited relevance of fusion dynamics (Miles, 2011b: 89-92). As the methodology is designed to explore rather than to provide a stringent assessment whether or not fusion

takes place, the judgement of fusion scenarios cannot be analysed against hard criteria. It can only draw careful conclusions and is expected to be fluent across the three categories. In terms of policy fields, competences, powers and resources, local governments are clearly limited compared to central government. The assessment of the fusion scenarios is more 'generous' or 'milder' than it would be for the national governments that deal with foreign or monetary policy are within the realms of local authorities. For example, infusion, as a strong link to European polity and policy, within local government does not refer to the same extent of infusion as of national governments.

3.3.1 The absorption of European legislation and policy

The making of binding decisions is a major characteristic of the EU system distinguishing it from other international organisations. Wessels, Maurer and Mittag (2003: 9) stress that these binding outputs can 'be used as significant indicators for the evolution of the political system'. As integration deepens, EU legislation increasingly affects local government (De Rooij, 2002: 449). The EU depends on the administrative capacity of its member states, and the member states in turn depend heavily upon local authorities in order to implement EU policies⁵³. Local authorities play an important part in the integration process (Goldsmith, 1997: 5 *et seq.*; 2003: 121), and the absorption of EU policies demonstrates this development.

The absorption indicator provides a starting point for understanding systemic linkages amongst top-down impact, bottom-up responses, organisational changes and attitudes towards integration. The indicator derives from the first two indicators of the macro-fusion thesis - 1) the growth of binding outputs, and 2) the broadening scope of public policies.⁵⁴

The scope of policy areas that are decided upon in Brussels has increased. Simultaneously, the impact of EU policies on municipal tasks is expected to widen (Goldsmith, 2003: 127). The indicator sets out to provide a differentiated picture of the quantity and quality of European legislation and policies absorbed by local government. This includes focusing on binding directives, regulations and decisions by the Court of Justice, as well as on non-binding policies related to the single market, such as environmental issues, consumer

⁵³ Local authorities also shape EU outputs by implementation.

⁵⁴ The five indicators of the MFT: 1) output of binding decisions, 2) scope of public policies, 3) transfer of competencies, 4) evolution of institution, 5) involvement of intermediary groups (Wessels, 1997: 276 *et seq.*).

protection, trading standards, contracting, transport, regional and cohesion policy and so on (*op. cit.*: 121).

For the assessment of this indicator, local officers dedicated to deal with European policies are the primary source of information for identifying the main fields of EU law and policy that affect municipalities. The indicator is designed to detect a broadening range of top-down impact to understand the systemic linkages that determine responsive action, as well as the attitudes of local actors towards integration. The indicator is less relevant for actual fusion dynamics. Although absorption determines a major characteristic of European integration, without a pro-active engagement of local authorities, it indicates only an executive role of local government rather than fusion itself. The interviews with officers are complemented with other expert-interviews and an examination of legal documents that confirm and clarify identified EU legislation and policies. Table 3.1 shows how the assessment of this indicator translates into fusion scenarios.

Table 3.1: Fusion scenarios for the absorption indicator (see Miles, 2011b)

Fusion scenarios for the absorption indicator	
Infusion	Growing absorption of EU policies and legislation
Clustered fusion	Uneven absorption of EU policies and legislation
Defusion	Limited absorption of EU policies and legislation

3.3.2 *The Europeanisation of local actors' attention*

Europe, and particularly the EU, has become an essential point of reference for actors of the member states, which consequently engage in intergovernmental and transnational policy networks⁵⁵. In 1993, Goldsmith (1993: 683) had already observed the development of such a dynamic for local government actors. Ten years later, he suggested that their attention to Brussels has been incremental and slow and that the national context remained the main point of reference. The Europeanisation of local authorities varied greatly across Europe, although some cities showed high levels of Europeanisation (Goldsmith, 2003: 128).

As earlier stated in the discussion on Europeanisation (see 2.6.3), the terminology needs to be deployed as a systematized concept and explicitly defined, otherwise it represents a

⁵⁵ Hanf and Soetendorp (1998: 1) brand this process as Europeanisation.

background concept that covers a collection of diverse research themes (Radaelli, 2003: 31; Radaelli & Pasquier, 2007: 36). Within the fusion literature, Europeanisation is 'representing the process in which the focus of attention of policy-makers may become greater and drawn more strongly to EU-related matters (in both a quantitative and qualitative sense) in order to detect if there is evidence of a growing level of business coming across the desks of national policy-makers.' (Miles, 2007:10)⁵⁶

Lindh *et al.* (2009: 39) emphasise that conceptual clarity requires the definition of a narrow terminology of Europeanisation, and the provision of a more explicit definition of Europeanisation within the *micro-fusion framework* that refers to actors (*institutional fusion I*: Europeanisation of politics) and domestic institutional adaptation (*institutional fusion II*: Europeanisation of polity). This study further defines the meaning of Europeanisation to include a change in local actors' attention towards EU policies⁵⁷.

The absorption of EU legislation does not necessarily equate to Europeanisation because in many cases it is not the result of a conscious decision, but rather of the performance of the executive role of municipalities. The analytical value of the attention indicator is that it explains the inherent logic between top-down, bottom-up and organisational processes, as well as local attitudes towards integration⁵⁸. The absorption of EU laws and policies leads to a Europeanisation of local actors' attention, which is viewed as a precondition for bottom-up and horizontal activities, as well as for institutional adaptation to the European governance⁵⁹. Therefore, the attention indicator is important to examine the first hypothesis: that the fusion approach is able to explain the systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level.

The most important questions of the empirical application of this indicator are: when are local authorities/actors Europeanised and which local actors' attention matters? According

⁵⁶ Institutional fusion defines Europeanisation 'as the shifts in the attention of national institutions caused by the growth and differentiation of the para-constitutional and institutional set up of the EC/EU.' (Wessels, Maurer & Mittag, 2003: 56).

⁵⁷ In the micro-fusion framework, *institutional fusion I* comprises a Europeanisation of attention and activities. Whilst organisational changes at the national level are the result of previous push from national actors (Wessels, Maurer & Mittag, 2003: 5 *et seq.*), at the local level institutional adaptation and responsive action depend strongly on the Europeanisation of local actors' attention are hardly subject to a push-pull dynamic. Since at the local level the awareness of the EU's relevance for the daily practice is not as extensive as at the national level, it is useful to evaluate separately the level of attention paid to Brussels.

⁵⁸ Kohler-Koch (1999: 29) argues that bottom-up processes are the result of formulation and implementation of European policies, whereby actors become socialised to new practices, and become Europeanised respectively.

⁵⁹ Europeanisation refers to a process in which 'a growing number of national actors experiencing and acknowledging the significance of EU business, leading to a desire to seek 'voice' and for improved participation in EU for national policy-makers.' (Miles, 2007: 8 *et seq.*)

to John's Europeanisation ladder (2000: 881 *et seq.*; 2001: 72), only when European ideas and practices enter the core of local decision-making, have local government become fully Europeanised. Such a fundamental transformation of local policy agenda would thus indicate a strong fusion dynamic and affect key policy-makers, officers and departments within municipal administrations.

This indicator is examined on the basis of interpretative observations. The main source for assessing the Europeanisation of local administrations and councils are the interviews with officers who are considered to have a general overview of the awareness of policy-makers and their colleagues and of EU-related policy agenda. External experts, such as municipal associations and MEPs, offer a more general perspective to validate the views of officers within individual local authorities.

Table 3.2: Fusion scenarios for the attention indicator (see Miles, 2011b)

Fusion scenarios for the attention indicator	
Infusion	Positive multilevel attentiveness and socialisation
Clustered fusion	Uneven multilevel attentiveness and socialisation across actors and policy fields
Defusion	Limited/negative attentiveness and socialisation

3.3.3 Institutional and procedural adaptation processes

This indicator examines formalised adaptation processes, particularly the establishment and restructuring of institutions, procedures and the relations between institutions and levels of government. The indicator focuses on the underlying polity of the European multilevel compound in order to assess the second hypothesis: that local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle to exert joint control over public policies. Potentially relevant structures for the fusion of local government can be found at all levels of government.

Adaptation at the European level

At the European level, the CoR and the complex system of committees and working groups provide local actors with channels for participation in EU policy-making. As suggested by institutional fusion, the demand of subnational actors for institutionalised access at the EU decision-making centre puts the European polity under pressure to adapt and reform its capacities and to create new procedures and mechanisms (see Wessels,

1992: 47-48). The evolution of supranational institutions and the development of increasingly differentiated procedures are parts of a vertical adaptation process, since they enable actors from the member states to participate and to promote their interest within EU policy-making (Miles, 2007: 11). The CoR in particular has indicated a growing role for regional and local representatives in the European integration process.

Whether the CoR provides local actors with effective means to exert control over EU policies, is assessed against the views of interviewees from England and Germany, as well as against secondary literature and treaty articles. A detailed analysis of the CoR's influence in the EU's policy-making process exceeds the capacities of this study. Although further adaptation processes that include local representatives are not expected to be found, this indicator also considers ideas how to reform the EU's polity as a means for formal fusion dynamics.

Adaptation at the national and regional level

Institutional fusion suggests that the push of actors for institutionalised access at the EU decision-making in turn creates a pull from the centre to adaptation within the member states (Wessels, Maurer & Mittag, 2003: 3 *et seq.*). Institutional change at the national, regional and sub-regional levels is potentially relevant for local government, as the different levels may provide indirect vertical channels for bottom-up strategies of local actors⁶⁰, and consequently for fusion dynamics.

Although legal documents and secondary literature provide important information about institutional structures for involving local government in the European strategies of national and regional governments, elite-interviews are essential to learn about the actual usage and value of such formal provisions.

Adaptation at the local level

Drawing on institutional fusion and the micro-fusion framework, it is assumed that municipalities and their agents adapt their structures to deal effectively with EU policies (*institutional fusion II: polity of Europeanisation*). Institutional reforms related to European

⁶⁰ Thereby, the adaptation of domestic institutions does not lead to convergence of domestic polities towards one common European model, as member states deal with the challenges of multi-level governance according their specific historical, political and constitutional context (Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 328 *et seq.*; Wessels, Maurer & Mittag, 2003: 444 *et seq.*).

integration indicate similar processes at the local as at the national level and therefore fusion, inasmuch as they allow municipal engagement in delivering and influencing EU policies. Adaptation at the local level owes more to the Europeanisation of national government (see 3.2.2) rather than being part of a push-pull logic, as is the case for national governments themselves.

Institutional and procedural adaptation within local authorities requires both vertical and horizontal processes. Horizontal adaptation among local institutions implies innovations to ‘enhance the ability of government actors, organs and machinery within the respective state to develop coherent and common approaches and to speak with one voice on EU questions (...) vertical adaptation enables (...) actors and organs to participate and transmit (...) perspectives into the EU policy-making environment.’ (Miles, 2007: 11)⁶¹ Examples of institutional adaptation in the organisational change of local government include the establishment of dedicated officers and teams for European affairs, and even offices in Brussels⁶².

The nature and usage of institutional reform at the local level is primarily informed by local officers who are familiar with their administrations (and themselves the result adaptation).

Table 3.3: Fusion scenarios for the adaptation indicator (see Miles, 2011b)

Fusion scenarios for the adaptation indicator	
Infusion	Strong horizontal and vertical adaptation
Clustered fusion	Uneven horizontal and vertical adaptation restricted to selective policy fields
Defusion	Weak horizontal and vertical adaptation

3.3.4 Action of municipal authorities in relation to EU policies

The action of policy-makers corresponding to downloading processes constitutes a significant part of the fusion literature, and refers to mobilisation to formulate, aggregate and represent governments’ interests in the EU policy-making cycle (Miles, 2007). The

⁶¹ In alternative understandings, vertical mechanisms are based on pressures to adapt to EU policies, whereas horizontal mechanisms are not subject to adjustment pressures to conform to EU policy models as in a hierarchical chain of command (Radaelli, 2003: 41). Although a distinction between ‘voluntary’ and ‘enforced’ adaptation is useful, in the context of fusion adaptation is particularly relevant to enable bottom-up engagement.

⁶² As states, regions and local authorities may follow the example of others and review their own organisation, adaptation is part of an ongoing editing process (Mörth, 2003: 161-162).

action indicator is required to examine the *systemic linkages* and the *fusion* hypotheses. Whilst the adaptation indicator looks at the structures of government at territorial levels, as focused on by MLG type I (see 2.6.2), the action indicator focuses on local mobilisation of interest formulation, aggregation and representation and within local governments. According to Lindh *et al.* (2009: 39), direct and indirect, horizontal and vertical activities are resulting from the shift of local actors' attentions towards Brussels. Such actions can be task-specific, intersecting and subject to flexible governance arrangements across numerous levels, as envisaged by MLG type II.

The new opportunities offered by European multilevel governance have increased the potential of local governments to promote their interests. Local actors are moving beyond the state level to gain autonomous channels of access to EU policy-making. As the Commission relies on local governments to promote its policies and to provide feedback, it fosters multilevel partnerships in policy-formation and implementation and pushes for an enhanced role of local authorities in policy-making⁶³ (Goldsmith, 2003: 121 *et seq.*; Schultze, 2003: 124). How effectively these opportunities can be exploited varies amongst states and amongst different forms of local government, and depends on the position of local authorities in the domestic context, as well as on the availability of resources⁶⁴ and personal contacts⁶⁵ (De Rooij, 2002: 449; Jeffery, 2000: 2 *et seq.*).

As highlighted by institutional fusion, the activation of networks and procedural mechanisms enable actors and interests groups outside the official framework to participate in the EU policy-making cycle (Wessels, Maurer & Mittag, 2003: 56 *et seq.*). In order to promote their interests, local governments and their agents participate in informal networks and establish their own offices in Brussels (De Rooij, 2002: 450).

The fusion thesis emphasises the role of intermediary groups for the evolution of certain European policy areas: a growing number of semi-official and informal, non-hierarchical networks are pushing for channels of access and intense participation in EU policy-making, for example via their own offices in Brussels. These lobbying attempts are

⁶³ Although the influence of the subnational level is for the most part limited to the initial preparation of EU policies, according to Schultze (2003: 135), 'this participative mode of governance, which has superseded earlier forms of hierarchical and cooperative governance, implies significant changes to the 'logic of influence' in EU decision-making and a triangulation of relationships in the evolving EU polity.'

⁶⁴ Some major cities invest the required financial, political and organisational resources to promote their concerns. The range of local action is broad, and it is particularly interesting to look beyond the cohesion policy towards other policy areas relevant for local authorities, for example environmental and social policy (Schultze, 2003: 137 *et seq.*).

⁶⁵ Jeffery (2000) raised highlighted the need to assess whether subnational mobilisation makes a difference in EU policy.

welcome and even promoted by the Commission in order to increase the effectiveness of policy implementation and enhance policy formulation (Wessels, 1997: 282 *et seq.*). The regional and local ‘forceful latecomers’ can extend their influence through new creative and effective action (Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 362).

Vertical action includes the direct lobbying of EU actors and institutions (bypassing paradiplomacy), as well as indirect strategies via the regional and national level (cooperative paradiplomacy) (Tatham, 2010: 78). Horizontal action refers to co-operation and co-ordination amongst local actors to formulate common positions towards EU policies. Horizontal mobilisation is often interlinked with vertical action and serves as a basis for the promotion of interests against higher levels of government (Lindh *et al.*, 2009: 39).⁶⁶ Transnational partnerships between municipalities and the realisation of social and territorial cohesion through programmes and projects contribute to a ‘fusing Europe’ (Derenbach, 2006: 77), since they enable local governments to feed innovative policies into the EU’s agenda (John, 2000: 882; 2001: 72).

The action indicator looks at mobilisation through formal access routes, as well as informal contacts and participation in networks⁶⁷. As the latter are important for vertical and for horizontal engagement, it is worth mentioning that the network approach draws on a number of ideas similar to the fusion literature⁶⁸. Both approaches highlight the role of informal relations between organisations and actors instead of formal institutions⁶⁹

⁶⁶ The action indicator is strongly related to paradiplomacy as it emphasises the importance of transnational networks through which politicians and officials operate and pool powers and resources (Keating, 1999: 14). Though paradiplomacy refers primarily to the involvement of regional governments in international relations, there are also local element parallels to it. As subnational governments become directly exposed to the economic pressures of globalization, they are building capacities for collective action to operate within the emerging transnational regimes, like the EU. The latter offers such opportunities (Aldecoa & Keating, 1999). Paradiplomacy is not regarded as an exclusively vertical concept, since it entails a strong horizontal dimension, not always aiming at higher levels. Paradiplomatic strategies involve horizontal action through transnational links and partnerships and cross-border cooperation (Keating, 1999: 8 *et seq.*).

⁶⁷ Such activities are hard to control by the centre state and therefore may serve to increase local autonomy (Keating, 1999: 8 *et seq.*). The centres of states have lost their monopoly over European policy and cannot exclude subnational authorities from policy-making anymore (Jeffery, 2000: 5). EU institutions and national governments remain the key players, but their agenda-setting and decision-making powers may not automatically lead to a dominating position. Local government networks can exert joint control over policy outcome by initiating proposals serving as references for decision-making and implementation (Goldsmith, 2003: 121 *et seq.*; Schultze, 2003: 135).

⁶⁸ The network approach is also closely linked to the literature on multi-level governance (Fleurke & Willemse, 2006: 85).

⁶⁹ The network approach assumes that ‘The links between central government, interest groups (...), and subnational governmental agencies is a ‘game’ in which all participants manoeuvre for advantage. Each uses its resources, whether constitutional-legal, organizational, financial, political, or informational, to maximize influence over outcomes while trying to avoid becoming dependent on other players. It is a complex game in which the pattern of links within the policy network can range from the tightly integrated policy community to a loosely coupled issue network.’ (Hooghe, 1996: 368)

(Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997: 9). The idea of a ‘network mode of governance’⁷⁰ (Eising & Kohler-Koch, 1999: 5) that spreads into its member states comes close to fusion’s notion of a multilevel compound in which actors from various levels interact. The policy network approach is not a predictive theory (Bache, 2008: 36), but mainly a tool focusing on policy process and interest intermediation (Rhodes, Bache & George, 1996: 370). As Kassim (1993: 3) argues, ‘the utility of the policy network approach is conditioned by the availability of a macro theory’ - as provided by the fusion approach.

Overall, this indicator covers a great variety of different forms of activity, and is most significant for assessing whether local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle in order to exert joint control over public policies. The question is whether local actors are shaping policy outcomes and whether they participate in a cooperative mode of governance in which actors from multiple levels exert joint control over public policies.

Instead of looking in detail at specific examples of EU policies and how they were effectively influenced by local lobbying attempts, this indicator aims to obtain an overview of the range of municipal activities. This indicator relies on elite-interviewing and the interpretations of respondents to examine the contribution of local mobilisation to EU policy-making. In depth studies of specific policy initiatives would be able to assess the effectiveness of vertical and horizontal activities⁷¹. This thesis aims for a more general picture of European engagement and seeks to map the variety of relevant activities and actors, agents, networks and institutions from multiple levels.

Table 3.4: Fusion scenarios for the action indicator (see Miles, 2011b)

Fusion scenarios for the action indicator

Infusion	Strong horizontal and vertical action
Clustered fusion	Uneven horizontal and vertical action restricted to selective policy fields
Defusion	Weak horizontal and vertical action

⁷⁰ Within the European network governance, the Community follows the logic of problem-solving and collective purpose, consociation is a widely accepted policy-making principle. Interest is the rationale for building up relations and also for following agreements (Kohler-Koch, 1999: 25). However, the network mode of governance is not an ever-present phenomenon (Radaelli, 2003: 29).

⁷¹ Vertical action takes place by a direct engagement with EU institutions and actors (bypassing), as well indirectly at the regional and national level (cooperative).

3.3.5 Local actors' attitudes towards European policies and governance

European integration influences norms and values and may transform the interests and preferences upon which action and adaptation takes place (Radaelli, 2003: 36).⁷² It is important to understand how local actors relate individually to European governance and how this affects their formal and informal engagement in European affairs. As only a few attempts have been made to assess the attitudes of local actors, the fusion approach provides a useful link between individual and collective rationales and the systemic dynamic of the Union's evolution. In terms of the third hypothesis, this indicator is exploited to assess whether the fusion approach is able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration.

The micro-fusion perspective offers an explanation of actors' attitudes and their adoption of a positive, balanced or negative value set towards integration (Miles, 2005; 2007: 12). Against three complementary concepts – performance fusion, political fusion and compound fusion - the attitude indicator aims to enlighten local actors' preferences for engagement within the inclusive system of the EU and for the pursuit of their interests against the background of a cost-benefits analysis.

Performance fusion

According to performance fusion, policy-makers adopt a 'performance-related integration mentality' and are willing to support European integration and accept the obligations that come with EU membership in order to benefit from the Union's economic power and to complement their own policy objectives and instruments. Rather than a 'European vision', actors adopt a pragmatic attitude towards the EU (Miles, 2005: 33).

Lindh *et al.* (2009: 41) suggest that actors 'identify themselves as fused into EU-decision-making, and have a stake in political terms in ensuring that the European Union succeeds in order to satisfy domestic policy outcomes even if this affects and complicates daily (...) politics.' The question is to what extent local actors perceive themselves as part of a wider system of governance that delivers beneficial policy outcomes and therefore triggers proactive engagement at the European level. In order to answer this question, an analysis of

⁷² As Featherstone (2003: 12) puts it: 'actors redefine their interests and behaviour to meet the imperatives, norms, and logic of EU membership.'

beneficial and constraining impacts of EU policies proves valuable⁷³. Whereas at the national level policy-makers adopt clear preferences for the economic benefits and weigh them against EU impact, local actors may be less clear about the direct effects of European policies on their municipalities.

Table 3.5: Fusion scenarios for performance fusion (see Miles, 2011b)

Fusion scenarios for performance fusion	
Infusion	Positive/permissive assessment of EU outputs
Clustered fusion	Selective/neutral assessment of EU outputs
Defusion	Negative attitudinal assessment of EU outputs

Political fusion

Political fusion assumes the acceptance of a third-way exit between insufficiently effective intergovernmental cooperation (*de facto* erosion) and the construction of a European federal state that would threaten national sovereignty (constitutional erosion) (Miles, 2005: 35). Since local representatives have only marginal influence on the institutional development of the EU, this concept is clearly less relevant for subnational than for national governments. Bypassing activities can provide a political means to increase local autonomy (Goldsmith, 2003: 121 *et seq.*; Keating, 1999: 8 *et seq.*; Lindh *et al.*, 2009: 41; Schultze, 2003: 124).

Even though the empirical relevance of political fusion may not prove as relevant to explain local preferences towards the nature of European governance, political attitudes form an indicator for fusion processes and link micro- to macro-developments.

Table 3.6: Fusion scenarios for political fusion (see Miles, 2011b)

Fusion scenarios for political fusion	
Infusion	Positive/permissive assessment of supranational integration
Clustered fusion	Selective/neutral assessment of supranational integration
Defusion	Negative/restricting assessment of supranational integration

⁷³ EU funding has traditionally been a major engine for local authorities to engage with the EU and gain direct, obvious benefits. Local governments profit from programmes and support for the exchange of experience and knowledge among local authorities across Europe. For Fleurke and Willemsse (2006: 84 *et seq.*), the beneficial and constraining effects of the EU policies on subnational government, the issue is of an empirical but also of a normative nature. Most member states provide their local authorities with constitutionally guaranteed autonomy, as also acknowledged by the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The EU, however, is not only an arena where local government can promote its interests, particularly through funding opportunities; binding European legislation can also overrule local regulations and foster constraining outcomes that reduce local autonomy.

Compound fusion

The compound nature of the EU's polity offers a great variety of channels and instruments which can be deployed for interests of different actors. As long as the EU delivers the expected political and economic results, national governments and other public and private actors have learned to appreciate the inclusive nature of the EU (Miles, 2005: 38).

Local actors are also expected to appreciate the messy, compound structures of the EU, because it provides them with flexible channels and partnership arrangements to participate in EU policy-making and promote their interests⁷⁴ (Goldsmith, 2003: 121 *et seq.*; Schultze, 2003: 124). The preference for compound fusion is a significant indicator for potential incentives that inform the pro-active engagement of local actors within interactive policy arrangements amongst multiple levels.

Table 3.7: Fusion scenarios for compound fusion (see Miles, 2011b)

Fusion scenarios for compound fusion	
Infusion	Positive/permissive assessment of participation in EU frameworks
Clustered fusion	Selective/neutral assessment of participation in EU frameworks
Defusion	Negative/restricting assessment of participation in EU frameworks

As this indicator focuses on attitudes, its reliance on qualitative interviews is adequate. The application of the micro-fusion perspective faces some analytical challenges. First, the variety of local actors is broad, and therefore representative actors need to be chosen. Instead of considering any local policy-maker or officer within local authorities, this indicator refers to those local actors that are experts on EU affairs. This may cause analytical bias since such actors are socialised towards EU policies, and are therefore more likely to value the benefits of integration and the EU's compound nature than others. Local agents, such as local government associations, provide a complementary representation of common preferences at the local level, but they are expected to be more pro-active than most of their member authorities. Nevertheless, pro-active officers as well as agents are able to reflect on municipal engagement and disengagement more generally.

A second challenge of this indicator includes reasons behind attitudes beyond a cost-benefit analysis, such as the position in the politico-administrative state structure, the

⁷⁴ This depends on the position of local authorities within a member state, as well as on the availability of financial and personnel resources (De Rooij, 2002: 449; Jeffery, 2000: 2 *et seq.*).

economic context, geography, culture, party-alignment and so on⁷⁵. In many member states, local identities are mostly the result of personal everyday experiences. The relationship to higher levels of government requires citizens to relate to ‘imagined communities’ with actors they only know at second hand through institutions, parties or media (Keating, 1998: 87). This thesis accounts for local specific characteristics that underpin actors’ attitudes and chooses its cases studies accordingly⁷⁶.

3.4 Comparing two case studies

Burnham *et al.* (2008: 70) state that the comparison of more than one case provides an empirical basis examining the value of political theory, whilst Hopkin (2010: 285-286) even argues that the development of theory ‘must’ be underpinned by a comparative analysis:

Comparison across several cases (usual countries) enables the researcher to assess whether a particular political phenomenon is simply a local issues or a broader trend. But perhaps the principal function of comparison in political science is that of developing, testing and refining, theories about causal relationships...

In Chrysochoou’s (2001: 8) words, a theoretical approach ‘should also able to identify parallels or suggestive analogies among comparable case studies...’ The five empirical indicators are applied in a comparative research design to explore whether local governments meet the assumptions of the three research hypotheses. With respect to the wide range of phenomena covered by the five indicators, the qualitative methodology of this thesis requires limiting the comparison to two cases without losing in-depth insights. From the comparison of English and German municipalities, conclusions about the impact of two contrasting state arrangements on the dynamics and relevance of fusion can be drawn.

⁷⁵ Loughlin (2001:19) states: ‘The attitude of ordinary citizens towards their subnational levels of government is extremely important’, since they ‘practise’ democracy through elections and participation in the local affairs and decision-making.

⁷⁶ The study addresses neither questions of a European identity and loyalty, nor mutual learning processes on the ground of mutual exchange (Goldsmith, 1997: 8). It neither reflects individual attitudes of local officials nor capture a direct picture of the public opinion of a locality. Although questions of legitimacy, as well as political and social benefits (Mather, 2006:114), are highly interesting in the context of local-supranational relations, this study does not have the capacities to do so. With regard to the theoretical ideas of the fusion approach, legitimacy beyond national elites offers prospects for future research.

Relating to a ‘most similar’ research design, the chosen cases are as different as possible regarding the independent variable and most similar in terms of the intervening variables. As Burnham *et al.* (2008: 70) explain:

Variables (or factors) can be divided into three categories: dependent variables, independent variables, and (...) intervening variables. Dependent variables are the phenomena that we want to explain in the research. Independent variables are the things we suspect influence the dependent variable. Everything else (that is, everything that makes up the social, economic and political context and backdrop of the dependent and independent variables) fits into the third category.

By selecting similar intervening variables, the effects of other social, economic and political factors onto the dependent variable can be eliminated or controlled, as they are similar across all cases. The impact of the independent variable can be isolated as the only different aspect across all cases, and thus be identified as the cause for the outcome of the dependent variable. Notwithstanding the value of a most similar comparison, in reality it is difficult to achieve the desired level of experimental control (Burnham *et al.*, 2008: 74-75; Hague & Harrop, 2007: 92-93).

For this research design, the three research hypotheses (*synergic linkages, fusion, attitudes*) are the dependent variables (see 3.3). The politico-administrative system of a state provides the independent variable determining fusion and is different in both cases. The socio-economic profiles of the investigated local authorities, as the intervening variable, share similar characteristics across both cases. The author emphasises that similarity is a preference amongst the selection of investigated local authorities, but it is not possible to find identical municipalities.

In terms of the independent variable, England and Germany have been chosen as the two cases studies with regard to their politico-administrative systems that are distinct in their regional structures, degree of centralisation and the autonomy of local government. Whereas in Germany’s federal system local authorities enjoy a high level of control over public policies provided for by the German constitution, England represents a strongly centralised structure. This contrast is further manifested in the role of regional government, which is weak in England but in Germany it is amongst the strongest in Europe. Chapter 4 provides a detailed overview of the expected implications of both state arrangements for the dependent variable – the efficacy of the fusion approach for the study of local government (see 4.5).

In order to have intervening variables with similar characteristics, the NWoE and NRW have been chosen as regions that both have declining industries resulting in significant

structural change. Both territories comprise urban and rural areas, and both have a history of European engagement due to the EU's cohesion policy. Within both regions, seven local authorities were chosen with respect to their size, politico-administrative function, socio-economic profile and history of pro-active European engagement (see 4.6). Differences between municipalities allow for a general outlook on local government beyond the common focus on major cities. The examined authorities cover a similar range of profiles in each region. In order to explore rather than simply to test fusion, examples of pro-active municipalities have been chosen, so that one major city and one rural county may provide deeper insights (see 4.7).

In the NWoE, the investigated authorities are Cumbria, Halton, Lancaster, Manchester and Stockport, with a particular focus on Liverpool City and Cheshire West and Chester County (CWAC). The selected municipalities in NRW are Borken, Cologne, Dortmund, Hagen and Iserlohn, and the City of Essen and the County of Steinfurt are highlighted. Liverpool and Essen, as well as CWAC and Steinfurt show similar characteristics in terms of size and socio-economic profile. All authorities are introduced in detail in chapter 4.

3.5 Empirical sources

3.5.1 Written sources

Primary documents and secondary literature are an important source to inform the study's empirical indicators. They complement the findings from elite-interviewing and serve the purpose of triangulation (Burnham *et al.*, 2008: 232). Secondary literature – journal articles, monographs and edited books – underpin this thesis with previous academic analyses of local-supranational relations and subnational mobilisation: they embed the findings of this thesis in a wider academic context (see 1.2); they provide background information of local and regional government in England and the UK (see chapter 4); they enhance the finding of this study by previous research and other case studies and they validate this thesis' finding through further insights of the subject (see chapters 5 and 6). Documentary sources were used to confirm or clarify the findings of the elite-interviews.

A documentary review provides further valuable information about local authorities, relevant politico-administrative structures, legislation, policies and programmes, and the European engagement of local actors. The documents used in this thesis include:

assessment reports; discussion, strategic and policy papers; government declarations; leaflets; legal documents, such as European treaties and the Official Journal of the European Union; meeting minutes; newsletters; practitioner journals; statistical and legal databases; and web pages. Particularly relevant for this study are:

- In order to generate the socio-economic profile of the investigated cases (see 4.7), statistics from the UK Office for National Statistics and the Federal Statistical Office of Germany (*Statistisches Bundesamt*) and those of the *Länder* (*Statistische Landesämter*), as well as the Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*), are used as main sources.
- Documents of EU institutions, in particular the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions, as well as the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, have been consulted in order to understand the context of EU policies and structures in which local government actors operate.
- Local authorities, as well as local government associations and sub-regional agencies, publish useful reports and documents. These have been exploited for the purpose of demonstrating their activities related to EU policies and programmes.
- In order to gain insights into the European engagement of local authorities through regional and national governance/government structures, the NRW ministries, reports of the NWDA and of UK government departments provide significant information.

3.5.2 *Elite interviewing*

In order to understand the articulation of interest and policy-formulation in the context of the EU's complex polity, Maurer and Wessels (2003: 55 *et seq.*) stressed the need for qualitative methods and that a purely quantitative approach would not be sufficient. According to institutional fusion, for example, actors become socialised and develop identities and interests within the European governance system (*op. cit.*: 32); and the micro-fusion perspective explicitly focuses on attitudes, values and perceptions of actors (Miles, 2007: 9).

As the intention of this thesis is to illustrate the meaning of fusion in a municipal context rather than to prove theory, the research design is intended to gain an in-depth understanding by means of a small number of particular cases. Qualitative interviewing was thus chosen as a key methodological tool to investigate the empirical indicators and subsequently to explore the validity of the research hypotheses (see Vromen, 2010: 255).⁷⁷

Elite or semi-structured interviewing is highly effective to gain insights into policy processes and organisational procedures. ‘Snowball’ or ‘referral’ sampling helps to identify key experts relevant to the research objective⁷⁸ (Burnham *et al.*, 2008: 231-233). Except for three interviews by telephone and two responses by email, for this research all interviews were conducted face-to-face according to a pre-set questionnaire arranged and deduced from the five empirical indicators (see questionnaire in appendix). Interviews were guided by the questionnaire in a semi-structured manner, but allowed flexibility to emphasise and/or omit certain questions according to the respondent. Respondents from the investigated local authorities, were asked all questions (though not always in the same order) for the purpose of verification. The transcriptions of each interview were coded and analysed according the themes of the five indicators.

As European engagement at the local level is primarily undertaken by officers instead of local politicians and councillors, the main target group for the interviews were officers within municipal administrations dedicated to European affairs. In all fourteen investigated authorities, interviews were held in person with such officers:

- Eight European (policy) officers were interviewed from Borken, Cumbria, Essen, Hagen, Halton, Iserlohn, Liverpool and Steinfurt
- Two Officers for international relations from Cologne and Dortmund as part of the mayor’s office
- Three external funding officers (with a major focus on European funding) from CWAC, Lancaster, Stockport

⁷⁷ The author assumes that the knowledge and experience of experts offer significant insights to explore fusion in the context of local government (see Mason, 2002: 63).

⁷⁸ Snowball sampling means that interviewees who have been identified through initial research refer to further key actors for subsequent interviews.

- Two officers from the Brussels representations of CWAC and Merseyside

It is noticeable that German municipalities appoint either European or international officers, whilst English authorities are more likely to incorporate European issues under the aspects of funding and economic development.

As the study focuses specifically on Essen, Liverpool CWAC and Essen and sought to confirm the officer perspective by local policy-makers, local councillors from the two English authorities were interviewed in their role as members of the CoR. Liverpool's chief executive answered via email. Except for Cologne, where the head of the city council was interviewed, the attempt to gain access to relevant local policy-makers in Germany was unsuccessful⁷⁹. Despite the limitations of their decision-making powers, the officers interviewed provided significant insights into the European engagement of their municipalities and an 'honest', not always favourable, overview of the Europeanisation and attitudes of their local policy-makers and officers.

As the major agents of local authorities, European policy officers from municipal associations in England and Germany were interviewed in order to provide a more general overview and context of local-supranational relations and to validate the findings of individual authorities. Whilst in England the Local Government Associations (LGA) is the only municipal umbrella organisation, there are three associations for the whole of Germany and two specifically for NRW. Interviews were conducted with:

- Six European policy officers from the German Association of Cities (two respondents), the German Association of Counties, the NRW Association of Counties, the NRW Federation of Towns and Municipalities (see 4.3.3) and the LGA (see 4.2.3).

As regional government/governance arrangements are considered to provide significant procedures to involve local authorities in European affairs, further interviews were held with representatives at the regional level:

- One interview with the head of the former NW Brussels Office. One interview with the Chief Executive of the Voluntary Sector North West. The officers from Halton

⁷⁹ The mayor of Essen referred to the interview with the European officers.

and Lancashire used to be European policy officers for the NW Development Agency and the Regional Leaders Board (see 4.6.1).

- Three respondents from the NRW Ministry for Federal Affairs, Europe and Media. Two members of the NRW parliament (*Mitglieder des Landstages NRW*) who represent NRW in the CoR. One telephone interview with the contact person for Europe, *Euregio* and the Netherlands of the Government District Munster (*Bezirksregierung Münster*).

In total five MEPs were approached to examine their role in local lobbying strategies and the role of local government at the European level:

- One MEP from St. Helens, one per telephone from Wrexham (Wales), one response via email from Manchester, one interview in Aachen and in Dortmund.

The interviews were complemented by an observation of two expert meetings dealing with the European engagement of local authorities:

- One meeting of the North West European Cooperation Group (see 5.4.3) and one meeting of the Euconet research group looking at the role of Cologne in the EU's multilevel governance system.

In total, 36 respondents were interviewed and two expert meetings were attended (see list of interviews). Whilst for NRW all interviews were obtained in 2010/2011, in the NWoE they were conducted in two rounds. The disbanding of the regional structures (see 4.6.1) and the high financial public sector cuts in England led to significant changes in the European engagement of local authorities. The results from 2010/2011 were updated in 2012 with additional interviews.

3.6 Summary of the methodology

In order to meet the overall research objective – providing an understanding of European integration from a local government perspective in the context of the fusion approach – this chapter has shown that various bodies of the fusion literature for the study of local

government in the context of European integration are applied by introducing the five As: *absorption, attention, adaptation, action* and *attitudes*.

The set of indicators serve as the empirical tools to explore the efficacy of the fusion approach against the three hypotheses concerning *systemic linkages, fusion* and *attitudes*. It is noted that the emphasis of the objective lies in exploring fusion dynamics rather than in testing them strictly.

This chapter has further introduced a comparative, most-similar research design, wherein the three hypotheses are the dependent, the politico-administrative system of England and Germany are the independent and the socio-economic profile of the investigated local authorities are the intervening variables.

Finally, the chapter has justified and introduced the usage of qualitative, elite interviewing as the main empirical method for the exploration of theory. It explained the selection of interviewees and how their responses are triangulated with a review of primary and secondary literature and documentary resources.

CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCING THE CASE STUDIES

4.1 Introduction to the case studies

Chapter 3 established a most-similar comparative research design, wherein the politico-administrative systems (regional structures, degree of centralisation, autonomy of local government) of England and Germany have been chosen as the independent variable and the research hypotheses (*systemic linkages, fusion, attitudes*) as the dependent variable (see 3.3).

Even though multilevel governance may have empowered subnational authorities and national governments have lost their exclusive monopoly over EU politics (Hooghe, 1996; Hooghe & Marks, 2001; 2003; Marks *et al.*, 1996), intrastate structures still determine the conditions for subnational mobilisation in relation to the EU (Jeffery, 2000: 3). The interdependency amongst different levels has grown, but the actual influence of local governments has not necessarily increased along with it. The state remains a strong gatekeeper for the involvement of the local level in European affairs. It is autonomy from central and regional government, constitutional rights, access to central decision-making and the allocation of competences⁸⁰ that determine to what extent municipalities engage in Europe (De Rooij, 2002: 448-449; Fleurke & Willemse, 2006).

This chapter will start with an outline of England's and Germany's politico-administrative systems in relation to local government. The comparison of the strongly centralised government structures in England and the strongly decentralised arrangements in the Federal Republic of Germany (independent variable) are expected to have significant implications on fusion's efficacy to explain the role of local government in the integration process (dependent variable).

After outlining local-central relations in both countries (see 4.2, 4.3), the chapter will provide an overview of regional structures and regionalisation processes in general (see 4.4.1), before turning to regional governance arrangements in England (see 4.4.2) and Germany (see 4.4.3). The chapter will subsequently highlight the expected implications of national and regional government structures onto the expected fusion dynamics (4.5).

⁸⁰ Although these criteria are important determinants, local authorities may turn out to be more or less autonomous than their formal constraints would suggest (Fleurke & Willemse, 2006: 72-75).

In order to introduce the examined cases and the socio-economic profile of the case studies (intervening variables), the chapter also outlines specific characteristics of the NWoE (see 4.6.1) and NRW (see 4.6.2), and of the seven investigated municipalities in each region (see 4.7).

4.2 Local government in England

4.2.1 *Status of English local government*

English local government provides a very particular, yet valuable case study to explore the efficacy of fusion for the study of local government. As Marshall (2008: 99-100) states:

In order to properly understand the interaction between UK localities and the EU, researchers must account for local norms and the impact of ‘mediating institutions’ at regional and national level. Taken together, the path-dependent nature of British local authorities and the ‘gate-keeping’ role of Whitehall ensure that unique and long-standing relationships are not subsumed into a reductionist, ‘one-size-fits-all’ paradigm.

Although the United Kingdom shows federal features with regard to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland⁸¹, England itself lacks strong regional structures and is characterised by unitary state patterns (see CEMR – members). England provides a strong contrast to the federal system of Germany and allows for an assessment of the implications of a strongly centralised state arrangement on fusion.

Whereas in most European countries local government is provided with constitutionally assigned autonomy (Fleurke & Willemse, 2006: 84), the UK lacks a written constitution in which the principles of democracy and parliamentary democracy are codified. The state relies on the accumulation of unwritten conventions and written rules, such as parliamentary and common laws⁸² (Loughlin, 2001: 37).

The absence of a constitution leaves municipalities without guaranteed protection of their competences and has significant implications for the autonomy and stability of municipal

⁸¹ Those regions show similar patterns of government as the German *Länder*, such as regional assemblies and clear divisions of competences between the central and regional level.

⁸² In contrast to Germany, the UK thus represents some kind of overarching entity above and separate from civil society.

decision-making⁸³. English local government has to operate in a restraining *ultra vires* framework⁸⁴ and maintains relatively few competences. The strong dependency on top-down decision-making has led to a number of reforms devaluing and restricting the powers, functions and decisions of local government (Bache, George & Rhodes, 1996: 299; Cole & John, 2001: 18-19; Goldsmith, 2002: 93; Hague & Harrop, 2007: 296; Marshall, 2005: 674; 2008: 100; Sellers & Lidström, 2007: 616 *et seq.*; Sullivan, Knops, Barnes & Newman, 2004: 245).

Until the early 20th century, in the ‘golden age of local self-government’, English local government was characterised by great political strength and multi-functionality (Wollmann, 2004: 643). From the 1930s until the present times, however, local government’s power has continuously been reduced (Loughlin, 2001: 39), to such an extent that today local government in the UK is more of a servant of the central government (Mather, 2000: 153). From the 1970s, the British state reformed local government by means of extensive financial and service cutbacks which particularly affected local government in the provision of public services. Between 1974-1979, the Labour government began a retrenchment of the welfare state, which was carried on and stepped up during the 1980s under the Thatcher government. This brought stricter control over local finances and policies, which could have countered the central policy of austerity.⁸⁵ Despite the commitments of the Labour Party after returning to power in 1997 to revitalise local government, there were ‘strong continuities between New Labour and Thatcherism’ with regard to the local government reforms. Although attempts were made to strengthen local political leadership and local executive in order to make them more politically accountable and to counter disenchantment of citizens with their local politics, the reform of public services was still characterised by a tight system of target-driven performance management and direct – particularly financial - control over local authorities by the centre (Laffin, 2009: 23 *et seq.*).

⁸³ The absence of a constitution is more important for the status of local government than the UK’s unitary structure, since unitary states with a written constitution usually grant their local government some general competences. Unlike other European states, the absence of constitutional guaranteed rights makes enables central government to change the rules for local government continuously.

⁸⁴ Central legislation by parliament and its interpretation by the judiciary determine the role and powers granted to the local level.

⁸⁵ Wollmann (2004: 644) suggests that ‘curtailing the powers of the local authorities and (...) strengthening its top-down grip over them’ was aimed at weakening Labour, which was then well established in local government.

4.2.2 The structure of English local government

Local authorities are divided into unitary single-tier authorities and county councils and district councils with two tiers. In two-tier authorities, the county level is responsible for major strategic functions, such as planning, education, social services, road infrastructure, transport, waste disposal, and police and fire services; district councils, as the lower tier, take on functions, like local planning, housing, environmental health, and leisure and cultural services (Goldsmith & Sperling, 1997: 96; Zerbenati & Massey, 2008: 87).

In 2009, some of the two-tier systems of county and district councils were reorganised into new unitary authorities. After the local government reform of 2009 there are 27 shire county councils (first tier, previously 34) and 201 non-metropolitan district councils (second tier, previously 238); 36 metropolitan district councils (single tier); 56 unitary councils (single tier, previously 47); and 33 London boroughs (including City of London) (CEMR, 2007: 227; Office for National Statistics).

In England's 'dual polity', 'high politics', such as external relations and economic management, are traditionally allocated at the central level, and 'low politics' of delivering public services are within local discretion (John, 2001: 30). Parliament makes decisions and local authorities provide and administer services through large, multifunctional bureaucracies⁸⁶ (Cole & John, 2001: 19-20). This discretion, however, is not as clear-cut as in Germany, and the allocation of competences and services is subject to regular changes⁸⁷ (Reilly, 2001: 3-4).

In an ongoing process of marketisation that started in the 1970s, local spending and income has increasingly been placed under control of central government and about 80 per cent of local resources are in the form of grants from central government. An increasing range of public services⁸⁸ have been privatised and become subject to competitive tendering and contracting. Consequently, 'in-house' delivery of services has been significantly reduced, and the exclusive powers of local authorities have been replaced by quasi-governmental organisations (quangos) and partnerships with public agencies and the private and voluntary sector.

⁸⁶ When it comes to the delivery of public services, the British system shows similarities with other welfare states in northern Europe, wherein universal provision of services is determined by the centre and delivered by the localities (Goldsmith, 2002: 95).

⁸⁷ As a result, subsidiarity is hard to apply in England.

⁸⁸ For example, water provision, waste management, as well as vehicle maintenance and some legal services.

The establishment of quangos, as well as the involvement of non-governmental actors, have contributed to a centralised management of local policies for the purpose of meeting the national government's objectives. With the outsourcing of tasks to semi-public and private stakeholders and agencies of central government, the functional scope of local government has been significantly diminished and marginalised. Local authorities have been turned into service coordinators or enablers rather than direct providers, which left them with little ability to make decisions on the quality and nature of services⁸⁹ (Cole & John, 2001: 28-29; Goldsmith & Sperling, 1997: 97-98; Goldsmith, 2002: 95-97; John, 2001: 33; Laffin, 2009: 23 *et seq.*; Loughlin, 2001: 41-144; Marshall, 2005: 674; Wollmann, 2004: 644-646; Zerbenati & Massey, 2008: 87-88).

Wilks-Heeg (2009: 37-38) argues that the 'hybrid of marketisation and centralisation', which was initiated under the previous Conservative government and picked up by New Labour has continued the decay of local self-government and led to a 'precarious' constitutional status of local government⁹⁰ (Mather, 2000: 60).

In order to deliver welfare services in education and social services, local authorities cover about a quarter of total public expenditure⁹¹, whilst central government closely oversees this expenditure and seeks to manage local politics and policies (Laffin, 2009: 24). With total tax revenue of fewer than 5 per cent raised by local government, the latter's financial autonomy is very limited (Wilks-Heeg, 2009: 36).

In correspondence with financial cuts, central government reduced the numbers of local authorities to deliver public services more efficiently (Goldsmith, 2002: 95). Britain has the largest local authorities within the EU, with an average of over 137,000 inhabitants per municipality (Vetter & Soós, 2008: 583; CEMR, 2007: 227)⁹². The establishment of large, cost-effective unitary authorities has led to the estrangement of citizens and communities with their council (Fenwick, McMillan & Elcock, 2009: 6) and eroded the political

⁸⁹ The New Labour strategy continued to foster a shift from local government to local governance by building on partnerships, appointed bodies and multi-agency approaches to coordinate public services across professional and departmental sectors outside the traditional central-local channels. Private sector organisations have attained an even greater role in the delivery of services and advice to central government.

⁹⁰ These developments underline the shift from modes of government to modes of governance as noted above, which has increased the democratic deficit at the local level (Mather, 2000: 53). As Goldsmith and Sperling (1997: 96) point out: 'most commentators agree that British elected local government has undergone a period of remarkable change, which has left it a pale shadow of its former self.'

⁹¹ 22 per cent according to Sellers & Lidström (2007: 617).

⁹² Compared to German authorities with an average size of 6,700 inhabitants.

significance of local government⁹³.

4.2.3 *Relevant actors within English local government*

The main municipal actors relevant for this study involve local councillors and policy-makers, officers and the Local Government Association (LGA). In England, authority is traditionally concentrated on a collective of elected councillors rather than on a single individual. Councillors are the main political actors at the local level by giving an overall policy direction through their membership of powerful committees and by taking political decisions in the council (Hague & Harrop, 2007: 296). Appointed local government officers manage the policies decided upon by the councillors, and lower level officers look after the delivery of services provided by local authorities.

Political parties play an integral role at the local level and they have a long-standing tradition of exerting control over local politics (Cole & John, 2001: 21-23). By 1997, most local authorities were led by Labour followed by the Liberal Democrats. This meant that when the Conservatives ran central government, there was a strong tendency to partisanship and opposition at the local level (Loughlin, 2001: 41-42).⁹⁴ This dynamic has recently re-emerged, and, as will be shown, has a profound impact on the European engagement of local councils.

The LGA is a major actor working on behalf of its member authorities⁹⁵ (Loughlin, 2001: 43). As a reaction to the centralist top-down approach of various governments, over time the LGA has initiated bottom-up activities⁹⁶ (Laffin, 2009: 27) based on informal contacts amongst Ministries and LGA officers (CEMR, 2007: 229 *et seq.*). The LGA is also active in Brussels as the main agent pooling the interests of local authorities across the country.

⁹³ Fenwick *et al.* (2009: 18) further suggested that the disengagement of citizens with their local authorities is caused by policies of central government: 'The uncertain direction of government policy, veering as it does between a new localism and the reinvention of metropolitan conurbations around city-regions, gives no clear sense of direction to anyone. There is a lasting sense that central government does not know what local government is for. It is not surprising therefore that the public tends not to be 'engaged' in debates about local governance.' Cole and John (2001: 20-24) and Wilks-Heeg (2009: 34), agree that citizens are largely ignorant about their local council and councillors, and see their authority primarily as a service provider. This has weakened links between local government and local communities, and nowadays a large section of the population has no engagement with local policies, apart from consuming local services.

⁹⁴ For Philip (1999: 37), the conflict between Labour and the Conservatives is the reason why the British political elite does not trust local politicians and therefore fosters centralisation tendencies.

⁹⁵ Since 1996, the LGA has represented the majority of local authorities in England and Wales *vis-à-vis* the national level and also the European level.

⁹⁶ The LGA does not enjoy a monopoly on policy advice to ministers, but it is in competition with other non-traditional experts and consultative bodies.

4.3 Local government in Germany

4.3.1 Status of German local government

German local government represents a valuable case to compare to their rather constrained counterparts in the centralised, unitary, *ultra vires* structures of England. In the federal system of Germany, central government's control over its subnational entities is constitutionally weak, and regions and municipalities enjoy a high degree of autonomy, whereby the former are essential in determining the discretion of local competences (Goldsmith, 2002: 92 *et seq.*). According to Stammen (1999: 101)

...the overall political structure of the *Bundesrepublik* can be visualized in terms of a large building with three separate but linked storeys consisting first, on the ground floor, of local government, with its municipalities (*Gemeinden*), towns (*Städte*) and districts (*Kreise*) then, on the first floor, of the 16 *Länder* each with its own constitution and political institutions, and finally, on the upper floor, of the federal state with its central state organs.

According to the German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), the Federal Republic of Germany consists of two layers: the Federation (*Bund*) and the federated states (*Länder*). In contrast to England, the German regions constitute a level of government. Municipalities and counties, or districts respectively, are subordinated to the *Länder* and do not constitute an autonomous layer of their own. At the same time, Article 28 of the Basic Law provides local authorities with the right to local self-administration⁹⁷, which means that they can 'regulate all manners of the local community in its own responsibility within the existing legal provisions' (Krichel, 2008: 234; Stammen, 1999: 101; Vietmeier, 1992: 1; Wollmann & Lund, 1997: 58-59; Wollmann, 2004: 650; Wollmann, 2008: 48). In other words, as long as powers and rights are not assigned for higher authorities, municipalities have a general competence to handle all public affairs within their territories (Bullmann, 2001: 88).

Germany's democratic system is explicitly built from the local level (Stammen, 1999: 108). The local is the lowest level of the state's democratic build-up, in which municipalities and counties are responsible for the implementation of regional and federal

⁹⁷ Municipal self-administration equals the English understanding of local self-government. However, according to the German constitutional doctrine, local self-administration emphasises the administrative role municipalities, whereas the political notion of government is exclusively subject to the state levels of *Bund* and *Länder* (Wollmann, 2008: 24-25). Even though it may be argued that the right to self-administration does not equal the right to self-government, the former prevents the state from taking powers away from its municipalities (Münch, 2006a: 83). With respect to the English terminology, it is legitimate to refer local self-government in the context of this study.

laws⁹⁸. Under constitutional doctrine the local authorities do not represent a layer of government in their own right, but are public bodies constituent to the *Länder* (Krichel, 2008: 229; Münch, 2006a: 81-82).

Although constitutionally speaking, municipalities are part of the *Länder*, in terms of functionality in relation to political, administrative and financial practice, the local level is *de facto* the third layer of government in Germany (Bullmann, 2001: 92; Krichel, 2008: 231; Wollmann, 2008: 50). This is underlined by the principle of subsidiarity, which is guaranteed by the Basic Law (Goldsmith, 2002: 92; Münch, 2006a: 83; Stammen, 1999: 101).

4.3.2 *The structure of German local government*

The strong constitutional position of local authorities and their dependency on the regional government significantly affects the discretion of competences and responsibilities conducted by municipalities and counties. The individual constitutions of each *Land* lays out the right of self-government, and the *Länder* have a significant impact on structure of their local authorities (CEMR, 2007: 78-80).

The *Länder* are divided into administrative districts (*Regierungsbezirke*), which are headed by appointed state officials (*Regierungspräsident*) in order to coordinate and supervise the implementation of sectoral policies and programmes (Wollmann, 2001: 155). *Länder* and municipalities cooperate, bargain and negotiate about responsibilities and competences (Goldsmith, 2002: 92). Although the *Länder* hold significant legislative and political powers over their localities, in comparison with other states, German local authorities keep a high political and functional status, and along with Sweden⁹⁹ they are among the strongest local government systems in Europe (Wollmann, 2004: 650-651).

In order to protect local authorities from the impact of higher levels of government, the right of local self-government guarantees municipal sovereignty over a wide range of issues. Within the frames of national and regional legislation and standard setting, municipalities decide on their financial budget, local charges and taxes, internal organisation and administrative reforms, personnel, statutes, economic development,

⁹⁸ Art. 28 of the Basic Law also states that they have to have a democratically elected representation

⁹⁹ The allocation of local revenues is more centralised in Germany than in Sweden.

planning, the provision of social and cultural services, and the procurement of goods and services. Since local authorities on average generate only about half of their revenues from local taxes and service charges, their powers are limited by the financial dependency on higher levels of government¹⁰⁰ (Krichel, 2008: 258 *et seq.*; Münch, 2006a: 83; Wollmann & Lund, 1997: 59-60; Wollmann, 2001: 154).

About 70 to 80 per cent of all regional and national legislation is implemented by local authorities (Wollmann, 2004: 651). Services of general interest are traditionally provided by cities, counties and municipalities¹⁰¹ including services, such as: water and energy supply, waste disposal, infrastructure, public transport, maintenance of hospitals, elderly homes and social welfare, kindergartens, schools, colleges and universities, sport and cultural activities¹⁰² (Bullmann, 2001: 92; Henneke, 2009: 18; Krichel, 2008: 256-257; Wollmann, 2008: 48-49). Together with the *Länder* level, local authorities conduct the 'lion's share' of government administration and public expenditure, whereby about two-thirds of public spending is allocated by municipalities, in particular for the provision of utilities (Bullmann, 2001: 89-92; Wollmann, 2001: 155).

Services of general interest define the strength of local self-administration. Municipalities can deliver services of general interest either directly through their own capacities, through state or municipal enterprises or through private service providers activities (Henneke, 2009: 22). Social services, such as kindergartens and elderly homes, are largely provided by non-profit welfare organisations, which are supported and complemented by local authorities (Wollmann, 2001: 156-157).

Counties (*Kreise*) fulfill a double-function, as they are autonomous territorial authorities, as well as the amalgamation of their member authorities. This means, that counties oversee their municipalities, and they also take a supra-local remit to complement the tasks of their constituent municipalities, when the latter lack in capacities. In county-exempted cities

¹⁰⁰ Despite compensation payments from the *Land*, the financial well-being of municipalities depends primarily on their tax revenues and assets, such as land space and properties.

¹⁰¹ Small authorities with 5,000 inhabitants or less (which make about 80 per cent of all 13,854 German municipalities; CEMR, 2007: 80). usually cover a smaller range of tasks than larger cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants or metropolitan areas (Goldsmith, 2002: 107). In particular, counties and county-exempted cities have to conduct services delegated by the state (Wollmann & Lund, 1997: 59; Wollmann, 2008: 48).

¹⁰² The responsibilities of local authorities are distinguished between voluntary and delegated tasks. Voluntary or optional tasks refer to the provision of education and culture services, public transport, sport and leisure activities, and social institutions. Examples of delegated tasks are the maintenance of municipal roads, water management, local or urban planning, and the building and maintenance of schools (CEMR, 2007: 80; Münch, 2006a: 82-83; Wollmann, 2001: 156).

both municipal levels coincide¹⁰³ (Bullmann, 2001: 92; Krichel, 2008: 249 *et seq.*).

Despite the right of local self-government, the increasing financial dependency on the *Länder* and the *Bund* has led to a restriction in the political capabilities and autonomy of local authorities¹⁰⁴ (Bullmann, 2001: 92; Krichel, 2008: 286-288; Stammen, 1999: 102). Financial deficits, together with the liberalisation policies of the European Commission, have led to marketisation processes in the public utilities sector. As a result, an increasing number of authorities have privatised some of their services and have given up important features of their traditional competences (Wollmann, 2004: 654; Wollmann, 2008: 51-52).

Notwithstanding some restrictions of local autonomy, municipal self-government still provides the basis for the federal arrangements of Germany (Stammen, 1999: 102). Wollmann (2004: 661) states that ‘Sweden’s and Germany’s traditional type of democratically accountable, multi-functional and territorially viable local government does relatively well in achieving the triad of policy co-ordination, democratic participation and political accountability.’ The strong constitutional status of local governments in Germany allows for political stability and protects them from central government’s caprice, unlike the position of the local level in England.

4.3.3 Relevant actors within German local government

Since the early 1990s, all *Länder* have directly elected mayors (*Bürgermeister*) and most of them have directly elected heads of the counties (*Landrat*). As mayors are directly elected by the citizens, they are provided with strong legitimacy and independence, and are powerful municipal actors¹⁰⁵ (Bullmann, 2001: 93; Schaap, Daeman & Ringeling, 2009: 238; Wollmann, 2008: 87-88).

In contrast to the UK, the high turnouts of around 70 per cent on average at municipal

¹⁰³ County-exempted cities have a sufficient number of inhabitants and administrative capacities to meet the tasks of counties and county-constituent authorities at the same time.

¹⁰⁴ As the costs for social welfare have grown under the crisis of the welfare state and the corresponding unemployment, and local tax revenues have declined, local authorities face severe financial difficulties to conduct additional activities. About 80 per cent of municipal tasks are delegated, and only 20 per cent or less are based on local initiatives.

¹⁰⁵ After the Second World War, the *Länder* in West Germany adopted different systems municipal leadership. Under the influence of British occupation, for example, NRW and Lower Saxony introduced elected municipal councils with strong competences and appointed, professional full-time executive and mayors with a symbolic role. With the abolition of the strict separation between political executive and local administration (dual leadership), ‘executive’ mayors became head of the local council¹⁰⁵ and administration.

elections indicate a high acceptance of local governments as providers of local democracy and identity (Wollmann, 2001: 158).¹⁰⁶ Mayors in NRW are characterised by a political rather than by an administrative background¹⁰⁷. Unlike in other *Länder*, in NRW the elections of mayors take place at the same time as the elections of the local councils. Municipal elections are therefore strongly connected to party politics and only few mayors do not belong to a political party. Despite the strong role of mayors, local councils have asserted themselves as significant decision-making and monitoring organs¹⁰⁸ (Wollmann, 2008: 91-92).

The three nation-wide umbrella associations are major municipal agents representing local governments. The *Deutsche Städtetag* (German Associations of Towns) represents major and middle-sized cities; the *Deutsche Städte- und Gemeindebund* (German Federation of Towns and Municipalities) comprises smaller and county-constituent municipalities and towns; and the *Deutsche Landkreistag* (German Association of Counties) involves counties. In addition, there are regional local government associations within the *Länder*.

Since individual local authorities are not provided with formal access to federal decision-making, their associations represent them *vis-à-vis* the national government and the EU¹⁰⁹. The associations have established themselves as important lobbyists for municipal interests and they have an advisory role on legal issues relevant for local government at the federal and the regional levels (Bullmann, 2001: 99; Wollmann, & Lund, 1997: 60).

4.4 Regions and local government

As the previous sections on Germany have shown, status and competences of local government are not only determined by the relationship between the national and local level, but also by regional structures. In a number of EU member states the regional level is a key factor for the role of local governments within their politico-administrative

¹⁰⁶ Although local elections have lower voting turnouts than those of the *Länder* and the federal parliament, Stammen (1999: 109) suggests that this intensification of democracy also affects the way in which ordinary citizens have an opportunity to participate in the political process. To the extent that he or she is simultaneously citizen of a town, a *Land*, and the *Bundesrepublik*, her or she has a civic responsibility at all three levels (and now also at the European level).

¹⁰⁷ This is different in *Länder* such as *Baden-Württemberg*.

¹⁰⁸ This is even more the case when mayors are highly dependent on their political party, as in NRW.

¹⁰⁹ Although the municipal associations maintain good relationships with the national ministries, the formal basis for consultation procedures are only laid out in the rules of procedure of the *Bundestag* and the *ministries*. Consultation of local representatives is neither constitutionally nor legally binding, and obligation to do so is weak. Municipalities would like to see an improvement of their consultation rights at the national level (CEMR, 2007: 81; Münch, 2006a: 210-15; Münch, 2006b: 356-357).

arrangements. Through the EU's regional and cohesion policy, the importance of regional governance has even grown in order to manage the implementation of funding schemes.

As noted above (see 3.3), the politico-administrative system of the investigated cases is the independent variable. The degree of centralisation is manifested in the role of regional government, which is weak in England but in Germany is amongst the strongest in Europe. The regional level is worth a closer examination for several reasons: the regional meta-level is part of the politico-administrative structures of a state and therefore of the independent variable. Hence, regional governance arrangements affect and determine the dependent variable, namely top-down and bottom-up processes between the EU and municipalities. Thereby, local, regional and national levels are assumed to interact within compound governance arrangements¹¹⁰. Lastly, regional units are considered as they provide an advantageous territorial scope to gather together a valuable range of different local authorities.

In order to introduce the regional context of this study, this section of the chapter provides a short overview of regions and their structures, and notions of regionalism and regionalisation before it turns its focus specifically on English and German regions.

4.4.1 Regions, regionalism and regionalisation

The status and powers of local government are strongly dependent on the relationship between the regional and the local level. The NWoE and NRW have been selected as territorial references of this study with regard to their regional government/governance arrangements. Before looking at English and German regions, this section therefore provides a short excursion into the nature of regions.

As Jones and Scully (2010: 7) point out: 'defining Europe's regions is difficult.' Considering the different meanings attached to the notion of a region, there is no single definition of what makes a region. Generally speaking, regions represent an intermediate space between the state and local government. However, this notion refers to units of local government, to metropolitan regions or to rural provinces, and even within a state, the notion of regions differs. In Germany, for example, some regions constitute *Stadtstaaten*,

¹¹⁰ Although a clear-cut distinction between different levels might be more applicable in the German than in the English case, it is expected to find cooperative patterns amongst local and regional levels within both states.

such as Hamburg, Bremen and Berlin, while others are *Flächenstaaten* with large territories, like NRW. It is not sufficient to define a region only by its geography, as it is also the political, social, economic and functional scope that makes a region (Keating, 1998a: 79-80).¹¹¹

It is an option to define regional spaces as geographic units. The EU's geocode standard, for example, divides regions into NUTS 1, 2 and 3¹¹² classifications according to three principles – size¹¹³, administrative division and geographical units¹¹⁴. Whilst Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the English regions and the German *Länder* belong to NUTS 1; NUTS 2 usually comprises counties or districts; and NUTS 3 represents a meso-level.¹¹⁵

In addition to a geographic division of regions, Gren (1999: 11-12) suggests three different types of regions can be distinguished: first, a region can be based on a functional purpose to pool common interests and preferences; secondly, a region can be determined by its common culture and identity¹¹⁶; thirdly, regions can primarily represent an administrative arrangement created by national government decisions. The latter type of regions can be found in Britain and in the German *Länder* and provide the point of reference for the selection of the study's cases.

The study also accounts for a regional dynamic beyond formal arrangements. When local governments struggle to fulfil their tasks and objectives individually, they may establish horizontal interdependent arrangements that are larger than municipalities but smaller than the established administrative units. The EU's regional policy, for example, promotes horizontal (sub-) regionalisation processes in the context of functional partnerships. The functional relevance of regions as sub-entities (sub-regions) or as cooperative arrangements across administrative borders has high relevance for the study of local

¹¹¹ As Keating (1998b: 11) puts it: 'A region is the result of the meeting of various concepts of space. It is also an institutional system, either in the form of a regional government or as a group of institutions operating in territory.'

¹¹² NUTS – Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques.

¹¹³ NUTS 1: 3-7 million inhabitants; NUTS 2: 0.8-3 million; NUTS 3: 150,000-800,000 (Eurostat, 2011).

¹¹⁴ This hierarchical classification serves statistical, analytical and political purposes by defining major socio-economic regions (NUTS 1), basic regions for the application of regional and cohesion policies (NUTS 2) and small regions for specific diagnoses (NUTS 3) (Eurostat, 2012).

¹¹⁵ Despite their statistical value this classification does not always reflect real politico-administrative entities, and even if they do, their powers vary widely across and within member states (Jones & Scully, 2010: 3, 6). The standardised categorisation across the variety of European regions is 'difficult' (Newman, 2000: 900) and arguably even a 'misconception' (John, 1997: 243), and it may have little meaning for the political processes of a region.

¹¹⁶ For a detailed discussion of cultural and identity regionalisation see Perrin, 2012.

government¹¹⁷, as they are linked to vertical and horizontal mobilisation processes of the local level. Regionalisation is part of a polycentric mode of governance across a larger number of collaborating levels and actors, thus an important aspect of potential fusion dynamics, as well as of MLG type II (see 2.6.2)

In addition to its functional aspects, regionalism, or regionalisation respectively¹¹⁸, also refers to the rise of regional identity and territorial-based systems of action in the light of internationalisation tendencies and global economic impact¹¹⁹. In contrast to previous notions of regionalism, which are associated with particularist movements, during the 1990s a ‘new regionalism’ evolved relating to functional autonomy (Perrin, 2012: 461-463). These developments involved two major features: firstly, regions have emerged as political arenas in which resources are allocated and policies are initialised and decided upon; second, regions have competed with each other over investments and markets, and engaging with international regimes (Keating, 1998a: 74-78; Keating, 1998b).¹²⁰

Regionalisation processes are often linked to the evolution of European multilevel governance. In some member states European integration and political decentralisation have been mutual reinforcing processes (Rowe, 2011: 34). The expansion of European policies provided opportunities for partnerships amongst localities (Mawson, 1998: 226-227) and for economic cooperation and institutional development of regions (Newman,

¹¹⁷ Benz *et al.* (2000: 13-17) describe regionalism as the establishment of regions as reference frameworks for policy-making and for the allocation of new powers and competencies: ‘In general terms, regionalism denotes an ideology, a political or social movement or a practice that seeks to create a new spatial unit in which political processes can take place and whose boundaries are not coterminous with those of existing territorial subdivisions of the state.’

¹¹⁸ In contrast to the ‘old’ notion of regionalism, which describes a top-down process driven by states in the 1960s and 1970s¹¹⁸, regionalisation (or the ‘new’ regionalism) means a bottom-up approach encouraged or driven during the 1980s and 1990s by global and European integration (Gren, 1999: 10-11; Keating, 1998b: 16). European structural policy and the principle of subsidiarity, along with challenges and opportunities of the common market, have stimulated local and regional authorities to formulate new models of development and an engagement with EU institutions (Loughlin, 2001: 24-25).

¹¹⁹ Whilst regions have gained greater attention to manage economic change on territories, states have become less important for the definition and reproduction of national identities and culture. In a process of territorial fragmentation, new public spaces and spatial systems emerge in the form of regional entities with their own internal logics.

¹²⁰ Gren (1999: 16 *et seq.*) identifies five factors that are part of the new regionalism. Firstly, as globalisation shapes local and national identities, regions have to adapt their institutions and develop their own strategies to manage the impact of globalisation. Second, in order to soften the global impact, regions seek to use the economic advantages of the global market by creating regional development agencies and becoming important actors and lobbyists, for example, via organisations such as the Assembly of European Regions or the Council of Communes and Regions of Europe. Third, the EU has been an important driving force for the new regionalism, particularly through provisions of the Maastricht Treaty and the revision of the structural funds. Fourth, in addition to the direct impact of the structural funds, European integration has also indirectly fostered the growth of a regional consciousness. Finally, subnational paradiplomatic activities and the involvement in interregional and cross-boarder networks are challenging national policies and can be seen as a forerunner of integration. These five aspects of regionalisation processes refer to the creation of functional spaces in which local authorities seek to manage common global and European challenges through horizontal cooperation even across borders.

2000: 899). At the same time, many regions initialised paradiplomatic activities¹²¹ outside of their national borders and participated in transnational networks and projects (Perrin, 2012: 461 *et sec.*).

Notwithstanding the role of European integration for the new regionalism, rather than understanding regionalisation dynamics as either being top-down or bottom-up driven, in practice they are driven by what Sturm and Dieringer (2005: 282) call ‘a complicated and instable mixture of motives’ (also Newman, 2000: 900). Consequently, Jones and Scully (2010: 8-9) suggest that state-regionalism (top-down), regional-regionalism (bottom-up) and Euro-regionalism (driven by the needs to adapt to European integration) are interacting forces.¹²² Chapters 5, 6 and 7 show that the mix of state-, regional- and Euro-regionalism is an important aspect of potential fusion dynamics at the local level.

4.4.2 English regions and local government

English regions as functional spaces

When Labour came to power in 1997, they proposed an asymmetrical centralisation for the UK, which was partly stimulated by decentralisation processes within the EU and its member states¹²³. Whereas Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have undergone a strong devolution process and regional government structures since 1999, this has not been the case for England (CEMR, 2007: 226; Jeffery, 2000: 7).

As England does not have a strong, constitutionally determined regional tier, regional governance is the result of top-down regionalisation processes (state-regionalism), as well as of European policies (Euro-regionalism). Traditionally, individual local authorities have

¹²¹ The term paradiplomacy originally referred to the external action of the Canadian and North-American states and provinces. In contrast to traditional diplomacy, Paradiplomacy relates primarily to economic and cultural interests (Perrin, 2012: 461).

¹²² Webb and Collis (2000: 862) ascribe a normative bias to the new regionalism and challenge its assumptions of the ‘hollowing out’ of the state and the emancipation of regions as a response to global economic demands. Depending on the ability of different levels to allocate new resources and competencies, as well as upon the national political culture and the existing regional institutions, the interplay of different regionalism dynamics affect the domestic structures of a state. In correspondence with the level of autonomy, political power and constitutional structure within Europe, regionalisation processes range from fully federal systems (Germany) to weak forms of functional regionalisation in unitary states (Britain) (Newman, 2000: 898).

¹²³ The Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly gained extensive, primary legislative powers, and the Welsh Assembly was provided with secondary legal competences for the application of UK legislation.

followed their own economic strategies rather than favouring a regional approach (Philip, 1999: 28).

During the 1990s the Commission adopted a preference for cooperating with more coherent sub-national entities than the larger number of local authorities (John, 1997: 243). The absence of a regional tier limited the abilities of local authorities to cooperate as equal partners with regional partners from other member states (Goldsmith, 1997: 215, 221).¹²⁴ Local policy-makers responded to these challenges by setting-up partnerships and creating coalitions of regional interest. Such regional cooperation has subsequently led to joint lobbying strategies, regional networking activities and regional offices in Brussels, and to greater political cohesion within a region¹²⁵ (John, 1997: 235-239; Rowe, 2011). Although the strongly centralised system in England has been and still is an impediment for successful intraregional cooperation, consensus partnership became the new model of cooperation in order to overcome institutional fragmentation within English regions (Mawson, 1998: 227-228).

In contrast to the German *Länder*, English regions remain primarily functional spaces with weak institutional arrangements and political capacity, destined to promote economic development¹²⁶ (Le Galés, 1998: 264). In the 1990s regional mobilisation took place, but it was primarily initiated and funded by central government for the purpose of planning and for the allocation of Structural Funds¹²⁷ (Fenwick, McMillan & Elcock, 2009: 9; Loughlin, 2001: 56).

English regional governance structures

As regional identification is traditionally low in England and their political role marginal, English regionalisation has not emerged through organic, bottom-up processes, but has

¹²⁴ In England, local authorities fulfilled a role, which in other member states had been assigned to elected regional authorities. Regionalism suggests that it depends on a region's institutional capacity how advantageously common relations, motivation and knowledge can be deployed (Webb & Collis, 2000: 858).

¹²⁵ Because of sub-regional rivalries, the success of regional partnerships has varied across England with some regions adopting closer cooperation than others. While the North for example maintained good regional relations, the West Midlands did cooperate to a fair degree, and the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside struggled to establish regional partnerships.

¹²⁶ Except for some places with strong regional identities, such as Cornwall and the North East, regionalism is only marginally rooted in the English tradition. Unlike Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, there are no clear geographical borders separating English regions, and regional identity is usually determined by what does not belong to a region rather than in a positive definition. The local level, where identity is much stronger, could offer potentially a better starting point to build governance upwards. However, as Le Galés (1998: 249) argues, local authorities generally accept regions as a level of coordination rather than as regional centralisation towards a level of government.

¹²⁷ The London Greater Authority represents the only directly elected regional authority in England.

been subject to the functional logic of central government (state-regionalism)¹²⁸. As the initiative of the Blair administration to grant more executive powers to some elected regional assemblies in England failed by referendum¹²⁹ (Fenwick, McMillan & Elcock, 2009: 6-13), regional governance structures were developed during the 1990s with the primary aim to create functional spaces for economic development. The establishment of the English Government Offices (GOs) and the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) represented regional institutionalisation processes for the purpose of delivering central government programmes and policies. The influence of central government in defining the objectives and functions of the regional level remained strong, and the constraints on autonomous regional strategies high (Webb & Collis, 2000: 859-861).

The regional level gained in significance with the establishment of ten GOs in 1994¹³⁰, despite the continuing control of central government. As the managing authorities for the Structural Funds, the initial purpose of the GOs was twofold. On one hand, they represented the departments of central government in the region to control and coordinate regeneration, economic development and applications for European Structural Funds within each region¹³¹. On the other hand, they represented the English regions to central government and the Commission. From 2006, the role of the GOs moved from a top-down to a bottom-up mechanism as their focus shifted towards the support of local and regional strategies and transformation processes (Goldsmith, 2002: 105; Laffin, 2009: 30 *et seq.*; Mather, 2000: 157; Mawson, 1998: 223-224).

Although in 2011 the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition closed the GOs and transferred some of their responsibilities to government departments, other bodies had emerged and fostered regional mobilisation. Eight RDAs were set up outside London in 1999 by the Labour government which initially limited the ability of local authorities to decide autonomously over economic development, planning, transportation and environmental matters¹³². At the same time, Regional Assemblies were established in each region representing local authorities *vis-à-vis* the RDAs, central government and the EU.

¹²⁸ In contrast, in Scotland, Wales and Ireland devolution has been strongly driven by a common culture and identity (regional-regionalism).

¹²⁹ Since 1992, the Campaign for a Northern Assembly sought to introduce a democratically elected regional assembly in the North East, which was followed up by a Constitutional Convention in 2002. However, in 2004 the establishment of such a regional assembly in the North East was rejected in referendum. This showed that the prospect of elected regional governments could not make into the political mainstream, and consequently no other referenda were held.

¹³⁰ Merseyside had its own GOs until 1998 when it merged with the GO for the North West.

¹³¹ This resulted in bypassing the activities of major local authorities, such as Manchester.

¹³² The RDAs involved representatives from local governments within a region and strong representation from the business sector in order to assist and control economic development of local communities.

The RDAs, however, were not responsible to the Regional Assemblies but to central government. Over time, the RDAs took over the responsibility for economic development and the allocation of European funding from the GOs and further contributed to regionalisation processes (CEMR, 2007: 226; Goldsmith, 2002: 101; Zerbenati & Massey, 2008: 87). Whilst the Regional Assemblies were already abolished between 2008 and 2010, in spring 2012, the coalition government disbanded the RDAs in favour of a localist approach.

Despite the initial top-down regionalisation, the creation of regional governance structures promoted regionalisation processes and played an important role in lobbying attempts in Brussels. With the introduction of administrative units by central government, sub-regions and cities began to adopt a wider regional focus and offices from the same region began to work cooperatively and presented themselves under a joint profile¹³³. The interaction of actors from the local and regional level supports the assumption of compound policy arrangements, as envisaged by fusion. The ‘disbanding of English regions’ in favour of localist and sub-regional strategies, for example supported by the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) (see 4.6.1) has had a significant impact on fusion dynamics at the local level.

4.4.3 German Länder, sub-regions and local government

Cooperative federalism

Germany represents almost the raw model for cooperative federalism with a functional division of powers among different levels of government, whereby the strong participation of the federated units in federal decision-making compensate for their obligation to implement federal policies (Börzel, 2005: 249). In this so-called *Politikverflechtungsfalle*, policy processes are ‘trapped’ by the constraints of joint decision-making (Jeffery, 2008: 588; also Scharpf *et al.*, 1976; 1985).

Unlike English regions, the *Länder* are not just administrative authorities, but in fact states (Krichel, 2008: 229). Under the status of ‘autonomous statehood’ the *Länder* are equipped with competences to structure politics and policies within their territory, and they

¹³³ In the absence of an elected, regional tier of government, British sub-national offices in Brussels tended to take the form of a loosely based coalition of regional interests, which involved some form of local authority grouping, but also encompassed wider regional interests, such as business organizations, the further and higher education sectors, as well as private companies. (Moore, 2007: 276)

participate in the decision-making process at the federal level (Maurer, 2003: 131).

The majority of the 16 *Länder* did not grow organically, but were artificially created after the Second World War. They vary significantly in size, population and economic structures. Whilst for example, Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen are comparatively small city-states, NRW has a population of over 17 million. The *Länder* are provided with a few exclusive legal competences in areas such as cultural policy, education, media, municipal affairs and police service. Through the *Bundesrat*, the *Länder* are co-legislators at the national level¹³⁴ (Bullmann, 2001: 89-90; Stammen, 1999: 106; Wollmann & Lund, 1997: 58).

In contrast to the federal system in the United States, rather than the strict division powers of German federalism emphasises interlinked competences and shared tasks and responsibilities (Benz, 1998: 115; Bullmann, 2001: 83, 87; Stammen, 1999: 103). Instead of having a single decision-making centre, as in England, the vertical division of power is part of a complex system of ‘political interwovenness’ (Maurer, 2003: 117). This is complemented by a horizontal distribution of power and control. As Stammen (1999: 101) points out: ‘Above all, the federal and *Land* levels operate, in association with each other, as a system of double (horizontal and vertical) distribution and control of power; therein lies one of the most important constitutional functions of federalism in Germany.’

In the course of a development towards a system of cooperative federalism, the exclusive competences of the *Länder* have been reduced in number and scope¹³⁵. As an offset to balance the reduction in responsibilities, the *Bundesrat* has gained more areas of influence and about 60 per cent of the national legislation has become dependent on the approval of the *Länder* (Benz, 1998: 115; Börzel, 2005: 249; Bullmann, 2001: 89; Stammen, 1999: 103).

Within the legal frameworks of the *Länder*, the municipal umbrella organisations at the regional level have varying rights of consultation either by constitutional, legal or procedural provisions¹³⁶ (Münch, 2006b: 358). As local authorities are subordinated to the *Länder*, the latter claim presentation of municipal concerns *vis-à-vis* at the national and

¹³⁴ Unlike a senate, members of the *Bundesrat* are delegates from the *Länder* governments and not directly elected.

¹³⁵ Since the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, the federal level has expanded its power through the usage of concurrent and framework legislation which has to be implemented by the *Länder* as in order to create uniform living conditions.

¹³⁶ The *Länder* have rejected the municipal umbrella organisations at the national level to participate in the decision-making of the *Bundesrat*.

European level as their constitutional responsibility¹³⁷. When the *Länder* include their local authorities within their EU-related engagement, it takes place on an informal basis (Münch, 2006a: 211-216).

The Länder in the EU

European integration locked the *Länder* into a multiple framework of joint decision-making (*doppelte Politikverflechtung*) (Moore & Eppler, 2008: 488-490). As the *Länder* obtained formal influence over EU policies through their representation in the Council of Ministers and the CoR, they appointed their own European Affairs Commissioners or Delegates to co-ordinate their European engagement with the federal level (Maurer, 2003: 133). This has led to greater complexity within Germany's federal system, and has further interlocked the responsibilities of the *Länder* in a 'joint decision-making trap' (*Politikverflechtungsfalle*) that constrains their autonomy not only through the federal government but also through the European level (Jeffery, 2008: 588).

As Moore (2008: 525) observes, 'there is an awareness within Brussels networks of the strong constitutional resources and domestic political hitting power which the German *Länder* can bring to any advocacy coalition.' In consideration of the rich literature on the European engagement of the German *Länder*, this section of the chapter gives a short overview of their role in European multilevel governance. As municipalities are subordinated to the *Länder*, status, engagement and even fusion of the *Länder* in European politics have significant implications for fusion dynamics of local government.

With the 1986 Single European Act, the establishment of the Single Market and the foundation of the EU, the *Länder* felt the threat of an increasing centralisation of policy-making and the progressive transfer of national and regional powers to the European level. In order to counterbalance such effects, the *Länder* pursued more defensive strategies related to the EU than those of other European regions, which perceived the EU as an opportunity to upgrade their position within their domestic arrangements (Benz, 1998: 111-112; Bullmann, 2001: 106; Moore, 2010: 54; Stammen, 1999: 115-116; Wollmann & Lund, 1997: 60).

¹³⁷ The representation of local government through regions is particularly relevant for European affairs, where the heterogeneity of political positions would further increase with the formal involvement of local representatives. More participation rights at the national level would also potentially undermine the status of the *Länder* in relation to municipalities, and therefore such adjustments would require constitutional adjustments.

In 1992, the so-called ‘Europe Article’ 23 of the Basic Law was introduced, which requires the consent of the *Bundesrat* for the transfer of sovereignty to the European level, and makes it mandatory that the *Bundesrat* participates in the preparation and definition of national positions within the Council of Ministers. Additionally, a minister of the *Länder* has to be represented in the national delegation within the Council, when their exclusive responsibilities are affected (Börzel, 1999: 584; Bullmann, 2001: 106; Jeffery, 2003: 100-101; Maurer, 2003: 133-135; Moore, 2010: 55; Rechlin, 2004: 24; Reilly, 2001: 6; Rowe, 2011: 58 *et seq.*; Stammen, 1999: 116; Wilson, 2000: 26; Wollmann & Lund, 1997: 61).

As the *Länder* were well equipped with capacities to lobby at national and European levels, they have been the vanguards of subnational mobilisation, pushed for institutionalised participation rights and developed as important actors on the European stage (Benz, 1998: 111; Börzel, 1999: 585; Rowe, 2011: 68).¹³⁸ As Wilson (2000: 26) pointed out: ‘The German *Länder* are definitely the staunchest advocates of a Europe of the Regions and of allowing regions a say in the European political process.’ The *Länder* were strong advocates of the principle of subsidiarity within the Maastricht Treaty and later within the Constitutional or Lisbon Treaties respectively. An important success of the *Länder*’s efforts (together with Belgium and Spanish regions and later the Austrian *Länder*) was the establishment of the CoR¹³⁹ (Bauer, 2006: 24; Bullmann, 2001: 106; Jeffery, 2003: 101; Moore, 2010: 55-56, 71; Münch, 2006a: 92 *et seq.*; Stammen, 1999: 116; Wollmann & Lund, 1997: 61).

Despite their previous commitment idea of a Europe of Regions, the *Länder* have refocused on the access to national decision-making as a means to influence EU policies¹⁴⁰ (Benz, 1998: 118; Börzel, 1999: 586; Bullmann, 2001: 106; Moore & Eppler, 2008: 495; Moore, 2010: 56-58; Reilly, 2001: 7). The recent approach of the *Länder* shows an individualisation and competition amongst their policies rather than a unified policy. Instead of pro-active strategies, the *Länder* seek to protect their existing competences, particularly in the field services of general interest, and the promotion of their domestic

¹³⁸ The *Länder* governments have introduced special ministries or departments for European affairs and set up permanent representations in Brussels (Benz, 1998: 118). They have participated in about 300 working groups of the Commission and the Council of Ministers in order to influence the implementation of policies. Even though their diplomatic skills in the negotiations with other Member States and in the Council were inferior to those of the national government, especially the larger and resourceful *Länder* have been successful in shaping EU legislation in its early stage independently from their national government via well-equipped Brussels offices (Moore, 2010: 59-69).

¹³⁹ The CoR was more significant than its predecessor, the Committee of Regional and Local Bodies. However, it was far less powerful than the *Länder*’s ambitions.

¹⁴⁰ The diversity of interest represented in the CoR prevented it from meeting the *Länder*’s high expectations to influence EU policies. At the same time, the *Länder* disagreed with the policies of the Commission leading to a discord in their relationship.

autonomy (Jeffery, 2003: 105-106; Moore, 2010: 73).¹⁴¹

The commitment of the *Länder* to the EU has shifted from instinctive support and depends now on the EU's capacities to meet their needs. As Jeffery (2003: 107) points out: 'Their refrain from the Single European Act to Maastricht was one of 'let us in'; it is now one of 'let us alone'.' Despite the *Länder*'s attempts to re-establish regional and municipal autonomy, their hopes for a federal-like separation of powers between European, national and regional level do not meet the realities of integration¹⁴². This is not to say that regional government structures will be replaced, but that inner- and interstate interaction within multilevel partnerships continues to evolve. Even though the *Länder* are able to veto integrative developments in the *Bundesrat*, they have become part of a wider fusion process (Wessels, 2000: 298 *et seq.*).

German sub-regions and local government

Fusion dynamics at the local level are not only subject to the *Länder* level, but also involve sub-regional mobilisation enabling European engagement through joint capacities. The cultural and historical basis of the *Länder* is fairly weak and does not attract as much popular identification as the state, local communities or regional units that are not identical with the *Länder* boundaries. Neither do economic regions, such as industrial districts or production clusters, coincide with the *Länder*. Below the *Länder* level there are sub-regional units operating in overlapping territorial and institutional settings which look for joint problem-solving capacities (Benz, 1998: 112-114).

Regional policy has been a means of the *Länder* governments (as well as of central government) for stimulating competition and developments and coordinating policies between sub-*Länder* regions (Benz, 2007: 422-429). As Benz (1998: 129) suggests, 'regionalisation in Germany is promoted by pragmatic considerations rather than political ideologies, by administrative concerns rather than political conflicts, by economic

¹⁴¹ The engagement of the *Länder* in the forerun of the Constitutional Treaty, which was partly triggered by them to define issues of subsidiarity and the delineation of competences, provide a good example of their behaviour. Whilst some *Länder* wanted to increase participation rights at the European level, others focused on protecting their autonomy (Bauer, 2006: 24-29). As Moore (2010: 73) puts it: 'Despite having some of the most far-reaching legislative powers of any EU regions, the German *Länder* are no longer in the vanguard of driving change at the EU level, nor in pushing for greater inclusion of the 'regional perspective' in European policy decisions in the EU. They lag far behind some of the newer 'constitutional regions' in Europe, not least the UK regions, which have deployed a much more pro-active approach to developing opportunities for action at the EU level.'

¹⁴² The division of powers envisaged by the German constitution could not stop a shift from the strict allocation of competencies towards a system of cooperative paradiplomacy and non-hierarchical governance.

development rather than ethnic cleavages.’

European regional policy has fostered regionalisation (Euro-regionalism) based on very weak institutional structures within a *Land* or across its borders. The *Länder* take a key role within regionalisation processes and initialised regionalisation by making regional cooperation mandatory to obtain structural funds; by transforming voluntary regional self-organisation into formal horizontal and vertical cooperation processes; by encouraging regional networks as an instrument of governance. Inter-authority cooperation has been manifested through joint regional offices established by local authorities; through the introduction of special units within the office of a senior official of a municipality or a county; or through departments within an administration made responsible for regional cooperation (Wilson, 2000: 53 *et seq.*).

As intra-*Länder* and trans-border cooperation grow, the *Länder*’s monopoly over municipal activities has been slightly challenged¹⁴³ (Benz, 1998: 126-127). Examples hereof are the *Euregios* along the Dutch- and Belgium-German border cooperating in areas such as traffic, tourism, labour markets and ecological issues (Bullmann, 2001: 105). The *Euregios* have been largely driven by inter-municipal cooperation between the German *Kreise* and the Dutch *regios* and facilitate collective engagement of local actors in horizontal and vertical strategies (Perkmann, 2003: 160; 2005: 158 *et seq.*).

4.5 Inferences of fusion’s efficacy in England and Germany

With regard to the national and regional state arrangements in England and Germany, it is possible to draw some inferences about how different state arrangements in both countries (independent variable) affect the adequacy of the three hypotheses – *systemic linkages*, *fusion*, *attitudes* (dependent variable).

¹⁴³ The *Länder* still monopolise formal relations with EU actors and institutions, since they have adequate democratic legitimacy and administrative capacities.

4.5.1 Inferences of fusion's efficacy in England

Inferences of systemic linkages

The first hypothesis assumes that the fusion approach is able to explain the systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level. From a top-down perspective, local authorities are affected in the delivery of public services by EU decisions¹⁴⁴. Local authorities in the EU have become increasingly aware of the impact of EU legislation. Driven by cohesion policy, they have established contacts with their counterparts in other member states, and they have pro-actively looked for funding opportunities (Martin, 1997: 54).

There are limitations to the European engagement of local authorities, such as financial cuts and central government's control over access to networks, Structural Funds and public spending to match funding. Nonetheless, EU membership has led to a new out-looking role for local authorities and to new autonomous activities and strategies. Local authorities have appointed officers for European affairs, established offices in Brussels, built direct links to the Commission and developed horizontal, trans-European networks with partners and their counterparts across Europe (Martin, 1997: 63-65; Martin & Pearce, 1999: 32-37; Mather, 2000: 163 *et seq.*; Smith, 1998: 62; Zerbinati & Massey, 2008: 84; Zerbinati, 2004: 1001).

It is assumed that local government will be subject to systemic linkages between top-down absorption, Europeanisation, institutional adaptation and vertical and horizontal action. The establishment of European competencies and municipal mobilisation, however, depends on central government's financial policies and programming strategies.

Inferences of fusion

Do local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle to exert joint control over public policies? The high level of centralisation and the constant weakening of powers and constitutional status of local government suggest that local authorities may neither have the confidence, the resources nor the freedom to participate autonomously at the European stage. Nonetheless, local authorities were able to use the opportunities of the

¹⁴⁴ This involves a wide range of areas such as planning, education, social services, community care, police and fire services, road infrastructure, housing, strategic planning, environmental health, transport, housing, waste disposal, and leisure and cultural activities.

Structural Funds partnerships, and some of them have learned to pursue their objectives at multiple points of power. Although the Commission and sub-national authorities pushed for greater cooperation under a genuine partnership between different levels, central government keeps its dominance as an ‘extended gatekeeper’ and continues to dominate the preparation, implementation and distribution of the Structural Funds (Bache, 1998: 36 *et seq.*; Laffin, 2009: 23; Martin, 1997: 60).

Although the Commission cannot alter significantly the power relations between local and central government, it has become a major point of reference to counter central government when it comes to compliance with the principles of subsidiarity, partnership and additionality¹⁴⁵. Despite being the financial gatekeeper, central government has not stopped some changes at the local level, which were imposed by European partnerships and long-term programming (Marshall, 2005: 675).¹⁴⁶

Multilevel governance may have provided English local authorities with more freedoms to operate beyond the central government, but local self-government is still highly contested by central government¹⁴⁷. The partnership principle has not led to full participation of local authorities, but the tight control by the state, triggered bypassing strategies to promote local preferences (John, 2000: 883-885; Sullivan *et al.*, 2004: 263-264). Coalitions of local actors have reduced some capacities of central government to impose its priorities (Smith, 1998: 52-53), and the regional policy has triggered new styles of policy-making at the local level (Martin, 1997: 63).

The LGA represents a major agent for its member authorities and promotes a stronger involvement of local actors in EU policy-making and thus for fusion. When the Commission was preparing its White Paper on European Governance, the LGA called for an increased partnership amongst different levels of government and the creation of a ‘European Governance Compact’ similar to the Territorial Pact of the EP and the CoR¹⁴⁸. As central government refuses a clear demarcation in English sub-national government, the LGA also applied subsidiarity without favouring a rigid demarcation of competences.

¹⁴⁵ Benington and Harvey (1999: 211) describe this shift in alliances between the local, central and European level of government as a ‘sophisticated cat and mouse game, with the Commission as a barking dog in the background’.

¹⁴⁶ Subnational authorities have to work in partnership with central government and with bodies from public, private and voluntary sector in order to deliver EU programmes (Goldsmith, 2002: 105-109). This reflects the idea of a multilevel policy compound.

¹⁴⁷ Despite its acceptance of multilevel governance, the Labour government retained a strong control of local engagement in EU’s regional and cohesion policy (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004: 246). This policy has been continued by the coalition government.

¹⁴⁸ This was a demand that their central government had largely denied.

Interestingly, when it comes to the notion of subsidiarity, the LGA's position on the White Paper seemed to be closer to the notion of fusion than the position of municipal associations in other member states. Whereas the LGA interprets subsidiarity as an interaction between levels or 'spheres of governance' of government, in other member states, such as Germany, Austria, Belgium and Spain, subsidiarity represents a political principle to protect the allocation of responsibilities at different levels. The lack of formative influence on a constitutional basis may have caused English local authorities to be successful in pursuing informal channels of influence¹⁴⁹ (Reilly, 2001: 3 *et seq.*).

The Commission encouraged local alliances between public and private stakeholder in the context of regional strategies (Goldsmith, 1997: 232; John, 2000: 885; 2001: 81). Top-down regionalisation in England has transferred local competences to the regional level to deal effectively with European funding schemes. As a result, local authorities started to adopt a regional perspective (Goldsmith, 1997: 231; Marshall, 2005: 675-678).¹⁵⁰ Regionalisation has played an important role for multilevel cooperation of local governments and is potentially a driving force for fusion.

The combination of a strong political administration and weak constitutional protection of subnational government has led to constant changes of municipal politico-administrative arrangements. These changes affect the stability of local governance arrangements and organisation structures in relation to the EU. Polity as well as policy strategies may make it hard to develop the same continuity of fusion dynamics, as it is the case for the strong government arrangements of a federal state, such as Germany.

Inferences of attitudes

The third hypothesis is that the fusion approach is able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration. Opportunities provided by the EU's regional policy have led to an appreciation of closer integration even among local authorities, which have not traditionally been the actively involved in European affairs (Martin, 1997: 63). The EU provides local authorities with access to decision-making that create a strong incentive to bypass central government and to regain resources and emancipate from central control.

¹⁴⁹ Whereas in Germany regional government is taking a gatekeeper role and restricts actors' access to decision-making, in the UK, sub-national authorities are used to finding new ways of responding to central government's control mechanisms through innovative partnerships with different stakeholders.

¹⁵⁰ The GOs, and later the RDAs, have turned out to be more cooperative than central government departments in London (Bache, 1998: 37).

Brussels has offered local authorities a new scope for action. As early as the mid-1980s, Metropolitan areas, which were largely governed by the Labour party, found the Commission to be more approachable than was the ‘hostile’ Conservative government¹⁵¹ (Rowe, 2011: 65-66). Although party alignment plays a role for the adoption of pro-European or Eurosceptic attitudes, according to the micro-fusion perspective, English local actors are expected by to show preferences for European policy outcomes (performance), bypassing central government (political) and the Commission’s inclusiveness (compound), as assumed by the micro-fusion perspective.

4.5.2 Inferences of fusion’s efficacy in Germany

Inferences of systemic linkages

In the light of the wide scope of competences allocated at the local level in Germany, hardly any municipal task is not affected by European legislation¹⁵² (Krichel, 2008: 337; Münch, 2006a: 126 *et seq.*; Nutzenberger, 1997: 15; Rechlin, 2004: 1 *et seq.*; Struve, 2006: 341). The increasing impact of EU policies on local authorities triggered the desire amongst them to have a say in the creation of these policies.

Under the pressure to adapt to European integration, major cities began to induce ‘European expertise’ within their administrations¹⁵³. Since the early 1990s the number of local authorities that engage in European affairs has grown. Nevertheless, it is still a fairly small number of pioneers, primarily large municipalities with adequate resources or with privileged funding status, that are actively promoting the awareness and the adaptation towards EU policies (Alemann & Münch, 2006: 17-19; Wessels, 2000: 270).

Along the assumed systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level, municipalities are expected to have become Europeanised¹⁵⁴, to adapt their politico-administrative structures and seek to influence policies according to their own interests. Thereby, the size and resources confirm this systemic logic.

¹⁵¹ Among the large metropolitan boroughs and city councils to set up the first offices were Birmingham City Council and Strathclyde Regional Council.

¹⁵² It is estimated that about 80 per cent of local activities are directly or indirectly subject to EU regulations. This is particularly the case for the provision of services of general (economic) interests.

¹⁵³ Local administrations introduce usually a central position, such as a specialised officer or even a team of officers in order to coordinate and promote EU topics across the different departments.

¹⁵⁴ Even though political and administrative actors within local authorities do not always understand the nature of European legislation (Fischer, 2006: 106).

Inferences of fusion

Wessels (271) concluded in 2000 that local actors and European actors had not fused in a common policy-cycle in order to enable them to exert joint control over public policies. Horizontal and vertical adaptation was weak; most local governments passively reacted towards European integration; and local authorities took an 'agency role' by implementing EU legal acts. Although over ten years later these findings may still apply for many municipalities, recent developments enhance this picture by a more active involvement of local government in EU policy-making.

As the CoR only provides three seats for local representatives, institutionalised access to European policy-making is expected to be weak. Instead, local government associations, networks and agents are essentially engaged at the European level. The exertion of influence is less subject to individual action, but rather to joint attempts commonly coordinated by the municipal umbrella organisations. Local actors rely mainly on informal contacts with EU institutions (Münch, 2006a: 209-221; Münch, 2006b: 356-362; Nutzenberger, 1997: 16-17; Wessels, 2000: 269). Informal interaction amongst actors from different levels is expected to dominate potential fusion dynamics.

As strong gate-keepers and European actors in their own right, *Länder* take an important role for the fusion of local government. The relationship between the local and the regional level is not characterised by a rivalry, as it is the case for the local-central relations in the England. The *Länder* and the local level are used to bargaining and negotiation processes in a cooperative manner. German municipalities have a long tradition of being part of a multilevel system of government with a 'vertically functional division of power'. The 'set in stone' arrangements of Germany's federal system may not allow for the same flexibility as at the local level in England, but at the same time the certainty of lasting politico-administrative arrangements may translate into more durable fusion dynamics (see Münch, 2006a: 84).

Inferences of attitudes

Is the fusion approach able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration? A major concern of German local governments is to promote an understanding for their model of municipal self-government at the European level (Nutzenberger, 1997:

15-16). The role of German municipalities goes beyond setting the framework for public services and includes the actual conduction of services. As the Commission and the Court of Justice have promoted the privatisation and liberalisation of services of general interest, they stimulated discontent at the local level and a fear of losing local autonomy (Krichel, 2008: 340-341; Rechlin, 2004: 13 *et seq.*; Waiz & Alkan, 2006: 132-150).

A federal tradition, strong self-awareness, sovereignty reflexes and defensive reactions towards EU interference into municipal practice are expected to affect local preferences for EU policies (performance), polity developments of European governance (political) and channels of access (compound). Compared to English local government, the German case study may turn to be not as engaging and it may challenge the idea of the micro-fusion perspective.

4.5.3 Summary of the inferences of fusion dynamics in England and Germany

Whereas English local government is characterised by a fairly strong functional but weak political status (Anglo model), local authorities in Germany follow a strong functional and political logic (Middle and North European model) (Wollmann, 2001: 158). This has different implications for the way that central and regional government exercise their gatekeeper role, as well as for the paradiplomatic strategies of local actors.

Tatham has observed (2010: 77-92) that even though greater political, legal and fiscal autonomy for local government enhances the means of bypassing domestic arrangements, interestingly the decentralisation of powers increases cooperative paradiplomacy within states and reduces bypassing. Strong local governments are better able to exert influence on their central government and thus are less reliant on looking beyond the national borders. The opposite is the case for more centralised states. English local actors may show a stronger preference for fusion dynamics than do their German counterparts. Whilst English municipalities have seen the EU as an opportunity for a new scope of action and for emancipation from national restrictions, local authorities in Germany perceive European integration as a threat for their autonomy (Wessels, 2000: 265; Rowe, 2011: 65).

The *Länder* are able to exclude local actors and make key-decisions on EU policies along the lines of 'who pays the piper, calls the tune'. The English model involves a wide range of local, regional and private actors, which is more in line with the Commission's idea of

multilevel governance than the *Länder*-dominated partnership arrangements in Germany. English local government, however, is constrained by central government. Because English local governments lack formal access to domestic policy-making, they deploy informal channels of influence, seek changes by directly approaching European actors, and can be more successful in delivering European policies and programmes than can their German counterparts (Reilly, 2001: 6 *et seq.*).

Local actors in Germany are more likely to cooperate rather than compete with the *Land* and may only bypass it when their interests clash. European integration, thereby, is expected to erode the rigid demarcation of competences between domestic levels and trigger more cooperative policy styles amongst multiple levels, whereby the *Länder* maintain the final say.¹⁵⁵

English municipalities may have a stronger incentive to interact with the EU. Fusion and the underlying attitudes towards European integration are expected to be determined by different logics within each country. Whereas in England local actors may prefer flexible, informal ways to engage in EU policies, German municipal representatives aim for more formalised patterns of integration and clear demarcation of competences. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 analyse the implications of the two contrasting government systems on the fusion of local government.

4.6 Introducing the North West of England and North Rhine-Westphalia

The NWoE and NRW are chosen as case studies because they strongly differ according to the political systems of England and Germany (independent variable), whilst at the same time, they show similarities in their socio-economic profiles (intervening variables) to isolate the impact of regional government/governance structures.

Although NRW is bigger in terms of geography and population, both Britain and the North West of Germany underwent a similar pattern of development after the Second World War, which followed the ‘northern’ model of local government. Under this model laws are made centrally and local government administered public services, whereby the numbers of local authorities are smaller and their average size is larger than in most European

¹⁵⁵ The outline of the relation between local, regional and central government in both member states suggest that ‘the formation of polycentric European governance’ (Le Galès, 1998: 250) may not represent a zero-sum game through which the distribution of power between the central and local level clearly changes.

countries (John, 2001: 28-36). NRW shares key characteristics with the British system of local government and comprises a smaller number of municipalities with a larger average population than other German *Länder*¹⁵⁶.

In addition to similarities in size and numbers of local authorities, both the NWoE and NRW have faced ongoing periods of economic restructuring due to the decline of their core industries. The levels of socio-economic deprivation provided selected sub-regions within both areas with privileged means of the Structural Funds¹⁵⁷, which has had an essential impact as potential driving forces for fusion dynamics at the local level. The NWoE and NRW offer a variety of similarly structured local authorities and sub-regions. Both regions include large cities with a high density of population and urban industry sectors, as well as areas with rural social and economic characteristics. This allows a comparison of a range of different types of local authorities within both regions.

In order to understand the specific context against which fusion's efficacy for the study of local government is assessed, it is necessary to outline and distinguish between their EU related government/governance arrangements and their socio-economic profiles. This section introduces the NWoE and NRW as regional frames in which the local case studies are located.

¹⁵⁶ Number of authorities UK (472) and Germany (16514); average population of lowest tier UK (137,000) and Germany (7900). (John, 2001: 35)

¹⁵⁷ Under Objective 1 status Merseyside and under Objective 2 status areas, such as Greater Manchester, Cumbria and the Ruhr area, have received enhanced financial assistance from the EU's cohesion policy for the purpose of economic and social development.

4.6.1 The North West of England

Figure 4.1: English regions



Source: [http://www.visitlancashire.com/xsdbimsgs/northwest_map\(1\).gif](http://www.visitlancashire.com/xsdbimsgs/northwest_map(1).gif) (accessed on 13th December 2012)

Socio-economic profile

The NWoE is the third largest region in the UK¹⁵⁸ in terms of population, with an estimated population of 7.06 million (see table 4.2). As over 87 per cent of the population live in urban areas, with 489 people per sq km in 2009, the NWoE also has the highest

¹⁵⁸ Including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

regional population density outside London (Young & Sly, 2011).

The territory of the NWoE is defined by a western long coastline to the Irish Sea, a northern border with Scotland, a southern border with North Wales, the West and the East Midlands, and the Pennines Hills which separate the region from the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber regions. The region only covers about 14,100 sq km, which makes it the fourth smallest of nine English regions after London, the North East and the West Midlands. The NWoE is made of the two non-metropolitan counties of Cumbria and Lancashire, six unitary authorities¹⁵⁹, and 15 metropolitan districts including the metropolitan conurbations of Greater Manchester and Merseyside¹⁶⁰ (*op. cit.*).

With regard to the socio-economic situation, in 2009, the NWoE generated £116.5 billion of gross value added (GVA) (see table 4.2), which accounts for almost 10 per cent of the UK total with almost two-fifths of the region's GVA being produced in Greater Manchester. With a turnover of £63.3 billion in 2008, the contribution of the NWoE to the manufacturing industry makes up about 13 per cent of the UK GVA¹⁶¹. Key economic sectors include professional and financial services, chemicals, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, aerospace, distribution, and other manufacturing (including textile, engineering, food and drink) (NWDA, 2003; *op. cit.*).

The service industry provides the majority of jobs (82 per cent of employees, compared to 10 per cent in manufacturing), as in the rest of the UK. Liverpool and Manchester account for about 20 per cent of all jobs in the service industry in the NWoE. With only 69.4 per cent of residents of working-age being employed, the regional employment rate in the NWoE is one of the lowest in the UK (average 70.8 per cent). As part of the service sector, the tourist industry makes another important economic sector with £2.3 billion. Around 10 per cent of the UK total number of overnight stays is spent in the NWoE by visitors from outside the region. In relation to other UK towns and cities, Manchester has the third and Liverpool the sixth highest number of visits from overseas residents. The expenditure on research and development by businesses in the region is the third largest in the UK (Young & Sly, 2011).

¹⁵⁹ Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Warrington, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen.

¹⁶⁰ Greater Manchester comprises the cities of Manchester and Salford, and the metropolitan boroughs of Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. Merseyside comprises the city of Liverpool and the metropolitan boroughs of Knowsley, Liverpool, St. Helens, Sefton and Wirral.

¹⁶¹ 39 per cent of UK GVA from coke, refined petroleum and nuclear fuels; 21 per cent from chemicals, chemical products and man-made fibre; 16 per cent from transport.

According to the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation, 32 per cent of the region's population lived in the most deprived quintile of the Lower Layer Super Output Areas in England. The average distribution would foresee 20 per cent of the population in each quintile. Only the North East exceeded this proportion. Liverpool, Manchester and Knowsley have over two-thirds of the population living in the most deprived quintile. In addition to the high proportion of people that are disadvantaged by factors such as low income, unemployment, lack of education, poor health and crime, a population growth rate of only 1.2 per cent is the smallest among the UK's regions (*op. cit.*).

The NWoE offers metropolitan conurbations and rural areas, as well as deprived and prosperous localities, and thus makes an interesting region to investigate fusion dynamics under varying conditions.

EU-related governance arrangements

The regional governance arrangements in England are characterised by a strong economic functionality with weak politics and low identification (see 4.3.2). Whilst in some regions, such as the North East, agreement on regional development strategies has been reached relatively easily and local authorities there have acted in concert to gain funding, the NWoE has historically been characterised by the rivalry between Manchester and Liverpool and between industrial conurbations (Manchester, Liverpool) and the more rural areas (Cheshire, Lancashire) (John, 1997: 242; Martin & Pearce, 1999: 37-45).

In spite of the structural changes and the industrial decline in the NWoE during the 1980s, regional economic development was not favoured by central government and its investment into regional approaches was kept to the required minimum for obtaining financial assistance from the EC. For a long time no governmental authorities have fostered the development of regional alliances, apart from the regional branches of the central government departments and the Integrated Regional Offices. Its economic difficulties, its peripheral status and the dominance of Labour-led authorities within the region, resulted in central government's lack of interest in the NWoE. This has led the Commission to question the approach of central government towards troubled regions. During the 1990s, the DG Regio built alliances with authorities and promoted regional partnership for the implementation of operational programmes in the NWoE (Conzelmann, 1995: 158-159).

Strongly encouraged by the Commission official Graham Meadows, the North West Regional Association was established in 1992 as a voluntary association to produce a coherent economic strategy for the NWoE¹⁶². Subsequently, local authorities in the NWoE showed some level of commitment towards a regional approach¹⁶³ (Conzelmann, 1995: 159-162).

The Government Office (GO) for the NWoE was introduced in 1994 by central government to control local policies and to act as managing authorities for the Structural Funds¹⁶⁴. By that time Merseyside already had its own GO, which contributed to the existing conflicts within the NWoE and to the rivalry between Merseyside and Greater Manchester (John, 1997: 244). Until 1998 when the GO for Merseyside merged into the GO for the NWoE, the Merseyside's separate and separatist way made it hard to develop a common regional approach for the North West (Goldsmith, 1997: 221).

Before the establishment of the North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA) in 1998, the NWoE hardly existed as a region in terms of political autonomous (Conzelmann, 1995: 136). Table 4.1 provides an overview of the most important regional bodies related to European policies: the NWDA, the Regional Leaders Board (4NW/NWRLB) and the North West Regional European Partnership (NWREP).

¹⁶² The principal aim of the North West Regional Association was: 'Promoting the image and influencing the future prosperity of the region, as well as acting as a regional voice in lobbying the UK government and European institutions to represent the best interests of North West England.' (see NWRA)

¹⁶³ In 1994, the North West Partnership, a common initiative of the North West Regional Association and the North West Business Leadership Team (NWBLT), established as a platform through which local authorities, business and higher education institutions sought to lobby on behalf of the region.

¹⁶⁴ The GOs were closed in March 2011.

Table 4.1: Overview regional governance arrangements in the NWoE

Regional governance arrangements in the NWoE	
1992	North West Regional Association
1994	Government Office (GO) for the NWoE
1998	North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North West Regional Association and NWBLT merged to form the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA), the regional chamber of the NWDA • Merseyside GO merged into the NWDA
2006	North West Regional European Partnership (NWREP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established by the NWDA and the NWRA
2008	Regional Leaders Board (4NW) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replaced the NWRA
2010	North West Regional Leaders Board (NWRLB) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replaced 4NW as a downsized version
2012	Disbanding of the NWDA

Through the NWDA, regional coordination between representatives from local authorities and the business sector was further advanced. The NWDA developed to the major platform for strategic and economic development and for the allocation of European funding in the NWoE¹⁶⁵ (see NWRA). It replaced the GOs as the managing authority for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Together with the other English RDAs, the NWDA was abolished in April 2012.

In 1998, North West Regional Association and NWBLT formed the North West Regional Association (NWRA), which was a formally incorporated body of the NWDA until its replacement by the Regional Leaders Board 4NW in 2008. 4NW was the first of its kind in England and brought together council leaders from all five sub-regions of the NWoE, as well as representatives from the private, non-governmental sector¹⁶⁶. 4NW was not an arm of central government, although it did have statutory functions given to it by central government, such as housing, planning, transport and economic development. European issues were not part of its statutory functions, nor of those of the NWDA, yet both were

¹⁶⁵ As the RDAs required the establishment of a regional chamber, in 1998 the NWRA and the NWBLT merged to form the North West Regional Assembly to support the work of the NWDA. The composition of the Assembly was approximate to a ratio of 70:30, local authority membership to non-local authority membership. The NWDA was set up as a non-departmental body of central government established to focus on the economic development of each region by building strong partnerships with local authorities, business, stakeholders, trade unions and civil society organisations. The NWDA Head Office was based in Warrington and accommodated an executive management board comprising the NWDA chief executive and directors of six agency directorates for strategic fields¹⁶⁵: Economic Development, Resources, Policy & Planning, Marketing & Communication, Tourism, and Human Resources Development. The work of the NWDA is guided by its regional economic strategy, which is based on policies of central government and regional demands.

¹⁶⁶ Such as Manchester Airport Group, North West Universities Association (NWUA) and the North West Trades Union Congress.

working together closely and took a leading role on coordinating European activities in the region¹⁶⁷. In 2010, the board was re-launched as the North West Regional Leaders Board (NWRLB) with only about 90 per cent of its previous personnel¹⁶⁸. Despite the disbanding of the NWDA, the NWRLB has sought to continue to provide a platform for local authorities, as well as other partners from the public, private and voluntary sector partners.

The NWDA and the NWRA established the NWREP in 2006 to bring together representatives from all sub-regions of the North West¹⁶⁹ for the purpose of developing EU-related activities. NWREP comprised representatives of the NWDA, the Regional Leaders Board (previously NWRA and 4NW), locally elected members, economic social and environmental partners, representatives from business, health, education, the third sector and CoR representatives (NWREP, 2009). NWREP held its last meeting in 2011.

The European policy strategy of the NWDA and the Regional Leaders Board (RLB) was further supported and promoted through the jointly maintained North West Brussels Office (NWBO). The NWBO was a valuable asset for the region's European engagement and was closely connected to the Brussels officers from other local and sub-regional authorities. Individual offices in the NWoE continued to exist, but they moved into the common 'North West House' and consequently were able to pool resources, staff and policy expertise to cooperate on common, mainly related to economic development. Instead of focusing on individual interests of sub-regions and cities, offices from the same region cooperated and presented themselves under a joint profile.

The NWoE combines state-, regional- and Euro-regionalism within its governance arrangements. The GO for the North West and the NWDA were established to deliver central government policies (state-regionalism), but the NWDA also provided a forum through which regional actors engaged in region-building processes (regional-regionalism). This has been particularly important in dealing with the high amounts of financial resources, which were designated to the Objective 1 and 2 areas within the region. As part of the wider agenda around economic development, local and regional actors have introduced procedures, such as the RLB and the NWREP, to engage in various EU policy issues (Euro-regionalism).

¹⁶⁷ The NWDA has employed a single officer specifically on European issues, 4NW included Europe in a combined resorts for non-statutory, crosscutting policies, such as equality and diversity, European policy and sustainable development.

¹⁶⁸ Whilst 4NW employed 32 staff in May 2010, the NWRLB only maintained three members in October 2010.

¹⁶⁹ Including local politicians, the regional members of the CoR, economic and social partners and the NWDA director of policy.

With the enlargement of the EU, UK regions no longer qualify for Objective 1 funding, the incentive for regional cooperation declined (Harrison, 2011: 22). In 2012, the coalition government abandoned the English regions in favour of sub-regional bodies, such as the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The latter support local authorities and businesses in developing their economies. Individual LEPs work differently according to their local background.

The main regional capacities in the NWoE disappeared. Some mechanisms are still in place to coordinate European policies, particularly the Regional Leaders Board and the European Economic Strategy Group (EESG), but they do not attract the same level of political commitment and sovereignty as it used to be the case under the NWDA. Chapter 5 not only shows the role of regional governance for the fusion dynamics of local authorities in the NWoE, but also demonstrates how the change (or better disbanding) in the regional approach has affected local-supranational relations.

4.6.2 North Rhine-Westphalia

Figure 4.2: The German *Länder*



Source: <http://www.cranburys.co.uk/img/maps/germany1.jpg> (accessed on 13th December 2012)

Socio-economic profile

NRW lies in the West of Germany and shares common borders with Belgium and the Netherlands. The capital of NRW is Dusseldorf, where the state chancellery, the government ministries and the parliament (*Landtag*) are located. Due to its large size in population and area, NRW comprises a broad geographical and socio-economic diversity

among its sub-regions. With almost 18 million inhabitants (*Information und Technik Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2012a), NRW is the largest and densest populated *Land* apart from the city-states (Berlin, Bremen, Hamburg) and represents the most powerful industrial region in Germany.

NRW comprises 34,097 square km and shares inner state borders with Lower Saxony in the North, Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate in the South, and external borders with Belgium and the Netherlands in the West (*Information und Technik Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2012a). The five administrative districts (*Regierungsbezirke*) within NRW are Arnsberg, Cologne, Detmold, Dusseldorf and Munster. NRW comprises 22 county-exempted cities, and 31 counties with 396 county-constituent municipalities (*Information und Technik Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2010; Krichel, 2008: 248). Since the territorial reforms of the 1960s and 1970s, with 40,000 inhabitants the average size in NRW is much higher than the national average of municipalities (8,000). Local authorities in some other *Länder* comprise only 3,000 inhabitants in average (Wollmann, 2004: 651).

During the industrial revolution, the Ruhr area became the most important producer of heavy industry in Europe and for a long time it remained the economic heart of NRW. Although with over five million inhabitants the Ruhr area is still one of the largest agglomerations in Europe, since the decline of its coal and steel industries in the 1960s, it has experienced enormous structural change causing mass unemployment, very low earning rates, major reduction in financial resources for local authorities, and a decline in population¹⁷⁰ (Krichel, 2008: 319-322; Schrumpf, 1997: 254).

If NRW were an autonomous state, it would be among the world's 20 best performing countries. In 2011, the overall GDP was over 522 billion Euros (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*, 2012a), which accounts for over 20 per cent of Germany's and almost 5 per cent of the EU's economic power. Compared to the rest of Germany, NRW exports most goods (worth €172.1 billion in 2008, 17.3 per cent of total exports) and attracts most foreign capital (129 billion Euros in 2007, 28 per cent of total foreign investments).¹⁷¹ Economic key sectors are still chemical industry, metal industry and machinery engineering, but as part of the ongoing structural change, service industries accounted for 69.3 per cent, while industry made only 30.1 per cent of the total economic performance in 2008 (MWME, 2010a).

¹⁷⁰ Rural areas in NRW benefit from the outflow of people of the Ruhr area.

¹⁷¹ 25 of Germany's 50 largest companies maintain their headquarters within the NRW including Deutsche Telekom, Bertelsmann, RWE, Deutsche Post, ThyssenKrupp, Bayer, Henkel and E.ON.

In terms of economic growth and employment, in particular with regard to long-term unemployment, the performance of NRW lies below the German average with only the city-states and the small Saarland doing worse¹⁷². Whilst the area on the Rhine between Dusseldorf and Cologne is blessed with intensive economic prosperity, the Ruhr area is lagging behind other sub-regions in NRW and even behind the EU-average. The agglomeration around the Ruhr area still relies on its declining industries subsidised by the state. The economic gap compared to other sub-regions is expected to widen in the future. Cities around the Ruhr area will face an aging population and estimated drop in population by over 10 per cent by 2025, whereas rural parts in NRW may even slightly grow during this time (Zimmermann *et al.*, 2009).

The crisis of structural change within the Ruhr area can be witnessed in municipalities. Whilst during the mid-2000s local authorities in other *Länder* could generate higher tax incomes to balance their budgets, municipalities in NRW could only reduce but not close the gap between revenues and expenses. As a result of severe structural problems, many local authorities in NRW still suffer from tight budgets and an ongoing trend of reducing municipal investments (Krichel, 2008: 233, 296-300).

Because of its size, NRW offers a valuable variety of socio-economic structures, such as prosperous and deprived metropolitan areas and agricultural territories, in which local authorities operate. Like with the NWoE, it is possible to examine if and how rural and urban, as well as economically wealthy and struggling municipalities show fusion tendencies (see chapter 6).

EU-related governance arrangements

As the constitutional and government arrangements of the *Länder* are outlined in section 4.3.3, this part of the chapter looks primarily at EU-related aspects within the political arrangements of NRW. Regarding local government, articles 1 and 2 of the *Gemeindeordnung* (municipal code) of NRW confirm the role of municipalities as the basis of the democratic structure of NRW, and their right to local self-government. Article 78 §1 of the constitution of NRW defines the relationship between the *Land* and its local

¹⁷² Due to the economic boom during times of the European economic crises, since 2005 the employment rate has been growing. Still, with an unemployment rate of 8.1 per cent in 2011 and an employment rate of 67.7 per cent beginning of 2012, NRW is fourth from bottom compared to the other *Länder* (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2012a; Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, 2012)

authorities: ‘The municipalities and municipal associations are central, regional and local authorities with the right of self-administration by their own elected bodies.’

The growing restrictive impact of EU policies and the requirement to implement European legislation triggered the establishment and expansion of administrative procedures within the government of NRW during the late 1980s. NRW could take a strong role in the European integration process and promote its interests at the federal as well as at the European level.

Since the early 1990s, institutional adaption within regional government has allocated extensive political and administrative resources and has included: the establishment of an effective infrastructure to coordinate policies between different ministries; the position of a European civil servant, which was subsequently upgraded to the European minister in 1998; the establishment of a European office attached to the state chancellery (office of the prime minister) with 23 officers; and the appointment of European departments within each ministry.

NRW can articulate its interests in a joint conference of the *Länder*’s European ministers (*Europaministerkonferenz*), which was introduced in 1992 and meets 3-4 times a year. The NRW representation in Berlin announced dedicated officers to participate in decisions about EU policies at the federal level via the *Bundesrat*. NRW maintains a considerable representation in Brussels with over 30 officers of which a significant number are recruited from the state chancellery and the individual ministries (MBME, 2013a; Wessels, 2006).

Although NRW has one to two members of its parliament sitting in the CoR, the government perceives the latter as only partially valuable for driving its interests. NRW also sends ministerial delegates to about 40 committees of the Commission, which indicates the strong involvement at the European level. Further paradiplomatic strategies of NRW are part of a fusion between regional, national and European level (*ibid.*). Contrary to the NWoE, NRW is equipped with adequate resources and powers to shape its own regional policy (Conzelmann, 1995: 136).

As NRW has been challenged by declining industries, regional and cohesion policy has become a major point of reference for the *Land*, which has systematically adapted its own regional economic priorities to the Commission’s policy framework (Schrumpf, 1997: 248). Under Objective 2, NRW has received a considerable amount of financial support

from the ERDF since 1989. Local authorities cannot directly apply to receive the main assets from the Structural Funds, but they are distributed by the government of NRW. Because the inclusion of sub-regional and local actors into decisions about structural policies complicates the corresponding procedures, the *Land* installed semi-open networks to deal with the Structure Funds (Conzelmann, 1995: 147-151).

Because of its industrial structure, NRW was traditionally governed by the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Since the 1960s NRW continued to be governed by the Social Democrats, except between 2005 and 2010 when the Christian Democrats were leading the *Land*. In 2010, the SPD together with the Greens came in power again. Despite the change of governments, the European engagement of NRW has persisted in a similar fashion, especially in relation to its local authorities.

In contrast to the NWoE, NRW represents a state in its own right and holds a high political profile. Regionalisation processes play a minor but emerging role at sub-regional level. NRW has adapted its government structures extensively in order to meet the challenges of European integration at the European, as well as at the national level. As NRW is a 'fusing region' with a well-developed European portfolio, this also affects the strategies of local authorities to engage in European affairs. The question is whether local authorities in NRW might emerge as fusing actors in their own right or whether they are part of the wider fusion dynamics of the *Land*.

4.7 Introducing the investigated local authorities

As the comparative research design seeks to explore how fusion's efficacy for the study of local government (dependent variable) depends on the political system of a state (independent variable), the socio-economic profiles (intervening variables) have to be controlled by choosing most similar units (see 3.4). In order to explore fusion against various types of municipalities in the NWoE and NRW, the study covers a range of authorities with different characteristics. Amongst the examined units are five major metropolitan authorities (Cologne, Dortmund, Essen, Manchester, Liverpool), five medium-sized authorities (Hagen, Halton, Lancaster, Stockport, Iserlohn) and four rural counties (Borken, CWAC, Cumbria, Steinfurt). As this study aims to explore the nature of fusion dynamics, only municipalities that showed some level of European engagement have been chosen. The selection of local authorities does not represent for the whole of local government within the two regions, and in particular smaller units were left out as

they were not considered to provide relevant insights.

In each of the regions, two local authorities were chosen as particularly interesting cases. In the NWoE, Liverpool maintains strong relations with the EU because of its history as Objective 1 area and the provision of a CoR member. CWAC also has one councillor sitting on the CoR and, as a Conservative-led, rural county, offers a contrast to the metropolitan borough of Liverpool. In NRW, the city of Essen and the county of Steinfurt were selected as pro-active authorities with exceptional institutional structures to engage with the EU, whilst also matching the characteristics of Liverpool and CWAC. The next sections of this chapter outline the socio-demographic background of all examined municipalities but highlights Liverpool, CWAC, Essen and Steinfurt.

4.7.1 Local authorities in the North West of England

Table: 4.2 Overview of the investigated local authorities in the NWoE

Investigated local authorities in the NWoE

	Population ¹⁷³	Territory (sq km/sq mi) ¹⁷⁴	GVA (m £) ¹⁷⁵	GDP/head (£) ¹⁷⁶	Unemployment (%) ¹⁷⁷	Type of municipality	Party alignment
UK	61 425 700	228 947.12 /89 181	1 256 932	20 341	8.1	-	Conservative/ Lib Dem
NWoE	7 056 000	14 105.34 /5 469	116 463	16 884	8.8	-	-
Manchester	502 900	115.65 /44.65	30 896 ¹⁷⁸	21 709	12.8	Unitary, metropolitan borough	Labour
Liverpool	465 700	111.84 /43.18	8 767	19 821	11.2	Unitary, metropolitan borough	Labour
Cumbria	499 800	6 768 /2,613	7 927	16 012	5.8	Non-metropolitan county	No overall control
CWAC	329 500	916.70 /354.55	14 040 ¹⁷⁹	20 371	7.5	Unitary authority	Conservative
Stockport	283 300	126.06 /48.67	30 896 ¹⁸⁰	21 709	7.3	Unitary, metropolitan borough	Lib Dem
Lancaster	137 800	575.85 /222.32	18 319 ¹⁸¹	15 714	7.0	Non-metropolitan district	Labour
Halton	125 700	79.09 /30.54	7 071 ¹⁸²	22 344	10.9	Unitary authority	Labour

¹⁷³ Nomis – official labour market statistics.

¹⁷⁴ In 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2011a).

¹⁷⁵ In 2009 (Office for National Statistics, 2011b).

¹⁷⁶ In 2009 (Office for National Statistics, 2011b).

¹⁷⁷ June 2012 – July 2012 (Nomis – official labour market statistics).

¹⁷⁸ For Greater Manchester South

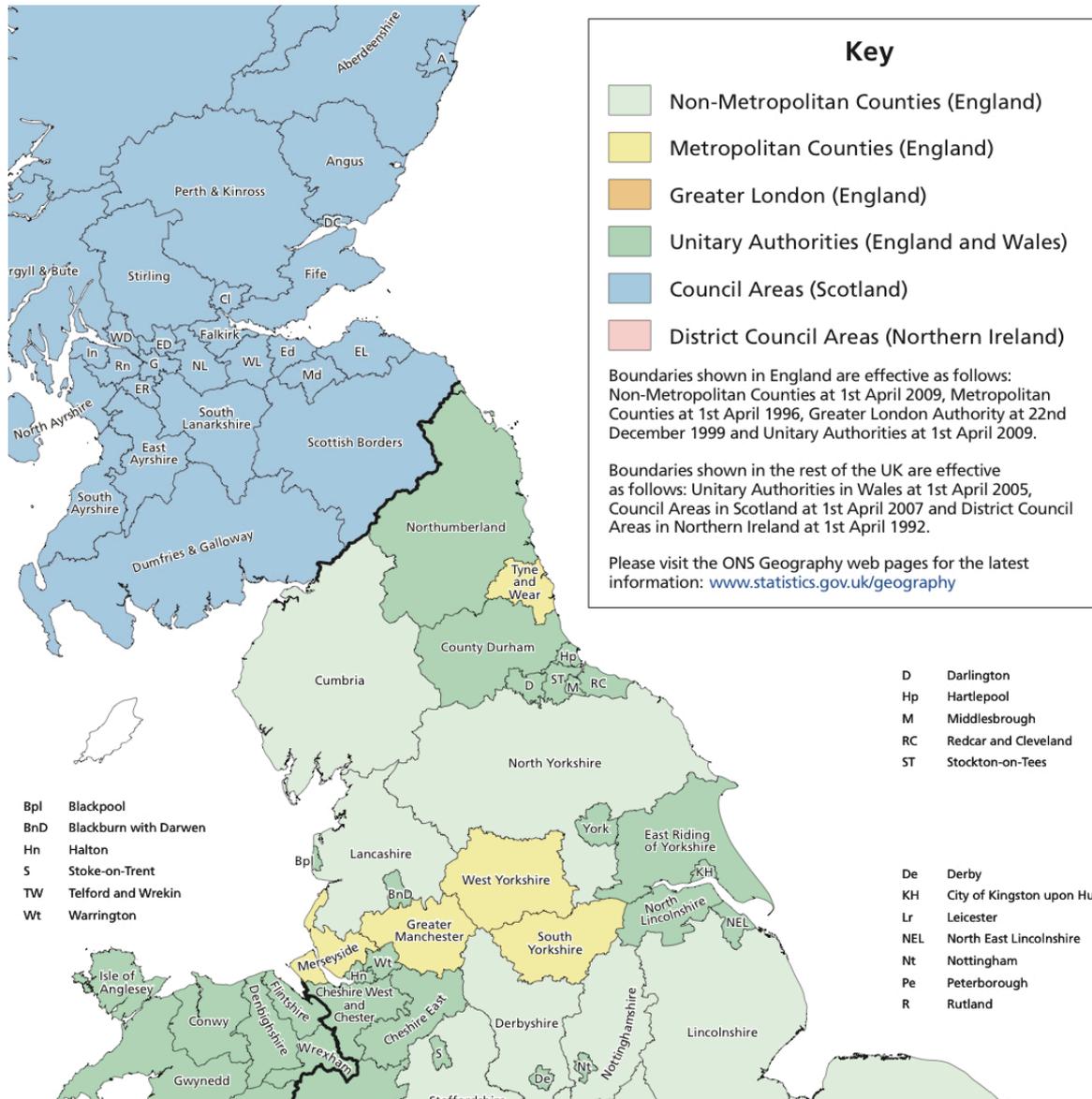
¹⁷⁹ For the former Cheshire County Council

¹⁸⁰ For Greater Manchester South

¹⁸¹ For Lancashire County Council

¹⁸² For Halton and Warrington

Figure 4.3: Counties and Unitary Authorities in the UK, 2009



Source: Office for National Statistics

The city of Liverpool

Liverpool City is a metropolitan borough that belongs to the wider Merseyside Metropolitan County that also comprises the metropolitan districts/boroughs of Knowsley, St. Helens, Sefton and Wirral, which all together have a total of 1,380,800 inhabitants. The Liverpool City Region¹⁸³ is an area cooperating in both economic and political terms. It includes Merseyside and Halton Borough and accounts for a population of 1,506,500 (Liverpool City Council, 2013).

¹⁸³ A city region brings different administrative authorities together under joint governance arrangements for the purpose of strategic planning, in fields like economic development, physical planning and housing.

Liverpool and Merseyside have undergone dramatic structural changes within the last century. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Merseyside's international maritime industry was a major driving force for the British economy. The city region suffered greatly from global restructuring of production. Before the Second World War Liverpool reached the peak of its population of 870,000, but then declined relentlessly until the 1990s. With the decline of the port and manufacturing sectors, the area was faced with essential structural problems, economic reorientation and a dramatic loss of jobs during the 1970s and 1980s. The consequences were labour market disintegration, mass unemployment, social disparities, political radicalism and urban degeneration (Boland, 1999: 788; Meegan, 2003: 54 *et seq.*).

In recent years, Liverpool's economy has experienced the fastest growth rates in the NWoE and major regeneration has taken place in the city. European Structural Funds and its Capital of Culture status in 2008 have enabled economic recovery, and have raised the city's national and international profile¹⁸⁴. Retailing and leisure activities, along with the banking, finance and insurance sectors, have been the main producer of jobs in recent years. At the same time, Liverpool is the most unproductive city in the UK¹⁸⁵. Despite its economic recovery, Liverpool still faces socio-economic problems and remains the most deprived area in England and one of the most disadvantaged city-regions in Europe¹⁸⁶ (Meegan, 2006: 70 *et seq.*; also Liverpool City Council, 2013; One Place, 2010; Office for National Statistics, 2007).

The political landscape of Liverpool used to be dominated by the Labour party¹⁸⁷. From

¹⁸⁴ Investments in the city centre have led to a major physical transformation including the building of Liverpool One, a new retail complex, the Echo Arena, the BT Convention Centre, the new Museum of Liverpool, the Mersey Ferry Terminal, new hotels, bars, shops and so on. As a key image of Liverpool has traditionally been along the lines of entertainment and music, the city's 'renaissance' has been built around leisure activities. The city's regeneration and its cultural activities have attracted a high number of visitors, and made it the sixth most popular UK destination for overseas visits during 2008.

¹⁸⁵ According to the UK Urban Competitiveness Index 2002.

¹⁸⁶ Between 1995 and 2005 Merseyside received the highest levels of state benefits per head in the UK, and particularly Liverpool still faces high unemployment rates. By the end of 2010, the total worklessness in Liverpool was about 21.8 per cent compared with only 14.9 per cent in the NWoE and 12.2 per cent in the UK. With 12.1 per cent of people depending on benefits, the rate of claimants exceeds the region- and nationwide numbers (8.7 per cent and 6.6 per cent). Though between 2004 and 2008 over 6,000 new jobs have been generated, the recent recession increased the number of people that are claiming job seekers' allowance by 32 per cent in 2009. Although this rate is lower than in other areas in the NWoE and in other cities, the city's faces a high proportion of unskilled workers, who have only limited access to the job market. The high level of deprivation is also reflected in the poor health condition and the low life expectancy of Liverpool's population, both of which are lower than in the NWoE and the whole of England. See also the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation (Young & Sly, 2011).

¹⁸⁷ During the 1980s, there was a period of political radicalism fostered by the militant movement. Between 1983-1987, the Labour council was led by a left-wing (militant) faction, which brought the city into conflict with the Conservative central government. In 1987, the majority of councillors were legally disqualified from office for wilful misconduct (Meegan, 2003: 61).

1998 to 2011, the Liberal Democrats took over the council leadership before Labour regained the majority of seats in the city council. The low election turnout for the Conservative party in Liverpool during recent decades strained the city's relationship with central government during the 1980s and 1990s. Conflicts with Conservative governments have been one of the reasons for Liverpool's early engagement in EU affairs and the establishment of close links with the Commission (Conzelmann, 1995: 159).

Merseyside received financial assistance from the ERDF under Objective 2 status between 1989 and 1993¹⁸⁸. Because of the severe extent of economic and social problems, in 1993 Merseyside became the first major former industrial conurbation to gain Objective 1 status, which provided Merseyside with an investment of over £1 billion to overcome its structural deficits¹⁸⁹. The sub-region obtained another £2 billion from the Structural Funds between 2000 and 2006 before in 2007 it became a Phasing-in Region and continued to receive privileged but significantly less funding under the new Competitiveness Objective. As a result of large financial assistance, Liverpool and the rest of Merseyside have been among the pioneering authorities in England to take advantage of European operation programmes (Boland, 1999: 788; Goldsmith, 1997: 218-219; John, 1997: 243; Marshall, 2005: 673; Meegan, 2003: 63-64; also NWUA, 2010).

With its long-standing engagement with the EU and its privileged role as an Objective 1 area, Liverpool provides a promising case study allowing a range of insights into potential fusion dynamics. Equipped with the resources of a major city, Liverpool has taken a lead role within the NWoE and within Merseyside, in relation to vertical and horizontal activities within the EU. The city also matches the socio-economic dynamics of the German cities in the Ruhr area, such as Essen in Dortmund.

The county of Cheshire West and Chester

CWAC County is part of Cheshire which also comprises Cheshire East and Warrington and Halton¹⁹⁰. Following the reform of local government in 2009, the county of Cheshire was divided into the two unitary authorities: CWAC and Cheshire East, whilst its non-metropolitan district authorities were abolished (Young & Sly, 2011).

¹⁸⁸ This was called the 'Merseyside Integrated Development Operation'.

¹⁸⁹ Merseyside was under-performing economically, with less than 75% of the European average GDP per head of the population. The priorities of the programme in Merseyside were to improve competitiveness, develop the skills of the workforce, stimulate economic growth and regenerate areas of greatest need (see NWUA).

¹⁹⁰ In 1998 Warrington and Halton became unitary authorities and were separated from the rest of the country of Cheshire.

CWAC is the fourth largest unitary authority in the NWoE. The county council is based in the city of Chester. Although the area includes industrial and market towns, such as Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford, it is mainly a rural area with 43 per cent of the population living in rural wards and with a high number of villages (Cheshire West & Chester Council, 2011).

In contrast to Liverpool, CWAC has traditionally been characterised by a stable economy, low unemployment rates and wide range of local businesses. The recent economic recession has challenged the economy of the area: economic growth has been modest since 2005 and unemployment increased by two thirds in 2009¹⁹¹. Nevertheless, the level of employment has remained relatively high, housing prices are above the regional and national average, and CWAC offers a variety of business sectors including agriculture, car manufacturing, financial services, chemical and bio-technological sectors and a strong tourism industry. Except for some wards, such as in Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Chester, deprivation levels in the county are not high¹⁹² (One Place, 2009).

Only a small part of CWAC has obtained privileged funding status from the EU¹⁹³. And yet, the county is involved in Structural Funds programmes and has participated in European wide networks, and thus provides an interesting case. CWAC is a wealthy county with rural characteristics, controlled by the Conservative Party, which complements the findings of Liverpool City and matches the characteristics of the county of Steinfurt.

The municipalities of Manchester, Stockport, Lancaster, Halton and Cumbria

In addition to Liverpool and CWAC, Manchester, Stockport, Lancaster, Halton and Cumbria complement the picture of various types of local authorities in the NWoE and their potential fusion dynamics.

The City of Manchester is the largest metropolitan borough in the NWoE and belongs to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority that in 2011 became the first city region in

¹⁹¹ The reliance on the banking sector and car manufacturing are potential risks for the economic well-being of the county.

¹⁹² The overall health condition in CWAC is good and life expectancy is higher than in other parts of England. As the population is aging, the county may face demographic difficulties in the future. See also the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivations (Young & Sly, 2011).

¹⁹³ The town of Frodsham received funding from the ERDF as a transitional area attached to the former borough of Vale Royal and adjacent to the borough of Halton, which attained Objective 2 status for 2000-2006 (Halton Borough Council, 2001).

the UK to coordinate economic policies, regeneration and transport amongst its ten constituent authorities¹⁹⁴. The Combined Authority comprises a population of 2.6 million and has been successful in generating economic growth through financial and professional services, three universities and emerging creative, digital and media industries (Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, 2011). In 2008, 39 per cent of the NWoE's GVA was produced in Greater Manchester. Manchester has undergone significant changes: even though it was the 'birthplace of the industrial revolution', towards the end the last century its manufacturing base and population declined significantly. In the last decade, however, the city has experienced substantial economic growth, enlarged its population¹⁹⁵ and is expected to increase its long-term growth rate. At the same time, Manchester continues to suffer high levels of deprivation and unemployment (Manchester City Council, 2012; Young & Sly, 2011). Manchester provides an interesting example of a major city pro-actively engaged in EU affairs and eligible for Objective 2 funding (see 1.2).

Stockport is also a metropolitan borough in the south of Greater Manchester¹⁹⁶ but significantly smaller than the City of Manchester. Stockport is one of the most affluent areas in the city region with a strong economy and a high quality of life (Roy, 2010). Although some areas, such as Brinnington, face significant deprivation and unemployment rates (Roy, 2011), the overall unemployment rate lies below the national and regional average (see Table 4.2). Stockport is too wealthy to obtain privileged ERDF means, but still managed to allocate EU money through alternative projects and programmes.

Lancaster is the largest non-metropolitan district in the county of Lancashire. The district is characterised by its long historical heritage, the coastal towns Morecambe and Heysham, a high proportion of students in higher education and service industries as the main source of employment. Whilst unemployment in Lancaster is lower than the average in the UK and in the NWoE (see Table 4.2), some areas, such as Morecambe and Lancaster, suffer deprivation (see Lancaster City Council). Since the public sector is a major employer, the recent public spending cuts has caused significant difficulties for the job market (Lancaster City Council, 2011). Lancaster represents an example of a medium-sized authority within the two-tier system of Lancashire County.

¹⁹⁴ Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, and Wigan.

¹⁹⁵ The 2011 Census expects Manchester to increase to 519,000 inhabitants by 2015.

¹⁹⁶ The South of Manchester comprises Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Tameside and Trafford and is the UK's largest economic NUTS3 area outside of London.

In 1998, Halton became a unitary authority after it had been a shire district within Cheshire for 24 years. In 2009, the non-metropolitan borough of Halton joined Liverpool City Region (see Halton Borough Council). The main industries of Halton include chemicals, food processing, clothing, metal products and furniture manufacturing. Unemployment in Halton is high (see Table 4.2) (Halton Borough Council, 2011). Halton has been eligible for Objective 2 funding and shows a relatively strong European engagement for a small authority.

The county of Cumbria is a two-tier authority. Like CWAC, Cumbria is a rural area but larger in land, geographically more isolated and sparsely populated (see Table 4.2). Including the Lake District and bordering the Pennines and the coastline, Cumbria offers a variety of landscapes attracting a large number of tourists. Whilst the county's economy is based on agriculture, hospitality and manufacturing, financial and service industries are not as strong. Unemployment is low in the county but depends on geographical disparities: Eden and South Lakeland have the lowest rates in the NWoE, whereas Barrow has higher rates of benefit claimants and economically inactive people (Cumbria Vision, 2009). Allerdale, Carlisle, Eden and South Lakeland have been eligible for Objective 2 funding and thus Cumbria represents a valuable complement to CWAC.

4.7.2 Local authorities in North Rhine-Westphalia

Figure 4.4: NRW counties



Source: <http://www.energieagentur.nrw.de/biomasse/bilder/nrw-karte.gif> (accessed on 13th December 2012)

Table 4.3: Overview of the investigated local authorities in NRW

Investigated local authorities in NRW

	Population ¹⁹⁷	Territory (sq km) ¹⁹⁸	GDP (m €) ¹⁹⁹	GDP per head (€) ²⁰⁰	Unemployment (%) ²⁰¹	Type of municipality	Party alignment
Germany	81 752 000 ²⁰²	357 127 ²⁰³	2 397 100	29 278	6.6 ²⁰⁴	-	CDU/FDP
NRW	17 845 154	34 092.97	522 920	29 220	8.0	-	SPD/Green
Cologne	1 007 119	405.17	41 761	41 989	9.7	County exempted	SPD
Dortmund	580 444	280.71	18 137	31 149	12.8	County exempted	SPD
Essen	574 635	210.32	24 820	42 939	12.4	County exempted	SPD
Steinfurt	443 357	1 792.96	10 209	22 995	4.3	District county	CDU
Borken	369 633	1 419.67	9 487	25 642	4.1	District county	CDU
Hagen	188 529	160.35	5 692	29 774	10.1	County exempted	CDU
Iserlohn²⁰⁵	96 355	125.51	2 341	24 530	8.0	County constituent	CDU

The city of Essen

The city of Essen lies in the middle of the Ruhr area, which comprises about 5.3 million inhabitants and is the third largest agglomeration within Europe after London and Paris. The Ruhr area is characterised by its polycentric structures, an infrastructure that is divided by abandoned industrial territories, inter-municipal competition and fragmented administrations²⁰⁶. Structural changes away from the former key industries coal and steel are still not completed, but resulted in unemployment rates above the regional average, particularly for women, comparatively high poverty and weak economic performance (Butzin, Pahs & Prey, 2009).

Essen is the fourth largest county-exempted city and part of the administrative district of Dusseldorf. Like all major cities in the Ruhr area, Essen faces a shrinking population that is expected to cause a loss of 10 per cent of population by 2020/2025 (Kreymann, 2008; Zimmermann *et al.*, 2009).

¹⁹⁷ In 2011 (*Information und Technik Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2012b)

¹⁹⁸ In 2011 (*Information und Technik Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2012b)

¹⁹⁹ In 2009 (*Statistische Ämter der Länder*, 2010)

²⁰⁰ In 2009 (*Statistische Ämter der Länder*, 2010)

²⁰¹ In June 2012 (Mertens, 2012)

²⁰² In 2012 (*Statistisches Bundesamt*, 2012)

²⁰³ In 2012 (*Statistisches Bundesamt*, 2012)

²⁰⁴ *Bundesagentur für Arbeit*, 2012b.

²⁰⁵ Iserlohn, 2012

²⁰⁶ Instead of being a homogenous metropolitan region, the Ruhr area comprises 53 municipalities, 11 county-exempted and 4 counties. The establishment of metropolitan governance structures has been hampered by ongoing rivalry between municipalities and cities over population, job markets and investments.

Essen's historical development has been characterised by its coal and steel industry, which is wedded to the family Krupp, who in the 19th century owned the largest steel factory in the world. Despite the decline of these industries and the corresponding economic downfall, among all major cities in the Ruhr area Essen shows a dynamic development²⁰⁷ and the highest economic performance approaching the same levels as Dusseldorf and Cologne²⁰⁸ (Kreymann, 2008). However, with an unemployment rate of 12.4 per cent (see Table 4.3), the job market is lagging significantly behind other local authorities in NRW and Germany. As Essen is historically the heartland of workers, it is not surprising that the city council has been governed predominantly by the Social Democratic Party²⁰⁹.

Between 1989 and 2006, the Ruhr area together with the smaller territories of Heinsberg and Aachen have been the only designated areas within NRW that received privileged EU funds. Given its history as a city under Objective 2 status, Essen and the Ruhr area compare to sub-regions in the NWoE that have undergone similar economic struggles and structural change.

The county of Steinfurt

The county of Steinfurt is located within the government district of *Münsterland* in the north of NRW. It features rural *specifica* and is the second largest county in NRW in terms of territory. Steinfurt is made of 10 small and medium sized cities²¹⁰ and 14 municipalities²¹¹, 66.5 per cent of its land is used for agricultural purposes. Whereas the population in the whole of NRW is reducing, the county has grown slightly in numbers and is expected to continue this trend (*Kreis Steinfurt Wirtschaftsförderung*, 2011).

The county performs economically well as indicated by a very low unemployment rate (see Table 4.3). The county council and administration is traditionally governed by the Christian Democrats (see *Landeswahlleiterin des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalens*).

²⁰⁷ Although according to a ranking of the 50 largest cities, Essen came place 33 regarding welfare, employment and location (niveau ranking), in terms of dynamic development (dynamic ranking), the city achieved place 13 (IW Consult GmbH, 2012).

²⁰⁸ Between 2006 and 2009, Essen could increase its GDP by 22.9 per cent to €24.8 billion, whereas Dusseldorf achieved a rate of 13.7 per cent and Cologne 0.04 per cent.

²⁰⁹ The city was led by Christian Democratic mayors in the 1940s and between 1999 and 2009. In 2009, the SPD regained the majority of seats in the city council from the CDU.

²¹⁰ Emsdetten (35,523), Greven (36,044), Hörstel (19,883), Horstmar (6,515), Ibbenbüren (51,522), Lengerich (22,234), Ochtrup (19,430), Rheine (76,530), Steinfurt (33,901), Tecklenburg (9,159).

²¹¹ Altenberge (10,248), Hopsten (7,585), Ladbergen (6,383), Laer (6,289), Lienen (8,578), Lotte (13,912), Metelen (6,329), Mettingen (12,105), Neuenkirchen (13,774), Nordwalde (9,373), Recke (11,578), Saerbeck (7,302), Westerkappeln (11,190), Wettringen (7,970).

Steinfurt is a member of the first *Euregio*, a transnational association of 104 German and 25 Dutch municipalities along the common border in the north west of NRW and the south of Lower Saxony. The first *Euregio* dates back to 1958 and was the forerunner to other associations of its kind. Through a common council and working groups, municipalities can feed into the activities of the *Euregio*, which are managed by a secretary and an executive board. Fifteen per cent of the association's financial resources are funded by its member authorities, which is matched by national means and EU funding, particularly through the INTERREG regime (Wessels, 2000: 277; see *Euregio*).

Between 2000 and 2006, Steinfurt received €26,771,388²¹² from EU funds. Since 2007, only the county can also compete for Objective 2 funding. From 2007-2008, Steinfurt received €6,039,031.77²¹³ from the EU (*Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2008). As a contrast to Essen, Steinfurt contributes to a differentiated picture of local government in NRW by adding not only a different type of authority, but also a variation of socio-economic conditions to the research design.

The municipalities of Cologne, Dortmund, Hagen, Iserlohn and Borken

These remaining five municipalities offer a valuable range of insights into the European engagement of local government in NRW.

Like Manchester, Cologne provides a valuable case to examine how a major German city relates to European governance. Cologne is the fourth-largest city in Germany after Berlin, Hamburg and Munich. Besides its tourist popularity for its cathedral and its carnival, the city has established itself as a city for media, higher education, music and sport events, and its main economic areas include health, automobile and chemical industries. The city has taken a European outlook and since 1992 Cologne has successfully participated in EU-funded projects²¹⁴ (Wolf, 2006: 252 *et seq.*).

Like Essen, Dortmund is also a major county-exempted city in the Ruhr area with similar socio-economic structures. Dortmund is the third largest city in NRW with a shrinking population (Kreymann, 2008; Zimmermann *et al.*, 2009) and a lower level of welfare than

²¹² Matched with €7,104,699 by the *Land* and €7,215,284 by the *Bund*.

²¹³ Matched with €2,002,289.53 by the *Land* and €3,535,365.25 by the *Bund*.

²¹⁴ Cologne maintains 23 town-twinning arrangements of which Liverpool was the first one shortly after the end of the Second World War. As the mayor of Cologne and later as the first *Bundeskanzler* Konrad Adenauer promoted Germany's engagement in the European integration process, a heritage that has been continued by the succeeding mayors.

Essen and the whole of NRW. Except for two short interludes, since the 1940s Dortmund has been governed by a mayor from the Social Democratic Party, and its city council has traditionally been dominated by the latter (except between 1999-2004). Under Objective 2 status Dortmund has developed a significant engagement with EU policies.

Hagen is a county-exempted city in the government district of Arnsheim in the southeast margins of the Ruhr area. Hagen is expected to lose about 10 per cent of its population by 2025 (Zimmermann *et al.*, 2009), though its job market performs better than those of most cities in the Ruhr area. Until 2006 the structurally weaker parts of Hagen received the privileged funding opportunities of Objective 2 areas. The city has also been active in allocating financial support for Objective 3 projects (Blania, 2006: 289-290).

Iserlohn is a medium-sized city in the government district of Arnsheim and the largest municipality in the *Märkischer Kreis* (county district). Iserlohn belongs to the more rurally structured Sauerland and has not been as dependent on the coal and steel industries of the Ruhr area. Its unemployment rate equals the total rate of NRW (see Table 4.3). Iserlohn had not been eligible for Objective 2 funding before 2007 when application were opened up to the whole of NRW.

The rural county of Borken is located next to Steinfurt within the government district of *Münsterland* and comprises nine small and medium sized cities²¹⁵ and eight municipalities²¹⁶. Its socio-economic profile is also similar to Steinfurt with: 66.6 per cent of its land area is used as agricultural area (*Kreis Borken*, 2010); a growing population; low unemployment; and a Christian Democratic party alignment. Borken is a member of the *Euregio* cross-border region.

4.8 Summary of the case studies

This chapter introduced the two case studies of this thesis. In order to explore the efficacy of the fusion approach for the study of local government against two contrasting state arrangements, England and Germany provide the political systems in which the investigated local authorities are embedded. Whilst in the centralised structures of England

²¹⁵ Ahaus (38,922), Bocholt (73,123), Borken (41,098), Gescher (17,129), Gronau (46,450), Isselburg (11,170), Rhede (19,366), Stadtlohn (20,577), Vreden (22,586).

²¹⁶ Heek (8,409), Heiden (8,080), Legden (6,805), Raesfeld (10,985), Reken (14,041), Schöppingen (8,451), Südlohn (9,028), Velen (12,938).

local governments operate in a restraining *ultra vires* framework and maintain relatively few competences, the federal system of Germany leaves the local level a high degree of autonomy and political stability.

As regional structures determine the relationship between the national and local levels, this chapter showed that English regions evolved as functional spaces to coordinate economic development and exert central policies driven by state-regionalism (top-down), regional-regionalism (bottom-up) and Euro-regionalism. In contrast, in the Germany model of cooperative federalism the *Länder* represent states with strong political powers, wherein sub-regional arrangements emerge on a relatively weak institutional basis.

With regard to the state arrangements of England and Germany, the chapter provided some inferences of fusion's efficacy for the study of local government. It is expected that fusion explains the systemic linkages between European integration and responses at the local level. In terms of fusion dynamics of local government, the thesis may find more flexible and unstable patterns in the NWoE than in federal system of Germany. Also, the attitudes of English local actors may indicate a stronger incentive to interact with the EU but prefer flexible, informal ways of engagement, whilst in Germany clear demarcation of competences and local autonomy may be desired.

The NWoE and NRW provide the regional frames in which the examined municipalities are located. Although NRW is significantly larger, both regions have similar socio-economic profiles and size and numbers of local authorities. Ongoing periods of economic restructuring provided both regions with privileged means of the Structural Funds. At the same time, they comprise a variety of similarly structured local authorities, such as major cities and rural counties which allows a close comparison. The study focuses on 14 authorities with various characteristics: Cologne, Dortmund, Essen, Manchester and Liverpool as major metropolitan authorities; Hagen, Halton, Lancaster, Stockport and Iserlohn as medium-sized authorities; Borchen, CWAC, Cumbria, Steinfurt as rural counties. Liverpool, CWAC, Essen and Steinfurt were chosen as particularly interesting cases that are analysed in greater detail.

CHAPTER 5: FUSION OF ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

5.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter provides the empirical findings of the five As, which were introduced in chapter 3, in order to explore to what extent the fusion approach is able explain the role of local government in the integration process. The findings are used for the assessment of the three hypotheses in chapter 7 concerning *systemic linkages*, *fusion* and *attitudes*. The indicators have been deduced from relevant bodies of the fusion literature and are designed to analyse the absorption of European legislation and policy; the Europeanisation of local actors' attention; institutional and procedural adaptation; vertical and horizontal, direct and indirect action of municipal authorities vis-à-vis EU policies; local actors' attitudes (see 3.2).

The findings of this chapter are obtained from qualitative interviews with European policy and funding officers from the investigated authorities and organisations, as well as with a small number of local councillors and MEPs. Additionally, primary documents and secondary literature and documents were used to enhance and underpin the results of the interviews. This chapter starts with a brief summary of the empirical results before it provides a deeper analysis of the indicators. A focus is placed on Liverpool City Council and Cheshire West and Chester County Council as particularly interesting examples of local-supranational relations.

As outlined in chapter 3 (see 3.2), the empirical findings allow drawing three different scenarios for each indicator: *infusion* describes a highly optimistic scenario with a positive assessment of the five As; *clustered fusion* refers to substantial, but differentiated findings for the indicators; and *defusion* is a negative scenario with very limited relevance of fusion dynamics (Miles, 2011b: 89-92). Before this chapter looks at the five indicators separately, it provides a short summary of the three hypotheses (see 7.3 for a more detailed analysis).

Systemic linkages

The findings of the absorption indicator suggest that the systemic linkages among top-down, Europeanisation, bottom-up and institutional dynamics is clustered and does not apply to all local authorities, but match the real situation of only a small proportion of local

authorities. Although the impact of EU policies and legislation is growing, some local authorities show a stronger interest in EU policies. The attention indicator presents a modest Europeanisation at the local level that depends on a few engaged officers and politicians. Many municipalities have adapted their administrative structures and have introduced a single officer, larger teams and even offices in Brussels with the primary purpose of acquiring European funding. The action indicator found that with some exceptions, such as Liverpool City, the European engagement of individual municipalities: is generally weak or clustered for larger authorities; has reduced due to the financial cuts for local authorities; and depends on engaged officers and politicians (often CoR members), the LGA, the CEMR, EUROCITIES and other transnational networks. There has been a defusion of EU-related activities, which has also affected horizontal cooperation with transnational partners and networks. These developments question fusion's ability to explain the systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level.

Fusion

The fusion hypothesis is shown to be partially correct, as some local actors fuse in a common policy-cycle in order to exert joint control over public policies. Because of the financial recession, the reduction of European expertise within local councils has led to a defusion of institutional structures. Most local authorities take an executive role only and those that engage pro-actively with the EU focus primarily on the acquisition of funding rather than on policy promotion (except in relation to funding). The CoR provides local councillors with direct institutional access to EU policy-making and is an important part of formal fusion processes. Whilst the national level had abandoned formal arrangements, such as the Central Local Partnership, for involving local representatives in EU policies, there used to be a number of regional governance arrangements that were part of a multilevel compound as assumed by fusion. When the regional arrangements were still fully in place, they had developed towards becoming a strong component through which local authorities linked themselves with European programmes, policies and institutions. Some regional platforms are still remaining but they serve mostly the purpose of horizontal cooperation. When the NWDA was abolished in 2012, activities of local authorities in the NWoE have mainly defused to an informal engagement with EU policies.

Attitudes

There is a fair relevance of fusion's explanation of the attitudes of local actors towards European integration. For local actors in the NWoE the benefits outweigh the constraints of EU membership and local actors are generally supportive towards European integration (performance fusion). Consequently, they show a political preference towards local subsidiarity and stronger involvement but in support of supranational solutions in policy areas which are best solved internationally (political fusion). Compared to central government, engaged actors in the NWoE find the Commission generally easier to interact with (compound fusion).

Table 5.1: Summary of the five As in the NWoE

The five As in the NWoE

Absorption	Infusion
Attention	Defusion/clustered for majority, infusion for a small number of actors
Adaptation	
European level	Clustered
National level	Defusion
Regional level	Shift from infusion to defusion
Local level	Clustered/infusion for major cities and agents, clustered for counties, defusion/clustered for smaller authorities
Action	
Direct vertical	Majority defusion/clustered, infusion for a small number of actors
Indirect vertical	Defusion through national level, shift from infusion to defusion through regional level
Horizontal	Defusion/clustered transnationally, defusionnationally, shift from infusion to defusion regionally, clustered sub-regionally
Attitudes	
Performance	Clustered for majority, infusion for a small number of actors
Political	Defusion for majority, clustered for agents and major cities
Compound	Defusion for majority, infusion amongst specialists

5.2 Absorption

The absorption indicator provides a starting point for understanding *systemic linkages* between top-down impact, bottom-up responses, organisational changes and attitudes towards European integration. The increasing top-down impact of the EU on local authorities provides a major indicator for the evolving significance of European integration at the local level. Table 5.2 outlines the most important legal and policy fields that affect local authorities in the NWoE. As municipalities absorb a wide scope of EU legislation and policies, they represent an essential executive part in the EU's political system. The EU's top-down impact is the most comprehensive fusion dynamic between both levels, wherein the cases of Liverpool City and CWAC illustrate how different types of authorities absorb a slightly different range of EU policies and rules.

Table 5.2: Summary of the absorption indicator for the English case studies

Absorption of the English case studies

	Main features	Scenario
English local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition law, environmental law, regional and cohesion policy • Limited impact on transport, social policy, security, energy, demographic change and migration • ERDF programmes, Europe 2020 and the European Employment Strategy as framework policies 	Infusion
Local government in the NWoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public procurement, state aid, environmental legislation, human resources management, chemical legislation • ERDF programmes, Europe 2020 and European Employment Strategy as framework policies for environmental sustainability, energy generation and efficiency, IT programmes • CAP for rural areas 	Infusion
Liverpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public procurement, services of general interest (water supply, social services, education, transport), environmental law • ERDF programmes 	Infusion
CWAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State aid, public procurement, environmental law • CAP, Europe 2020 	Infusion

5.2.1 Absorption of English local government

Since European secondary law mostly comes in form of a framework legislation that needs to be implemented into national law, there is a division of responsibilities between the EU as a policy initiator, central government as a transformer and local government as an implementer. This would match the fusion's idea of joint management amongst multiple

levels, but local government has limited influence on the transformation of European into national legislation. Instead, the national interpretation of EU directives often reflect national interests and have constraining effect onto the local practice²¹⁷.

In the early to mid 1990s, local authorities became increasingly responsible for the implementation of EU directives and regulations in the fields of trading standards, environmental standards and public procurement (Goldsmith, 1997:219). The increasing impact of EU legislation indicates that local government has become a significant part of a fusion dynamic across multiple levels. EU legislation affects all (and particularly large) councils including issues related to energy efficiency, waste management, working hours and so on (LGA, 2010).

The three major areas affecting the local level relate to the common market, environmental law and cohesion policy. Whereas competition and environmental legislation is binding, many of the initiatives around social policy, energy policy and transport initiatives, have a more indirect impact on the day-to-day work of local authorities. Over time the focus of local government has even expanded to new macro-challenges, like demographic change, climate change, and security, which is linked to questions of migration, violent radicalisation, terrorism and also energy supply (interview Rowles). Because of its very limited legal competence in these areas, such policy initiatives are primarily conducted in the context of European funding schemes and economic agenda such as the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020.²¹⁸

As the EU's policy agenda widens, local government is increasingly affected by EU initiatives not only in a binding way but also through soft policy tools equipped with financial means to stimulate engagement in these policies and to foster bottom-up processes at the local level. This is potentially in accordance with the *systemic linkages* hypothesis (see 3.3).

²¹⁷ It is not always clear for local authorities which legal initiatives actually started in Brussels. Interestingly, it seems as if EU legal acts in their original form are often not as problematic to implement for local authorities, as they are after civil servants of central government have added regulations on top of these acts. According to the head of the former Brussels Office of Cheshire (interview Pearson), 'in this country, we are writing many complex laws by the legal people to say: this is how it should be done rather than having a framework legislation, which allows some flexibility of what you achieve.'

²¹⁸ In contrast to the top-down impact of directives and regulations, the implementation of such policy initiatives are subject to partnership with the EU and other actors in the public, private and voluntary sector, and take the form invitations to local authorities (Benington & Harvey, 1999: 2000-2003).

5.2.2 Absorption of local government in the NWoE

Like local government across England, the NWoE is strongly affected by EU legislation. The main binding areas that have been identified during interviews with local officers refer to public procurement²¹⁹, state aid, environmental legislation²²⁰, human resources management²²¹ and, within some localities, the chemical industry²²². Other policy initiatives that are part of a wider fusion process involve local regeneration through ERDF programmes, Europe 2020 and the European Employment Strategy. These macro-level frameworks break down to specific fields, such as environmental sustainability, housing policies, energy generation and efficiency, IT programmes and so on. Rural areas, such as Cumbria and Lancashire, are beneficiaries of the CAP not only in terms of subsidies to farmers, but also with regard to the Rural Development Programme for England, and related issues of health and food security and the food economy (interviews Carter; Hope; Hornby; Moore; Yates).

5.2.3 Absorption of Liverpool

Liverpool shows a strong top-down relationship particularly in the fields of public procurement, the delivery of services of general interest²²³ and environmental legislation. As well as such binding impact, cohesion policy has had a significant meaning for the economic development of the city region (interview Eyres) and has required compliance with the predetermined policy priorities set at the European level. Since its designation as an Objective 1 area in 1993, Merseyside thus has been a great beneficiary of the Structural Funds²²⁴ (Boland, 1999: 788; Goldsmith, 1997: 218-219; Marshall, 2005: 673). After 2006, Liverpool became a transition region equipped with significantly less financial resources from the EU. This chapter will show how top-down policy initiatives triggered the city's bottom-up strategies which even included actions to influence EU legislation.

²¹⁹ Local authorities had to change their procurement systems.

²²⁰ For example, the Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC), Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC), Flora-Fauna-Habitat Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC).

²²¹ For example, the Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC) and the Equal Treatment Directive (2006/54/EC).

²²² The REACH Regulation (1907/2006) about the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals is important for areas with a strong chemical industry such as Halton Borough Council.

²²³ Such as water supply, social services, education, public transport and so on.

²²⁴ Between 2000-2006, Merseyside allocated £2 billion from the Objective 1 programme for social and economic regeneration (NWUA, 2010).

5.2.4 Absorption of Cheshire West and Chester

CWAC is also affected in a top-down manner by EU legislation around public procurement, public service delivery and environmental law. Nevertheless, the county has some specific characteristics that widen the scope of impact compared to Liverpool: as a main agricultural producer of the UK, CWAC needs to implement and monitor regulations around CAP. Whereas under Objective 1 status Liverpool is often excepted from state aid regulations, for CWAC this represents a more time consuming field that needs to deal with from case to case in order to guarantee compliance with EU legislation²²⁵. Frodsham (a small village) is the only area of CWAC that gained access to privileged funding under Objective 2 (Halton Borough Council, 2001). Still, ERDF programmes and Europe 2020 are significant for the economic development within the county, as they provide the context in which CWAC sets its EU funded initiatives (interview Lee). European policy initiatives provide a link between the absorption of top-down policies and the subsequent Europeanisation and mobilisation of local authorities.

5.3 Attention

Chapter 3 established that Europeanisation in the context of this study refers to a shift of local actors' attention by which the EU's policies and its system of governance become a new point of reference. The attention indicator is an important means for understanding the systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level. However, local government in England has not entered the last step of John's Europeanisation ladder (2000: 881 *et seq.*; 2001: 72) on which European ideas and practices would have entered the core of local practice and policy agenda (see 3.2.2). No local authority would consider itself as fully Europeanised, in the sense that European ideas have changed local ideas and practice substantially. And yet, depending on resources, policy field, size of and actors within an authority, there seems to be a fairly high awareness of the EU²²⁶, at least in relation to EU legislation and funding (interview

²²⁵ Legislation in this field is complex, can be open to interpretation and may change within different projects. When services are provided for the county council, it needs to ensure that the benefits service providers receive, for example as part of public funded projects, do not make profits which would disturb competition.

²²⁶ Drawing on his experience in Brussels, the EU adviser to the LGA (interview Rowles) finds that along with Germany and its *Länder*, and the Dutch and Swedish local government associations, the UK belongs to the three to four member states whose local level stands out from the rest in terms of its engagement in European affairs.

Rowles; also John, 1997: 219).

European issues are usually subject to specialised officers and arise occasionally on topics such as environmental policy or transport, but there is a limited systematic focus on EU affairs. Many local officers and politicians are unaware of or pay little attention to European policies and even less to the EU's constitutional developments²²⁷. Compared to day-to-day issues European policies are often considered less significant unless they require legal compliance, have a direct impact or centre around significant amounts of funding for physical regeneration²²⁸ (interviews Carter; Hope; Moore; Yates). As the head of the LGA's Brussels office (interview Rowles) states:

European issues are still at the periphery of the local agenda. They are not half as important as the level of council tax that is going to be set, the questions around social services and how they are going to be delivered, schools and education policy. These are all the top things that take the most time in debate in council chambers at the local level. European issues are often unfortunately slightly to one side of the core debates at the local level.

A comprehensive fusion of English local government is not expected, especially not in smaller authorities without a European officer. Table 5.3 provides an overview of Europeanisation tendencies. Despite the limited focus of Europeanisation on the acquisition of funding and economic development, the cases of Liverpool and CWAC show such a focus can expand to a wider range of policy fields. Due to the current global financial situation, including UK government policies and the financial cuts, many local authorities had to refocus and reprioritise a number of issues including their European agenda (interviews Bleaden; Carter; Hope; Yates). Some local councils have reduced their attention towards European policies, which indicates a strong defusion trend and contradicts the systemic linkages between an increasing top-down impact of EU policies and the corresponding mobilisation at the local level.

²²⁷ The forthcoming of the Lisbon Treaty was primarily followed by dedicated officers.

²²⁸ The former Resource Procurement Team Leader at Tameside Borough Council (interview Yates) suggests: 'at the chief executive level and senior politician level there is an understanding of its relevance, but I do not think that filters down into priorities in terms of delivery in the organisation. Actually, what they are really interested in is Structural Funds to build things and to provide services like business support, civil service or to regenerate areas physically. They are not interested in European cooperation so much. They are interested in the money.'

Table 5.3: Summary of the attention indicator for the English case studies

Attention of the English case studies

	Main features	Scenario
English local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven by legal impact and funding opportunities • Dependent on size of an authority and engaged actors 	Defusion/ clustered
Local government in the NWoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong for public procurement and public service delivery and ERDF • Low towards voluntary, pro-active initiatives • Varying according to actors and size 	Defusion/ clustered
Liverpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven by privileged funding under objective 1 status • Expanded to a wider range of policy fields 	Infusion
CWAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven by funding, economic development, environmental issues, legal impact • Limited to specific actors 	Clustered fusion

5.3.1 Europeanisation of local actors in England

As early as 1993, Goldsmith (683) argued that changes at the European level were leading to a growing focus of sub-national government on Brussels. Local authorities had yet to appreciate the opportunities offered by the EC, especially when they did not benefit from funding programmes, which particularly was the case for small municipalities²²⁹ (Goldsmith & Sperling, 1997: 95). As Goldsmith (1997: 217) stated:

...most British local authorities were ill-prepared for the onset of the Single Market, and that those who were really in Europe presented a small minority. However, the early 1990s witnessed considerable change, leading to a situation in which there were far fewer authorities who had not adopted a conscious approach towards their management of the European issue.

Dealing with EU issues was not high priority within local authorities, in particular when financial resources were tight and central government did not promote participation of local government in European matters. Nonetheless, it did not go unnoticed that EU policies had caused an increase in workload for local authorities, particularly in the areas of the single market, industrial and competition policy, but also in social policy (Goldsmith & Sperling, 1997: 102). Throughout the 1990s local actors and institutions increasingly recognised the impact of EU legislation and by the mid-1990s, they became aware of the cohesion policy as an opportunity and developed related strategies (Bache, 2008: 120; Martin, 1997: 54).

²²⁹ According to a study conducted by Martin and Pearce (1999: 37 *et seq.*), in two thirds of the investigated authorities interest in European issues among councillors was rising, particularly because of their eligibility for structural funds since 1994.

As the European integration process advanced and the establishment of the CoR brought local councillors in direct contact with the EU, local actors became exposed to EU ideas and initiatives, as well as to the practice of local authorities within other member states (Benington & Harvey, 1999: 2000).

A major agent that promotes the Europeanisation of local authorities towards the EU is the LGA²³⁰. The LGA is also the main entity to follow the development of EU treaties, as this is 'too abstract' and 'too far away' from the daily practice for local authorities (interview Rowles). Through transnational municipal networks, like the CEMR and EUROCITIES (see 1.2), or through the CoR, some local actors are also 'plugged' into the development of European treaties and European governance irrespective of the LGA. As noted above the level of Europeanisation has reduced across England, which indicates a defusion trend.

5.3.2 Europeanisation of local actors in the NWoE

Notwithstanding some exceptions with a higher awareness of the EU, officers from the NWoE who engage in European policies can face challenges in promoting related activities amongst their administrations. Although they might have an idea that many laws affecting their practice have been instituted at EU level, the majority of administrations in the NWoE do not need an in-depth awareness of specific European legislation and policies as part of their daily work. As legal initiatives are often incorporated into the UK law, they become less visible as being EU origin. Also, some officers may play the impact down. All administrations are aware of the EU's impact particularly in the fields of public procurement and public service delivery where councils would risk penalty fines for non-compliance (interviews Bleaden; Carter; Hornby; Moore).

As the largest city in the NWoE and under Objective 2 status, in the beginning of the 1990s Manchester, for example, developed an early awareness towards funding from the cohesion policy for urban regeneration, which subsequently expanded to other policy fields including environmental policies, waste issues, information technology and public

²³⁰ Because local actors are busy with their daily jobs and usually do not have the time to scan the horizon for new European legislation, the LGA regards itself as the 'eyes and ears of local authorities in Brussels'.

procurement²³¹. Still, it depends on officers within individual departments to what extent they incorporate European ideas into their work (interview Hope).

Although Cumbria's European policy officer (interview Hornby) speaks of a 'relatively low' awareness in the county council, key policy-makers within the council's cabinet know about the impact of legislation and policies, for example related to the departments for legal issues, procurement, economic development, planning and transportation, human resources, the environmental directorate, and ERDF. The European policy officer, regular meetings, Cumbria's *Europe direct* service and the development of a holistic European strategy contribute to the systematic promotion of European themes in the council.

The size of the organisation plays a role, but there are larger authorities with limited interest in Europe and also small boroughs, such as Halton and Stockport²³² with relatively aware administrative leaderships and councillors. Most often, unless local authorities see an opportunity to acquire funding for regeneration, they do usually not have the capacities to pay attention to wider issues of EU policies. This has become even more pronounced given the change in emphasis in public spending (interviews Bleaden; Carter; Moore; Yates).

5.3.3 *Europeanisation of local actors in Liverpool*

European engagement has been, and is, a high priority for the City Council and for the Mayor, who has set up a Commission specifically to advise and examine Liverpool's role in Europe. (email Fitzgerald)

Liverpool City Council is an outstanding example of a Europeanised local authority, as it represents a major city that has benefited massively from EU funding as an Objective 1 region since 1993 (see 4.7.1 and 5.5.3). The impact of the European cohesion policies led to new approaches to engagement with EU policies within Merseyside (Boland, 1999: 788). In comparison with most parts of England, in Liverpool there is an exceptional awareness that the EU is important to the city and the wider city region²³³ (interview Clucas). The city council and relevant officers indicate their awareness of the importance of engaging actively in European affairs to ensure future funding allocation, although the

²³¹ Environmental policies and waste issues dealt with on a Greater Manchester wide basis.

²³² Social care and regeneration are the most relevant areas.

²³³ For Cllr Clucas, the attention towards the EU in Merseyside and Liverpool is different from the rest of the country because 'if you go around the city, you will see the European flag and people recognise that. Whether they know it consciously, is a different issue.'

city's council and administration in general are not thoroughly Europeanised in terms of their agenda and practice²³⁴. This specific interest has subsequently spilled over to a wider range of policy fields including green growth, equality, the Atlantic Strategy, urban policy and cohesion policy. Dependent on the relevance of policies for the council Europeanisation is sectoral and only marginally relates to the EU's constitutional development. In contrast to many other authorities, the economic recession has led to a stronger awareness of EU policies within the city council (email Fitzgerald).

5.3.4 Europeanisation of local actors in Cheshire West and Chester

Only a few actors in the county council have an awareness of EU policies. Still, some policy fields are important to the county and thus CWAC shows a clustered level of Europeanisation. The key areas of focus within CWAC County Council centre around funding opportunities and economic development, such as programmes on maintaining employment, on generating economic growth and on environmental issues, especially in relation to areas of agriculture, chemical and automobile and aerospace industry. In terms of EU policies, the county council looks primarily at the future of ERDF programmes, the Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 and the 5th Cohesion Report²³⁵. Constitutional issues hardly matter for the county council²³⁶ (interview Lee).

Although officers are aware of the EU's legal impact, since Cheshire has never been a prioritised funding area fewer people that devote their attention to the EU work in the county council than in the councils of Liverpool or Manchester²³⁷. As the External Funding Manager (interview Lee) puts it:

²³⁴ Most departments and key actors in the city council seem to have an understanding of the EU and are in some way involved in activities with EU engagement as part of, for example, the city's social, economic, environmental or transport agenda. Through regular internal briefings, crosscutting awareness is fostered amongst senior politicians, heads of departments and team leaders within the council²³⁴ (interview Eyres).

²³⁵ The manager for external funding and partnerships (interview Lee) states: 'When we work with European funding and structural funds, we ensure that our projects and our programme is Lisbon-compliant, in terms of the things that we are trying to fund and achieve are reflective of it.'

²³⁶ The head of the former Brussels office has been closest to the development of the Lisbon Treaty (interview Pearson).

²³⁷ 'People tend to become very focused on their work and not interested in anything else that is seen as additional.' (interview Lee) The head of the former Brussels office (interview Pearson) suggests that local politicians are often not aware of the high impact of EU legislation. Because of a lack of appreciation of the EU's significance and particularly in times of economic crisis, he further argues that priorities within the council are first placed on local frontline services and not on European issues. For him the county's Conservative party alignment also leads to a degree of 'ignorance' towards the EU among the councillors.

On relatively *ad hoc* basis, there is a lot of European legislative issues that are dealt with on a national level. But as a local authority we are usually charged with actually implementing things. We generally just have a watching brief on most areas, so we are aware of what is coming down.

Departments with a higher awareness include the team for external funding and partnerships, the public procurement team, and other departments that work on single European projects and programmes²³⁸. In addition, Cllr Manley, who is responsible for external affairs and a member of the CoR, promotes Europe amongst councillors.

5.4 Adaptation

This indicator focuses on the government structures at territorial levels, as focused on by MLG type I (see 2.6.2), and the underlying polity of the European multilevel compound in order to assess the second hypothesis: that local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle to exert joint control over public policies. Institutional fusion assumes that European integration has led to push-pull dynamic between the European and the national level through which at both levels institutional adaptation and differentiation has taken place (see 2.3). From a local government perspective, the creation of the CoR followed a similar logic, since its establishment stemmed from the push of subnational governments to increase their sphere of influence at the European level. Despite its limited powers, the CoR provides elected councillors with direct access to EU policy-making and shows patterns of vertical and horizontal fusion. Cooperation with the EP and Commission has intensified over time and the Lisbon Treaty made the CoR a guardian of subsidiarity. Consequently, local councillors are involved in procedures of growing complexity to prepare and control decisions over public policies jointly, as it is assumed by fusion. Since the CoR is the only form of institutional adaptation at the European level, from a local perspective in England formal fusion processes are considered clustered.

Adaptation is least developed at the national level. Unless central government re-establishes a systematic dialogue with the LGA on European policies, the latter has to rely on informal ways to promote its European concerns via the national level. Regional governance arrangements in the NWoE, such as the Regional Development Agency (RDA), the Regional Leaders Board (RLB) and the North West Regional European Partnership (NWREP), used to provide important links between the local, central and European level. In order to deal with challenges of European integration, a mix of Euro-,

²³⁸ As well as the former head of the Cheshire Brussels Office.

state and regional-regionalism resulted in a functional space within the region, wherein competences and resources of different levels have fused horizontally and vertically. Since the major regional structures were abandoned, defusion processes have taken place and the region has lost in significance for the European engagement of local authorities.

Depending on the Europeanisation of local authorities, adaptation at the local level happens because of a push-pull logic from the European level. Local councils in England undertake reforms on a voluntary basis to deal and engage effectively with European policies and legislation. Throughout the first decade of the new millennium, English local authorities developed overall a number of considerable administrative capacities to deal with European issues. Such adaptation processes demonstrate fusion's ability to explain the *systemic linkages* between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level. However, recently financial cuts have forced local councils to reduce the number of dedicated officers and to close their offices in Brussels, which indicates a severe defusion of local government in England and puts limits to the *systemic linkages* hypothesis.

Local authorities in the NWoE reflect similar developments from strong institutional adaptation processes towards weak or clustered levels of fusion. Liverpool City Council and CWAC County Council provide typical examples for adaptation processes within local councils: they appointed a dedicated councillor who is also a CoR member, maintain specialised officers and established an office in Brussels. The Merseyside Brussels Office is the only remaining local representation from the NWoE. The defusion of regional and local arrangements that enable European engagement shows how the instability of politico-administrative in England impacts severely on the fusion dynamics of local government.

Table 5.4: Summary of the adaptation indicator for the English case studies

Adaptation of the English case studies

	Main features	Scenario
European level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct participation of local councillors through the CoR • Stronger institutionalised access is partly desired 	Clustered fusion
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Local Partnership disbanded • No direct institutional access 	Defusion
Regional level in the NWoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWDA, Regional Leaders Board, North West Brussels Office, NWREP as important bodies for local-supranational relations • Flexible, blurred governance arrangements • Multi-informed regionalisation between Euro-, state-, regional-regionalism • Regional Leaders Board and European Cooperation Group only remaining bodies • European Economic Strategy Group attached to Regional Leaders Board • LEPs work on sub-regional basis 	Shift from infusion to defusion
Local level in England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of European officer or units due to coercive pressures • Adaptation of council structures • High number of subnational offices in Brussels by the end of 1990s, number is diminishing • Dependent on size and resources • Binding outputs, funding opportunities and Europeanisation processes have triggered institutional adaptation 	Defusion/ clustered fusion
Local level in the NWoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External funding officers • Appointment of a councillor for international and European affairs • All sub-regions used to have an office • Merseyside and Greater Manchester only remaining sub-regions with capacities in Brussels 	Shift from infusion to clustered fusion
Liverpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One deputy councillor and a high level commission • One specialised officer • Previously member of the Merseyside Brussels Office • Initially driven by privileged funding status, later focus extended to policy-making and policy-networks • Result of absorption and Europeanisation of actors 	Clustered/ infusion
CWAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One councillor designated as part of portfolio for external affairs and economic development • Small team for external funding and partnerships • European themes incorporated as cross-cutting responsibility in the administrative structure • Cheshire Brussels office from 2003-2010 • Adaptation driven by funding opportunities and economic development 	Shift from infusion to clustered fusion

5.4.1 Institutional adaptation at the European level

The Committee of the Regions

Since most of its English members are local councillors²³⁹, the CoR provides local government with direct access to EU policy-making and is regarded as a valuable body for promoting local concerns²⁴⁰ (interviews Carter; Hope; Moore). Though the CoR is less powerful than the EP, the Council and the Commission, its influence has grown over time²⁴¹ and can be considered as part of the clustered formal fusion dynamic of English local government.²⁴²

The four CoR members from the NWoE have a good reputation for acting effectively on behalf of local interests²⁴³ (interview Carter). For Liverpool, the CoR has also been a very important body, because Cllr Clucas used to sit in the CoR with two mandates²⁴⁴, nominated for the NWoE by Merseyside and by the Regional Leaders Board²⁴⁵. Since CWAC also provides a CoR member, the county has direct access to EU policy-making.

²³⁹ Since the Nice Treaty, CoR members must hold an electoral mandate or be accountable to an elected assembly (Neshkova, 2010: 1195).

²⁴⁰ The CoR is also very useful for the LGA, which provides the secretariat and briefings for the UK's delegation.

²⁴¹ The sphere of mandatory influence designated to the CoR involves policy fields of direct regional relevance: education; culture; public health; social policy; trans-European networks for transport; employment policy; vocational training; telecommunication and energy; environment; economic and social cohesion. The CoR can offer opinions on other subjects, which can be taken into account by other EU institutions on a voluntary basis. In 1997 the Amsterdam Treaty enhanced the sphere of mandatory influence to areas such as employment, social policy, environmental policies, vocational training and transport (Neshkova, 2010: 1196; Wagstaff, 1999). With the Lisbon Treaty the CoR received the power to enforce the principle of subsidiarity vis-à-vis other EU institutions before the Court of Justice, albeit it is not clear yet how the new role of the CoR will be realised in practice.

²⁴² There are problems in the collaboration between the CoR and the Commission that is still not always eager to implement the CoR's recommendations (interview Eyres). Though not all local actors expect an upgrade of the CoR (interviews Carter; Hope), CWAC's external funding manager (interview Lee) would also welcome enhancing the role of the CoR, because 'the strength of the CoR members is that they are usually councillors involved in local government, and therefore they understand directly the needs of the local people and authority.' The EU adviser to the LGA (interview Rowles) is optimistic: 'I am sure in the future it will move towards becoming an official institution and then it will have equal status with the European Parliament, and I think that would be the single, greatest one thing that could improve the representation of local and regional bodies towards the EU.' In such a scenario local government would enter a new quality of fusion. It is, however, questionable whether the member state governments will take major steps to further upgrade the CoR.

²⁴³ Members of the NWoE are Cllr Herbert Manley (Alternate from CWAC County Council), Cllr Mary Robinson (Alternate from Eden District Council) and Cllr Neil Swannick (from Manchester City Council).

²⁴⁴ Cllr Clucas was president of the Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) within the Committee and chairs the working group on the EU budget post 2013, which feeds directly into the EP, the Commission and the Council to ensure the requirements of subsidiarity are met. Cllr Clucas was also looking after the EU's impact on behalf of the local and regional authorities across Europe and in the UK (interview Clucas). Even though she was not exclusively representing Liverpool or the NWoE, people from the city council provided her with informal views on the city region's perspective, which she could subsequently raise at the European level.

²⁴⁵ And subsequently approved by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Prime Minister and eventually the Council of Ministers.

The action indicator shows how the CoR member Liverpool and CWAC played an important role for the fusion dynamics of both councils.

Other potential institutionalisation processes at the European level

There are only modest adaptation pressures to reform the EU's polity to involved local representatives, as it is assumed by institutional fusion. Except for the desire to extend the competences of the CoR, there is no strong desire amongst local actors in England to 'push' for further institutionalised access within the EU's polity²⁴⁶ (interviews Pearson; Sumner). Even though an optimal solution would be to embed local development as a horizontal crosscutting issue within the whole Commission²⁴⁷, local actors do not have the power and capacity to initiate such reforms²⁴⁸.

The LGA promotes the involvement of local representatives in the committees and working groups of the Commission and for introducing scrutiny procedures and systematic exchange with the Commission (interview Rowles). Up to the present day, however, the Commission has hardly any relevance for formal fusion processes. Very few local representatives are sitting on the committees or working groups of the Commission. Fusion dynamics are mostly subject to informal lobbying as outlined by the action indicator.

6.4.2 Institutional adaptation at the national level in England

Institutionalised procedures at the national level to involve local actors in European affairs do not exist anymore, and therefore central government is not relevant for institutional fusion from a municipal perspective. Between 1997 and 2010, the Central-Local Partnership (CLP) was set up to provide local government leaders and the LGA with the formal right to dialogue with senior government ministers on matters of common concern and included European policy issues. The arrangement was not made under a legal basis but was underpinned by the commitment of central government (CEMR, 2007: 228).

After the CLP was abandoned, the LGA had to rely on informal meetings, which illustrates

²⁴⁶ There are worries that a further institutionalisation of local-supranational may complicate and slow down processes.

²⁴⁷ A crosscutting solution would be optimal as subnational representatives from England work across various DGs, such as DG Environment Consumer and Health, DG Business, DG Regio and so on.

²⁴⁸ The majority of the political elite across the member states is reluctant to equip sub-national government with greater influence at the European level.

the instability of local governance arrangements in England and the corresponding implications for fusion dynamics. Particularly in the design of the Structural Funds programmes, systematic exchange with central government would be desired²⁴⁹ (interview Rowles). However, there are no signs that such formalised multilevel arrangements are intended.

5.4.3 Institutional adaptation at the regional level in the NWoE

Between 1999 and 2012, England maintained regional governance arrangements that in some areas played an important role for the European engagement of local authorities. In the NWoE, the interaction between local and regional levels on European policies became strong and was part of compound governance arrangements amongst multiple levels. In contrast to the federal arrangements of Germany, regional governance in England is subject to continuing change, which impacts negatively on their role as enablers of municipal fusion.

Not only do ERDF programmes require regional arrangements for their conduction and management, key actors within the NWoE developed organisational capacities to produce a common policy agenda and partnerships between local decision-makers and institutions (see Mawson, 1998: 226-227). In the absence of a strong regional government, these governance structures provided local and regional actors and institutions with a flexible and effective approach to fuse horizontally and vertically. The head of the North West Brussels Office (interview Sumner) suggested in 2010 that

What has happened in the North West, and perhaps different to some of the other English regions, is that - because there is not anything really set in stone – there is no mandate to have to work in a certain way. We have come up with our own structures that work best for our region. The partnership working that is happening in the North West is actually very, very strong.

The following analysis focuses primarily on the most important regional bodies in the

²⁴⁹ As the head of the LGA Brussels office (interview Rowles) argues: ‘The only way subsidiarity can be made real, is if the local level is engaged in not just the delivery of policies, but the design of policies. That is the step change that needs to happen. Often local authorities are recipients or beneficiaries of funding, but they are not as involved in some areas in the design of how those structures and programmes work. It is on those issues that we need to have a very regular and systematic dialogue with central government. Any new structures that would help us would be welcomed. The Council of Europe did a charter on local self-government, which is all about local autonomy and freedom to decide. That has been a useful document for us that we have been able to use as a lever to say: we do have certain rights as local governments and we do not always have to respond to the national imperatives that come down. So I like to see more opportunities for the local level to engage with the central level.’

NWOE to link local to European policies: North West Development Agency (NWDA), 4NW/North West Regional Leaders Board (NWRLB), North West Brussels Office (NWBO), North West Regional European Partnership (NWREP), European Cooperation Group (ECG).

After the regional structures were disbanded by central government, which caused a diffusion of the integrative dynamics in the NWoE, some of these bodies have survived and other structures gained in importance, such as the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the European Economic Strategy Group (EESG). As these new arrangements are still at an early stage, this indicator can only outline how they affect the fusion dynamics of local government.

The North West Development Agency

In 1999, central government set up the RDAs to focus on the economic development of the region and to establish strong partnerships with local authorities, and public, private and voluntary stakeholders²⁵⁰. The NWDA, 'once that most powerful and wealthy of regeneration quangos under the last Labour government', was based in Warrington and employed up to 500 people (Place North West, 2012) and replaced the Government Offices (GOs) as the managing authority for ERDF programmes, and was also responsible the European Commission's Law Development Fund and for the ESF programmes.

Unlike the GOs and other RDAs in England, the NWDA appeared to be engaged on behalf of local authorities (interviews Bleaden; Clucas; Yates). The NWDA established the EESG, a small small high level group, to encourage and coordinate engagement across programmes of the Structural Funds. Particularly for smaller councils, the NWDA was an important enabler for transnational partnerships and offered access to valuable information and officers with European expertise.

The NWDA contributed to an emancipation of the NWoE as a region responding to European and global demands with a cooperative approach. With the closure of the NWDA in March 2012, local authorities lost an influential structure through which they could influence central government on EU policies and also engage directly with the EU. As the funding officer of Stockport Borough Council (interview Bleaden) puts it: 'by

²⁵⁰ As the NWDA was imposed by central government as part of a top-down or state-regionalism (Jones & Scully, 2010: 8), it did not indicate the 'hollowing out' of the state (see Webb & Collis, 2000: 862).

removing everything at the regional level they caused an awful lot of damage.' With the closure of the NWDA, local authorities lost capacities, skill, knowledge and clarity of decision-making to engage with Europe, as well as resources to match European funding²⁵¹ (interview Caulfield). In terms of fusion, this has led to a disinvestment of local authorities and has weakened the relationship between the European level and local government in the NWoE.

The North West Regional Leaders Board and the European Economic Strategy Group

The NWRLB used to be an important regional arrangement, previously linked to the NWDA, through which local authorities were engaged in EU policies. The NWRLB was initially part of the North West Regional Assembly (NWRA)²⁵², which was replaced by 4NW in 2008²⁵³ (see 4.6.1) (interview Carter; also NWDA, 2003). Even though neither the NWDA's nor 4NW's statutory functions included working in Europe, they adapted their structures to be able to deal more effectively with European affairs and used to work together closely to take a leading role on coordinating European activities in the NWoE²⁵⁴.

In 2010, 4NW was downsized to ten per cent of its personnel and was re-launched as the NWRLB. Despite the closure of the NWDA, the NWRLB still continues to exist with the only purpose to maintain some control over European funding within the region²⁵⁵ (interviews Caulfield).

After the closure of the NWDA, the Local Management Committee (LMC) was set up by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), to identify priorities for the 2014-2020 programme. The vice-chair of the LMC is provided by Manchester City Council. In order to provide accountability and to promote a regional position in the LMC, the NWRLB feeds local interests into it. The European Economic Strategy Group (EESG) was subsequently established as a consultant to the NWRLB (interview Caulfield; also NWDA, 2012; Schmid, 2012). The EESG comprises leaders and elected members from

²⁵¹ Whilst Greater Manchester and Liverpool can provide resources to match European funding, other municipalities in the NWoE struggle to do the same.

²⁵² The NWRA was the first regional leaders board in England bringing together council leaders from all its sub-regions - Cumbria, Cheshire, Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester, which nominated political representatives for this board.

²⁵³ 4NW was not an arm of central government, but did have statutory functions given to them by government (Robinson, 2009).

²⁵⁴ Their co-operation also included areas where collective capacities were more efficient than individual capacities for each local authority, such as transport, housing, planning and sustainable.

²⁵⁵ Although European issues was initially a small item on the agenda of the NWRLB, in the context of economic development European funding has become the main driver behind the board in order to prevent a renationalisation of ERDF programmes.

local authorities, as well as representatives from the LEPs, the voluntary and the private sector²⁵⁶, so it is very influential²⁵⁷ and is potentially a new driver for fusion dynamics (interview Moore).

Although the NWRLB managed to continue in a downgraded version, many local policy-makers prioritise individual strategies. The NWRLB seeks to promote common interests in the ERDF programme post 2013, but depends on how central government decides to manage ERDF²⁵⁸ (interviews Caulfield; Hope; ECG meeting). Central government is very likely to deliver ERDF through a national programme, which is expected to have a negative impact on the fusion dynamics of some local authorities.

The North West Regional European Partnership and the European Cooperation Group

In the 1990s, NWREP started as key priority group of the NWRA (interview Carter). In 2006, NWREP was adopted by the NWDA and 4NW as a senior level, region wide partnership led by local authorities to consult regional and local leaders on European issues beyond ERDF, ESF and Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)²⁵⁹ (NWDA, 2012). NWREP claimed to be the 'voice of the region' when dealing with European affairs and it oversaw the delivery of European Priorities²⁶⁰ through annual work plans; supported engagement in EU funds and activities; provided a platform for regional partners, MEPs and members of the CoR for debating and influencing the future of EU policies; developed a strategic relationship with their members of the EP and the CoR; and promoted the NWoE in Brussels.²⁶¹ Despite some criticism on the effectiveness of NWREP²⁶², it represented a wide range of local and regional interests *vis-à-vis* the CoR, MEPs and the Commission, and encouraged European engagement (interview Lee).

²⁵⁶ The DCLG chairs the EESG; vice-chair is provided by Manchester City Council.

²⁵⁷ Although the Regional Leaders Board takes the ultimate decisions, the input of the EESG is unlikely to be overturned (interview Caulfield).

²⁵⁸ The NWRLB, for example, could govern pan-LEP arrangements to deliver ERDF. This would enable marginalised counties, such as Lancashire and Cumbria, with means of influence over European programmes.

²⁵⁹ The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) runs from 2007 to 2013, with a budget of approximately £3.9bn to improve competitiveness in the agriculture and forestry sector; improve the rural environment; foster rural quality of life and diversification of the rural economy (Defra, 2010).

²⁶⁰ Regional European Priorities for 2009-2013: Economy (e.g. Enterprise and SMEs, Research, Development, Technology, Innovation, Internationalisation), Environment (Climate Change, Energy, Resource Efficiency and Eco-Innovation), People (Education and Skills, Demographic Change, Economic Inclusion, Health)

²⁶¹ NWREP brought together the NWDA director of policy local politicians, the regional members of the CoR, economic and social partners from all sub-regions.

²⁶² Liverpool's European officer (interview Eyres) wanted to take greater advantage of their CoR members: 'We need some sort of regional, sub-regional forum, where Committee of the Regions members can feed back on what they are doing and on issues they're looking at, but also where the North West can feed up to the Committee of the Regions members and be represented.'

The NWREP incorporated the European Corporation Group (ECG), a sub-committee that started in 2001 as an INTERREG working group and was subsequently nested within NWREP to give it a governmental structure. The ECG provided strategic leadership and funding advice beyond ERDF and ESF programmes, for example on INTERREG and action programmes (see 1.2)²⁶³ (NWDA, 2003). Whilst the NWRLB has been responsible for ERDF and ESF programmes, the ECG comprised the main experts at officer level within NWoE. In 2011, NWREP held its last meeting, but the ECG remained on an informal, voluntary basis. In the ECG, engaged officers from the NWoE²⁶⁴ have continued meeting on a two monthly basis ('a coalition of the willing') and without formal links to any regional governance structures²⁶⁵. Its membership has reduced to a 'small core of very high edged practitioners' detached from any governance structures, which makes it less effective in terms of European impact and transnational opportunities. The group does not formally lobby for policies but can only inform other bodies, such as the NWRLB and the EESG (see 5.4.3.4), on an informal basis (interviews Bleaden; Caulfield; Hornby; Yates).

The way in which the NWDA has developed close links with the NWRLB, the NWREP and the ECG working together on European issues, shows how a mix of motives (state-regionalism, regional-regionalism and Euro-regionalism, see 4.4.1) has created a functional space within the region to deal with challenges of European integration (Jones & Scully, 2010: 8-9; Sturm & Dieringer, 2005: 282; Newman, 2000: 900). In a process of 'multiple-informed' regionalisation, competences and resources of local and regional levels have fused owing to European integration.

In recent years, the regional level has become less significant for fusion dynamics, and consequently the European engagement of local authorities has suffered. The NWRLB, the EESG and the ECG are now the leading bodies in the NWoE into which local authorities can feed and share their concerns.

The North West Brussels Office

As an essential part of the European engagement, the NWDA and 4NW maintained a joint

²⁶³ For a short time there also used to exist a practitioners group dealing with technical issues around projects, such as guiding application processes.

²⁶⁴ Of about 30 potential members in 2011, a higher number faced redundancy.

²⁶⁵ The main focus of the ECG is about transnational cooperation and European programmes. 'All we are, is an entirely voluntary peer-network trying to maintain the knowledge and skills coming together. Because them people feel quite isolated and lonely in their own organisation, they see value what they can learn from one another and the contacts that they bring.' (interview Caulfield)

office in Brussels, which represented another major example of institutional adaptation at the regional level²⁶⁶. The tasks of the NWBO included lobbying for cohesion policy post 2013, and looking at potential added value of EU policies, which typically has been about the accession of funding. Although the NWBO did not work directly for local authorities and was not lobbying the Commission on behalf of a specific municipal council, local leaders could feed into the office's work through 4NW. Through the NWBO, local actors from the region were able to engage in partnerships and networks across Europe, as well as with the Commission (interview Sumner). The office was an important channel for a multilevel fusion. With the closure of the NWDA, the NWBO also ceased to exist, which again demonstrates defusion processes in the NWoE.

Local Enterprise Partnerships and other sub-regional arrangements

LEPs have become the primary bodies for delivering economic development on a sub-regional basis. In some sub-regions they have obtained a stronger role than in others. After the decline of regional governance, LEPs have gained in significance but are not equipped with sufficient resources to have an effective impact. They have concentrated their attention on European funding and have become involved in the delivery of the ERDF programmes²⁶⁷ (NWDA, 2012). LEPs do not have the same administrative capacities as the NWDA; have a narrower policy focus than the previous arrangements and provide less impetus for bottom-up activities. It is doubtful whether the new decentralised, localist approach of central government²⁶⁸ will be as effective for the fusion of local government as the regional governance structures had been (interviews Caulfield; Hope).

In addition to the regional structures and the LEPs, some of the five sub-regions have developed their own horizontal procedures to cooperate on European issues. Examples of this include the Lancashire European Network, which covers all local authorities and the two universities in Lancashire²⁶⁹ (Lancashire Brussels Office, 2007) and New Economy. The latter was established in 2009 as an advisory body to the Association of Manchester Authorities (AGMA) and has become the leading body for EU policies and funding issues within Greater Manchester (interviews Hope; Yates). With the decline of regional

²⁶⁶ Because only two persons ran the Brussels office, they provided only a broad European expertise and worked together with the teams of the NWDA and 4NW on specific issues, such as innovative and sustainable development, climate change, transport and vocational training.

²⁶⁷ Hence, a representative from the LEP Board sits on the EESG.

²⁶⁸ The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition has established LEPs as a key component of its Decentralisation and Localism Bill published on 13 December 2010 (Harrison, 2011: 18).

²⁶⁹ The Lancashire European Network has not been active recently (interview Moore).

governance and the financial pressures for efficient resource management, sub-regional structures have become more important for potential fusion processes.

5.4.4 Institutional adaptation at the local level

Institutional adaptation of English local government

The *systemic linkages* hypothesis states that top-down impact and Europeanisation processes have led to a reorganisation of local councils and administrations has allowed them to deal more effectively with European policies and legislation, and potentially enables them to engage in European programmes and even in policy-making processes. As well as the size and resources of an authority, the extent to which local governments adapt their politico-administrative structures is dependent on their history as an area under privileged funding status²⁷⁰. The opportunities to collaborate with the EU in joint programmes and community initiatives, to participate in transnational networks, and to exert ‘coercive-indirect’ pressures²⁷¹ (Marshall, 2008: 101), such as the application of the partnership principle and long-term programming to access Structural Funds, have led to the establishment of European officers and units within local administrations²⁷² (Benington & Harvey 1999: 203). Within some administrations, individual departments have also nominated contact persons to work on European issues. Smaller authorities may only have a single officer who is partly responsible for European issues in the context of economic regeneration or planning.

Initially, some UK local authorities set up offices in Brussels (often shared with other authorities) to monitor new legal initiatives, policy developments and funding opportunities (Benington & Harvey 1999: 203; Marshall, 2008: 108). Along with the German *Länder*, British (sub-) regions pioneered the establishment of representations in Brussels in the mid-1980s. It was local government actors that took the lead in opening

²⁷⁰ Larger or leading authorities, and those which attained objective 1, 2 or 5b, status (for example the metropolitan districts in the North West of England) tend to have a European team consisting of two to five members of staff looking at European funding and policy issues (also Martin, 1997: 58).

²⁷¹ See push-pull logic (see 2.3).

²⁷² From the 1980s to the early 1990s, local authorities in England that had appointed specialised European officers were in the minority. By 1995, 73 per cent of authorities afforded one or more officers²⁷², 50 per cent had at least one full-time position designated for European issues, and ten per cent appointed a European unit. 35 per cent of authorities had established working groups on European affairs to work across different administrative departments, and 27 per cent had nominated special contact for European questions within each department (Martin, 1997: 58-59).

permanent Brussels representations and set up the first regional offices from England²⁷³, because their regions were fragmented and only had a very limited scope for autonomous action in the EU. Offices in Brussels allowed local actors to bypass central government (John, 2001: 86; Rowe, 2011: 55, 65). By the end of the 1990s, the UK had the highest number of subnational offices in Brussels, followed by Germany and Spain (Goldsmith, 2003:124).

With regard to political structures, some local councils have adapted their committee structures to facilitate engagement with European policies. They either appointment a specialised councillor or establish a specific committee, usually as part of a wider portfolio on planning and economic development²⁷⁴. Due to economic recession, a larger number of Brussels offices have been closed in recent years. With the financial situation and current UK government policies, most authorities, with exceptions such as Birmingham or Wolverhampton, have drawn back their European capacities (interview Carter) and considerable institutional defusion has taken place.

In addition to local councils, the LGA was amongst the first actors in England to adapt its structures for an effective European engagement on behalf of its member authorities. Such structural features include the appointment of specialised officers, a European and International Board, an office in Brussels and the European Officers Network (EON). Within EON each region is presented by a certain number of officers²⁷⁵ to coordinate EU policies relevant for local government (interview Moore). The EON underwent some recent restructuring processes: instead of European officers, the network now assembles policy officers and ‘what used to be purely Europe is now being focused to policy *per se*’; and it has turned into a virtual network that communicates effectively over distances (interview Carter). The LGA maintains some of its European capacities that provide a strong a link to EU policy-making.

Institutional adaptation of local government in the NWoE

Whilst the previous section allowed for a general overview of institutional adaptation at the local level, the examined authorities in the NWoE offer more detailed insights into the specific characteristics of these processes. Most specialised officers only deal with

²⁷³ Among the large metropolitan boroughs and city councils to set up the first offices were Birmingham City Council and Strathclyde Regional Council.

²⁷⁴ This is common where the key European focus lies on the acquisition of structural funds.

²⁷⁵ The NWoE is represented with three officers in the EON.

European issues as part of a wider portfolio. Instead of having a European officer, it is common in the NWoE to delegate European themes to a funding officer responsible for acquiring funding from various national and international sources²⁷⁶. Some councils, such as Manchester and Halton, have also delegated European issues to the council leader or a councillor responsible for international affairs.²⁷⁷

In the first decade of the new millennium, local government from all five sub-regions of the NWoE were represented in Brussels through joint offices. Lancaster, for example, was represented through the Lancashire Brussels Office, Stockport through the Greater Manchester Brussels Office (interview Bleaden) and Halton through the Merseyside Brussels Office (MBO) (interview Carter). Except for the MBO, all representations were closed and various European competences have been disbanded²⁷⁸. Overall, local government in the region has shifted from a fairly high level of fusion towards a clustered and defused level.

Institutional adaptation within Liverpool

Institutional adaptation within the city council has been triggered by an increasing awareness (Europeanisation) of the beneficial impact of EU policies (absorption) (see 5.5.3). It provides the basis for further engagement (action) and confirms the *systemic*

²⁷⁶ In Greater Manchester, since the 1990s when ESF and ERDF programmes brought significant sums into the city region, almost all local authorities used to have one or more people dedicated to Europe, or officers whose partial responsibility included European issues. Whilst some municipalities still maintain individual European capacities, the Combined Greater Manchester Authority they work much closer together than in the 1990s (interviews Hope; Yates). In Manchester City Council, no particular structural changes have been initiated: Europe is not subject to a team of multiple officers but incorporated into a number of team dealing with different areas, such as procurement and economic development in general. Though some officers are specialised in working on specific projects, the council generally mainstreams international and European work across different areas to integrate EU policies more efficiently within specific departments (interview Hope). Since 2000, the Funding and Programmes Manager in Stockport have shifted the focus from about 20-30 per cent of European sources to over 60 per cent (interview Bleaden). In Lancaster, the Strategic Funding Officer was part of the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership which existed from 2001 to 2012 and brought together actors from different sectors to deliver joint projects. The main focus of the Strategic Funding Officer has been around funding, but has shifted towards European policies related to wider issues of cohesion policy. Together with the team for regeneration, three people are working with ERDF programmes (interview Moore). Since the early 2000s Halton Borough Council a Regional and European Officer working around 40 per cent of here time on European issues (interview Carter). Cumbria County Council maintains a Europedirect service point.

²⁷⁷ Whilst in Manchester City Council, external and international relationships are allocated to the council leader and a deputy leader and take an important position in the councils European profile, for a small authority like Halton, it is unusual to have international affairs as part of the council leader's and a councillor profile (interview Carter).

²⁷⁸ Greater Manchester closed its Brussels representations in January 2012 and outsourced their European capacity to an external information service and an external agent who works one day per week for them. The Brussels office had held up to four officers, (interview Hope). The closure of the Lancashire Brussels office was the result of a change in the overall control of the county council from Labour to Conservative. Thereby, offices that are funded by a single authority represent a higher cost to that authority than would a partnership office (interview Sharples).

linkages hypothesis. Within its city council, three forms of institutional adaptation enable Liverpool to engage pro-actively not only in European funding schemes, but also in policy-making and policy networks: the appointment of a commission responsible for the European agenda, the introduction of a specialised European officer and the establishment of the joint MBO²⁷⁹. Liverpool's approach is formed to work horizontally across the sub-region of Merseyside on behalf of multiple stakeholders.

With regard to the political structures, one councillor used to deal with European affairs in the context of economic development²⁸⁰ and until 2012 used to be a member of the CoR. The 2011 elected mayor appointed a high level commission specifically to advise and examine the city's European approach, which shows a strong commitment (see 5.5) (email Fitzgerald; interview Sharples).

Within the administration, Liverpool's European officer's main tasks involve accessing EU funding, primarily from the ERDF and ESF; influencing policies and promoting the city region's interest within the Commission and the EP; and collaborating and networking through EUROCITIES and in transnational projects²⁸¹. As the leading officer for the whole city region, he also supports the neighbouring authorities and coordinates activities²⁸² (interview Eyres).

The MBO indicated a strong fusion tendency of Liverpool City and other municipalities within the city region. Established in 1996 as a result of Merseyside's Objective 1 status, the MBO is the only remaining full-time local representation from the NWoE²⁸³. Along with the other five local authorities in Merseyside, Liverpool City Council used to be one

²⁷⁹ In addition to the outlined structural features, the Merseyside Monitoring Committee was introduced in the early 1990s to monitor the ERDF programmes within the city region. The group gather various stakeholders and also influences the design and delivery of the JESSICA and JEREMIE schemes (European Commission, 2012a: 6-7).

²⁸⁰ From 1998-2012, Cllr Flo Clucas was also responsible for other areas such as finance, environment, social care, housing, neighbourhood and community safety. Her responsibilities also included membership of the Programme Monitoring Committee, which oversees and advises the managing authority for the delivery of the ERDF programme, and of the Merseyside Phasing-In Sub-Committee (interview Clucas).

²⁸¹ The European officer is a 'strategic interface' or liaison between the city council and the Programme Monitoring Committee that holds the funds. In practice this means that he forwards funding opportunities to the relevant departments within the city and connects them to specific programme teams within the council, who offer detailed support to plan projects and make bids. He scans the incoming calls for projects, transnational funding opportunities, workshops, conferences or other consultation procedures of the Commission, and then communicates them back within the city region. He also sits in the economic development forum of EUROCITIES through which they seek to exert influence on the Commission on various policy areas.

²⁸² The European officer represents Sefton, Wirral, St. Helens, Knowsley and Hulton in meetings with the programme monitoring committee, representatives from the University sector and the community sector.

²⁸³ Reasons hereof are the division of expenses among multiple stakeholders and the ability to access higher Structural Funds as well as transnational programmes. The involvement of multiple parties generates more stability than individual ownership.

of the stakeholders of the MBO²⁸⁴. However, whereas in the past local authorities dominated the office's agenda, Liverpool City Council left the MBO in 2011 and Knowsley is the only municipality left²⁸⁵. Liverpool's main focus in the MBO has been about cohesion policy and regeneration. Although the city council lost influence over the office's strategic direction, because Liverpool City Council is leading on cohesion policy on behalf of the whole city region²⁸⁶, it still cooperates closely with the MBO (interview Sharples). Liverpool's drop-out of Liverpool indicates defusion. Nonetheless, on an informal basis, the office remains a strong tool for European engagement.

Institutional adaptation within Cheshire West and Chester

One councillor, a specialised team and the former office in Brussels have been the primary features of institutional adaptation within CWAC. Compared to other counties, in the past CWAC showed a high level of institutional adaptation with the major aim of allocating European funding.

On the political side, one councillor has been assigned to deal with external affairs as part of his portfolio as the executive member for prosperity²⁸⁷. The councillor is also a member of the CoR, which links the county to the EU and to the other four CoR members of the NWoE²⁸⁸ (interview Manley).

Within the administration, the team for External Funding and International Partnerships are primarily responsible for European policies. The team is part of the Regeneration and Culture Directorate. The head of the team and two other members are dealing with European policies, while the other members work on national funding. Since Cheshire has never received privileged EU funding²⁸⁹, the team has fewer people devoted to European funding and policies than has Merseyside or Greater Manchester.

²⁸⁴ MBO board is only indirectly politically accountable and follows a pragmatic approach. Amongst the stakeholders are Universities, LEP, fire and rescue service, police, transport (Merseytravel), waste disposal, economic development and private sector organisations.

²⁸⁵ The incentive for leaving is not entirely clear but might be linked to the negative reports about EU crisis combined with local government budget cuts.

²⁸⁶ On 'heavy' legal issues such as transport or environment, other organisations are leading.

²⁸⁷ The portfolio also covers land use development, housing, economic regeneration and development, skills and knowledge. The councillor does not only deal with European funding, but also with funding from other sources in the UK.

²⁸⁸ As a member of the CoR, the councillor can provide officers and other actors in the county with access to the EU's virtual information systems.

²⁸⁹ Only the town of Frodsham received funding from the ERDF as a transitional area attached to the former borough of Vale Royal and adjacent to the borough of Halton, which attained Objective 2 status for 2000-2006 (Halton Borough Council, 2001).

After the division of Cheshire County, CWAC sought to incorporate external European themes as a crosscutting responsibility²⁹⁰. The team for External Funding and International Partnerships provides assistance across the council's departments, as well as for voluntary and community organisations of the whole authority in order to set up external funding issues and international partnerships including projects and programmes of the European Structural Funds²⁹¹ (interview Lee).

From 2003 till 2010 Cheshire County did have a permanent office within the North West House in Brussels. The primary task of the office was not only to focus on EU funding, but also on EU policies. Further tasks of the office included the development of collaborations within European networks and INTERREG programmes, such as the European Chemical Regions Network (ECRN) (interview Pearson). In the course of the financial crisis, the position changed from a permanent to temporary arrangement, and the office was eventually closed.

The closure of the Brussels representation indicates that particularly in times of financial difficulties, European themes represent a field of activity of lower priority for CWAC. With a dedicated councillor and a specialised team, CWAC still maintains strong capacities to engage with EU policies. However, as the office was a major actor for Cheshire's European work, the county underwent a defusion process.

5.5 Action

As outlined in chapter three (see 3.2.4), the action indicator assesses local mobilisation, interest formulation and aggregation of and within local government, and thus is the most important dynamic of the *fusion* hypothesis. Local action is distinct along direct and indirect patterns, as well as vertically and horizontally. Whilst direct action bypasses national levels of government and addresses EU actors and institutions, indirect action addresses regional and national levels of government in order to deploy them for the promotion of local concern at the European level. Direct and indirect activities fall under vertical mobilisation, and involve the usage of various channels, which are not equally

²⁹⁰ The team for External Funding and International Partnerships works cover a wider field of European themes across the administration.

²⁹¹ They also publish a newsletter and seek to foster engagement with European policies and legislation relevant to the authority, such as the EU budget, energy and climate policy, CAP, regional and territorial policies, and demographic change. The team for External Funding and International Partnerships works closely together with the legal team on European state aid legislation, and the procurement team to look after compliance with European procurement regulations.

effective in influencing EU policy-outcomes. Horizontal mobilisation is often interlinked with vertical action and serves as a basis for the promotion of interests against higher levels of government (Lindh *et al.*, 2009: 39).

Since institutionalised access to EU policy-making is only limited for local government, informal activities are the major determinants for assessing whether local actors exert some control over European policies, as it is the case for national governments. Despite or even because of the strong centralisation of political control within England, some local authorities have showed a strong interest in influencing supranational policies, which they have to implement, such as in the field of environmental legislation and planning (Marshall, 2008: 112-113). Even though local authorities still recognise the dominance of central government, EU membership has led to a new role for local authorities and to new autonomous activities (Martin & Pearce, 1999: 32-37; Mather, 2000: 163 *et seq.*; Zerbinati & Massey, 2008: 84).

From early on, some local councils took the new opportunities offered by the EU and developed vertical activities to promote their concerns at the European level and to create more autonomy for themselves. As Benington and Harvey (1999: 204) have observed:

In addition to chasing EU grants and seeking early warning of EU initiatives, some UK local authorities have also seized the opportunity to try to influence EU policy-making in particular fields in which they have a specific or general interest (for example, economic and industrial development, poverty and social exclusion, ageing of the population). A small, but rapidly growing number of UK local authorities is involved in attempts to lobby the EU in regional combinations and associations, or in transnational networks.

In the past, many municipalities may have been well placed and been able to exert influence on EU policy-making (Goldsmith & Sperling, 1997: 100-118). The indicator's findings suggest, however, that direct, indirect and horizontal activities have been weakened under the current economic climate. Although some authorities have increased their European engagement, a great number have reduced their action, most obviously in the budget cuts to travel to Brussels for policy influencing and horizon-scanning, partner search and general updating (interviews Hope; Hornby; Moore).

There have been limits for Euro-active local authorities. European engagement has remained in the hands of a few councillors and officers and the number has even reduced dramatically. Whilst most municipalities have hardly any impact on EU policies, it is major cities, such as Manchester and Liverpool, that have disproportional impact (interview Caulfield).

Some local authorities bypass central government and directly address the Commission around issues such as urban development, climate change and sustainable development (interview Rowles). In terms of direct vertical action, nevertheless, in many cases their agents, and particularly the LGA, are active on their member's behalf at the European level rather than English municipalities themselves. Brussels offices of local authorities and transnational municipal and thematic networks, in particular EUROCITIES and the CEMR (see 1.2), have been used to promote local preferences and practice amongst other member states and at the European level to shape EU policies in matters (Marshall, 2008: 101, 109).

As the case of the NWoE illustrates, the prospects of funding and the impact of EU legislation and programmes have triggered multiple strategies that used to be part of a pro-active fusion dynamic. However, the level to which English local authorities conduct vertical activities varies strongly among municipalities and not all of them show pro-active engagement. Whilst some municipalities directly address EU institutions, others rely on the LGA and municipal networks. EUROCITIES, for example, provides Liverpool with direct links to the European level, and CWAC uses the ECRN to EU actors. As other local authorities, Liverpool and CWAC also use their membership in European wide networks to exchange best-practice for horizontal cooperation.

Regional governance in the NWoE used to provide strong strategies for indirect vertical action of local actors, particularly with regard to ERDF programmes, transnational cooperation and economic development. The NWoE also provided the context for strong horizontal partnerships that linked local authorities to other European networks. Regional arrangements have been part of a blurred and dynamic multilevel arrangement amongst local, regional, central and European governance. Their decline affected the European engagement of local authorities in the NWoE negatively. Local actors may enhance their engagement again in the future (interview Sharples), as austerity measures force local authorities to look beyond the UK to find financial resources²⁹² (interview Simpson).

²⁹² At the same major EU resources have shifted from the UK to new, less prosperous member states, which also caused some disengagement.

Table 5.5: Summary of direct vertical action for the English case studies

Direct vertical action of the English case studies

	Main features	Scenario
Local government in England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initially driven by funding opportunities • Expanded to other policy areas • Potential means to bypass central government • LGA as major agent • CEMR and EUROCITIES as main networks • MEPs relevant for LGA than for authorities • CoR important body for authorities with a councillor being a member, but limited influence 	<p>Defusion/ clustered fusion/ infusion</p> <p>Infusion for LGA and major cities</p> <p>Recently defusion</p>
Local government in the NWoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main focus on direct funding • Engagement reduced because of financial cuts • EUROCITIES only relevant for Manchester • Varying engagement with MEPs • CoR members useful for policy promotion 	<p>Defusion/ clustered fusion/ infusion</p> <p>Recently defusion</p>
Liverpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of funding is most important field of activity • Primary interest in urban and economic development • CoR provided direct links to the European level • MEPs less useful for policy promotion • Direct links to Commission, in particular to DG Regio • Bypassing central government • EUROCITIES as the key channel to European level 	Infusion
CWAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily driven by funding, economic and rural development and EU policy programmes • CoR member provides the county with direct access to EU policy-making • MEPs only a marginal relevant • Direct links with the Commission through EU policy programmes • ECRN as a main agent for the county's vertical action 	Clustered fusion

Table 5.6: Summary of indirect vertical action for the English case studies

Indirect vertical action of the English case studies

	Main features	Scenario
Through the national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly relevant for ERDF and ESF • Central Local Partnership abandoned • Cooperation around policies is weak 	Defusion
Through the regional level in the NWoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important for vertical action • Partnership of local authorities through Regional Leaders Board • NWDA and NW Brussels Office as important agents • Main focus on ERDF programmes • Disengagement through disbanding of regional arrangements • Regional Leaders Board, European Economic Strategy Group and European Cooperation Group remain, but less effective • Sub-regional engagement emerging 	Shift from infusion to defusion
Liverpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previously strongly involved into regional activities • Develops sub-regional ERDF programme as a Transition Region 	Clustered fusion Recently defusion
CWAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previously involved in regional vertical activities • Reorientation to sub-regional approach 	Clustered fusion tendency Recently defusion

Table 5.7: Summary of horizontal action for the English case studies

Horizontal action of the English case studies

	Main features	Scenario
Transnational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transnational networks and partnerships to exchange innovative practice • In the NWoE, mostly subject to transnational projects, e.g. INTERREG • NW region engaged in ERRIN, CLUNET, EURADA 	Defusion/ clustered fusion/ infusion
Nation-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA, European Officers Network and UK Brussels Office Network for horizontal cooperation • UK Transition Regions Network 	Defusion/ clustered fusion
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previously strong horizontal partnership • Drastically reduced • NWRLB, EESG, ECG only remaining bodies for horizontal cooperation 	Shift from infusion to defusion
Sub-regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong in Greater Manchester • Re-emerging in Lancashire and Cumbria 	Defusion/ clustered fusion/ infusion
Liverpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherent approach within city council and city region • EUROCITIES, URBACT and HerO for transnational cooperation and exchange • Transition Regions Network for Cohesion Policy 	Clustered fusion
CWAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On ad-hoc basis within county council • ERCN and ChemClust for transnational cooperation in the chemical sector • RURACT on rural issues • Further transnational partnerships on specific issues 	Clustered fusion

*5.5.1 Action of English local government**Direct vertical action of English local government*

Despite the strong control of central government, some municipalities have become highly active in lobbying in Brussels on behalf of regional funds and policies (Goldsmith, 2002: 105-109). As early as the mid-1980s, subnational engagement with EU institutions was driven by large metropolitan areas with the aim for lobbying and deploying additional funding for regional economic restructuring programmes. From the late 1980s onwards, subnational representations also focused on wider policy issues and became important actors involved in strategic European-wide networks and the monitoring of concerns

relevant for their area²⁹³. The European Commission offered subnational actors, especially in Labour governed metropolitan areas, a much more welcoming environment than the Conservative government (John, 2001: 86; Mather, 2000: 154-156; Moore, 2007: 275-277).

Direct vertical action takes place, whereby the most important agents for local mobilisation are the LGA, transnational municipal networks, MEPs and members of the CoR. Even though dedicated local officers and policy-makers developed direct links to the European level, overall defusion applies for English local government and has been reinforced through the economic crisis.

The LGA is an active and effective actor for collective bottom-up mobilisation in England²⁹⁴, and engages with EU actors, especially when its views differ from those of central government (interview Rowles). The LGA is easy to access²⁹⁵ (interview Moore) and, particularly for smaller local authorities provides, an opportunity to be involved in European affairs through the LGA²⁹⁶. Through the European Officers Network (EON), representatives from local authorities, such as Greater Manchester or Halton, can feed back into the work of the LGA. Subsequently, the European and International Unit of the LGA²⁹⁷ offers information and support to its member authorities, and monitors and lobbies the EU on their behalf²⁹⁸. On the macro-scale of European policy developments, the LGA has pushed for the new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty²⁹⁹. Financial cuts have also affected negatively the European work of the LGA and the EON, and indicate further defusion. The LGA has reduced its European staffing, which has led to reduced engagement in a lot of specific fields, such as environmental policies, town-twinning and providing information (interviews Hornby; Sharples). Additionally, the EON's agenda has

²⁹³ While the first tier county councils seem to be more confident of their ability to influence EU policies, only a small number of second tier authorities and metropolitan district councils believe that they could exert influence on EU policies (Martin & Pearce, 1999: 32-37; Mather, 2000: 163 *et seq.*; Zerbinati & Massey, 2008: 84).

²⁹⁴ The LGA is independent from national government and parties, and is funded by voluntary membership from local authorities.

²⁹⁵ Manchester City Council, for example, works with the LGA on issues around EU procurement legislation (interview Hope).

²⁹⁶ 'The LGA provides a 'national service' that our councils can rely on. We ensure that councils receive timely intelligence on funding opportunities and future regulations, and we lobby EU decision-makers to minimise additional costs and EU red-tape.' (LGA, 2012a)

²⁹⁷ Previously, the Local Government International Bureau.

²⁹⁸ The Brussels office is contact point and ambassador for local government (LGA, 2012a). For example, the LGA scans the Commission's annual work programme for policy areas that require lobbying on behalf of their members. This is subsequently tested with 'people on the ground' to set policy priorities according to the preferences of local authorities (interview Rowles).

²⁹⁹ Although the process is at an early stage, the LGA expects to work together with national parliament on draft legislation and to be included in the loop of information for revising proposals.

evolved its focus and is now effectively run as a virtual network only (interview Carter).

Transnational municipal networks are significant agents for fostering fusion processes of English local government. Their joint action is generally more effective than mobilisation of individual activities, as their position gains far greater legitimacy and validity when it is representative of a wide number of local authorities³⁰⁰. During the 1990s, local authorities became increasingly active through transnational municipal networks (Goldsmith, 1997: 220), which play an important role for direct vertical engagement with EU policies. As Benington and Harvey (1999: 211) stated: ‘Many UK local authorities (of all political persuasions) used transnational networks as a way of bypassing the Conservative UK government in order to gain access to EU resources or programmes.’

The CEMR and EUROCITIES are the most prominent networks. The CEMR is not relevant to the vertical action of individual authorities but to the LGA, which is consulted directly and involved in stakeholder groups when the Commission drafts its proposals (LGA, 2010). Although some English member cities left EUROCITIES for financial reasons³⁰¹, the organisation is still a significant agent allowing major cities³⁰² to become directly involved EU policy-making. Through the bottom-up working style of EUROCITIES, cities can transform individual concerns into joint political positions with adequate political weight to influence EU policies.

Although the EP does not provide institutionalised access to EU policy-making, MEPs are a direct link through which local issues can be addressed at the European level. The most relevant local representatives to engage with MEPs at the European level are the LGA, European umbrella organisations and the CoR³⁰³. Some local authorities work closely with their local MEPs or those relevant for special issues (email McCarthy; interviews Rowles; Simpson; also LGA, 2010). The EP’s Committee on Regional Development (REGI) is a

³⁰⁰ As the EU adviser to the LGA puts it: ‘a single local authority will always have a channel to make its voice heard at the European level. But there are over 100,000 authorities across the EU. Only one saying one thing is always going to struggle to make a significant impact at the European level.’

³⁰¹ Amongst them are Leeds and Nottingham.

³⁰² Nine English cities are currently member of EUROCITIES including Birmingham, Brighton and Hove, Bristol, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle-Gateshead, Sheffield and Sunderland. Additionally, the London Boroughs of Bromley, Camden and Merton, as well as Preston and Wolverhampton are associate partners.

³⁰³ MEPs have a much stronger position than CoR members and links between them are often weak. Depending on the EP Committee, the CoR is provided with various levels of influence: ‘I am one of the few committee chairs who allows the Committee of the Regions to present their opinions to us. Some of my members don’t like that but I think it’s important that we get the CoR reporting to us.’ (interview Simpson)

significant addressee for local actors, as it deals with cohesion policy³⁰⁴, which is the most important field of local engagement with the EU. With the financial cuts in the UK, local actors have engaged successfully with the EP to ensure future access, as well as to implement effective partnership in the delivery (interview Vaughn). Because central government's position may oppose that of local authorities in the NWoE, the latter bypass the former even though it has the final say (interview Simpson).

Local government is very active in the CoR and dominates the UK delegation. Local authorities with a competent councillor in the CoR are provided with direct access to EU policy-making³⁰⁵. For some municipalities and in terms of aggregated local action³⁰⁶ there is a fairly strong fusion tendency through institutionalised processes at EU level. However, the CoR does not match the impetus of the EP, and the diversity between municipalities and regions sets limits to the influence of local government (interview Simpson). Because of the Committee's size and the formalisation of processes, many cities prefer to work in particular networks and organisations or try to address the Commission and MEPs directly, which are more influential than the CoR (interview Hope). This casts doubts on the assumption of a generally strong fusion through the CoR.

Indirect vertical action of English local government

In order to increase the prospects of successful interest promotion, bypassing paradiplomacy is often complemented by cooperative diplomacy, which addresses regional and national government (Tatham, 2010: 76-78). Before the mid-1990s, central government firmly controlled the participation of local authorities in cohesion policy³⁰⁷. When in 1997 the more pro-European Labour party came to power and closed the political gap between the centre and its Labour-governed localities, the latter obtained more rights and resources to engage in partnership arrangements (Bache, 2004: 169-173; 2008: 119-120).

³⁰⁴ The REGI Committee is responsible for: ERDF, the Cohesion Fund and the other instruments of the Union's regional policy; assessing the impact of other Union policies on economic and social cohesion; coordination of the Union's structural instruments; outermost regions and islands as well as trans-frontier and interregional cooperation; relations with the CoR, interregional cooperation organisations and local and regional authorities (European Parliament, 2006).

³⁰⁵ Even though the councillors represent local authorities across their region and England within the CoR.

³⁰⁶ The LGA manages the UK secretariat of the CoR and briefs the UK delegation on EU policies (LGA, 2010).

³⁰⁷ In the 1980s, partnerships existed in urban areas for economic regeneration, but rather than empowering local government, they fostered the role of the private sector in local policies.

During the last decade, the relevance of indirect vertical action has changed back and forth, because of the unstable governance arrangements of English regions and the continuing changes in local-central relations. Apart from the regional governance arrangements which are discussed below, the relevance of central government for fusion dynamics is marginal, not to say hampering. Particularly, for the involvement of local government in the delivery of ERDF and ESF programmes, central government is the ‘Damocles Sword’ not allowing local actors to have a say (interview Simpson).

Through a sub-group of the Central Local Partnership (CLP) (see 5.4.3) local government leaders had access to central government in order to discuss European policies. Since the CLP was abandoned in 2010, the LGA relies on informal channels to lobby central government to act in favour of local government at the European level. Cooperation with central government seems to be difficult for local authorities that want greater involvement in the transformation of European funding programmes into English arrangements (interview Rowles). Nonetheless, effective lobbying strategies do not only address European institutions directly, but also aim to win national support. To ensure the incorporation of local interests in the cohesion policy 2014-2020, for example, local actors engage with the UK Permanent Representation to the EU (UKREP) in Brussels (Sharples, 2012).

Further links between central and local government in the context of European policies cover the ESF programme 2007-2013. The Department for Work and Pensions manages the competitive tendering for which local authorities, as well as other public, private or third sector organisations have to apply³⁰⁸ (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012). As the competition for programmes is ‘very prescriptive’ regarding national priorities and does not allow for innovative local input³⁰⁹ (interview Yates), they present more of a top-down than a bottom-up dynamic.

Horizontal action of English local government

Although in reality participation in horizontal partnerships and networks is often coupled with vertical action, for analytical clarity this section primarily focuses on the exchange of ideas and best practice between equivalent types of government. English local authorities

³⁰⁸ ESF funds are then distributed through public co-financing agencies such as the Skills Funding Agency, DWP and National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

³⁰⁹ The former funding officer of Tameside (interview Yates) suggests that whilst the ESF programmes of the 1990s were more open for innovative projects, they have now become a tool for mainstream funding.

have developed economic regeneration strategies in conjunction with local, regional and European partners (Benington & Harvey, 1999: 199), but since the 1990s, new paradigms of local practice have fed into various European policies. Horizontal action of local authorities is part of a wider system of governance, and subsequently an incremental part of a vertical mobilisation.

Exchange of experience and best practice amongst local authorities ensures that local governments of 27 European states do not develop in an isolated way (interviews Rowles; Simpson). Formulating joint positions with and learning from other localities across Europe stimulates engagement with EU policies, feeds back into European governance, and therefore potentially into fusion processes.

Particularly in the last twenty years, the Commission developed various programmes through which UK local authorities built partnerships and networks with their counterparts across the EU. Programmes, such as the INTERREG initiative (see 1.2), enable horizontal collaboration amongst local authorities to reflect on their own practice against other examples across Europe and to share their expertise in European affairs (Benington & Harvey, 1999: 206-207; John, 1997: 220; Marshall, 2008: 110). Such collaborative networks across national borders add great value to the practice in English local authorities (interviews Bleaden; Hornby; Rowles). This has been an important (though often overlooked) contribution to European integration and to horizontal fusion processes.

On a nation-wide basis, the LGA and pro-active local authorities established a horizontal network mechanism through which local governments across England (and the UK) can exchange views and ideas on EU policies and programmes. Although on a national scale horizontal action is less advanced than on a regional scale, nation-wide networks led to a closer cooperation between municipalities and potentially to enhanced fusion dynamics, as further wider and deeper engagement with EU affairs is stimulated.

Within England, the LGA represents a major vehicle for horizontal cooperation amongst its member authorities by supporting networks, such as the European Officers Network (EON), which used to comprise over 100 local government officers engaged with European affairs³¹⁰. EON has informed local governments about EU policies³¹¹ and good

³¹⁰ Local authorities have also been connected through the European Social Fund network to share information and ideas about the impact and delivery of ESF programmes; as well as through the UK Brussels Office Network (UKBO) (LGA, 2012b).

practice on the management and implementation of funding programmes (LGA, 2007). Notwithstanding the previous value of EON as a stimulator of European engagement, it has turned from a very formalised group (with three representatives from the NWoE on it) to a virtual group also focusing on policies other than European ones. Thus, horizontal action amongst local officers across England has suffered.

A parallel UK-wide network has emerged with the purpose to share information, based on a European network that supports the Transition Regions category in the cohesion policy post 2013³¹². From the NWoE, Cumbria and Merseyside are members of the UK Transition Regions Network³¹³ (interview Hornby). The network is one of a few examples, where local authorities from England and the UK cooperate horizontally on a specific policy interest to lobby subsequently national government institutions, such as the UKREP in Brussels, and EU bodies, such as DG Regio and the REGI Committee of the EP (Sharples, 2012).

5.5.2 Action of local government in the NWoE

Direct vertical action of local government in the NWoE

Most of the European engagement in the NWoE focuses around European funding. This involves the acquisition of funding and the conduct of programmes and projects, as well as the promotion of interests and policies to ensure funding in future programmes (interviews Carter; Hope). Local authorities, such as those in Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City region, Preston, as well as the North West Regional Partnership, submitted individual and joint statements to the consultation procedures for the 5th Cohesion Report (see European Commission – Regional Policy). In addition, Cumbria³¹⁴, Lancaster and Merseyside, for example, act through the Transition Regions Network (see 5.5.1) to

³¹¹ Including regional and cohesion policy, state aids, enlargement, budget issues, rural and agricultural policy, urban issues, diversity, equal opportunities and social inclusion, asylum and immigration, governance, sustainability, the environment, trade, cooperation activities, youth policy and the Euro.

³¹² The Commission proposes three categories for 2014-2020: more developed (more than 90 per cent of EU average GDP per capita, which includes most of the UK); transition regions (75 - 90 per cent of EU average GDP), less developed (less than 75 per cent). (see BIS)

³¹³ Additional members include Cornwall, Devon, Durham, Highlands and Islands, Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire, Staffordshire and Tees Valley (Highland Council, 2011).

³¹⁴ 'At the European level a clearer picture is starting to emerge on what the new cohesion policy will look like. As the regulations give scope for local authorities to be involved in the formation and delivery of sub-regional programmes, but will require concerted lobbying of government to ensure that localism takes residence over national programmes.' (Exert from latest discussion about European issues, interview Hornby)

influence key actors at the European level for the purpose of being prioritised in the funding period 2014-2020³¹⁵ (interview Hornby; ECG meeting; Sharples, 2012). Unless it affects them, other policy issues do not attract strong engagement of local government in the NWoE³¹⁶ (interviews Bleaden; Carter).

Cumbria introduced an EU strategy to develop a comprehensive strategy around innovative EU policies beyond funding³¹⁷. Notwithstanding ambitions for the wider European engagement of local authorities, pro-active strategies suffer often from a lack of means to finance dedicated capacities³¹⁸ (interview Hornby). The acquisition of EU funding is the main field of action, and despite potential for fusion processes on a wider policy scale, with some exceptions defusion applies for many authorities in the NWoE.

Previously the Brussels representations of the sub-regions provided local authorities with close links to the Commission³¹⁹. Since, except for the Merseyside Brussels Office, all local authorities in the NWoE closed their Brussels representations³²⁰, together with the limitation of travel budgets, this has impacted negatively upon direct vertical action. The delegation of local officers from the NWoE participating in the Open Days of the CoR is one of the few remaining initiatives where local actors can present their activities, network with partners across Europe and meet EU officers and policy-makers.

Whereas ERDF funding through the regional and national level has attracted the strong engagement of local authorities, fewer municipalities participate in programmes run directly by the Commission – a trend that has increased since the financial cuts, ‘despite the obvious benefits for social cohesion’ (interview Yates). As a major city, Manchester

³¹⁵ The Commission proposes three categories for 2014-2020: *more developed* (more than 90 per cent of EU average GDP per capita, which includes most of the UK); *transition regions* (75 - 90 per cent of EU average GDP), *less developed* (less than 75 per cent). (see BIS)

³¹⁶ Examples hereof are the Water Directive and low carbon emissions.

³¹⁷ Such policies include issues around low carbon emissions, demographic changes, youth employment and rural development.

³¹⁸ 'We have got to cut our coat according to our cloth and there might be other priorities.' (interview Hornby)

³¹⁹ Local actors do still engage with the Commission via email or telephone (interview Hornby).

³²⁰ As part of Greater Manchester, Manchester City Council can use an external agent to find out about new funding calls and networking opportunities (interview Hope).

City Council has participated in a great number of EU programmes³²¹. But also smaller authorities, such as Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council³²² or Cumbria County Council³²³, have been very successful in allocating funding cost-efficiently around physical regeneration, financial deprivation, social care or waste management. Direct engagement in EU programmes fosters policy links between local and European governance³²⁴ (interviews Bleaden; Hornby).

For single authorities, membership in a transnational network is the exception and used to be a matter for the NWDA (see indirect vertical action). As the largest city in the region, Manchester City Council is a member of EUROCITIES, which offers effective support to its members and is ‘a very effective route to influence positions’ (interview Hope). EUROCITIES provides the most direct vehicle for the city’s direct vertical action, which confirms the network’s significance for fusion processes³²⁵.

MEPs provide direct links to EU decision-making. However, some dedicated officers are sceptical about the usefulness of MEPs and their familiarity with local concerns (interviews Eyres; Lee). As MEP Brian Simpson stated: ‘Before 1999, we were elected via Constituencies not lists on first past the post. Since 1999, we have been on regional lists elected by proportional representation.’ Since then, fewer MEPs have a local government background and often lost links to local government. MEPs that have previously been local

³²¹ Projects of Manchester involve Young SMEs (INTERREG IVC) to assist new companies; SMART Europe (INTERREG IVC) to assist regional economies; Regions4GreenGrowth (INTERREG IVC) to support sustainable energy supply; INNOPOLIS (INTERREG IVC) to foster knowledge exchange between enterprises and universities; Mini Europe (INTERREG IVC, ended December 2011) for sustainable economic development; CLUSNET (INTERREG IVC, ended October 2011) to support economic clusters; Ticket to Kyoto (INTERREG IVB) to reduce CO2 emissions; Bridging Mobility Gaps: Improving Connectivity and Mobility Access (INTERREG IVB, ended June 2012); CSI European (URBACT) to support sustainable development in cities; SABER (Satellite Broadband for European Regions) (PSP ICT); Developing waste prevention and recycling communication media support systems to increase participation in low performing urban areas (LIFE+); TRACE: Training for Activation Capabilities and Empowerment of the unemployed (Leonardo da Vinci, ended July 2012); CAEE: The Case for Agglomeration Economics in Europe (ESPON, ended 2010) to study urban agglomerations as key drivers of the economy.

³²² Participation in transnational projects is the most important stimulus for Stockport’s European engagement, which reflects a common case of a pro-active medium-sized English municipality. Projects in Stockport include Cities in Balance (INTERREG IVB) dealing with social inclusion of old people; GRUNDTVIG for voluntary exchange of seniors with Genk (Lifelong Learning Programme); MSC Regeneration: Urban and Demographic Change in Medium-Sized Cities (INTERREG IIIB); ICT Policy Support Programmes (PSP).

³²³ Cumbria is partner in the Waste 2 Energy (INTERREG IVC) project.

³²⁴ The Cities in Balance programme, for example, enabled Stockport to feed its experience into following EU initiatives with the same focus.

³²⁵ The main areas in which Manchester acts through EUROCITIES involve ICT and broadband provision, energy efficiency, innovation and economic development, cohesion policy and potentially public service provision. As the European policy officer of Manchester City Council (interview Hope) puts it: ‘In Europe there are so many local and regional authorities and you need a way to distinguish yourself when you’re knocking on the door. Working alongside the biggest cities in Europe working on side, and EUROCITIES has developed a very good reputation and developed to influence institutions, they have the intelligence and they may have the ability to get through the door.’

councillors, still show a strong commitment to local concerns³²⁶ (interview Simpson). Local authorities still approach MEPs on the basis of personal relations³²⁷, or to their membership in particular EP Committees³²⁸ (interviews Carter; Hope; Hornby). The interaction between MEPs and local actors illustrates the breadth of topics relevant for local government including issues around European funding, state aid policy, environmental issues, transport, housing, broad-band and best-practice promotion (email McCarthy; interview Simpson). As the level of engagement with MEPs varies strongly in the NWoE, the relationship between MEPs and local government is best labelled as a clustered fusion dynamic.

In contrast to MEPs, the CoR provides local representatives with institutionalised access to EU policy-making and is a major lobbyist for local (and regional) concerns³²⁹. With some very active representatives from the NWoE, the CoR is a useful channel for promoting local concerns³³⁰. Support to CoR members is provided through informal networks and relationships between actors (interviews Carter; Hornby; Simpson). As CWAC's External Funding Manager (interview Lee) states: 'The strength of the Committee of the Regions members is that they are usually councillors involved in local government, and therefore they understand directly the needs of the local people and authority.' However, most cities would rather work through transnational networks, interest groups or directly engage with the Commission or the EP (interview Hope). Although the CoR has some fusion relevance depending on its members, its role for a potential fusion should not be overestimated as it holds significantly fewer powers than the EP and is dependent on the 'good will' of the major institutions to consider its policy statements.

³²⁶ MEPs with a local government background gained an understanding of the local dimension of certain EU policies and maintain personal contacts to local councils. 'It stops you getting into the Westminster or Brussels bubble, where everything revolves around the parliament building and everyone forgets about the poor bloody people who we are representing.' (interview Simpson)

³²⁷ 'There's no vote for me in Kent. The first priority for me is the North West of England and then the European perspective.' (interview Simpson)

³²⁸ For example, MEP Brian Simpson, who sits on the Committee for Transport and Tourism Committee, is relevant for the rural areas Cumbria (also for the Strategic Transport Network), Lancashire and Cheshire, as well as for municipalities, such as, for example, Halton, Warrington or Wigan. MEP Arlene McCarthy sits on the URBAN-Housing Intergroup. Through EUROCITIES Manchester also engaged with MEPs across Europe.

³²⁹ 'What we do in the Committee of the Regions is to look at legislation that comes through, look at how we can advise the Parliament before they make these decisions, and to influence Parliament wherever we can.' (interview Manley).

³³⁰ In particular, Cllrs Flo Clucas from Liverpool used to be a very active member. Cllr Clucas contributed effectively to changed ERDF regulations on energy efficient housing according to preferences in the NWoE (interview Moore). Manchester City Council uses the CoR to gather intelligence about European policy development and establish links to other European and transnational actors EP (interview Hope).

Regional governance in the NWoE used to be an effective feature of municipal mobilisation and of fusion dynamics. Because of the high sense of disengagement with national government, regional governance in the NWoE was a strong platform through which to interact with the European level. For many local authorities, the region was a major driving force for vertical action: ‘You can overestimate the local engagement in the past in other English regions. It was regional engagement in many cases. The North West was exceptional in having strong engagement both at local and regional level.’³³¹ (interview Sharples) With the disbanding of the RDAs the English-European multilevel compound has defused to weaker forms of informal cooperation.

Although North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA) (as well as the regional GOs) were established by central government to control the programme monitoring committees of the ERDF programmes in the NWoE, they are considered under this section, as they contributed to regionalisation processes in England (Moore, 2007: 278-289).

The combination of partnership among local authorities through the NWRLB, NWREP and the ECG (regional-regionalism), the involvement of central government in regional affairs via the Government Office and the NWDA (state-regionalism) and interaction with Commission, EP and CoR (Euro-regionalism) are part of a joint management approach as assumed by fusion and MLG Type II. Unlike the GOs, the NWDA interacted closely with local authorities (interview Bleaden). In this arrangement, competences and responsibilities have become blurred into a local-led regional governance compound, which used to be an important driver for fusion processes.

By 2012, the new government had largely dissolved most formal regional arrangements and caused a defusion of local government’s European engagement. Local authorities often lack the capacities, skills and knowledge previously provided by the region (interview Caulfield). This may lead to a severe lack of raising local priorities around European policies through indirect action, particular in the two Northern English regions³³² (interview Bleaden).

³³¹ The North West, thus, is not representative of the whole of England. Although Yorkshire and the West Midlands had strong regional engagement, the Regional Development Agencies in the South East and the South West did not work as effectively (interview Simpson).

³³² ‘It’s a worry that we lost the key people that make that connection between Brussels and the North West.’ (interview Yates)

Three major aspects of vertical action through the regional level are outlined in the following:

- Regional governance has been particularly relevant to deliver ERDF programmes
- Regional governance worked on policies of economic relevance
- With the disbanding of the NWDA, vertical action on a sub-regional basis has revived

The 2007-2013 ERDF programme for the NWoE including Merseyside's Phasing-in funding comprised €755 million (NWUA, 2010). The NWoE was the largest beneficiary of Structural Funds amongst the UK³³³ during the last two funding periods (interview Bleden). The regional approach on funding programmes has been a major link amongst local authorities in the NWoE and the EU³³⁴. The NWDA was the managing authority for the ERDF programme³³⁵ and developed a regional strategy that brought all local authorities and other partners in the NWoE together³³⁶ (interviews Hope; Moore). The remaining bodies that lobby for a role of local government in shaping the ERDF programme according to local and regional preferences are the Local Monitoring Committee (LMC)³³⁷, the Regional Leaders Board and the European Economic Strategy Group (EECG). The coalition government, elected in 2010, intends to renationalise the Structural Funds and replace the previous arrangements by an English-wide approach. At the same time, capacity at the national and regional levels for managing large individual ERDF programmes have been reduced. As a consequence, sub-regional and local authorities with adequate capacities rather than with the need for assistance may be more capable of delivering programmes³³⁸ (interviews Caulfield).

³³³ During 2000-2006, the region received £1.6 billion of Structural Funds, which was the largest share in the UK (NWDA, 2003). Cllr Manley states: 'in the North West we have been very fortunate in ensuring that we maximise what we can get from those funds, and across the North West we average approximately a million Euros a day.'

³³⁴ Halton Borough Council, for example, used Objective 2 funding for regeneration purposes (interview Carter).

³³⁵ For the 2007-2013 programme, ESF was managed nationally.

³³⁶ In addition to the Structural Funds, local authorities in the NWoE also cooperated on funding for transnational projects, such as INTERREG through the European Cooperation Group.

³³⁷ After the regional governance arrangements, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) set up the Local Monitoring Committee (LCM) to identify priorities for the 2014-2020 programme.

³³⁸ Some local authorities with the capacity to deliver, such as Manchester City and Stockport Metropolitan Borough, expect to allocate 'their share' of ERDF means. Others, such as Lancaster, strongly aspire to be considered by central government to support their regeneration needs; potentially under transition status which is generally not supported by central government.

Potentially, with the end of regionally delivered ERDF programmes the local level may gain in importance (interview Sharples). Except for major city regions, however, severe defusion of local-European engagement in the NWoE is more likely. Whilst in the past the NWDA provided local authorities with matched funding, local actors have to find other partners to provide financial, land or personal resources to match European funding (interviews Caulfield; Manley). Merseyside and Greater Manchester are big enough to generate well-equipped sub-regional programmes, but other sub-regions might struggle to find the resources and capacities to do the same. Whereas the NWDA ensured that the enormous amounts of funding went into the NWoE and were distributed across the region, in the new programme, central government is expected to create a national programme. This may reduce the amount of funding given to the NWoE (except for Merseyside as a Transition Region) (interviews Bleaden; Caulfield; Hope; Hornby; Yates).

Thanks to bottom-up initiatives of local authorities, regional cooperation has not only involved ERDF management, but also policy promotion. Under the previous regional arrangements, a high proportion of policy work was delivered by the NWDA in association with the Regional Leaders Board and the North West Brussels Office (NWBO). Local government in the NWoE could pool political influence and lobby for certain EU policies³³⁹, such as the cohesion and regional policy, Europe 2020³⁴⁰, the White Paper of Multilevel Governance and even the Lisbon Treaty (interviews Bleaden; Hornby; Sharples; Sumner). Particularly for smaller municipalities, the NWDA worked well on their behalf and offered access to their specialist on European issues, such as transnational projects and partnerships (interview Clucas).

NWREP was the main body through which local policy-makers could feed into the Regional Leaders Board and the NWDA, and subsequently mobilise the CoR and EP members and the NWBO (see 5.4.3). The NWBO worked for all local authorities in the region offering effective support to local government with a major focus on Structural Funds but also providing support for other programmes (interviews Bleaden; Hornby; Sumner). The English regional offices, however, could not use the same formal channels as UK Representation and those of the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament³⁴¹, but were provided with greater flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and arising

³³⁹ Stockport, for example, only got involved in EU policy work as part of a region and had a councillor in the European Cooperation Group (ECG).

³⁴⁰ The policy priorities of Europe 2020 overlapped with some of the objectives of the North West Regional Strategy.

³⁴¹ The UK Representation and those of the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament enjoy privileged diplomatic access in Brussels but are bound to commitments to central government.

opportunities (Moore, 2007: 278-289). Moore (2008: 526) suggests that representations of 'non-constitutional' regions have fewer political goals, as the latter comprise the interests of multiple stakeholders and may only be the lowest denominator of different inputs. This is also the case for the NWBO.

With the decline of regional governance, the NWDA and the NWREP were disbanded which caused a disengagement of local government. The European Cooperation Group (ECG), which previously provided strategic leadership for the region, and the European Economic Strategy Group (EESG), which feeds into the Regional Leaders Board, are the only remaining bodies to engage with Europe (see 5.4.3). The ECG remains as an informal, voluntary forum for discussion on EU policies³⁴². Although the ECG promotes ideas about ERDF and transnational programmes *vis-à-vis* other bodies, the participating officers lack the political legitimacy to lobby on behalf of their council (interview Caulfield).

Before the establishment of regional arrangements, the strategies of local authorities to ensure access to European funding involved sub-regional cooperation in joint lobbying attempts and shared Brussels offices (Goldsmith, 1997: 218). With the decline of regional governance, indirect vertical action through sub-regional approaches has regained importance for local authorities. Without a regional presence, local authorities have to pool their policy interest as sub-regional priorities³⁴³, and at the same time the new ERDF round will be delivered through sub-regional programmes³⁴⁴ (interview Bleaden).

Local authorities can potentially work through the LEPs to engage with the EU. However, their focus does often only marginally include EU policies³⁴⁵ and enjoys varying degrees of popularity amongst local authorities³⁴⁶ (interview Caulfield).

Within Greater Manchester³⁴⁷, local authorities deal with European policies, such as the cohesion policy 2014-2020, primarily on a sub-regional basis, wherein different

³⁴² 'The ECG is really useful because it's the only thing left now for me to go to. For some people that's all there is now to share ideas. If you're on your own in your sub-region, you think: well, am I up to date? Do I know everything I need to know? Does everyone else find this worrying?. It's a very useful updating forum about funding and policy and future and current forms of programmes.' (interview Hornby)

³⁴³ Unlike sub-regions, such as Greater Manchester, LEPs avoid getting involved in political questions.

³⁴⁴ If for reasons of efficiency, central government is expected to prefer large sub-regional programmes which would exclude a number of local authorities, and therefore negatively affect fusion dynamics (interview Yates).

³⁴⁵ For example, they have usually no structures, such as a European sub-committee, in place.

³⁴⁶ LEPs are largely private sector driven. Whilst Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cumbria work closely with their LEPs (interviews Hornby; Sharples), the Lancashire LEP has been subject to arguments (interview Simpson).

municipalities and organisations take the lead on specific policy fields. Particularly important for such mobilisation is the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) and the recently hired virtual Brussels office supported by a part-time consultant (interview Bleaden).

Further examples of sub-regional engagement in the NWoE involve Lancashire and Cumbria County Councils, which liaise and promote policy positions on behalf of their district councils³⁴⁸ (interview Moore). Within Cumbria, the Economic Development Officer Group has been revived and provides, among other issues, a regular forum for feeding in information European topics. Additionally, the LEADER programme allows rural areas to develop a bottom-up approach to finance initiatives for rural development³⁴⁹ (interview Hornby).

It is not clear how effective sub-regional approaches will turn out to be. Compared to the previous regional arrangements, sub-regions may bring less political weight into the EU policy-making arena. It is expected some local authorities may rely on direct vertical action, whilst others will undergo further disengagement, which contributes to a stronger differentiation of fusion dynamics in the NWoE.

Horizontal action of local government in the NWoE

Apart from Manchester, Liverpool and CWAC, most local authorities in the NWoE do not participate in permanent European-wide networks. However, through the NWDA and the Regional Leaders Board (RLB), local actors in the North West could adopt an outward looking strategy. The NWBO and the ECG were important mediators of projects and partnerships with organisations in other European regions. Through interregional and transnational networks, such as ERRIN³⁵⁰, CLUNET³⁵¹ and EURADA³⁵², the NWoE was in constant contact with other regions and able to establish informal links between local authorities and other organisations upon request (interviews Bleaden; Moore; Sumner; also NWDA, 2003).

³⁴⁷ In 2011, local authorities in the city region merged to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

³⁴⁸ One of their priorities on which Lancaster works through Lancashire with the Commission refers to the Irish Sea as a distinctive project region. This also involves cooperating with the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) on the Atlantic Ocean Strategy.

³⁴⁹ The LEADER initiative in Cumbria used resources allocated through the NWDA and funds project in the areas Solway, Border and Eden, and Fells and Dales (see Cumbria Fells and Dales RDPE Leader; SBE).

³⁵⁰ European Regions Research and Innovation Network.

³⁵¹ Cluster Network

³⁵² European Association of Development Agencies.

Within the NWoE, there was a very strong horizontal partnership (interview Sumner) which fostered engagement with the EU either through individual or joint measures of local authorities in the NWoE. As the EU has become an important point of reference, horizontal action across the region provided the basis for vertical mobilisation and thus for fusion. The NWREP was the main body for pooling ideas, experiences and policies amongst local, regional and European actors on regular basis. Through the development of strategic aims, the NWREP encouraged and enabled collaboration and cooperation (interviews Clucas; Eyres). The allocation of sub-regional offices in Brussels within the North West in England House allowed for immediate cooperation (Marshall, 2008: 108-109; also NWDA, 2003). With the decline of the regional structures, horizontal activities significantly retreated. In addition to the RLB, the European Cooperation Group (ECG) is the only remaining forum for exchanging views and intelligence on European affairs on an informal basis amongst a small number of officers (interviews Bleaden).

Sub-regions in the NWoE have regained significance for the coordination of European activities. Greater Manchester has developed an effective way of undertaking horizontal action across the sub-region via New Economy, which is leading on European policies and funding³⁵³. Additionally, individual local authorities within Greater Manchester can coordinate policy issues related to the EU³⁵⁴ (interviews Bleaden; Hope).

Local officers within Lancashire and Cumbria also cooperate on EU policies on behalf of their district councils, through the Lancashire European Network and the Cumbria Economic Development Officers Group. Cumbria County Council, for example, organises meetings and seminars on issues, such as procurement policy and funding opportunities (interviews Hornby; Moore).

5.5.3 Action of Liverpool

Direct vertical action of Liverpool

Liverpool's history of acquiring large sums from the Structural Funds led to the Europeanisation of various actors in the city council and activated a sustainable

³⁵³ Manchester's Commission for the New Economy is one commission of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) and works on European topics.

³⁵⁴ Also with regional governance still in place, European officers from Greater Manchester used to work closely together before decisions were allocated by chief executives (interview Yates).

engagement with the EU. Although the city's focus in the EU is primarily about urban and economic development, its expertise on European affairs allows Liverpool to engage actively within the EU beyond funding opportunities. Areas of engagement urban and cohesion policy, the Atlantic Strategy, green growth and equality strategies (email Fitzgerald).

Liverpool's strategies for bypassing central government are an unfolding, yet partial, range of policies and involve various actors and channels, such as the city's European officer³⁵⁵, the Merseyside Brussels Office (MBO)³⁵⁶, the CoR, the EP, the Commission and networks, such as EUROCITIES³⁵⁷, Cities for Cohesion and Transition Regions. Liverpool shows itself confident and aware of opportunities to lobby effectively concerning areas such as cohesion policy, economic policies, housing and culture (email Fitzgerald). The case of Liverpool proves the potential of a multilevel compound of informal relations and semi-institutionalised arrangements, rather than assuming a mere executive role of local government.

The acquisition of funding has been the most important field of action for Liverpool City Region. The Echo Arena, the Waterfront, the City Centre, St. Georges Hall, the Philharmonic, the Everyman Theatre, the Science Park are all prestigious objects that were built or restored with support of EU funds³⁵⁸. Between 1989-1993, Merseyside received financial assistance from the ERDF under Objective 2 status³⁵⁹. During the early 1990s, Liverpool was thus amongst the cities that learnt most quickly how to engage with the European level and it then lobbied to influence the reforms of the Structural Funds in 1993. Liverpool became the first major former industrial conurbation to gain Objective 1 status to overcome its structural deficits. From 1994-2006, Merseyside was an Objective 1 region, and was given an enhanced level of support from the Structural Funds: £1 billion for 1994-2000 and £2 billion for 2000-2006 (Boland, 1999: 788; Goldsmith, 1997: 218-219; Goldsmith, 2003: 123; John, 1997: 243; Marshall, 2005: 673; Meegan, 2003: 63-64; also NWUA, 2010). The URBAN programme allowed Liverpool to use further means via

³⁵⁵ He takes a leading role for the whole city region in communicating and enabling programmes.

³⁵⁶ The MBO directly engages with the EU's institutions and actors, and supports the European officer with information on relevant issues and projects. In 2011, Liverpool resigned from MBO membership, but still cooperates on an informal basis.

³⁵⁷ Although the European officer works occasionally with the LGA, when they write a position paper on European issues, the LGA is not always appropriate for addressing European issues, because Liverpool has specific urban needs, which do not always match with the interests of other English or Welsh local authorities (interview Eyres).

³⁵⁸ Additionally, Liverpool's Universities, schools and training programmes benefited from EU programmes.

³⁵⁹ This was called the 'Merseyside Integrated Development Operation'.

the ERDF and the ESF to exchange innovative and experimental approaches on urban development between cities across Europe³⁶⁰.

When Merseyside's Objective 1 status ended in 2007³⁶¹, the city region lost major privileges over other European regions to apply for funding, and acquired significantly less money to support businesses. In order to soften the loss of financial means, Merseyside became a Phasing-in Region³⁶² to transfer from the former Objective 1 to the new Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective (former Objective 2). Under the North West ERDF Programme 2007-2013, Liverpool City Council has initiated a number of prestigious projects³⁶³.

The city council aims for acceptance as a transition region phasing from Objective 1 status for the period post 2013. As a transition area, Liverpool would receive fewer means, but would still be considered for privileged financial assistance. In case the member states decide to introduce this category, Cllr Clucas was optimistic that with 85-86.5 per cent of the average EU-GDP, Liverpool City Region, as well as Cumbria and Lancashire, would lie below the 90 per cent barrier and therefore qualify for a transitional period post 2013.

The acquisition of ERDF support has resulted in strong patterns of mutual engagement between Liverpool and the Commission, whereby DG Regio became the primary addressee on issues related to cohesion policy³⁶⁴. Such engagement is mostly undertaken at officer level. Whereas Liverpool's European officer regularly attends meetings and workshops with the DG Regio, he would like to see such an engagement not only at officer level but also from politicians to politicians: 'I am reasonably content with the way we work with the Commission. We don't do enough, not so much so the officer but at the political level. But then access to the Commissioners, which is the sort of political level of the Commission, is very difficult. There's one per member state and they're pulled everywhere.' (interview Eyres)

³⁶⁰ From 1994-1999 Merseyside received £565 million for economic development, structural adjustment and human resource development through Structural Funds. The city has also access to Jeremie and Jessica funding to stimulate growth and enable capital projects (email Fitzgerald).

³⁶¹ After the 2004 accession round, Merseyside's GDP per capita was above 75 per cent of the EU average.

³⁶² This provided the sub-region with €308 million (41 per cent) of a total of €756 million from the North West ERDF Programme, and €197 of €520 million of ESF grant funding available to the North West (North West of England House, 2008; NWDA, 2007).

³⁶³ Projects include the Commercial District Public Realm Improvements, Creative Quarter Public Realm (Baltic Triangle), Hall Lane Strategic Gateway, Knowledge Quarter Public Realm Mount Pleasant, Liverpool Cycle Strategy, and the URC LV Lime Street Gateway (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2013). For the Lime Street Gateway project Liverpool received about £3 million of the ERDF to transform the public areas around Lime Street railway station (NWDA, ERDF Key Facts).

³⁶⁴ DG Culture is another relevant addressee. Additionally, various officers in city council participate in relevant consultation processes and the MBO attends briefings with the Commission.

The evolving relationship between actors from both levels indicates fusion processes around particular policy initiatives. Nonetheless, local government is at the bottom of the multilevel system and member states maintain strong deterrents to fusion. Or as Liverpool's European officer (interview Eyres) suggests:

A lot of what the Commission does is actually an end of member states governments, and local authorities and cities are a little bit further down the line. I would challenge to get them to think about our position. Not before the national position because they negotiate with the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, but they have to recognise that there is not just one level of government that they are working at. We are slowly getting there.

In addition to its links with the Commission, the case of Liverpool shows that CoR membership of local councillors can offer a considerable access to various policy fields dealt with at the European level. Until her retirement in 2012, Cllr Clucas provided a direct link to EU institutions and promoted the city's interests effectively within the CoR³⁶⁵. Clucas mainly worked on the EU budget, cohesion and regional policy, but also on a wide range of other topics, such as housing policy³⁶⁶, maritime safety and fishing, culture and transport systems (interviews Clucas; Eyres).

Whilst the CoR provided the city council with a strong connection to EU policy-making, MEPs are only approached on issues relevant to their membership in the EP's Committees, but there is no strong link. When MEPs were elected directly from Liverpool or from

³⁶⁵ The European officer briefed her informally about the city's position for example on cohesion policy or the EU budget, and in turn she would feedback the stances of her colleagues in the CoR (interview Eyres). Even though she was a representative from the NWoE, Clucas did not hide her concern to promote the particular interests of Merseyside. She sought to overcome the distance between citizens from her constituency and Brussels: 'The Council of Ministers does not want to listen to local and regional government, because we represent, in some respect, a wedge of potential opposition and so it does not want to see the Committee of the Regions as an institution that has power and influence. However, despite that, the power and influence is growing and that is because there is a recognition by many members of the European Parliament and many people inside the Commission and in the member state governments that we actually speak with the voice of the people that is not once every five years represented in an election, but actually is immediate.' (interview Clucas)

³⁶⁶ Her paper on housing provides an interesting case, which had an impact on the EU's housing policy. After the Italian MEP Alfonso Adria approached her to write a paper on housing and matters of regional policy, she suggested using housing policy as a means of regenerative and environmental policy by building energy efficient buildings and thereby reducing the carbon footprint. Her paper went unopposed through the CoR to the EP and from there to the Commission, which however was reluctant to take action, as housing is not part of the EU's competences. After three years of lobbying from 2007 to 2010, the Commission agreed to use up to four per cent of the ERDF programme as a tool to promote energy efficient housing within the member states. She then successfully lobbied the UK government to agree to such a programme, which was finalised for Merseyside and the NWoE in 2010. For the North West several local authorities and housing associations work together, and in Merseyside local authorities with selected partners have set up a programme to create windproof and watertight homes in deprived housing areas (interview Clucas).

Merseyside instead from a regional list, it was easier for the city council to build links³⁶⁷. This suggests that MEPs are more likely to enable fusion when they are designated for specific localities.

EUROCITIES plays an essential role for Liverpool's vertical approach and shows the significance of the cities network for urban-European fusion dynamics: EUROCITIES facilitates direct communication between Liverpool and various DGs, and involves the city council in transnational collaborations and calls on upcoming conferences and workshops of the Commission³⁶⁸. The main focus of Liverpool's engagement in EUROCITIES is about economic development and urban regeneration. But there is also a wider interest in dealing with other topics on a European scale. Various people from Liverpool City Region thus attend different committees³⁶⁹ and working groups³⁷⁰ of EUROCITIES³⁷¹. Since 2010, the city council has sought to enhance participation in EUROCITIES by involving local policy-makers.

Indirect vertical action of Liverpool

As part of Merseyside and under Objective 1 status, Liverpool City has traditionally followed a route somehow separate from the rest of the region. Hence, it is unsurprising that regional governance has only been partially relevant to the city's European engagement. At the same time, under the NWDA and NWREP, Liverpool was in favour of closer regional cooperation beyond funding issues for more effective policy promotion (interview Eyres).

³⁶⁷ According to the European officer (interview Eyres): 'for topic-related issues then we know which MEP to go to and we can talk to them. That is fine, but we do not have them sort of generically representing the interests of Liverpool city region.'

³⁶⁸ 'The city council regards EUROCITIES as being important because it is the only vehicle that we are aware of on the European stage that has only one job, which is to represent cities. EUROCITIES' entire function and life is to be constantly talking to the European Commission, to the European Parliament, to the Committee of the Regions. It also gives us access to the other cities.' (interview Eyres)

³⁶⁹ Culture, economic development, knowledge society, mobility, social affairs.

³⁷⁰ Branding management and city attractiveness, clusters, cohesion policy, creative industries, economic migration, eGov 2.0, eInclusion, entrepreneurship, ESF task force, financial incentives, responsible procurement and consumption, road safety, social inclusion, URBACT, urban competitiveness, urban regeneration.

³⁷¹ The European officer participates in the committee on economic development, whilst another officer sits in the culture forum and the Primary Care Trust attends the forum on social affairs. Members of the committees exchange ideas to improve their practice, and discuss how EUROCITIES can lobby the Commission to, for example, put cities firmly within the funding schemes. An example of a working group in which Liverpool participates refers to urban regeneration. In 2008, the committee for economic development identified a few cities including Liverpool and later on Preston to deal with regeneration in deprived neighbourhoods within the frames of a working group. The group collected examples of good neighbourhood practice and wrote a guiding report that was forwarded to the wider committee and subsequently to the DG Regio, as it is a common practice of working groups to share best practice and inform the Commission, the EP and other member states about it.

Indirect vertical policy promotion was primarily subject to an engaged councillor and CoR member who was very active on behalf of the region. Through the North West ERDF programme 2007-2013, the city council was closely linked into the region's European engagement. Cllr Clucas was the main actor working with the regional arrangements and she chaired the European Affairs Key Priority Group of the NWRA and later NWREP. Additionally, the NWBO provided a useful focus complementary to the MBO (interviews Carter; Sharples; Yates).

If the EU introduced Transition Regions for the 2014-2020 programme, Merseyside would gain this status and would operate intensively on a sub-regional basis; wherein the LEP offers important potential (interview Sharples).

Horizontal action of Liverpool

The case of Liverpool illustrates how various types of horizontal action play an essential role in municipal mobilisation and thus for a wider fusion process. Transnational horizontal action is important to foster fusion processes, as it transposes European policies and European wide local expertise onto the council's agenda. Participation in European-wide programmes, such as INTERREG, contributes to transnational cooperation (email Fitzgerald). EUROCITIES provides the main arena for interacting with other cities on a more systematic basis³⁷². The membership of EUROCITIES is possibly as important for vertical engagement as it is for horizontal action. EUROCITIES allows Liverpool to exchange knowledge formally and informally in various fields of urban practice. Additionally, the city can deepen and enhance its transnational cooperation with explicit partners in specialised networks, such as URBACT and HerO (Heritage as Opportunity)³⁷³ (interview Eyres).

Liverpool is also a member of policy networks, such as the Transition Regions Network in the UK and on a Europe-wide basis (see 5.5.1), as well as Cities for Cohesion (email Fitzgerald). Hereby, horizontal action is closely linked to vertical lobbying strategies to ensure enhanced funding for Merseyside for 2014-2020.

³⁷² Membership in EUROCITIES also contributes to transnational collaborations of other authorities in the city region.

³⁷³ URBACT enabled exchange and learning programme to promote sustainable urban development. In April 2008 Liverpool joint an URBACT project called HerO, which shared practices on the preservations of world heritage sights and historic landscapes in busy city centres.

Horizontal activities within the city region ensure a coherent and effective approach to deal with European policies. Despite the long history of conflicts between Liverpool and the other outlying authorities within the sub-region; since the early 1990s with Liverpool at the core, the five local authorities in the sub-region – Sefton, Wirral, St. Helens, Knowsley and Halton – established informal relationship amongst officers, political leaders, MEPs and MPs under a joint partnership called the Merseyside European Liaison Unit. Liverpool’s European officer still shares information and exchanges positions with the other sub-regional authorities and with organisations, such Merseytravel and the Liverpool based universities (interviews Carter; Eyres). The Merseyside Brussels Office (MBO) brings together local authorities and Merseyside-wide operating bodies to discuss European developments of general interest and to decide on a common agenda for the office.

There used to be means to incorporate European ideas across the politics and practice of the council and its local partners within Liverpool City Council. In order to create a crosscutting awareness among senior politicians, heads of departments and team leaders within the council, an internal briefing took place every three months on funding opportunities, cohesion policy. These meetings, however, are not held anymore (interview Eyres).

5.5.4 Action of Cheshire West and Chester

Direct vertical action of CWAC

CWAC shows considerable direct engagement and demonstrates the existence of a fused multilevel cooperation on particular EU policies. The main addressees of vertical activities involve the Commission, the CoR, the former Cheshire Brussels Office and the European Chemical Regions Network (ECRN)³⁷⁴.

Although the county does not receive as much funding as Liverpool, EU policy programmes are the main motor for engagement with the EU, and there is a range of policy fields, such as chemistry industry, agriculture, tourism, rural development, in which CWAC seeks to link into a European context. A major field of the CWAC’s vertical activity refers to the acquisition of EU funding, which, considering the high GDP within

³⁷⁴ Cllr Manley also occasionally works with the LGA, but the rural needs of the county are not represented in the LGA to the extent required by the CWAC.

CWAC, requires enhanced pro-active engagement³⁷⁵. The mutual interest amongst local and European policy-makers in delivering EU policies successfully transforms into vertical action. The Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020 provide the context in which CWAC explores opportunities to cooperate with the EU around climate change, employability and economic growth. The county engages in these policy fields to have an impact on the future of Europe 2020 and ERDF programmes³⁷⁶.

The Commission is a main addressee of CWAC's concerns³⁷⁷ and plays a strong role for the county's vertical mobilisation, which indicates a pro-active fusion dynamic. Some actors from CWAC have recognised the potential of direct relationships with the Commission and have deployed various formal and informal ways to promote their concerns around ESF, ERDF and rural development programmes directly (interview Lee). Through direct contacts in Brussels or via meetings of the regional monitoring committees for European programmes³⁷⁸, the county engages with the Commission to influence decisions on the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020³⁷⁹. The formerly united council for Cheshire (and from 2009-2010 CWAC individually) could deploy their representative in Brussels to approach Commission officials³⁸⁰. With the closedown of Cheshire's Brussels office in 2010, such bypassing activities have reduced.

CWAC seek to mobilise NWoE members of the CoR and the EP on its behalf. Like Liverpool, having a councillor on the CoR significantly enhances the opportunities for direct vertical action and adds continuity to the relationship between CWAC and the

³⁷⁵ For the ERDF period 2007-2013, the Conservation and Acceptance of Renewable Energy (CARE) provides an example of a partnership approach within Cheshire and Warrington co-financed by the ERDF with £3,643,685. The project aims to install energy efficient and renewable energy measures in rurally isolated homes and low level and high-rise tower blocks. The project involves the councils of CWAC and Cheshire East, various housing associations and an environmental organisation (Cheshire West & Chester Council, 2011).

³⁷⁶ 'For us as a region, that is probably one of the strongest connections with the Commission, because the Commission uses the RDF programme to deliver its policy.' (interview Lee)

³⁷⁷ The external funding officer (interview Lee) suggests: 'from what we have, we can usually pull together a strong enough delegation to talk to the heads of units from the Commission and also to lobby and talk to the desk officer by saying for example: well, in our situation we are seeing this being something which is not going to bear fruit, because you are not going get out of it what you want.'

³⁷⁸ The meetings usually took place within the NWDA and were chaired by the Government Office. During these meetings, as well as informally outside the official agenda, representatives from the CWAC have discussed their concerns with the Commission's delegates.

³⁷⁹ For example, the 5th Cohesion Report promotes economic specialization of regions. In CWAC, however, different sectors, such as chemical, automobile and aerospace industries, as well as the agriculture sector, are crosscutting and converging.

³⁸⁰ The former head of the Cheshire Brussels Office (interview Pearson) states: 'it is so much easier to influence policy, if you get involved at the very beginning rather than once the policy has been essentially formulated and it is put out for consultation.'

EU³⁸¹. Through the councillor's membership in the Commission for Natural Resources (NAT), the county's rural needs are well represented in the CoR. The NAT Commission addresses issues that are relevant for the county, such as tourism, and milk production in times of mass farming and globalisation. On behalf of the county, Cllr Manley focuses on the sustainability of rural, agriculture based communities. The CoR offers a valuable platform for finding partners from other parts of Europe who have similar concerns and are willing to support common ideas (interviews Lee; Manley).

The EP is not perceived as a primary channel for the vertical activities of CWAC. MEPs greatly differ in their background. MEPs tend to have a very specific area of interest which are often not linked to local concerns, with some MEPs even developing a policy of disagreement with European integration (interview Lee). As Cllr Manley argues: 'We are trying to engage more actively with the European Parliament members. At the moment I have not been too successful, but that is something where they need to do more work in the future, because they need to act as a cohesive body to do better things for our area.'

The European Chemical Regions Network (ECRN)³⁸² provides the main agent and continuity for the CWAC's vertical action engagement around a very particular interest³⁸³. Through the ECRN, representatives of the council gain access to the members of the Commission, the EP and CoR to discuss issues around their chemical industry³⁸⁴. Through the ECRN, CWAC also obtained financial resources from the Commission for training purposes in the chemical sector³⁸⁵.

Indirect vertical action of CWAC

Since CWAC has not been privileged under ERDF programmes, indirect vertical action was not the primary aspect of CWAC's European engagement. Nonetheless, the regional

³⁸¹ Although he is only a local councillor, he is recognised in the CoR as a regional representative from the North West, which makes it easier to promote his local concerns. Cllr Manley goes frequently to Brussels to examine 'ports for the future', which currently refers to funding opportunities for 2012-2020.

³⁸² The ECRN started as an INTERREG IIIC project in 2004 to cooperate on issues around the chemical industry sector.

³⁸³ The ECRN is also a means for horizontal action for exchanging knowledge and expertise with other European regions (see horizontal action).

³⁸⁴ One of the main successes of the county, as part of the network, has been achieved within the corresponding high-level group of the Commission. The ECRN achieved the freezing of legislative measures around chemical policy during the recent economic crisis because new regulations would have caused additional complications and costs that would have seriously affected the chemical industry in their area.

³⁸⁵ Participation in the ECRN involves economic rationales such as: 'how can Chester and Cheshire West and the North West of England link in with what is going on in Europe? How can we ensure that we are at or near the forefront of technology or skills and knowledge or systems, so we can sustain what we have got?' (interview Manley)

arrangements provided a framework for funding activities and a valuable representation for promoting their interests *vis-à-vis* the EU, for example through consultation processes of the Commission and briefings of MEPs and CoR members (interview Lee). Through NWREP, Cllr Manley has been able to feed their policy preferences into regional activities, and at the same time has been part of the region's engagement with the CoR.

Horizontal action of CWAC

Horizontal action within CWAC's administration does not indicate an infusion of local government, as European ideas and values do not penetrate the county's practice on a comprehensive scale. In contrast to Liverpool, which established a more systematic approach to distribute information about European developments, within the county council of CWA horizontal action is achieved on an intermittent basis. European issues are discussed through the International Committee involving members from the council, police, fire service, and Chester University.

On a transnational scale, horizontal action is also more limited in CWAC than in Liverpool, but the county is committed to a range of continuing and *ad hoc* horizontal activities on economic development strategies. Collaboration with other European regions is perceived as a powerful means within the council, and is regarded as even more effective than engaging on a UK platform³⁸⁶. The incorporation of European wide practice and ideas on selected topics is part of a wider fusion dynamics.

One of the county's main networking activities takes place in the context of the European Chemical Regions Network (ECRN), (of which North Rhine-Westphalia is also a member)³⁸⁷. CWAC is also a member of ChemClust, a spin-off of the ECRN funded with €302 million by the INTERREG IV C scheme, which seeks to extend cooperation between its members to the fields of cluster policies, technological development and innovation. For rural issues, RURACT offers the county opportunities to share knowledge and expertise with other rural localities across Europe³⁸⁸.

³⁸⁶ The international funding officer (interview Lee) argues: 'As local authorities we need to be more adventurous. If we do the same things we have always done, we will always get the same results. Let us think look outward a bit more and not only trying to be the best in England, but trying to be the best in Europe.'

³⁸⁷ Horizontal cooperation in the ECRN helps CWAC to improve the competitiveness of their chemical industry. Through the ECRN, regions and sub-regions can exchange innovative approaches to generate skills in the fields of science and manufacturing.

³⁸⁸ In addition to the standing relationship the ERCN and RURACT, the county has also developed links with other transnational partners, for example on issues like tourism and garden heritage.

5.6 Attitudes

The third hypothesis states that the fusion approach is able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration. The attitude indicator examines this hypothesis by assuming that local policy-makers and officers adopt a positive, balanced or negative value set towards the European integration process. The micro-fusion perspective draws on three complementary concepts which inform actors' attitudes towards integration - performance fusion, political fusion and compound fusion (see 3.2.5).

According to performance fusion, political actors' support of European integration depends on the benefits of EU membership. In order to assess whether local actors also take a similar stance and seek to fuse with the EU, it is sensible to look at the perceived advantages and constraints of European policies for local authorities.

A major problem for the application of political fusion is the lack of a clear political vision on the future trajectories due to the limited influence on them. This is not to say that national politicians always have an articulated and defined view on the Union's evolution, but their potential impact plays a greater role. Political fusion can be assessed either against local actors' preference for the macro-trajectories of the EU, or for their role in the EU's political system which might be more relevant considering the influence of local government. The latter understanding also includes the direct involvement of local representatives, bypassing activities, the role of subsidiarity and local autonomy.

Compound fusion assumes that actors show a preference for the inclusive, compound nature of the EU's polity as it provides them with access to European policy-making. English local policy-makers and officers confirm this idea by bypassing their central government in order to engage directly with the Commission.

The main actors dealing with European affairs from the investigated councils appreciate the benefits of EU policies, prefer integrating with Europe and accept the legal constraints as a necessity (performance fusion). Evidence for a clear preference of the EU's macro-development is not as straightforward as for national government, since local actors show only limited interest in and influence over constitutional revision. Nevertheless, there is a general support for European governance and a desire to enhance the role of local authorities within a multilevel system of governance and protect local competences

through subsidiarity (political fusion). A number of local actors perceive the Commission as more accessible than their central government and appreciate the compound and inclusive nature of the EU to promote policies (compound fusion).

Notwithstanding the value of the micro-fusion perspective for mapping local actors' attitudes towards European integration, the concept does not account for how factors such as party-alignment affect the position of councils towards EU policies. Generally, councils led by pro-European parties³⁸⁹ show stronger preferences towards European engagement (interview Simpson).

³⁸⁹ Traditionally the Labour party and the Liberal-Democrats.

Table 5.8: Summary of the attitude indicator from the English case studies

Attitude of the English case studies

Performance fusion	Main features	Scenario
Local actors in England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of funding, cooperation and exchange with European counterparts, internal market • Constraints of competition law for public service providers, public tendering • Bureaucratic and financial burden 	Defusion/ clustered fusion/ infusion
Local actors in the NWoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally positive in the examined cases • Financial austerity is causing ambiguous attitudes 	Clustered fusion, potential for defusion
Liverpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High benefits for urban regeneration and economic development, exchange of best-practice, internal market • Advantages outweigh the disadvantages of European regulations 	Infusion
CWAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits in chemical sector, CAP, rural development, EU programming • Constraints by restrictive interference of EU law • Pragmatic view, disadvantages as rationale to become pro-active 	Clustered fusion
Political fusion		
Local actors in England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pragmatic view between supranationality and protecting subsidiarity • Preference for multilevel/multi-stakeholder governance • Bypassing as a means of political emancipation • Depending on individual actors 	Infusion for agents and major cities
Local actors in the NWoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferences for effective implementation of partnership • Cypassing central government • Not shifting powers (MLG type I) but multilevel cooperation (MLG type II) 	Defusion/ clustered fusion/ infusion
Liverpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Except for the new subsidiarity, constitutional developments only of marginal interest • Preference for greater recognition within policy-making and implementation • Bypassing as a means of political emancipation • Idea of a 'tripod-relation' between local, national and European level 	Clustered fusion
CWAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional preferences limited to subsidiarity and White Paper on Multilevel Governance • Political preferenes linked to policy programmes • Bypassing not as a means to emancipate • Only marginal preference for more supranationality and local sovereignty 	Clustered fusion

Compound fusion		
Local actors in England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission perceived as more accessible than central government • Preference of multi-stakeholder governance • Bypassing indicates appreciation of the EU's inclusive nature 	Clustered fusion
Local actors in the NWoE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference for multi-stakeholder governance • Actors engaging with the Commission show a strong preference for the EU's compound governance structures 	Defusion/ clustered fusion/ infusion
Liverpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More direct contact to Commission than to central government • Compound nature is appreciated • Room for enhanced access of local governments 	Infusion
CWAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission and other EU actors perceived as accessible and supportive 	Infusion

The following sections explore in detail to what extent the micro-fusion perspective offers valuable explanation for fusion and defusion trends of local government in England, the NWoE, Liverpool and CWAC.

5.6.1 Attitudes of local actors in England

Performance fusion of local actors in England

The EU adviser to the LGA (interview Rowles) states that the benefits of European integration are sometimes hard to see at the local level:

If you take a microscopic view and you just look at one single local authority, you just have to implement the next regulation and the next directive and the next regulation and the next directive. And all you are seeing is that you need all the time new processes which cost money - there might be new processes to recycle waste, new ways that you must do public procurement, new ways that you must calculate the working time of your staff – you are seeing the negative side of the calculation without seeing the positive benefits which are more at the macro-level.

Many local actors look at the performance of the EU and accept fusing processes because they deliver trading benefits, funding and support for horizontal cooperation with other European local governments. Local actors do not necessarily appreciate the impact of EU legislation, which constrains local practice and powers and places an additional financial and bureaucratic burden on local government (interview Rowles). Amongst English local authorities there seems to be an overall acceptance of most constraints *vis-à-vis* the macro-benefits, as assumed by performance fusion.

The perceived benefits at the local level in England are particularly financial in nature and provide a strong incentive to engage and potentially even to fuse with the EU³⁹⁰.

Notwithstanding the beneficial outputs of European integration, regulations on services of general interests limit the ability of local authorities to provide state aid. These regulations create a bureaucratic burden, resource intensive tendering and legal uncertainty, which in some cases caused a standstill of local loans and grants to public service providers³⁹¹. Even though leading local politicians regularly express their dissatisfaction with European legislation and the corresponding financial and bureaucratic burden, only a very few would want to withdraw from the European project and adopt a pragmatic, performance-related view³⁹² (interview Rowles).

As the major assets of the cohesion policy have shifted towards Eastern Europe, local engagement has been reduced. At the same time, austerity measures force local authorities to look beyond the UK to find financial resources³⁹³ (interview Simpson). Both scenarios confirm the underlying logic of performance fusion.

Political fusion of local actors in England

The major players amongst local authorities, such as London, Manchester, Birmingham or Liverpool might be aware of the development of the Union's treaties and governance. For most local authorities, the LGA is the main vehicle for communicating the constitutional and governance developments to its member authorities. Although at the local level

³⁹⁰ In 1997, for example, Martin (1997: 63) observed: 'There is some evidence then that the availability of EU regional policy assistance is contributing to the emergence of new styles of policy-making at the local level. There are signs of a more widespread appreciation of the implications of closer European integration even among local authorities which have not traditionally been active in 'European issues'.' Under the structural fund period 2007-13 the UK received about € 9.4 billion, plus a significant amount under the CAP and for rural development. As a result, English local authorities have gained a more outward looking perspective and appreciate the opportunities the EU offers to them. This also includes the assistance for cooperation and exchange with other local authorities across Europe (*ibid.*).

³⁹¹ Although European competition law seems to have some constraining effects on the work of local authorities, the UK has a long tradition of public-private partnerships. The Commission for example looked closely at the UK as a model for joint ventures between private and public sector.

³⁹² The EU adviser to the LGA (interview Rowles) for example states: 'I would be reluctant to place a sort value judgement on it and say it is a good or a bad thing. It is a necessary thing. The EU is there and it is producing law, which affects local authorities. I take a very pragmatic approach: it is a phenomenon that is there. We estimate at least 50 per cent of legislation needs to be implemented through the local level. So we need to be engaged with it, we need to make sure that legislation coming out is friendly and implementable by the local level. That is the best way to sell the need for engagement in the EU, certainly in a country like the UK.'

³⁹³ At the same major EU resources have shifted from the UK to new, less prosperous member states, which also caused some disengagement.

preferences for a political fusion with the EU are not as common as at the national level, some responses of local actors show some ideas about how the EU may develop in their favour.

Local actors that are engaged with the EU take a pragmatic view reflecting a third way of integration between supranationality and intergovernmental cooperation. Local actors accept pooling of sovereignty in supranational arrangements as long as the EU delivers economic benefits and provides opportunities for cooperation and the exchange of best-practice (interview Rowles). Although local actors may not intend to commit entirely to supranationality, they have welcomed the upgrading of the role of the CoR, which allows them to promote local concerns at the European level. A few actors would even like to gain permanent access to the Commission's working groups and committees, and in the most extreme case to embed local development as a crosscutting issue in the Commission.

Depending on their party alignment, Labour and Liberal Democrat local actors may take a more positive stance towards supranationality than their Conservative counterparts. Generally, local actors are cautious, and to varying degrees, protective towards their areas and would like to set a limit on how far the Union's intervention into local affairs should actually go. The expansion of subsidiarity to the local and regional levels is therefore welcomed – a response that can be compared to the sovereignty-reflex of national governments and their preference for intergovernmental cooperation in sensitive policy areas.

Bypassing activities also indicate a political preference because it allows English local governments to express their preferences autonomously from central government: 'Bypassing is a reality now and it has to be built into the multi-stakeholder governance. Dialogue and governance have to happen from EU to the local level and subsidiarity means that decisions are made at the lowest level possible, which also means regional or local level.' (interview Sumner)

Compound fusion of local actors in England

There is partial evidence to support the hypothesis of compound fusion. There are a great number of local actors who deploy and tacitly acknowledge the inclusiveness of the EU which provides them with opportunities for autonomous action. Bypassing activities indicate such a preference. The EU adviser to the LGA (interview Rowles) suggests that

'the local level across the EU finds the Commission very accessible, actually, and very open and happy to meet with organisations such as ours, which is not always the case with national governments.'

5.6.2 Attitudes of local actors in the NWoE

Performance fusion of local actors in the NWoE

Local actors in the NWoE recognise the added value of the internal market and trading arrangement. The NWoE is a good example for a performance-related mentality as local authorities were able to regenerate their infrastructure significantly through European funds³⁹⁴. Within the examined councils, political and administrative leaders are generally positive about European engagement as long as it delivers cost-efficiently visible benefits³⁹⁵. The latter are primarily but not only of financial nature³⁹⁶. In addition to the opportunity to plan projects over a period of seven years³⁹⁷, conducting transnational projects and introducing innovative practice provided a strong incentive to engage in EU policies³⁹⁸ (interviews Bleaden; Carter; Hope; Hornby; Sumner; Moore; Yates).

Despite the positive attitudes of political leaders, at officer level there can sometimes be frustration with the top-down impact and the bureaucratic burden of EU legislation³⁹⁹, as well as an apprehension about engaging in European projects (interviews Bleaden; Carter).

³⁹⁴ 'In the North West we are more pro-active in the European field than other regions, simply because we have been able to get more money out of the system and have a lot more projects. That is a result of having Liverpool and Merseyside within our region, which attracted funds in the past. But of course we will not attract the same amount of funds in the future. We are in a changing situation, whereby we have got to work harder to get the various moneys out of the system.' (interview Manley)

³⁹⁵ At the same time, there are many local authorities which do not conduct European projects.

³⁹⁶ This is often not acknowledged within a local council: 'Cumbria sometimes thinks of Europe as being about getting funding, whereas we need to play a cleverer game than that. It's about collaboration and potential commercialisation opportunities and intellectual property development and tackling common challenges together and achieving common solutions, but all of those things require a leap of faith, a believe, a strategic long-term approach. I am comfortable with that but not many people are. It requires possibly quite a big risk under this kind of economic climate.' (interview Hornby)

³⁹⁷ This is particularly important in England, where financial support strongly depends on the political leadership of national government.

³⁹⁸ In Stockport, participation in INTERREG programmes led to political support for further EU-related activities: 'That was an eye opener in Stockport, because people saw it wasn't just a set of distant, slightly related projects. The EU is not necessarily that interested in what we deliver locally as long as it contributes to a wider benefit or influences policy. For Cities in Balance it was demographic change. It also produced hidden outputs: wider, shared learning.' (interview Bleaden)

³⁹⁹ At the same, some actors are aware that national government adds provisions on top of European law to pursue its own objectives.

Notwithstanding some resistance of local actors⁴⁰⁰, performance fusion explains the fairly positive attitude of engaged local authorities towards European policies.

Local policy-makers often have an ambiguous relationship with the EU and are uncertain whether to increase or reduce their activities (interview Hope). The financial crisis puts a threat to the positive attitudes of local decision-makers and to their European engagement, which strongly depends on individual actors (interview Bleaden).

Political fusion of local actors in the NWoE

The majority of local councils in the NWoE do not engage in constitutional or institutional developments of European governance. The relevance of political fusion is primarily about stronger involvement of local actors in the design of the EU policies.

One of the most articulated views on political developments refers to the strained relationship with central government and the consequential bypassing activities. The head of the former North West Brussels Office (interview Sumner) gives reason why bypassing can indicate political fusion: ‘Europe has aided local and regional authorities a lot in building up the voice and the impact they can have towards the EU.’⁴⁰¹ Preferences to enable political fusion include the lack of transparency, barriers for European engagement and effective cooperation with central government⁴⁰² (interviews Hope; Yates).

As a response to the 2009 CoR White Paper on Multilevel Governance (see 1.2), local policy-makers expressed their political vision of shared responsibility and effective partnerships through the NWREP: ‘Recognition should be given to the role of local and regional authorities in the delivery of EU initiatives to foster economic growth and sustainable development.’ (NWREP, 2009) Such a preference is shared amongst dedicated officers that seek a more systematic communication between the European and the local

⁴⁰⁰ This is strengthened by negative or non-existent media coverage about European policies and transnational projects (interviews Bleaden; Yates).

⁴⁰¹ This view is also shared by CWAC’s external funding officer (interview Lee): ‘Some local authorities get involved on purely pragmatic basis in terms of they can see some added value in dealing on a European wide basis, but other local authorities probably have a history of working more on a European level, because they feel they are getting something there that they are maybe not getting elsewhere and they are trying to express their own level of freedom of action.’

⁴⁰² Stockport’s funding manager (interview Bleaden) suggests: ‘I can understand why people think of the EU as an ally against central government cuts. By giving people funding was a really useful tool to manipulate governments.’

level and effective implementation of the partnership principle⁴⁰³ (interviews Hope; Moore).

This does not necessarily indicate a desire for multilevel governance as a shift of authority amongst different levels, as suggested by MLG type I, but rather for MLG type II cooperation to deal collectively with joint problems around issues such as transport, environment and cohesion policy⁴⁰⁴ (see 2.6.2). Although this is a priority within proactive local authorities, in some local authorities the refocus and change of funding priorities has caused either a reduction or a stagnation of the desire to deliver European initiatives (interview Carter).

Compound fusion of local actors in the NWoE

Compound fusion is reflected by the Union's approach of a 'multi-stakeholder governance', which involves the local and regional level in decision-making (interview Sumner). Whether local policy-makers and officers in the NWoE show a preference for the EU's compound polity, however, depends heavily on whether they have experience in cooperating with the Commission. Actors who have engaged with Commission officials tend to appreciate the open access for promoting their concerns. As Lancaster's European policy officer (interview Moore) puts it:

The ones who have been out to Europe and seen how it operates, they see it as an open door. The ones that we haven't managed to persuade to go there, don't see the Commission as an open thing. If you give them that experience, they see it as a positive thing and that you can meet senior officials over there and discuss things.

A number of actors, such as Cumbria's European policy officer (interview Hornby), find the Commission more accessible than Westminster: 'I write to them a lot. I phone them up. They are always very helpful, incredibly transparent and helpful. They always write back very quickly. I always get from them what I want.'

Notwithstanding the positive experiences, there are many local actors who do not connect

⁴⁰³ For Manchester, strengthening the urban dimension within the design and delivery of the cohesion policy is a major concern: 'There is much more of a drive to have local authorities involved in the design of the programmes. That's one of the things that EURO CITIES argues all the time: it's only a successful implementation if you're involved in it.' (interview Hope).

⁴⁰⁴ 'It's another tool to influence but more in particular policy areas or legislation. Although there might have been some debates and conversations about multilevel governance and how things fit together and subsidiarity, I think really at the end of the day that's the conversation with our national government because every member state has a different set-up.' (interview Hope). Cumbria's European Policy Officer (interview Hornby) about bypassing: 'I cannot see a situation where you would need to do that because they have different competences. You work with both together to triangulate your information.'

at all with the Commission⁴⁰⁵ (interview Moore). Particularly in rural areas, such as Cheshire and Lancashire,⁴⁰⁶ the majority of local politicians do not understand how the EU works and are biased against the EU by their party alignment. Thus, they prefer to focus on London and the traditional domestic arrangements that are familiar to them (interview Pearson).

5.6.3 Attitudes of local actors in Liverpool

Performance fusion of local actors in Liverpool

The case of Liverpool does not reflect the majority of local governments in England, but it confirms that the city's European engagement is strongly informed by an output-related mentality. As European integration provided Liverpool with massive funding opportunities to regenerate the city, local policy-makers and officers are well aware of the benefits that the regional and cohesion policy and urban programmes provided⁴⁰⁷.

The mutual exchange of innovative practice with other cities and the overall advantages of a common market and a stable peace⁴⁰⁸ outweigh the dislike of the additional bureaucracy caused by EU policies⁴⁰⁹ (interview Clucas). Through the European angle, Liverpool could upgrade its profile by learning from other local authorities, and gain access to opportunities to regenerate the city and attract business investments. Hereby, the recession has created a greater incentive to engage with the EU to foster economic development (email Fitzgerald).

Political fusion of local actors in Liverpool

⁴⁰⁵ With the cuts of travel budgets, interaction with the Commission has become more unlikely.

⁴⁰⁶ CWAC and Cumbria County Council strongly engage with the Commission.

⁴⁰⁷ Since Liverpool and Merseyside have been great beneficiaries of the structural funds, local actors, as well as citizens in the sub-region, appreciate the advantages of integration, and neither local newspapers nor local radio stations have been critical about the EU. For Cllr Clucas, the general attitude towards the EU within the city region is different from in the rest of the country: 'For us here in Merseyside, the change that we have been able to make with the active participation of many people in our communities has worked wonders for the city over the last ten to twelve years.'

⁴⁰⁸ The positive impact on the economy, as Liverpool based business rely on the skilled work forces from other member states. Because Liverpool had suffered significantly from the Second World War, European integration also provided the city with peace and reconciliation platforms.

⁴⁰⁹ Compliance with European regulations, are accepted as part of the common market which ensures equal practice across the member states. On many occasions central government adds more regulations onto European legislation than the EU itself.

With regard to the evolution of the EU, the development of European treaties is not a major topic on the city council's agenda. Nonetheless, the few actors in the city council who engage with constitutional trajectories welcome the 'new' principle of subsidiarity (interview Clucas), which indicates a preference for the maintenance of local power⁴¹⁰. However, stronger involvement within EU policy-making and implementation is more important as an informal means for political fusion than are major constitutional revisions⁴¹¹.

Considering the lack of autonomous power in the national context, bypassing is common practice for actors from Liverpool, and an expression of the desire to emancipate via central government⁴¹². As local governments ally with the Commission, slow process in that direction is being made. Liverpool's European officer (interview Eyres) would welcome a three-way link (or 'tripod') between the local, national and European level. This indicates a preference for fused arrangements between relevant levels of government through the application of policies (MLG type II, see 2.6.2) rather than through constitutional revision (MLG type I). As Liverpool lacks in opportunities to shape the macro-developments of the EU, informal bypassing provides a more adequate means to achieve a fusion between local-supranational partnership and local sovereignty.

Compound fusion of local actors in Liverpool

When Cllr Clucas compares the Commission with central government, she states:

We believe that we have a better and more direct contact with the Commission, with people who actually make regulations. They are more keen to listen to us than our government. That may change now, but in the last 12 years for my involvement in the EU programmes, it was much easier to get a quick direct answer from the Commission than it was from our own government. If the Commission could help to achieve something, it would.

There is a strong preference for working with the Commission and bypassing central government. As Liverpool has a long-standing tradition of engagement with the

⁴¹⁰ For the former CoR member Clucas, the new principle of subsidiarity 'means, if we do not think we are being properly considered, we can take them to court.'

⁴¹¹ Actors in the council expect a greater role for cities on the basis of Europe 2020 and the 5th Cohesion Report, as it emphasis the need to develop urban areas.

⁴¹² 'Local authorities in the UK are one of the most controlled local authority systems in Europe. Bizarrely, when people see the UK as being very open and democratic and providing lots of freedoms, in reality the local authorities are very constrained. We have got few fiscal rights and few legislative powers. We are largely controlled in what we do by our government. So when the European Commission says: we want local authorities and cities being involved, that is good, but we also need the empowerment from the UK government. Some limited progress on devolving powers from central Government to the big English cities has been made over the past 12 months through a process known as 'city deals' - but there is still a long way to go before cities in England have freedoms and powers that are in anyway comparable to the situation in many of our counterpart cities in continental Europe and the EU.' (interview Eyres)

Commission and other European institutions, relevant actors from the city council appreciate the compound channels offered by the EU to engage and feed into EU policies. Liverpool's European officers would even like to see an extension of policy areas in which local representations can engage. Although regional policy and various programmes provide local authorities with access to the Commission, there is room for the Commission to improve access for local representatives to policy processes⁴¹³ (interview Eyres).

5.6.4 Attitudes of local actors in Cheshire West and Chester

Performance fusion of local actors in CWAC

Notwithstanding some reluctance towards the restraining impact of integration⁴¹⁴, the main actors in CWAC that deal with European issues acknowledge the necessity of constraints in order to achieve the economic benefits of integration⁴¹⁵. The impact of EU regulations provides a rationale for a pro-active fusion with the European level⁴¹⁶. CWAC's incentive to engage with the EU is slightly different from that of Liverpool. While the latter has been a great beneficiary of the EU's funding schemes, CWAC has been focused on very specific issues, such as the chemical sector, CAP and programmes to sustain their rural communities. For the Conservative led county council, the financial advantages are even more significant in justifying European engagement (interview Lee).

Overall, CWAC benefits from the continuity of direction and delivery of issues that need

⁴¹³ Since the Commission's policy outcomes are primarily the result of national governments' interests, there is preference for a higher recognition of local concerns.

⁴¹⁴ Within the council, views about the impact of EU legislation seem to differ. Some European regulations are perceived as a restrictive interference into the local practice, for example in the field of state aid. However, there is an awareness how to influence legislation and working with EU law has not been a significant problem (email Fitzgerald).

⁴¹⁵ CWAC's External Funding Officer (interview Lee) argues: 'Local authorities do benefit from the EU. It would be silly to say that they do not. Obviously, there are issues around legislation, additional areas of compliance, but those areas of legislation are trying to do positive things and sometimes the issues are more around the lack of clarity from central government.'

⁴¹⁶ The head of the former Cheshire Brussels office (interview Pearson) suggests that local actors have to engage in policy-making to shape the regulations that affect them. Also Cllr Manley sees the need to get 'pro-active' rather than 'antagonistic' in order to shape policies by building a consensus across Europe. 'The age of parochialism has passed and it is just a matter whether you choose to recognise it or not.' (interview Lee)

to be tackled through a common European approach⁴¹⁷. Together with the financial opportunities and economic benefits of integration, this indicates a positive attitude towards integration based on pragmatic incentive as assumed by performance fusion.

Political fusion of local actors in CWAC

Actors within the county council show only limited preferences for the major developments of the EU like the Lisbon Treaty. Because CWAC provides a member of the CoR, the institutional development of the EU is of greater interest for the county⁴¹⁸. In contrast to Liverpool⁴¹⁹, CWAC only works directly with EU institutions where this offers a swifter or more practical approach to addressing specific concerns that may impact local economic interests at the earliest opportunity. Such engagement may be in support of major local employers or key sectors such as agriculture and chemicals. Where practical, such as in the case of Super Fast Broadband projects, such issues are dealt with through the responsible Government Department, however this is not a suitable approach for every issue; in particular issues of quite local concern that do not merit a national approach or view (interview Lee). Nonetheless, bypassing central government is not considered to be a conscious expression of political fusion.

CWAC's political emphasis is placed on keeping sovereignty within the state. A reason for this may be the level of wealth within the county, which does not require engaging in EU funding schemes as comprehensively as in Liverpool. Another reason is the alignment with the Conservative party, which has traditionally been Eurosceptic. Since the Conservatives came into power in 2010, the county council has started to align back to London than towards Brussels (interview Pearson).

⁴¹⁷ 'It is important that ERDF programmes have a 7 year cycle, whereas within a national and local perspective priorities tend to chop and change according to the political wind, which makes it for local authorities very difficult to plan strategically over a long period of time and to make real change. One of the benefits of a larger economic entity, such as the EU, is that the financial and policy objectives, although they are a little bit more generic and vague, are at least relatively consistent over a reasonably long period of time and that delivers real benefits for us a local authority in terms of making a difference on the ground.' (interview Lee)

⁴¹⁸ If the CoR were upgraded, local authorities would become more engaged and subsequently the EU would get closer to citizens (interview Lee).

⁴¹⁹ 'They probably saw Brussels as a bit of life-line, but for Cheshire it is a different experience. There was not the same need and the same feeling, where we needed to go and have an alternative route other than through central government, which probably means that the engagement we have had with Brussels has always been reasonably modest, and it is been very focused on areas of specific interest, where we felt there is something that we should get engaged in and there are good economic reasons for doing so, like the ECRN.' (interview Lee)

In CWAC, the preference for compound fusion is not as advanced as in Liverpool, and the few engaged actors within the county council have developed a preference for the EU's inclusive nature⁴²⁰. Although the majority of actors lack an understanding of the EU and therefore do not adopt a rational attitude towards it (interview Pearson), the relationship to the CoR and the Commission is perceived as fruitful and bypassing takes place.

Through the Commission's working groups and monitoring committees for ERDF programmes, actors from the county have been able to forward their views⁴²¹. The Commission appreciates the input of local governments and their agents, since the latter are less partial than representatives from the industry and have an interest in delivering its policies. It is easier for CWAC to contact DGs than any ministries in London, and there is a strong incentive for local governments to engage directly with the EU (interviews Pearson; Lee).

5.7 Summary of the English case study

The findings of all five indicators allow drawing a conclusion and understanding of the various fusion dynamics at the local level in England and the NWoE:

1. *Absorption* (see 5.2)

The top-down impact on local authorities impact explains why local actors and institutions turn their attention towards Brussels, adapt their politico-administrative structures and engage in European affairs. European legislation related to the internal market, environmental directives and regional and cohesion policy are the areas primarily relevant for the investigated cases.

2. *Attention* (see 5.3)

The absorption of EU policies has led at best to a partial Europeanisation of local government limited to a small number of local policy-makers and officers. EU affairs have not become a primary focus of attention at the local level. A

⁴²⁰ Cllr Manley finds that supranational actors are particularly supportive towards him.

⁴²¹ When local politicians and other actors from the county were invited to visit the Brussels office and the DGs, they realised the importance and potential of the EU for their local concerns: 'People like the chief fire officer are not tolerated, they are actually welcomed. They value the informal contribution that can be made to the emerging policy.' (interview Pearson)

lack in Europeanisation goes hand-in-hand with a lack in European engagement, which is essential for fusion. Without corresponding bottom-up mobilisation, local governments are only at the receiving end as executives of EU policies, which does not determine a fusion of local-supranational governance.

3. *Adaptation* (see 5.4)

In terms of formal access to EU policy-making, the CoR is the only body through which English local government is directly represented at the European level. Direct representation of authorities, such as Liverpool and CWAC, with councillors sitting in the CoR is a significant, yet limited fusion dynamic, since the CoR exerts only limited influence.

The application of the adaptation indicator has further emphasised that instead of the national level, regional arrangements in the NWoE facilitated fusion processes for the local authorities within the region. Regional governance brought together local, regional, national and European stakeholders, and led to a blurred division of competences among different levels of governance. With the closure of the NWDA in 2012, sub-regional cooperation gained in significance but overall it has not the same drive to foster fusion dynamics.

Institutional adaptation within local authorities has been strongly developed and indicated fusion tendencies comparable to national governments, but on a smaller scale. The establishment of local representation in Brussels during the late 1990s was evidence of a remarkable commitment. Additionally, many councils appointed either a councillor for European affairs, created a specific committee or made it part of a portfolio on planning and economic development. While larger authorities used to afford specialised administrative teams to deal with European issues, smaller units usually employed one dedicated officer whose work on Europe is part of a wider context of economic regeneration or planning. Notwithstanding the strong adaption of local councils in the past, defusing tendencies have been detected. Because of budget cuts, the number of local offices in Brussels and dedicated officers has been reduced.

4. *Action* (see 5.5)

Despite institutionalised access through the CoR, the action indicator shows that the local-supranational engagement is strongly defined by informal activities of local actors. Fusion in a local government context is thus less about interaction amongst levels of government as assumed by MGL I but about flexible multilevel cooperation of a small number of actors, agents and networks (MLG type II, see 2.6.2). The LGA, the CEMR and EUROCITIES are the most comprehensive agents for direct vertical action. Single local councils, particularly major cities, also bypass central government and interact with the Commission to allocate funding or to promote their interests. As well as the CoR, MEPs are further addressees of local action but they are generally more detached from local concerns as they are not elected directly for a constituency.

The abandoned regional governance arrangements used to provide an important channel for cooperative paradiplomatic strategies and were part of a multilevel compound in the NWoE. This also included horizontal cooperation on EU policies amongst the NWDA, local policy-makers and officers, MEPs, CoR members and other public and private stakeholders. Additionally, the NWoE linked its local authorities with other organisations through networks, such as ERRIN and CLUNET. After the closure of the NWDA, vertical and horizontal activities on European issues have reduced in the NWoE and defusion has taken place. Yet, the European Cooperation Group (ECG) and the Regional Leaders Board (RLB) still provide a downgraded basis for coordinated EU-directed activities.

Whilst horizontal action is only marginally advanced across England and is primarily based on the LGA and the European Officers Network (EON), local authorities in the NWoE also use multiple networks for horizontal cooperation with partners from other member states. For Liverpool EUROCITIES and URBACT are effective networks. CWAC is member of the European Chemical Regions Network (ECRN) on behalf of a very specific area relevant to the county.

5. *Attitudes* (see 5.6)

The attitude indicator provides an explanation for the European engagement of local government in the NWoE. Performance fusion assumes that the support of local actors to the EU is the result of beneficial outcomes of integration. The sub-indicator revealed that despite some constraints of EU policies, local actors in the NWoE widely acknowledge the economic value of the common market, financial benefits of the Structural Funds, CAP and rural development policies, as well as opportunities for transnational cooperation. As the overall benefits of EU membership outweigh the constraints, integration is accepted as a necessity and only a very few local politicians would consider withdrawing from the EU.

Based on the advantages and disadvantages of EU policies, local actors generally adopt a political preference that is protective in terms of local autonomy but supports supranationality in areas that need to be tackled by a European approach to deliver added value. This illustrates the idea of a third way integration between intergovernmental cooperation and supranationalism as suggested by political fusion. Local actors welcome the promotion of the CoR and the expansion of subsidiarity and view bypassing central government as an attractive strategy. Rather than engaging in constitutional questions, local actors would welcome more transparency and cooperation between the local, the central and the European level in the context of joint governance arrangements for delivering cohesion policy and Europe 2020 objectives.

Compound fusion is partially relevant for the attitudes of local actors in England. Although many local actors may not prefer to engage at the European level, those that have learned to use the channels of access to EU institutions appreciate their inclusiveness. Bypassing activities affirm the assumptions of compound fusion, which applies particularly to the LGA and larger authorities with dedicated officers. Local actors in the NWoE find the Commission generally more accessible and open to local input than is central government.

CHAPTER 6: FUSION OF GERMAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

6.1 Overview of the chapter

Chapter 5 applied the five empirical indicators introduced in chapter 3 (absorption, attention, adaptation, action and attitudes) in England. This chapter examines the fusion dynamics of local government in Germany and in North Rhine-Westphalia. The findings, like the English case study, inform the detailed analysis of the three hypotheses concerning *systemic linkages, fusion* and *attitudes*.

The findings of the indicators are based on qualitative interviews with European officers from the investigated authorities and organisations, as well as with regional and European actors, such as CoR members and MEPs. The interviews are supported by primary and secondary literature and documents. Whilst chapter 5 used Liverpool City and Cheshire West and Chester County councils as detailed cases studies, this chapter uses the city of Essen and the county of Steinfurt. The indicators are examined against three different scenarios: *infusion, clustered fusion* and *defusion* (see 3.2).

The chapter begins with a short overview of its relevance for the three hypotheses and provides tables to assist in the analysis of its empirical findings.

Systemic linkages

The *systemic linkages* hypothesis is relevant only for a small proportion of German local authorities, as it is the case in England. One result of a fusing multilevel governance system is the growing top-down impact on local authorities. Municipalities absorb European policies and legislation which affect their practice significantly. The Europeanisation of local actors' attention, however, varies strongly and is usually defused within the entities of local administrations, which indicates that bottom-up fusion depends on individual actors and the size of a municipality, rather than having a comprehensive shift of awareness across local authorities in Germany. European ideas and policies have not entered the core of local practice and agenda. Neither is institutional adaptation omnipresent. Whilst municipal umbrella associations have adapted their structures to deal effectively with European policies as assumed by fusion, generally municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants have designated officers to work on European issues. Only

a very few administrations, such as the city of Essen, have comprehensive organisational changes similar to the adaptation processes of national governments. Since many local authorities do not pro-actively engage with EU policies, it seems correct to describe the systemic linkages between European governance and municipal responses as clustered.

Fusion

Institutionalised arrangements are less relevant for local actors to enable them to fuse in a common policy-cycle for exerting joint control over public policies. Whereas institutional reform at the European and national level, which includes local representatives in EU policy-making, is characterised by defusion, there are competitive procedures in place for distributing European funding through the NRW government to local authorities. Bottom-up processes through which local authorities are involved in the European strategies of the *Land* are semi-formal but are not institutionalised. This is not to say that fusion dynamics are irrelevant, but rather that they are subject primarily to informal patterns of interaction across numerous levels (MLG type II, see 2.6.2).

The action indicator reveals that bottom-up fusion of individual local authorities is mostly limited to issues around the region and cohesion policy, the Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 and the allocation of funding. These policy initiatives spill over to an increasing field of action related to EU programmes. The municipal umbrella associations at the national level and their European wide counterparts, such as the CEMR and EUROCITIES (see 1.2), are the most important actors to engage directly with EU actors. Only a few local authorities bypass their regional and national government, whereby MEPs offer direct links between the European and local levels. Direct involvement of the local level has grown but it is subject to representatives rather than to individual municipalities. Whilst ‘direct fusion’ is weak for most local authorities, evidence supports the idea of a multilevel compound in which local actors rely heavily on their regional government to engage with EU policies, in particular through the implementation of the Structural Funds.

Fusion dynamics of local government does not only work across multiple actors and levels, but also through horizontal cooperation among local governments. Vertical action is often linked to horizontal cooperation within transnational municipal networks, the German sections of the CEMR and EUROCITIES, within NRW and on a sub-regional basis. Rather than as the formal involvement of local representatives, fusion of local government is best

understood as informal interaction across multiple levels. Such dynamics are growing albeit restricted to a few actors and in most cases not systematic.

Attitudes

The fusion approach is partly able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration. Empirical evidence demonstrates the varying relevance of the micro-fusion perspective for assessing the attitudes of local actors towards European integration. Despite some scepticism towards the constraining impact of EU legislation on municipal practice, local actors support EU membership because it delivers economic and integrative benefits and offers them funding opportunities (performance fusion). A political preference towards the development of the EU is mostly limited to the recognition of local subsidiarity, the right to local self-government and stronger involvement within EU policy-making (political fusion). Whilst some actors criticise the lack of privileged access to EU policy-making and the ineffective implementation partnership arrangements, others welcome the openness of European institutions towards their concerns (compound fusion). Overall, local actors do develop preferences towards integration reflecting fusion's assumptions of a performance-related mentality, but interaction with the Commission is coupled to a protective attitude with regard to their sovereignty and autonomy of practice.

Table 6.1: Summary of the five As in NRW

The five As in NRW

Absorption	Infusion
Attention	Defusion/clustered for majority, infusion for a small number of actors
Adaptation	
European level	Defusion
National level	Defusion
Regional level	Clustered
Local level	Clustered/infusion for major cities and agents, clustered for counties, defusion/clustered for smaller authorities
Action	
Direct vertical	Defusion/clustered, infusion for agents and networks
Indirect vertical	Defusion through national level, clustered through regional level
Horizontal	Clustered transnationally, clustered nationally, infusion regionally, clustered sub-regionally
Attitudes	
Performance	Clustered for majority, infusion for a small number of actors
Political	Clustered/infusion for small number, defusion for majority of actors
Compound	Clustered/infusion

6.2 Absorption

As explained in chapter 3 (see 3.2.1), the absorption indicator provides a starting point for understanding causal linkages amongst top-down impact, bottom-up responses, organisational changes and attitudes towards integration. According to the fusion thesis, the growing top-down impact of European policies and legal acts indicates the fusion of different levels of government (see 2.2.3). From a local government perspective, it is the most forceful and substantial dynamic in the European-local relationship. The massive extent of local activities that are affected is part of a differentiated top-down process covering all municipalities. As the Commission relies on local government to deliver its

policy objectives⁴²², the transformation of European policies into national and regional legislation and programmes coupled with the implementation and conduction at the local level provides municipalities with an important role in fusion processes amongst multiple levels. Though this does not necessarily mean that local government is more than a merely executive part in this system, the top-down impact leads to a Europeanisation of local authorities as illustrated by the attitude indicator and subsequently triggers interactive patterns between local and European level.

The following analysis outlines the most relevant fields of legislation and policies which affect local government in Germany and in NRW. As Table 6.2 shows, the EU's legal impact on local authorities in NRW is hardly distinct from the general impact on German local government.

Table 6.2: Summary of the absorption indicator for the German case studies

Absorption of the German case studies

	Main features	Scenario
Local government in Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition law, environmental law, regional and cohesion policy • Limited impact on employment and social policies, public transport, education and culture, energy, consumer protection, industrial policy, municipal development cooperation 	Infusion
Local government in NRW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above • Emphasis on Water Framework Directive and Directive on Services in the Internal Market 	Infusion
Essen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above • Emphasis on public procurement, regional and cohesion policy, employment and social policies 	Infusion
Steinfurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above • Emphasis on public procurement, state aid, environmental law, regional and cohesion policy 	Infusion

6.2.1 Absorption of German local government

Even though ‘municipalities are often underrated with regard to the range of their public service portfolio’ (interview Blania), the scale and scope of the EU's impact on local government is impressive. Local authorities play a key role in the implementation and

⁴²² The Commission even uses regulations such as on public procurement to enforce additional policies. Examples of this effect are rules on public procurement which also foresee regulations that are not directly linked to the free market but target emissions reduction for vehicles (interviews Eckstein; Röllenblech).

achievement of EU objectives. In fact, the implementation of European legislation is the strongest link between local government and European governance. Since county-exempted cities and counties provide more public services than smaller authorities, they are more subject to top-down impacts than smaller municipalities and consequently more strongly involved in the EU's compound system of governance⁴²³.

Starting in the early 1990s, when the completion of the European Single Market brought a 'flood of directives' facing local authorities (Alemann & Münch, 2006: 17), today about 80 per cent of European legislation is implemented by local and regional authorities (interviews Brockes; Jostmeier; von Lennepe; Quaschnik; also Krichel, 2008: 337; Münch, 2006a: 125 *et seq.*; Rechlin, 2004: 1; Wessels, 2000: 267). NRW's CoR member (interview Jostmeier) also estimates that about 60-70 per cent of EU investments and projects are realised by municipalities.

Because the European legislator is often not familiar with the municipal practice in Germany and legislation is transformed by national and regional government, top-down fusion is not always straight-forward. EU law causes some 'confusion' and challenges municipal practice by creating strong uncertainty within local administrations⁴²⁴. The growing complexity of procurement and state aid rules increasingly requires external consultancy in order to guarantee compliance with EU law, for example in the field of public transportation; and often it is only the Court of Justice that clarifies certain rules through explicit case law⁴²⁵ (see Table 6.3) (interviews Haarmann; Quaschnik; Thorstenson; also Fischer, 2006: 106).

The European legislation and policies that affect German municipal practice have been widely discussed in the academic literature (Derenbach, 2006: 86-88; Fischer, 2006; Guderjan, 2011: 150-153; Krautscheid, 2009; Kuhn, 2006; Münch, 2006a: 126 *et seq.*, Rechlin, 2004; Zimmermann, 2006: 27) and are listed in Table 6.3. European competition law comprises a combination of treaty articles, judgements of the Court of Justice and secondary legislation which has its most practical effects upon public procurement, state

⁴²³ Smaller municipalities are also increasingly part of a top-down fusion, as issues such as inter-municipal cooperation have increasingly become into focus of EU legislation.

⁴²⁴ In many fields local actors still do not understand the relevance and meaning of European legislation, since they are not familiar with the European terminology.

⁴²⁵ According to Krichel (2008: 340-341), European case law on public procurement has been undermining the German structures of public service provision and inter-municipal cooperation by taking away competences and constraining autonomous decision-making.

aid for municipal companies and public service provision⁴²⁶ (Waiz & Alkan, 2006: 137).

As well as competition law, environmental policies also have to be implemented primarily at the local level, wherein municipalities deal with binding measures, as well as soft steering instruments such as the best available techniques, knowledge-based approaches and best practice sharing (Witte & Nutzenberger, 2006: 156). Other fields of municipal practice that have been identified as important but not as obvious include building law, spatial planning, regulatory law, anti-discrimination rights and consumer protection (interviews Blania; Quaschnik).

⁴²⁶ Public services include water, gas and electricity supply, water and waste management, public transport, kindergartens, education, cultural activities, hospitals, social and health care. Unlike the British idea of services of general, the German *Daseinsvorsorge* is not as focused on market forces and competition between providers (Henneke, 2009: 18; Waiz, 2009: 41 *et seq.*; Waiz & Alkan, 2006: 131-132; Witte, 2011: 280).

Table 6.3: Top-down impact on German local authorities

Top-down impact on German local authorities

Policy Field	Legal acts and policy instruments
Competition law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directive on Procurement in the Water, Energy, Transport and Postal Services Sector (2004/17/EC) • Directive on Public Works, Supply and Service Contracts (2004/18/EC) • Monti Package on Rules Governing Compensation for Public Service Obligations (2005) • <i>Altmark Trans</i> Judgement on Compensation Payments (C-280/00) • <i>Teckal</i> (C-107/98) and <i>The City of Halle</i> (C-26/03) Judgements on Inter-municipal Cooperation • Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC) • Directive on Services in the Internal Market (2006/123/EC)
Environmental law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flora-Fauna-Habitat Directive (92/43/EEC) • Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) • Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC) • Environmental Noise Directive (2002/40/EC) • Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) • Lisbon agenda and Europe 2020
Employment and social policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal Treatment Directive (2006/54/EC) • European Employment Strategy • Anti-discrimination rights, e.g. EQUAL⁴²⁷ • ESF programmes, Lisbon agenda and Europe 2020
Building law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings (2010/31/EU)
Public transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation 1370/2007 • <i>Altmark Trans</i> Judgement on Compensation Payments (C-280/00) • Action Plan on Urban Mobility • Green Paper on Urban Mobility • Intelligent Energy Europe Programme (IEE) • CVITAS Programme • Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligent Energy Europe Programme (IEE) • CVITAS Programme • Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development • Lisbon Agenda and Europe 2020
Regional and cohesion policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERDF programmes • Lisbon agenda and Europe 2020
Elections right for foreign residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to vote and stand as a candidate in municipal elections (94/80/EC) and Art. 20 (2b) TFEU
Other policy areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Agriculture Policy • Education, Culture • Consumer protection • Industrial policy • Municipal development cooperation⁴²⁸

⁴²⁷ The EQUAL Community Initiative was financed by the ESF and co-funded by the EU Member States within the 2000-2006 programming period. The initiative focused on supporting innovative, transnational projects aimed at tackling discrimination and disadvantage in the labour market.

⁴²⁸ On issues such as culture policy, education, youth and industrial policy the EU can only apply supportive and complementary measures; and in the fields of social and employment policies the EU can only coordinate strategies across member states (Ruge, 2006: 211).

6.2.2 Absorption of local government in the NRW

Local government in the NRW shares the high impact of EU legislation with the rest of Germany, as most legislation is transformed into national law. Some measures, such as the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), are transposed by the *Land* and not by the *Bund* (interviews von Lennep; Waiz; Wirth). The Directive on Services in the Internal Market (2006/123/EC) has also affected the practice within each *Land* differently leading to institutional changes at the local level, which are outlined by the adaptation indicator (see 6.4).

6.2.3 Absorption of Essen

As a county-exempted city, Essen absorbs the full range of EU policies relevant to local government and thereby demonstrates a strong top-down impact. The most visible laws and policies that affect Essen include public procurement directives, rules related to ERDF programmes under Objective 2 status, European social and employment policies, as well as the EU's action programmes (see 1.2). EU policy initiatives provide the context in which Essen engages with the EU (interview Thetard).

6.2.4 Absorption of Steinfurt

Although counties have slightly different responsibilities than cities and towns, they are also greatly affected by EU law and policies. The case of Steinfurt shows a strong top-down fusion particularly in the fields of environmental legislation, public procurement and cohesion policy. Additionally, the field of state aid is of major relevance for Steinfurt, as the county maintains a small airport and a waste management company. The action indicator (see 6.5.4) will show how in the field of state aid top-down impact leads to bottom-up mobilisation.

6.3 Attention

Owing to the strong top-down impact of EU legislation and the opportunities offered by funding schemes, fusion assumes that local authorities become potentially Europeanised and subsequently adapt their administration and initiate EU-related activities. Hence, the attention indicator is linked to the first hypothesis concerning *systemic linkages* (see 3.2.2).

The Brussels officer of the German Association of Cities (interview Haarmann) suggests that implementation of EU legislation leads to a differentiated Europeanisation of local government. Awareness of the EU as an additional legislator and policy-initiator has grown amongst some local actors and in some policy fields the EU has become a new point of reference.⁴²⁹ The Europeanisation of local government is a necessary precondition for European engagement and therefore for fusion. However, local councils and administrations are not Europeanised as such. The focus of local actors remains strongly on domestic developments and issues such as schools, kindergartens or traffic planning, while ‘Europe’ is only of second or third order and a minor concern on the agenda of local politicians which they only notice when they feel an immediate impact on their practice (interviews Blania; Eckstein; Leitermann; Quaschnik).

Despite the growing awareness of the EU, apart from the German municipal umbrella organisations, it is still only a few pioneers of councillors and officers that show and promote a higher awareness towards European themes (interview Eckstein; Alemann & Münch, 2006: 19) and constitutional developments (interviews Quaschnik).

The cases of NRW, Essen and Steinfurt show that even though size matters, attention towards the EU depends strongly on individual actors. In comparison to other *Länder*, local authorities in NRW seem to be very ‘Europhile’. Nonetheless, apart from the municipal associations and the government of NRW, it is a relatively small group of specialised officers and an even smaller number of local politicians for whom Europe represents a significant agenda item. The city of Essen is an exceptional case, where the support of the political and executive leaders has led to the promotion of an integrated European awareness across local administrations.

⁴²⁹ This indicator relies on the suggestions of people who are engaged in European affairs and therefore for the most highly Europeanised. Although the interviewees are not representatives of the majority of local actors, they are able to evaluate the attention that local actors pay towards the EU in general and within specific municipalities. Within the frame of the applied research design, it has been possible to base the results of this indicator on unbiased evidence.

The general deficiency of European awareness has significant implications for the adequacy of the *fusion* hypothesis⁴³⁰. Instead of understanding integration at the local level a systematic process between different levels of government, the adaptation and action indicators provide a picture of differentiated integration determined by the informal engagement of individual actors.

Table 6.4: Summary of the attention indicator for the German case studies

Attention of the German case studies

	Main features	Scenario
Local government in Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven by legal impact, liberalisation of public services, and funding opportunities • Mainly relevant for municipal umbrella associations, European officers, legal departments within local administrations 	Clustered fusion
Local government in NRW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven by legal impact, liberalisation of public services, and funding opportunities • Size of an authority matters • Strong in county-exempted cities, e.g. Cologne, Dusseldorf, Dortmund, Essen, Hamm, Hagen • Also relevant in some smaller units with less than 100,000 inhabitants, e.g. Rheine • Strong in some counties, e.g. Neuss, Borchen, Steinfurt, medium in most counties (but stronger than in most <i>Länder</i>) • Mainly relevant for the NRW municipal associations, European officers, individual local politicians 	Infusion in county-exempted cities Infusion/clustered fusion in counties Defusion amongst majority of local actors
Essen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven by funding programmes, institutional adaptation and activities to develop European competencies • Expanded to a wider range of policy fields 	Infusion
Steinfurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven by membership in the <i>Euregio</i> (see 4.7.2) • Strong for county leaders and the European officer 	Clustered fusion

6.3.1 Europeanisation of local actors in Germany

The Europeanisation of local government has grown during the last two decades and is usually the delayed result of the EU's top-down impact. Although European legislation started to impact upon municipal practice and the delivery of public services from the early 1990s, it was not until the mid-1990s that the Commission actively enforced these principles through concrete measures. Only then did local actors slowly realise the relevance of EU legal acts and debated the consequences of liberalisation and privatisation

⁴³⁰ A number of interviewees argued that there is room to enhance European awareness within municipalities (interviews von Lennep; Röllenblech; Verheyen; Waiz; Wirth).

of public services. The same applies to the regional and cohesion policy, as throughout the 1990s local actors were largely excluded from partnerships arrangements between the *Länder* and the Commission. Since then many municipalities have become aware of the EU's significance for their practice (interviews Haarmann; Jostmeier; Thorstenson). Although constitutional developments are not of interest to most local actors, there has also been a gradual shift, as actors in large cities and counties have followed the debates on the acknowledgement of local government (interview Thorstenson).

6.3.2 *Europeanisation of local actors in NRW*

By the end of the 1980s, the first major cities in NRW had turned their attention towards Brussels. The impact of European legislation and activities, like town-twinning arrangements, led to a Europeanisation, even in smaller municipalities. It was not until the turn of the millennium, when the awareness of the EU had grown among local actors that they do not only play an essential role in implementing European legislation, but that they are also able to exert some influence and get heard in Brussels through their municipal associations (interviews Jostmeier; Wirth).

Because of its size and socio-economic structure, the awareness of local and regional actors in NRW is probably higher than in other *Länder* (interview Eckstein). Though size is an important factor for the level of awareness, there are a number of strongly aware county-exempted cities⁴³¹, some counties⁴³² and fewer county-constituent municipalities⁴³³, including relatively small municipalities with over 75,000 inhabitants or authorities along the border (interviews Waiz; Wirth). Although major cities are generally more aware of the EU than are rural areas (interview Leitermann), counties in NRW (as well as the NRW Association of Counties) also seem to pay more attention towards the EU than do their counterparts within most other *Länder*⁴³⁴ (interview Thorstenson).

In a 2012 survey about the European engagement in NRW, only about one quarter of all participating local authorities stated that Europe is a very important or important part of their agenda. Whilst in about 80 per cent of county-constituent cities and 65 per cent of counties Europe is a less important or unimportant issue, county-exempted cities are the

⁴³¹ For example, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Dortmund, Essen, Hamm, Hagen.

⁴³² For example, Neuss, Borken and Steinfurt.

⁴³³ For example, Rheine.

⁴³⁴ In particular counties within the *Euregio* cross-border region (interview Eckstein).

most Europeanised group of municipalities. For about 46 per cent of county-exempted cities Europe is a very important or important item (Landua, 2012).

In a major city, such as Dortmund, European affairs are ‘more and more relevant’, and attract attention within various departments, such as for economic development, environmental issues, planning and culture (interview Irle). Most local politicians do not pay much attention to European issues. In the administration of Cologne, for example, the awareness of the EU is comparatively high across different departments (interview Wolf), but only a few local politicians have lately begun to engage with European topics (interview Granitzka). This indicates the importance of dedicated officers for enabling fusion dynamics.

6.3.3 Europeanisation of local actors in Essen

The city of Essen is an exceptional case that does not conform to the norm. The mayor of Essen acknowledges and promotes the value of EU funding and the city’s involvement in EU policy-making (see Paß). The support of the political and executive leaders has led to an integrated European awareness across local administrations. Due to regular meetings on European issues, training seminars and the development of European competencies, attention towards the EU is developing within the administration. Although awareness varies across different departments, each department has incorporated European themes in its practice and there are several specialists in the city administration and within Essen’s associated companies that have strong expertise on legal issues.

Despite the fact that other topics are usually prioritised amongst local politicians, single politicians in the city council show a strong interest in Europe. Funding schemes, action programmes on social issues such as culture, youth, education, integration and transport, and Europe 2020 are the most relevant issues on Essen’s European agenda⁴³⁵ (interview Thetard) and indicate the policy fields where bottom-up fusion dynamics are most likely to emerge.

⁴³⁵ In relation to these ‘immediate items’, an awareness of European treaties is also promoted.

6.3.4 Europeanisation of local actors in Steinfurt

Like Essen, the county of Steinfurt seeks to take a pioneering position in European engagement, and its leading officers and politicians have developed a strong awareness towards the EU, which is partly because of Steinfurt's proximity to the Dutch border and its membership in the *Euregio*, inter-municipal organisation between the German *Kreise* and the Dutch *regios* and facilitate collective engagement of local actors in horizontal and vertical strategies (see 4.4.3)⁴³⁶. It is not only the European officer that follows and engages in political debates at the European level, but also the county leaders⁴³⁷.

Actors within the administration of Steinfurt are mostly aware of the EU's role in the fields of environmental law, public procurement and partly with regard to funding schemes. In spite of the relatively strong Europeanisation within the county council, many officers usually do not have the capacity to follow European themes, and many European policies are perceived as national or regional initiatives (interview Röllenblech). Instead of expecting a comprehensive fusion of the county government, the case of Steinfurt suggests that fusion is subject to the individual Europeanisation of actors.

6.4 Adaptation

According to institutional fusion (see 2.3), European integration has led to a multilevel polity arena in which competences and state instruments cannot be strictly located at the national and European institutions anymore. Consequently, different levels do not act independently from each other, but fuse vertically and horizontally and with growing intensity as they jointly prepare, make, implement and control binding decisions for public policies (Rometsch & Wessels, 1996: 20). The adaptation indicator looks at structural features at all relevant levels of government through which local actors are involved in the implementation and making of EU policies (see 3.2.3). The indicator provides important findings for the assessment of the second hypothesis concerning *fusion*.

In contrast to regular involvement of national (and regional) governments through the Council of Ministers, the European Council and the committees and working groups of the Commission, German local actors are only very marginally represented within the EU's

⁴³⁶ Borken's European officer (interview Eckstein) confirms that Steinfurt as part of the *Euregio* border region has long history of European engagement, e.g. through INTERREG programmes, and local politicians show a high sensibility to European issues.

⁴³⁷ See for example Hoffschulte, 2002; 2006.

polity: the relevance of the CoR is defused for German local government; attempts to institutionalise local representation in the Commission have not been successful; within the EP, the Committee on Regional Development (REGI) partly covers local concerns but is not considered to be sufficient by local actors. So, at the European level institutional adaptation is defused and European integration has not led to a formal blurring of competences to make common decisions over public policies. This is not to say, however, that both levels have not become interdependent.

Since there are no effective structures to involve local representatives in EU policy-making at the national level, the NRW government has introduced procedures that allow for the greater involvement of local government, particularly related to the EU's regional and cohesion policy and ESF programmes. Together with the development of sub-regional capacities for engaging in European policies, this provides supportive structures for vertical and horizontal fusion processes. As the *Länder* do have direct access to EU policy-making and exert some influence over the use of state instruments, for example through the Council of the EU, institutional adaptation at the regional level is significant for an 'indirect' fusion dynamic of local government.

Whilst European integration has led to a pull from Brussels to adapt national government structures, at the local level this is not mandatory and depends largely on the preferences of local authorities for engaging in European policies. As a result, the form and effectiveness of adaptation of municipal administrations in NRW (as well as in Germany) is clustered and extends from comprehensive reforms in some major cities to no changes even in large cities. Many local authorities have assigned European themes as a partial task within a wider portfolio, which affects only a small part of their administration (interview Röllenblech).

Very few administrations, such as Essen, have developed coherent organisational concepts whereby multiple departments have announced internal procedures or people to cope with European themes. Such comprehensive administrative arrangements allow for a strong engagement with various European policy areas. Procedural adaptation within the political structures of local councils in NRW has not been introduced, except in the city of Cologne.

Whilst the three German municipal associations⁴³⁸ (see 4.3.3) have clearly adapted their structures to effectively engage in European politics, the shared representative of the NRW

⁴³⁸ The Association of Cities, the Federation of Towns and Municipalities, and the Association of Counties.

Association of Counties provides an exceptional case of institutional innovation. Overall, NRW comprises a number of local authorities that have adapted their organisation to be able to engage with European policies, but there is also a high number of municipalities that have not introduced any adequate capacities. Procedural differentiation, as is assumed by institutional fusion, has partly taken place at the local level, but not comprehensively across local authorities which would enable them to pro-actively engage in European policies. These findings reduce the relevance of the *systemic linkages* and the *fusion* (and indirectly the *attitudes*) hypotheses.

Table 6.5: Summary of the adaptation indicator for the German case studies

Adaptation of the German case studies

	Main features	Scenario
European level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoR: local government is underrepresented, only 3 of 24 seats for the municipal umbrella associations, limited powers • Commission: DG Regio is contact point in relation to regional and cohesion policy • EP: REGI Committee as contact point, appointment municipal spokesperson of all four major parties 	Defusion
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal ministries: rules of procedures provide general consultation rights for municipal umbrella associations on European issues, not legally binding • <i>Bundestag</i>: rules of procedures provide general consultation rights for municipal umbrella associations but not explicitly on European issues • <i>Bundesrat</i>: no consultation rights 	Defusion
The regional level in NRW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRW government: rules of procedures provide general consultation rights for NRW municipal associations but not explicitly on European issues • NRW <i>Landtag</i>: rules of procedures provide general consultation rights for NRW municipal associations but not explicitly on European issues • European certificate for municipalities • Regional agencies to coordinate and support ESF programmes and sub-regional networks • Personal contact points to supervise service providers from other member states • Sub-region building, e.g. metropolitan area of the Ruhr (<i>Metropol Ruhr</i>), the Region Cologne/Bonn (<i>Region Köln/Bonn</i>), South Westphalia, <i>Euregio</i> or Munsterland 	Clustered fusion
Local level in Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal umbrella associations: Brussels representations, specialised officers • Local administrations: European officers or teams either within departments for economic development or at major's office • The city regions of Frankfurt and Stuttgart maintain the only local offices in Brussels 	<p>Infusion for umbrella associations</p> <p>Clustered fusion/infusion in most major cities</p> <p>Defusion in most municipalities with less than 100,000 inhabitants</p>

Local level in NRW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal associations: NRW Association of Towns shares the same officers and facilities as the German umbrella organisation; NRW Association of Counties shares an officer with one NRW county located within the NRW Brussels representation, first deputy chair is responsible for European legal affairs; NRW Federation of Towns and Municipalities: European legal and issues and basic affairs are allocated in one department • Local administrations: European officers or teams either within departments for economic development or at major's office 	<p>Infusion for umbrella associations</p> <p>Clustered fusion/infusion in cites with over 100,000 inhabitants</p> <p>Clustered fusion in counties</p> <p>Defusion/clustered fusion in municipalities with less than 100,000 inhabitants</p>
In Essen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European office with three officers • Regular meeting within the administration and other actors to coordinate European issues (<i>Europarunde</i>) 	Infusion
In Steinfurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One European officer incorporated within the county's economic development agency⁴³⁹, part of a wider portfolio also covering energy, traffic, food and <i>Europe direct</i> • 2002-2010 joint Brussels office with NRW Association of Counties 	<p>Clustered fusion</p> <p>Previsioully infusion</p>

6.4.1 Institutional adaptation at the European level

The Committee of the Regions

Although the CoR provides institutionalised access to European policy-making, in practice it does not provide German local government with effective representation in EU policy-making. Some local actors view the CoR as generally useful to represent local and regional issues at the European stage, to create an engagement with the Commission and to enforce subsidiarity (interviews Blania; von Lennep; Quaschnik; Thorstenson). Compared to England (and the Netherlands) (interview Haarmann), the CoR is less relevant as a means to fuse into the European policy-making cycle.

⁴³⁹ Whilst the European officer is usually directly located within local administrations, the *Wirtschaftsförderung- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft Steinfurt* (WEST) is a separate company but incorporated into the county administration.

Many local actors in NRW do not perceive the CoR as a relevant channel to European policy-making⁴⁴⁰ (interviews Blania; Jostmeier; Quaschnik; Wolf). This view is also shared by the European officers from Essen (interview Thetard) and Steinfurt⁴⁴¹ (interview Röllenblech). The NRW government does not engage with the CoR because it is too diverse to promote their regional interests effectively⁴⁴² (interview Waiz).

The main reason for the marginal engagement of German local government with the CoR is that of Germany's 23 seats in the CoR only three seats are actually designated for local representatives from the municipal umbrella associations, whilst 20 seats are designated for the *Länder*. Local government thus has only very limited potential to use the CoR and is clearly underrepresented and outnumbered by the *Länder*.⁴⁴³

The heterogeneity of the CoR in terms of party alignment, member states, regions and local authorities makes it difficult to form stable coalitions amongst different member states. Even though municipalities and regions can generate common views along the lines of subsidiarity and the greater involvement of subnational government, joint positions are often watered down to general statements that do not reflect specific desires. On detailed questions, the German umbrella associations rely on alternative channels to promote their interests at an earlier stage of the policy-making process (interviews Haarmann; Leitermann; Thorstenson).

Even after the Lisbon Treaty, the influence of the CoR remains weak in comparison to other institutions (interview Thorstenson). In addition to the lack of binding powers, its positions often arrive too late to be considered before the first reading of the EP, at which

⁴⁴⁰ Even though through the mayor Arnsberg in NRW represents the German Federation of Towns and Municipalities in the CoR.

⁴⁴¹ Nevertheless, Steinfurt's European officer appreciates the upgrade of the CoR through the Lisbon Treaty and the work of their NRW members, who also represent the interests of municipalities.

⁴⁴² Whereas for the NRW parliament the CoR is useful, as it is represented by the parliamentarians Werner Jostmeier and Elmar Brockes, the NRW government relies mostly on the *Bundesrat* to promote its European preferences; because of technical deficiencies of CoR position papers and because various positions would not match NRW's political preferences, such as for example the call for a framework directive for public services.

⁴⁴³ As there are intentions to reorganise the CoR, local actors in Germany expect to gain more seats in the future (interviews Blania; von Lennep; Leitermann).

stage policy drafts are unlikely to change substantially. Also, the main EU institutions do not necessarily take the CoR's concerns into account (interview Haarmann).⁴⁴⁴

Other potential institutionalisation processes at the European level

As it is assumed by institutional fusion for national governments (see 2.3), German local actors push for more effective ways of formal representation than through the CoR. Among such attempts is the idea of a central unit in the Commission (either in the Cabinet or in the General Secretariat) to monitor and moderate policies relevant to municipalities (interviews Haarmann; Leitermann; Thetard; Thorstenson; Verheyen; Waiz). Such a 'municipal contact point' within the Commission would require the support of the member state governments and is unlikely to be established in the near future. Therefore, the Commission does not meet the assumption of a formal fusion dynamic.

Within the EP, there are some mechanisms for considering local concerns at least from a German perspective, but they do not provide local actors with direct institutional access to EU policy-making. First, REGI monitors issues of subsidiarity and looks after regional and local concerns related to funding, but it is viewed as insufficient by the municipal umbrella associations, which would prefer either the introduction of a separate committee for local and regional affairs (Derenbach, 2006: 99) or a shift of the focus of the REGI Committee towards municipal issues in a wider context than funding (interview Haarmann). Secondly, the four major parties in Germany have each appointed one municipal spokesperson⁴⁴⁵ who cooperate with the municipal umbrella associations and promote local interests within the relevant committees (interview Verheyen). Though the municipal spokespersons are not initiated at the European level, they are a semi-formal example of procedural adaptation for representing municipal concerns within the activities of the EP.

⁴⁴⁴ NRW's CoR member (interview Jostmeier) suggest that 'ten years ago the papers were generally thrown directly into the bin. At the moment, there is a coming and going of Commissioners and high officials, especially after their re-appointment, so that they can present in front of us.' The actual influence of the CoR depends on whether and how actors from the EP incorporate CoR positions in their final papers. The Committee has emerged through the Lisbon Treaty and its own engagement, but there is a lot room for improvement to integrate a bottom-up perspective into the perspective of the other institutions. NRW's alternate of the CoR (interview Brockes), however, would not welcome an upgrade of the Committee to a fully-fledged institution, as it would over-complicate the decision-making process. For him, the CoR needs to be understood as a platform through which regional and local actors can link themselves, build networks and articulate common positions.

⁴⁴⁵ Sabine Verheyen (NRW) for the European People's Party; Peter Simon (Baden-Württemberg) for the Party of European Socialists; Heide Rühle (Baden-Württemberg) for the European Greens; Michael Theurer (Baden-Württemberg) for the Alliance of Liberal and Democrats for Europe.

6.4.2 Institutional adaptation at the national level in Germany

In the federal system of Germany, the *Länder* represent their local authorities in the *Bundesrat* with regard to European issues (Article 23 German Basic Law), but there are hardly any formal provisions at the national level for including the municipal umbrella associations or other municipal representatives in decisions on European affairs. Defusion applies for formal participation via national government. Previous attempts to introduce provisions in the Basic Law for formalised access to the national decision-making have not been successful (interview Leitermann).

Although the municipal associations maintain good relationships with the national ministries, the formal basis for consultation procedures are only laid out in the rules of procedure of the *Bundestag* and the ministries. According to the rules of procedure of the *Bundestag*, the associations have to be consulted on issues of municipal relevance, but this right does not include European policies. The *Länder* refused to grant municipal representatives any hearing rights in the *Bundesrat*, as they claim to represent the interests of local authorities via consultation procedures at the regional level⁴⁴⁶. It is only in the rules of procedures of the Federal Ministries that since 1995 the municipal associations have been provided with consultation rights on European issues (see Art. 74 (5) *Gemeinsame Geschäftsordnung der Bundesministerien*). Municipalities would like to see an improvement of their consultation rights at the national level (CEMR, 2007: 81; Münch, 2006a: 209 *et seq.*; Münch 2006b: 356-358; Rechlin, 2004: 25 *et seq.*; Wessels, 2000: 269).

Since the protocol on subsidiarity of the Lisbon Treaty provided sub-national governments with the right to monitor and control legal initiatives regarding the interference in their competences, the municipal associations expect greater involvement within the corresponding procedures (Leitermann, 2006: 6). The legal basis for this is provided by the German *Begleitgesetze* (Concomitant Laws) which were passed in 2009 after the Constitutional Court demanded national legislation to amend the Lisbon Treaty. The *Begleitgesetze* explicitly refer to local public service provision⁴⁴⁷ and protection of

⁴⁴⁶ It is argued that more participation rights would lead to essential changes in Germany's political system and therefore require constitutional adjustments. Formal consultations would not be applicable with respect to variety of different interests. *Ergo*, local representatives have to rely on informal channels to lobby their regional government (Münch, 2006a: 213-216).

⁴⁴⁷ Art. 9 (4) Law on Cooperation between Federal Government and *Bundestag* on the matter of the European Union (*Gesetz über die Zusammenarbeit von Bundesregierung und Deutschem Bundestag in Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union*).

municipal rights and interests within EU legal initiatives⁴⁴⁸ (Kirchbaum, 2009). As the rules of procedure cannot be legally enforced, however, the *Begleitgesetze* are more a formality than of real value for local representatives.

6.4.3 Institutional adaptation at the regional level

Some procedures have been established for involving local government in decision-making on regional and European issues at the regional level. Such adaptation processes are mostly linked to the delivery of the cohesion policy programmes in the context of a multilevel partnership, wherein the NRW government remains the main gatekeeper for bottom-up involvement of local authorities. Institutional fusion through the *Land* can be classified as clustered. Although the rules of procedures of the parliament and the government provide the NRW municipal associations with general consultation rights within the *Land's* policy-making procedures, these rights have not been extended to European issues (interviews Waiz; Wirth).⁴⁴⁹

When the Social Democratic-Green government came to power in NRW in 2010⁴⁵⁰, it started to promote procedures for including municipalities in the procedure of subsidiarity control and to foster the development of European competencies within local administrations (*NRWSPD – Bündnis 90/Die Grünen*, 2010; 2012). Subsequently, a set of criteria was designed to certify 'Europe-active municipalities in NRW'. The underlying ideas are that local authorities can apply for the certificates, gain support from the *Land* and are encouraged to start their own initiatives. Local authorities that apply for the certificate are assessed against their ability to communicate European issues across their administrations; to cooperate horizontally within their authority; to define European objectives; to create administrative capacities and to participate in European networks and policy-making processes⁴⁵¹. The rewarded municipalities of the first round of the

⁴⁴⁸ Art. 10 (1) Law on Cooperation between *Bund* and *Länder* on the matter of the European Union (*Gesetz über die Zusammenarbeit von Bund und Ländern in Angelegenheiten der Europäischen Union*): *Bei Vorhaben der Europäischen Union ist das Recht der Gemeinden und Gemeindeverbände zur Regelung der Angelegenheiten der örtlichen Gemeinschaft zu wahren und sind ihre Belange zu schützen.*

⁴⁴⁹ From the perspective of the NRW government, a binding mandate to involve local representatives would only create an extra bureaucratic burden without necessarily leading to a more balanced consent of different interests within NRW. Flexible involvement of local actors is viewed from regional actors as being sufficient and more effective (interviews Waiz; Wirth). This view is shared by Steinfurt's European officer (interview Röllnblech).

⁴⁵⁰ And was confirmed in May 2012 after re-elections.

⁴⁵¹ The guidelines have been developed together with local actors who strongly welcome the initiative (interview Röllnblech).

competitiom were announced in March 2013 (see 6.5.2) (interviews Ricken; Röllenblech; also MBME, 2013b; *Staatskanzlei des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2013).

Further forms of institutional adaptation include the establishment of 16 regional agencies (*Regionalagenturen*) in 2004, which are responsible for coordinating the employment policies of the Ministry of Labour across NRW under the financial and legal framework of the ESF. The regional agencies consult, initiate and support the implementation of the *Land's* ESF programmes and projects, and develop sub-regional networks amongst public and private actors (Blania, 2006: 290; Wolf, 2006: 261; see *Ministerium für Arbeit, Integration und Soziales NRW; Regionalagentur Münsterland*).

In addition to the regional agencies, the Directive on Services in the Internal Market (2006/123/EC) has led to the establishment of thirteen points of single contact within NRW, which are located at a sub-regional level, such as in the Munsterland, or in cooperation between cities, such as Essen, Muhlheim (Ruhr), Oberhausen and Duisburg which founded the *UnternehmensService Ruhr-West*, in order to support service providers from other member states (interviews Röllenblech; Thetard).

As well as the outlined top-down reforms, there are also examples of bottom-up regionalisation at the sub-regional level in NRW that have challenged the *Länder's* monopoly (Benz, 1998: 126-127). Bottom-up institution-building of NRW local authorities is not part of state-regionalism, but is a combination of regional-regionalism and Euro-regionalism (see 4.4.1). Notwithstanding the dominant role of the *Land*, capacity-building at the sub-regional level promotes EU-related mobilisation of local government and therefore supports fusion dynamics. Sub-regions such as the metropolitan area of the Ruhr (*Metropol Ruhr*), the Region Cologne/Bonn (*Region Köln/Bonn*) or South Westphalia are not exclusively related to European politics, but have developed a strong role in allocating and coordinating European funding for the sub-region⁴⁵².

The *Euregio* sub-regions along the Dutch-German border region (as well as the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Europäische Grenzregion*⁴⁵³) represent a special example of sub-regional institution-building. *Euregios* have been driven by inter-municipal cooperation between the German *Kreise* and the Dutch *regios* and they facilitate collective engagement

⁴⁵² In 1995 the Region Cologne/Bonn, for example, established a working group to discuss European policies of regional and local relevance; and in 2007 the COMPASS agency (COMPetitive ASSistance) was founded in order to provide information and consultation about European funding schemes within the sub-region.

⁴⁵³ The AGEG represents over 100 different border regions across Europe vis-à-vis Brussels.

of local actors in horizontal and vertical strategies. The original *Euroregio*, which comprises Steinfurt and Borken, dates back to 1958 and was the first institutionalised cross-border corporation within the EU⁴⁵⁴. The *Euroregio* is run by a council, a board, a secretariat, working groups and employs almost 50 persons (Münch, 2006a: 2006; Perkman, 2003: 160; 2005: 158 *et seq.*; Wessels, 2000: 277).

6.4.4 Institutional adaptation at the local level

Institutional adaptation of German local government

Whilst the national and regional governments in Germany have adapted and introduced comprehensive politico-administrative structures as part of a wider fusion between those and the European level, the assessment of institutional adaptation of local government is very diverse. The municipal umbrella associations, for example, have adapted their organisations to the challenges of EU membership by establishing specialised personnel within their administrative structures, as well as instituting representations in Brussels. In 1991, a common office in Brussels called '*Eurocommunale*' was opened. Although the variations of their members' interests led to the establishment of three individual offices in joint premises in 2002, they still coordinate their lobbying activities for a more effective representation of German cities, counties and municipalities⁴⁵⁵ (Münch, 2006b: 364-365; Rechlin, 2004: 40; Struve, 2006: 339-340). The reforms of the municipal umbrella associations indicate infusion as they enable the municipal associations with adequate capacity to engage with European policies.

Comprehensive reforms can hardly be found within local authorities themselves, but structures have been introduced for engaging with Europe and foster 'cautious' fusion tendencies. Reforms within local administrations usually depend upon the size and the Europeanisation of local authorities.⁴⁵⁶ Adaptation processes range from the appointment of a single European officer to European offices staffed with several persons. Whilst the majority of larger cities adapted their administrations at the beginning of the new

⁴⁵⁴ The *Euregio* served as a model for numerous other *Euregios* in Europe of which four are in NRW.

⁴⁵⁵ Although the separation allowed each organisation to promote the specific interests of their members, they have lost in external appearance and coherence (Münch, 2006b: 365).

⁴⁵⁶ A 'flood of regulations' facing local authorities at the early 1990s made major cities introduce European competences, commonly within the departments for economic development. As subsequently some larger cities realised that European engagement is not limited to the allocation of funding, they established central positions within their administrations, commonly in the mayor's office, in order to give 'Europe' greater significance, to coordinate activities across different departments and to enhance the field of action.

millennium, most authorities with fewer than 100.000 inhabitants did not introduce European competencies and therefore lack in the capacity to confirm institutional fusion (Alemann & Münch, 2006: 17-19; Münch, 2006a: 178-191; Wessels, 2000: 270). Only the city regions of Frankfurt (in 2001) and Stuttgart (in 2002), which share their representations with multiple stakeholders, are represented directly in Brussels (interview Leitermann; also Münch, 2006b: 369).

Institutional adaptation of local government in NRW

The NRW municipal associations show a more differentiated picture of institutional adaptation than their national umbrella organisations. As NRW does not have a separate organisation for cities but is incorporated in the German Association of Towns, NRW cities have more direct access to the European policy arena than cities in other *Länder* (interview Leitermann). As in most *Länder*, the NRW Federation of Towns and Municipalities has no representation in Brussels, but has allocated European law and basic issues within one of its departments⁴⁵⁷. The NRW Association of Counties is the only regional municipal association in Germany with an individual representative in Brussels⁴⁵⁸. In addition to the Brussels officer, the NRW Association of Counties has adapted its structures by allocating European legal affairs to its first deputy chair (*Beigeordneter*).

Institutional capacities for engaging in European policies usually reflect the commitment and ability of local authorities to participate in a wider fusion process. The size of a municipality plays an important role: though not all major NRW cities have adapted their administrations (Münch, 2006a: 191). Usually authorities with 100,000-150,000 inhabitants or more employ a specialised officer or even a separate department for European or international affairs. The allocation of a European officer within the department for economic development shows that its main function is the acquisition of funding, whilst the allocation at the mayor's office provides the post with greater

⁴⁵⁷ *Dezernat I: Recht und Verfassung, Europarecht - Grundsatzfragen, Staats- und Kommunalverfassung, Verwaltungsmodernisierung, Öffentl. Dienstrecht, Ausländerrecht, Ordnungsrecht, E-Government, Integration.*

⁴⁵⁸ The municipal associations of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and Saxony maintain joint facilities in Brussels, and NRW cities do not have an individual organisation but are represented by the German Association of Towns. Despite the resistance of the NRW government towards municipal Brussels offices from NRW (Münch, 2006a: 250), in 2002 the Association of Counties established the post (*EU-Kontaktstelle Brüssel*) together with the county of Steinfurt, which financed one third of the post, under the facilities of the three German umbrella organisations (*Eurocommunale*). In 2006, the officer moved into the Brussels representation of the NRW government in order to guarantee stronger regional coherence and representation. The county representative monitors policies and lobbies on behalf of NRW counties. In 2010, the county of Lippe took over this position (interviews Röllenblech, Thorstenson).

significance and a wider field of action (Münch, 2006a: 183).⁴⁵⁹ In about 60 per cent of NRW local authorities' administrations one or more departments are dealing with European issues (about 95 per cent of county-exempted cities and counties; about 50 per cent of county-constituent cities). Whilst county-exempted cities allocate European issues across multiple departments, counties generally have a centralised post (Landua, 2012).

Whilst even larger cities struggle to legitimise the added value of a European officer in times of financial shortage, smaller municipalities are usually not able to afford such a post, and instead rely on their associations or on an officer at county level⁴⁶⁰ (interviews Blania; Jostmeier; von Lennep; Wirth).⁴⁶¹

Institutional adaptation within Essen

Within NRW, the comprehensiveness of Essen administrative adaptation is only matched by Cologne. Except for the city council itself, the administration is undergoing a process that can be compared with national and regional governments. Relevant actors are aware that Essen's 'troubled' financial situation requires the acquisition of significant means from the EU to support social and economical generation. The city aims to become 'fit for Europe' and to develop internal competences.

Essen established the post of a European officer at the end of the 1990s to monitor and to deal pro-actively with EU legislation, and to promote and support the allocation of

⁴⁵⁹ A so-called *Europabeauftragter* is typically a generalist responsible for the coordination of town-twinning arrangements, the acquisition of European funding and contacts with municipal associations. The oversight of EU legislation is typically covered by individual departments. In 1998, the city of Hagen established the post of a European officer particularly focusing on European funding (Blania, 2006: 289). Dortmund has established a separate position for European affairs within its administration, but also kept a contact person within the economic development agency responsible for ERDF programmes (interview Irle). In NRW, Cologne was among the first cities to appoint a European officer during the early 1990s (interview Rapkay). In 2004, the European office of the city of Cologne (as well as town-twinning and decentralised cooperation) was integrated into the newly established office for international affairs and allocated up to seven members of staff. The head of this office is also the European officer (Münch, 2006a: 181-182; Wolf, 2006: 255, 262). Cologne is the only city in NRW with a political committee explicitly responsible for international issues, as well as for general administration, law and procurement (interviews Granitzka; Wolf). The city of Iserlohn is an example of a county-constituent municipality with less than 100,000 inhabitants that established a European expertise in its administration. The European office was originally equipped with two posts in 2007, but financial cuts have led to a reduction of resources for this post. Rather than having comprehensive institutional adaptation processes across municipal administrations or appointing specific persons within different departments as contact points for European issues, it is more common to establish temporary procedures or structures in order to deal with single European projects (interviews Blania; Quaschnik).

⁴⁶⁰ Counties can be useful to provide their municipalities with information on European developments, but do not possess the capacities to initialise projects within individual municipalities (interview Quaschnik).

⁴⁶¹ Some local authorities, such as Cologne, Hagen, Neuss, Steinfurt and Unna, also established *Europe direct* offices within their administrations, which represents a form of institutional adaptation. However, *Europe direct* is usually not directly relevant for municipal mobilisation, but may inform and communicate 'Europe' back to the citizens (interviews Blania; Quaschnik).

European funding. In contrast to other authorities, where the European engagement has been reduced due to financial cuts, in 2011 Essen expanded the post to a European office (*Europabüro*) with three employees. A major focus of the leading European officer centres on the development of European competences and skills within the city's administration.⁴⁶²

The city of Essen also introduced a regular meeting within the administration to coordinate European issues. The establishment of the so-called *Europarunde* is a unique procedural innovation in NRW and has only been possible because it is supported by the executive board of the administration⁴⁶³. In the *Europarunde* significant contact persons from each department⁴⁶⁴, the city's economic development agency⁴⁶⁵, the University Duisburg-Essen, the regional agency MEO⁴⁶⁶ meet to ensure coherent project management and co-financing across multiple departments and stakeholders.⁴⁶⁷ Subsequently, some departments even introduced their own 'European meetings' (interview Thetard). These organisational structures are the bases for coordinated and comprehensive strategies for engaging in EU policies.

Institutional adaptation within Steinfurt

Even though institutional adaptation in county administration is not as comprehensive as in Essen, the case of Steinfurt illustrates that local authorities can be vertically and horizontally active even without comprehensive formal changes in their organisations. The county has incorporated 'Europe' within the county's economic development agency⁴⁶⁸ as

⁴⁶² There are plans to integrate a centre for skill training into the office in order to promote further European competences within the administration, particularly for graduates starting to work for Essen.

⁴⁶³ Hagen's European officer (interview Blania) wanted to appoint a contact person within each administrative department to ensure coordinated European engagement. However, this approach was not supported by the city's politicians and the executive board.

⁴⁶⁴ The contact persons are usually equipped with decision-making powers, and include the departments for environmental issues; urban regeneration and land management; equal opportunities; culture, integration and sport; environment and building; personnel, organisation, public safety and fire service; finances and treasury; youth, education, and social issues; planning; town-twinning and inter-municipal relations; as well as the *Volkshochschule* Essen (for adult learning) and the *Systemhaus* (for IT infrastructure) (Stadt Essen, 2013).

⁴⁶⁵ EWG- Essener Wirtschaftsförderungsgesellschaft mbH

⁴⁶⁶ Comprising Mulheim, Essen and Oberhausen.

⁴⁶⁷ Cologne also established a coordination group within the city administration that meets once a year (Wolf, 2006: 262). However, a recent research project about the European engagement of Cologne has found that most departments have no appointed contact person anymore and that the annual meeting has discontinued (EUCONET meeting).

⁴⁶⁸ Whilst the European officer is usually directly located within local administrations, the *Wirtschaftsförderung- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft Steinfurt* (WEST) is a separate company but incorporated into the county administration.

part of a wider portfolio⁴⁶⁹ and for the purpose of allocating funding and engaging in legal and political issues. Although no other explicit European specialists have been appointed and no European committee has been established within the county council, Steinfurt's European officer (interview Röllenblech) suggests: 'Even though it looks very static from the outside, there have been many adaptation processes within the structure as well as within the organisational flow. In the future this is going to be a very important approach for the theme of Europe.'⁴⁷⁰ This emphasises the role of intra-municipal coordination for effective European engagement.

Notwithstanding the relevance of informal activities, Steinfurt also provides an example of institutional adaptation that is unique in Germany: the Brussels representation of the NRW Association of Counties is run by an officer from a NRW county. The office was established together with Steinfurt and until 2010 was run by the county's European officer⁴⁷¹. Since the county of Lippe took over this position, the European engagement of Steinfurt has lost some of its effectiveness, but both counties still cooperate closely and organise events together (interview Röllenblech; also Essling, Faber, Röllenblech & Schafmeister, 2011). The joint office in Brussels has been a strong institutional dynamic, which allows for direct engagement with European actors, and therefore marked a proactive fusion feature.

6.5 Action

European engagement of local actors is a main determinant for the relevance of the fusion approach within local-supranational relations. The action indicator is essential for exploring whether the fusion approach is able to explain the systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level, and whether local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle in order to exert joint control over public policies.

⁴⁶⁹ European issues make almost 80 per cent of the European officer's portfolio and are often interlinked with other topics, such energy, traffic, food and *Europe direct*. Three officers are working for the *Europe direct* centre in order to provide citizens, companies, schools etc with information about the EU. *Europe direct* is only marginally part of fusion processes.

⁴⁷⁰ He further suggests that municipalities are about to realise that the competition with other member states will lead to corresponding adaptation processes.

⁴⁷¹ The representative was supposed to work two thirds of his time on the behalf of Steinfurt, which financed two thirds of the budget and the rest was funded by the NRW Association of Counties. However, the former representative from Steinfurt (interview Röllenblech) states that the work for the NRW Association of Counties required more time than this, which was not a problem as the interests of Steinfurt are often the same as in other counties.

Notwithstanding the importance of the EU's top-down impact, the Europeanisation of local actors⁴⁷² and institutional adaptation processes, the assumption of fusing local governments is only met when the latter participate in EU politics and policies. Local engagement with the EU comprises a number of different aspects, which, though they are for the most interwoven, are distinguished under this indicator for reasons of analytical clarity as direct vertical, indirect vertical and horizontal action (see 3.2.4).

By looking at local government in Germany, NRW, Essen and Steinfurt, this indicator assesses all three types to give a detailed picture about fusion. The indicator shows that whilst for the national and regional level, fusion refers to institutionalised access to European policy-making, from a German local government perspective fusion is primarily subject to informal, cooperative modes of governance amongst actors from multiple levels. Although the regional level is the most important reference for local action, as assumed by fusion and MLG type II (see 2.6.2), some local actors deploy a combination of cooperative and bypassing paradiplomatic tactics to promote their interests effectively at multiple points⁴⁷³.

It is important to note that although NRW comprises a high number of active European officers, a yet higher number of local authorities hardly engage with European policies⁴⁷⁴. About 60 per cent of NRW local authorities are allocating European funding. About 40 per cent direct their European engagement for the purpose of enhancing and safeguarding local competences. Only 25 per cent seek to enhance their rights to participate in EU policy-making or to influence EU policies. The most important objective is the future of European programmes (Landua, 2012). Compared to national government, the empirical findings of this indicator can claim only limited fusion trends. Although the focus on funding seems to be a narrow sphere of action, the EU funds an extensive scope of measures which provide the basis for further European engagement.

⁴⁷² Owing to the active support of the political leadership of Steinfurt, the county's bottom-up mobilisation has been very strong and comprised a wide field of action with a primary focus on the regional and cohesion policy.

⁴⁷³ Steinfurt used multiple activities and networks for interest promotion, such as the meetings of European officers, the NRW Brussels representation, the *Euregio* and the Munsterland sub-regions, and the working group *EU Werkstatt NRW Kommunen* which is led by Steinfurt's European officer.

⁴⁷⁴ Size of a municipality does not necessarily decide whether local authorities are active in European affairs, but smaller municipalities tend to lack the capacity to do so. The cases of Essen and Steinfurt show that action usually depends on an engaged European officer and focuses on the acquisition of funding and related policies.

Direct vertical action of local government involves the allocation of funding as well as policy promotion and aims directly at European actors and institutions. Bypassing paradiplomatic tactics and participation within EU policy-making is an essential feature of municipal mobilisation. However, this indicator does not detect comprehensive fusion dynamics across the local level but only of few engaged policy-makers and officers, in particular from major cities, who interact with MEPs and Commission officials. Steinfurt provides an exceptional case of vertical action as the county was directly represented in Brussels and thus was able to establish contact with European actors and could lobby successfully for its interests.

The three German municipal umbrella associations represent local government and show the most important fusion dynamics as they pool the political weight of a large number of authorities. The national umbrella associations claim sole representation *vis-à-vis* the EU on legal and policy issues, sit in the CoR and are among the most influential German actors for promoting local concerns on the European stage.⁴⁷⁵ Whether for individual authorities or their umbrella associations, transnational networks, especially the CEMR and EURO-CITIES, are also essential for fusion processes, as they are most effective for interacting directly with EU actors and institutions. Other European networks, such as CEEP, POLIS and TELE-CITIES, provide further access to EU policy-making on specific policy issues.

Direct vertical action is the most important category of fusion, as it can affect and perhaps modify European integration and governance. ‘Under the surface’ local governments also deploy domestic channels for promoting their interests which, depending on their regional and national governments, then indirectly feed into and change EU policies. The findings suggest that direct vertical action would meet a stronger ‘theoretical quality’ of the fusion approach, but indirect action is empirically more relevant.

Whilst in Germany the national level is only of very limited use for indirect vertical action, the NRW government plays an essential role to link local activities and European policies. As municipalities are subordinated to the *Land*, their European engagement is strongly defined by formal and informal interaction within the NRW government, whereby informal arrangements have gained in significance.

⁴⁷⁵ The NRW municipal associations are also relevant (in particular the NRW Association of Counties and the German Association of Towns in which NRW cities are incorporated), but they tend to deal more with funding and local-specific issues and tend to engage with the NRW government.

Most importantly, the NRW government manages the distribution and implementation of the ERDF programmes for which municipalities have to apply. This has led to the establishment of strong links between local, regional and European actors, particularly in structurally weak sub-regions, such as the Ruhr area, which are eligible for Objective 2 funding⁴⁷⁶. Since 2007, when the whole of NRW could compete for these resources, interaction between the local and regional level on European issues has widened. The *Land* seeks to involve local actors actively in the delivery of the ERDF and ESF programmes. NRW provides a good example of multilevel partnership and compound, polycentric governance (MLG type II) embedded in hierarchical territorial jurisdictions (MLG type I) as promoted by the Commission, the EP and the CoR and as assumed by the fusion approach (see 2.6.2; also Bache, 2008; 2011: 124 *et seq.*)

The NRW government represents its municipalities within EU policy-making and in treaty negotiations. It encourages cooperative modes of governance and bottom-up mobilisation of local actors. The Team for Europe and International Affairs of the state chancellery is the most important actor for indirect vertical action followed by some exceptional examples of semi-formal arrangements to coordinate and promote local and regional priorities on EU policies, such as the meetings of European officers and the certification of European competencies within local authorities (see 6.4.3).

In addition to funding and policy promotion, the NRW government fosters sub-regional capacity-building in relation to EU policies through the NRW ESF, LEADER and the *Regionale* programmes. Interaction amongst European, regional, sub-regional and local level actors represents a cooperative mode of governance within NRW's hierarchical government structures reflecting the assumptions of fusion.

On a transnational, nation-wide, regional and sub-regional basis as well as within municipalities, local actors cooperate horizontally with each other and exchange knowledge and views so as to formulate common positions towards EU policies. Sharing practice and experience amongst local governments feeds into European policies, and therefore contributes to fusion processes. On a transnational basis, European networks and associations provide significant forums through which local actors coordinate their policy interests and share information with their partners across Europe. The German CEMR and EURO CITIES members also coordinate their views and experience on a nation-wide basis.

⁴⁷⁶ Essen promotes its interests primarily at the regional and sub-regional level, as it receives most funding from the NRW Objective 2 and the ESF programmes.

In addition to horizontal mechanisms offered by the NRW government, such as regular meetings of European officers, some local actors have also initiated an NRW-wide working group (*EU Werkstatt NRW Kommunen*) to exchange, articulate and coordinate common positions further. Other initiatives of the *Land* feature strong horizontal dynamics within sub-regions indicating an informal multilevel compound. Within NRW, Cologne and Essen are the only local authorities to adopt a systematic horizontal action to incorporate Europe within their administrations. Essen's pro-active European engagement is evolving owing to its exceptional approach towards incorporating European issues horizontally across the city administration.

Table 6.6: Summary of direct vertical action for the German case studies

Direct vertical action of the German case studies

	Main features	Scenario
Local government in Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most local authorities do not engage directly within EU policy-making • Mostly limited to the allocation of funding • Municipal umbrella associations: main actors, focus on policies related to the Single Market, employment and social issues • Transnational municipal networks: municipal umbrella associations are main actors in CEMR, about 600 local authorities are member in the CEMR, representation in official hearings, committees and expert groups of the Commission and the EP through the CEMR; EUROCITIES important for the engagement of major cities • MEPS: easy to access, familiar with local concerns 	<p>Clustered fusion</p> <p>Infusion for municipal associations</p>
Local government in NRW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of individual authorities is stronger than in other <i>Länder</i> but mostly limited to the allocation of funding • Participation in action and framework programmes, INTERREG, GRUNDTVIG, Europe for Citizens, LIFE+, Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci, Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) and URBAN • Municipal associations: Association of Towns is very active and offers consultation processes; NRW Federation of Towns and Municipalities does usually not lobby directly; NRW Association of Counties directly engaged with EU actors and institutions through their <i>EU-Kontaktstelle Brüssel</i> • Transnational municipal networks: local actors either engage in the German section of the CEMR or EUROCITIES (e.g. Cologne, Dortmund, Hagen), other networks include transnational POLIS, CEEP and TELECITIES • MEPs: important addressees of local action 	Clustered fusion
Essen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of funding: action programmes, Europe for citizens, INTERREG B • Policy directed: primarily to ensure Objective 2 funding • European officer as main actor • Most important vehicles: Regional association of the Ruhr area (<i>Regionalverband Ruhr</i>), the forum of European officers (<i>EU Werkstatt NRW Kommunen</i>), CEMR 	Clustered fusion
Steinfurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of funding: INTERREG A, action and framework programmes • Policy directed: main focus is about financial issues and regional and cohesion policy • Multi-faceted lobbying approach includes Brussels representation of the NRW Association of Counties, MEPs and the Commission 	Infusion

Table 6.7: Summary of indirect vertical action for the German case studies

Indirect vertical action of the German case studies

	Main features	Scenario
Through the national level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low interaction between municipal umbrella associations and national actors 	Defusion
Through the regional level in NRW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of funding: <i>Land</i> delivers ERDF and ESF programmes, most important field of interaction • Political mobilisation: <i>Land</i> represents its municipalities at higher levels of government and fosters European engagement within local authorities • Team for Europe and International Affairs of the state chancellery as the most important actor • Through the meeting of European officers in the state chancellery and the certification of ‘Europe-active municipalities’ interaction on European issues is fostered 	Infusion
Essen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long history of acquiring privileged Objective 2 funding • Interaction on policy issues with the state chancellery, the Ministry for Federal Affairs, European and Media, the NRW Brussels representation, the Objective 2 secretary and ZENIT 	Clustered
Steinfurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2007 acquisition of Objective 2 funding; also the ESF programme for NRW • Engagement with actors in the meeting of European officers, the state chancellery, the NRW Brussels representation and the forum of European officers (<i>EU Werkstatt NRW Kommunen</i>) 	Infusion

Table 6.8: Summary of horizontal action for the German case studies

Horizontal action of the German case studies

	Main features	Scenario
Transnational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEMR as the most important forum • Other relevant networks: ELAN, CEPLI, EUROCITIES, CEEP, POLIS and TELECITIES 	Defusion/ clustered fusion/ infusion
Nation-wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working group of the German CEMR section • German EUROCITIES Dialogue • Cooperation amongst the Brussels offices of municipal agents 	Defusion/ clustered fusion/ infusion
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting of European officers in the state chancellery • NRW working group of European officers 	Clustered fusion
Sub-regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional agencies • ESF and LEADER schemes • <i>Regionale</i> programme • Associations of city regions • Euroregions 	Defusion/ clustered fusion/ infusion
Essen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No involvement in transnational networks • Meeting of European officers, working group of European officers within NRW • Regional association of the Ruhr area (<i>Regionalverband Ruhr</i>) • <i>Europarunde</i> of appointed officers from each administrative department; guidelines and training seminars on European issues 	Transnational defusion Sub-/regional clustered fusion Intra- municipal infusion
Steinfurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No involvement in transnational networks, ad-hoc basis • Meeting of European officers, working group of European officers within NRW • <i>Euregio</i>, Munsterland • No systematic intra-municipal approach 	Clustered fusion

6.5.1 Action of German local government

Direct vertical action of German local government

Instead of looking at the action of individual authorities, this section focuses on the three most important vehicles for municipal policy promotion: the German municipal umbrella organisations, their European counterparts CEMR and EUROCITIES, and MEPs. Though none of them constitutes local government as such, they provide municipalities with direct informal access to EU policy-making and are therefore essential for determining fusion dynamics of local government. A major element of fusion is not the delivery of programmes but the influence on policies. The three municipal umbrella associations play the most important role for direct vertical action related to economic, employment and social policy issues (interviews Haarmann; Jostmeier; von Lennep; Münch, 2006b: 356; Struve, 2006: 347). The associations seek to promote common positions⁴⁷⁷ and do not favour the individual political lobbying of single authorities⁴⁷⁸ (interview Leitermann; also Münch, 2006b: 368-369).

The effectiveness of the association's lobbying is hard to assess. Compared to some major industries, the heterogeneity of local government across the EU and their limited resources make it difficult to exert influence effectively at the European level. The Brussels offices of the German associations rely primarily on informal contacts with European institutions and are constantly in contact with the Commission and the EP (as well as the German representation) and provide them with advice and information. Even though all three umbrella organisations each have one seat in the CoR, the latter is not of major value for promoting their municipal concerns (Münch, 2006b: 362; EUCONET meeting).

An example of successful vertical action includes the promotion of subsidiarity and local self-government during the Convention on the Future of Europe between 2002 and 2003 (Münch, 2006a: 246-247; Zimmermann, 2006: 28). As these achievements are the result of joint efforts, however, it is not possible to assess the effectiveness of individual actors (interview Haarmann). Despite their bypassing activities, successful local mobilisation

⁴⁷⁷ Even though the Association of Towns, the Federation of Towns and Municipalities and the Association of Counties represent different types of authorities, as the associations European officer (interview von Lennep) puts it: 'the first condition for successful lobbying is that the three municipal umbrella associations in Germany agree and speak with one voice to Europe and not with three. Then you have to see that the German voice finds a wide consent in the municipal landscape of the EU...As long as you are on your own, the voice goes unheard in the thicket of European lobbyists.'

⁴⁷⁸ Their regional counterparts are meant to deal with funding and local-specific concerns.

often depends on the approval of national actors (interview Leitermann), which can put constraints on the potential for municipal fusion.

For the municipal umbrella organisations as well as for local authorities, transnational municipal networks, in particular the CEMR and EUROCITIES, are the easiest and most effective ways of establishing direct links with EU institutions and engaging in European policies and politics. The CEMR comprises municipal associations of all member states and is the most effective and comprehensive vehicle for bringing general local concerns into EU policy-making.⁴⁷⁹ As members of the CEMR (and the CEEP), the three municipal umbrella associations, as well as individual local authorities⁴⁸⁰, can present their interests as ‘the municipal voice’ in official hearings, committees and expert groups of the Commission and the EP (interview Leitermann; also Leitermann, 2006: 336; Münch, 2006b: 369; Struve, 2006: 343). Such direct representation is an essential fusion dynamic⁴⁸¹. In the run-up to the Constitutional Treaty, German local actors could place their claims for local self-government and subsidiarity at the European level successfully through the CEMR (Leitermann, 2006: 337; 2009; Münch, 2006a: 114 *et seq.*).

EUROCITIES allows German cities to engage directly in EU policies. In the course of the convention for the Constitutional Treaty in 2002, for example, the German EUROCITIES members issued the so-called Cologne Declaration in which they addressed the members of the convention to enshrine⁴⁸² constitutionally the right to local self-government, subsidiarity for local government, consultation procedures between European institutions and municipalities for legal initiatives and the involvement of an urban dimension in all relevant policy fields⁴⁸³ (Rechlin, 2004: 51-53; Deutsche EUROCITIES-Städte, 2002).

Interaction with MEPs provides local actors in Germany with further links to EU politics. Local officers and increasingly for local politicians, MEPs are easy to access and familiar

⁴⁷⁹ Because they are more homogeneous than the CoR, the German municipal umbrella associations engage primarily in the CEMR to formulate and pool their concerns and claims.

⁴⁸⁰ Individual membership in the German section offers local authorities also in a wider ‘European movement’ engaging fundamental discussions of European integration (interview Leitermann).

⁴⁸¹ Although about 600 local authorities are members in the German section of the CEMR, the umbrella associations are the main protagonists within the network and formulate ‘hard’ political positions for German local government, which in practice cannot be challenged by single authorities. If the CEMR cannot formulate a common position, it still allows actors, such as the municipal umbrella associations, to find allies from other member states, such as the Netherlands or Sweden, to follow more specific goals complementary to the common objectives of the CEMR (interview Leitermann).

⁴⁸² The German umbrella associations only called for the recognition of local self-government.

⁴⁸³ The declaration was a joint position by the municipal umbrella associations, the EUROCITIES, the CEMR and other municipal organisations

with local concerns⁴⁸⁴ (interviews Brockes; von Lenep; EUCONET meeting). In comparison to England, most MEPs are rooted in and familiar with localities. Within relevant committees MEPs can make a strong impact and promote municipal preferences⁴⁸⁵. Within the EU's polity, the influence of the EP is limited, and municipal concerns have to be balanced against various national interests from different member states (interview Verheyen). Therefore, engagement with MEPs does not constitute fusion in a narrow meaning, but it presents an important form of vertical action for municipal actors.

Indirect vertical action of German local government through the national level

The adaption indicator (see 6.4.2) showed that consultation of local representatives is neither constitutionally nor legally binding, and obligation to do so is weak. A strong informal basis from which to promote their EU-related concerns is also missing at the federal level. The Brussels advisor to the Association of Towns (interview Haarmann) does not feel represented by the German government, and would welcome it if the latter protected the interests of the local level more thoroughly in European negotiations.⁴⁸⁶

The dialogue on European affairs between local actors, in particular the municipal umbrella associations, and the German government is defused compared to the regional level in NRW and depends on the willingness of national actors (interviews Wolf; EUCONET meeting; Wessels, 2000: 269). As a consequence, local representatives have

⁴⁸⁴ MEP Sabine Verheyen, the municipal spokesperson of the EPP, for example, maintains close contacts with municipal actors within NRW and on a national scale, as she is co-opted with the chair of the Federation of Towns and Municipalities, a member of the *Kommunalpolitische Vereinigung* (Municipal-Political Association) of the Christian Democrats, and interacts with the other municipal spokesmen (interview Verheyen). MEP Bernhard Rapkay constantly interacts with local officers and politicians on the basis of personal contacts and party alignment. Cooperation has been close with the German Association of Towns and the Federation of Towns and Municipalities, and to a lesser extent with the Association of Counties. Rapkay was co-opted member of executive board of the Federation of Towns and Municipalities, and is co-opted member of *Bundesvorstand* (Federal Board) of the *Sozialdemokratische Gemeinde der Kommunalpolitik* (Social Democratic Community of Municipal Politics), which is the Social Democratic equivalent to Municipal-Political Association of the Christian Democrats. His engagement with local actors is not limited to the municipal umbrella associations, but also includes politicians and officers within his electorate (interview Rapkay).

⁴⁸⁵ In the EP, MEP Verheyen seeks to represent issues of local self-government and subsidiarity, Directive on Services in the Internal Market (2006/123/EC), social services, environmental law, waste disposal and other policies relevant to local government (interview Verheyen). Though Bernhard Rapkay, MEP for the Social Democratic Party from Dortmund, is not a municipal spokesperson, his expertise includes issues around services of general interests, which made him a main contact person for local actors over a long period of time. Rapkay was the rapporteur of the EP on the White Paper on services of general interest.

⁴⁸⁶ Parties may play an important role for the vertical action of local actors. The advisor further argues that the Social Democratic and the Green parties are more supportive in providing local authorities with the option to deliver public services and transport themselves than it is the case for the Christian-democratic-liberal coalition.

increasingly looked for direct channels of access to European decision-making (Münch, 2006b: 359).

Horizontal action of German local government

Transnational cooperation amongst local governments is a significant dynamic that shapes European integration horizontally as local authorities exchange and adapt their practices to examples from other member states. Engaged local actors have a variety of platforms through which they can coordinate their policy interests and share information with local governments across Europe. Transnational cooperation often provides the basis for vertical action.

The CEMR is the most important forum to feature horizontal action not only for the municipal umbrella associations⁴⁸⁷ but also for individual authorities, such as Essen and Hagen. Other networks the municipal associations rely on are the European Local Authorities Network (ELAN)⁴⁸⁸ (Münch, 2006b: 368; Struve, 2006: 340-344) and the European Confederation of Local Intermediate Authorities (CEPLI)⁴⁸⁹. Single authorities participate on organisation such as EUROCITIES⁴⁹⁰, the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public (CEEP), POLIS for transport and TELECITIES for information and knowledge policies⁴⁹¹.

On a nation-wide basis, there are also horizontal activities in place providing some level of coherence of European engagement amongst German local government. With regard to municipal associations, for example, the Brussels offices of organisations⁴⁹² seek political coherence through cooperation (EUCONET meeting; Struve, 2006: 344). On the level of individual municipalities, the European and funding officers that are members of the German CEMR section participate in a nation-wide working group meeting twice a year to share information and to discuss innovative practice and projects, funding programmes,

⁴⁸⁷ The CEMR secretariats from Germany, the UK, the Netherlands and Denmark also meet annually since 1970s and maintain close contacts to cooperate on specific issues.

⁴⁸⁸ ELAN meets every two weeks and provides a useful example to coordinate positions with partners from other member states.

⁴⁸⁹ CEPLI is only relevant for the Association of Counties, which aims to 'reinforce the consistency and visibility of our activities in the European area; facilitate cooperation between our intermediary local authorities and establish the continuous exchange of information and good practices between our regional authorities' (CEPLI, 2008).

⁴⁹⁰ See Cologne, Dortmund and Hagen.

⁴⁹¹ See for example, Hagen.

⁴⁹² For example, the municipal umbrella associations, the Association of Municipal Companies (*Verband Kommunaler Unternehmen*), the German Trade Union (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*) and the German Saving Banks Finance Group (*Deutscher Sparkassen und Giroverband*).

European policies and constitutional issues. The network is relatively small including over 40 members from counties and county-exempted cities and only a few county-constituent municipalities. Local authorities from NRW⁴⁹³ find the working group very useful and provide a high proportion of members (interviews Blania; Quaschnik; Thetard; also Münch, 2006a: 225-226; Spengler, 2009). In addition to the CEMR working group, major cities exchange information and positions regularly in the German EURO CITIES Dialogue (Münch, 2006a: 256).

6.5.2 Action of local government in NRW

Direct vertical action of local government in NRW

As over time local authorities in NRW have become Europeanised across certain policy areas, they have generally become very active in European affairs and have developed their own ideas in relation to the EU. Bypassing primarily takes place in the field of the EU's structural policy, where cities have been very influential in promoting an urban dimension in the structural policy (interview Waiz). Smaller municipalities usually lack personnel and financial capacities to engage with EU policies and programmes (interview Wirth).

According to a 2012 survey amongst local authorities in NRW, the municipal umbrella organisations and MEPs are the most important agents for promoting local interests. Whilst participation in EU consultations and municipal networks are also used to influence EU policies, working groups of the Commission are regarded as the least relevant (Landua, 2012). By looking at activities related to the allocation of European funding and policy promotion through municipal associations, transnational networks and MEPs in NRW, this section of the thesis claims that, overall, local actors are active as intermediary groups. They are not directly fused with the EU but strongly reliant on their agents and regional government.

Although the major means of the ERDF are allocated through the regional government, there are a number of initiatives for which municipalities have to engage directly with the Commission. The allocation of European funding is commonly the most important part of bottom-up action of local authorities in NRW. Since EU funds have become more and

⁴⁹³ For example, Bonn, Cologne, Dortmund, Duisburg, Essen, Hagen, Iserlohn and Neuss.

more subject to EU policy priorities in the context of various programmes and schemes, they are not only a matter of top-down delivery but also provide local actors with incentive and opportunities to shape policies.

Apart from the EU's action and framework programmes, INTERREG (see 1.2) is a very common scheme in which local authorities are in direct contact with the EU⁴⁹⁴ (interviews Blania; Eckstein; Wolf). Cities like Hagen and Iserlohn and the county of Borken have also participated in other directly funded projects including: the GRUNDTVIG programme for adult learning of the Lifelong Learning Scheme (2010-2012); Europe for Citizens for town-twinning arrangements and other exchange programmes; LIFE+ (for environmental projects); Comenius for student exchanges; Leonardo da Vinci for professional development; Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) and so on (see 1.2) (interviews Blania, Hagen; Quaschnik; also Eckstein, 2011). URBAN II (2000-2006) is another scheme that has been used by the city of Dortmund to allocate funding for urban development (see *Stadt Dortmund*).

The conduct of European projects provides the basis for further engagement through which local actors feed back their experience and concerns into EU policy-making. As many cities lack financial means, local politicians are primarily focused on the outputs of projects funded with EU money to conduct activities and to implement their ideas (interview Blania). Participation in EU funded projects is often the only direct engagement with the EU and does not necessarily generate any local government influence upon EU policies. A number of local authorities may absorb and deliver European policy preferences, but they do not fuse pro-actively into a wider system of governance.

In contrast to the national umbrella associations, the role of their regional counterparts in NRW as enabler for fusion is more clustered⁴⁹⁵. Since cities in NRW, do not have their own branch but are incorporated into the German umbrella organisation, the Association of

⁴⁹⁴ Cologne primarily allocated funding from the Research Framework Programme for projects in the fields of energy, mobility, information and communication technologies, urban development and environment (interview Wolf; also Wolf, 2006: 255). Dortmund has recently participated in two INTERREG IV C projects: nano4m (2009-2011) and CLUSNET (2008-2011). Iserlohn participates in an INTERREG IV B project: SeNS Seniors Network Support (2010-2014) involving Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. Hagen has been particularly active as the lead partner for the INTERREG III B project: CRII Cities Regain Identity and Image, and the INTERREG IV B projects: CIB Cities in Balance (2008-2011, EU funds €2,750,390) also involving Stockport, and CURE Creative Urban Renewal in NW-Europe (2010-2013, EU funds €1,729,956); Hagen has been a member of the Managing District Centres in Northwest Europe (2008-2011, EU funds €1,415,074) (see Mandie). For more details on the CRII project see Blania, 2006.

⁴⁹⁵ According to the head of the Brussels office of the Association of Towns (interview Leitermann) there are hardly any conflicts of interest, as there are no fundamental differences between the interests of cities in NRW and in other *Länder*. Wolf from the city of Cologne (interview Wolf), however, argues that their views are not always the same.

Towns also acts specifically for NRW cities and provides them with a strong link to EU policy-making⁴⁹⁶ (interviews Blania; Quaschnik). The NRW Federation of Towns and Municipalities is only a modest enabler of fusion. Except for some rare occasions, the NRW Federation of Towns and Municipalities does not lobby in Brussels and acts either through the NRW government (indirect vertical action) or through the German Federation of Towns and Municipalities, which collects information from their regional counterparts and forwards them to the European level (interview von Lennep). The situation is similar for the NRW Association of Counties⁴⁹⁷, which either seeks to lobby at the regional government or relies on its national umbrella association⁴⁹⁸. In contrast to the NRW Federation of Towns and Municipalities (as well as to their counterparts in most *Länder*⁴⁹⁹), however, the NRW Association of Counties has an officer in Brussels, which allows it to engage directly with EU actors and institutions⁵⁰⁰, which shows a clustered fusion tendency.

As with other German municipalities, the CEMR and EUROCIITIES are the two most effectively used transnational European networks and are potentially strong enablers of fusion. Many of the larger authorities are engaged either in one or the other. Whilst Cologne⁵⁰¹ and Dortmund⁵⁰² for example, are members of EUROCIITIES, the cities of Hagen⁵⁰³ and Iserlohn⁵⁰⁴ show greater involvement in the CEMR. For its NRW members, EUROCIITIES is the most important vehicle for direct engagement with EU policies⁵⁰⁵. The German section of the CEMR is also an important platform for direct vertical activities. However, rather than bringing local actors directly in touch with European

⁴⁹⁶ The Association of Towns offers consultation processes to their members on specific European topics.

⁴⁹⁷ Most counties, such as Borken, would not seek to influence EU decision-making individually, but would address the NRW Association of Counties which takes a lead position but invites their members to bring in their own priorities (interview Eckstein).

⁴⁹⁸ The chief executive of the county of Steinfurt is also president of the NRW Association of Counties.

⁴⁹⁹ Except for Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and Saxony, where the municipal associations maintain joint offices.

⁵⁰⁰ The *EU-Kontaktstelle Brüssel* was founded together with the county of Steinfurt, which provided the officer representing the interests of NRW counties, particularly in the field regional and cohesion policy. In 2010, the county of Lippe took over this position.

⁵⁰¹ Cologne uses EUROCIITIES for issues such as climate protection, public service provision and constitutional question. In 2002, the European team of the city of Cologne also coordinated the Cologne Declaration of the German EUROCIITIES members calling addressing the convention for the Constitutional Treaty (interview Wolf).

⁵⁰² Instead of lobbying separately, Dortmund also forwards policy positions to the corresponding working groups within EUROCIITIES, such as on cohesion policy or public services, in order to lobby EU actors (interview Irle).

⁵⁰³ Since Hagen has fewer than 250,000 inhabitants, it is only an associated member of EUROCIITIES. The city lacks in resources to participate actively in the network, and is more engaged within the CEMR (interview Blania).

⁵⁰⁴ Whereas previously members of the CEMR had to pay an extra membership fee, since 2010 through the municipal umbrella associations, they can become part of the German section. Iserlohn was also an autonomous member before membership became linked to the Associations of Cities.

⁵⁰⁵ EUROCIITIES provides a stronger homogeneity and acts more quickly than the CoR.

officials, it is the municipal umbrella associations that act in the CEMR on behalf of their members. Since individual authorities would find it hard to get heard and lack contact points at the European stage, other transnational networks are further enablers of interest promotion and therefore of fusion. Cologne, for example, was a member of POLIS (European Cities and Regions Networking for Innovative Transport Solutions) for issues around transport and mobility, and through its *Stadtwerke*, the city's municipal company, Cologne is indirectly involved in the CEEP (Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services) with regard to services of general interest (interview Wolf); and Hagen is member of TELECITIES, an off-spring of EUROCITIES focusing on the creation of information and knowledge-based societies (Blania, 2006: 290).

Engagement with MEPs is valuable for local actors in NRW and though MEPs are not exclusively representing municipalities, they are important addressees of local action⁵⁰⁶. Despite some engagement with MEPs, municipal actors have to mobilise at an earlier stage and at multiple points in order to influence European policies effectively in cooperation with MEPs (interview Verheyen). Interaction with MEPs takes place either on an *ad-hoc* basis or as part of a wider sub-regional network in order to promote local practice or positions on funding programmes and to get information about EU funded projects (interviews Blania; Quaschnik; Verheyen). Even though municipal fusion in NRW involves MEPs to a limited degree, there are cases where MEPs have been very active on behalf of their municipalities and have fed local interests into EU policies⁵⁰⁷. The Late Payment Directive was a good example of how, through intensive cooperation with local actors and partners from other member states, MEPs achieved consensus amongst different interests at the European level (interview Verheyen).

Indirect vertical action of local government in NRW through the regional level

The NRW government maintains close links with its municipalities to coordinate and deliver European policies. The *Länder* have fused into the cycle of interactive multilevel partnership (Wessels, 2000: 298-301). A large and influential state like NRW in particular

⁵⁰⁶ Although the level of cooperation between local actors and MEPs varies, the latter are usually open and understanding towards municipal concerns and have often been engaged in local politics. The relationship between local actors and MEPs is generally subject to personal contacts and party alignment (interview Ricken). For example, politicians and officers from the city of Dortmund frequently interact with their local MEP Rapkay who cooperates with local authorities within his electorate, and has conducted a number of events and meetings with local actors (interviews Irle; Rapkay). Other engaged MEPs are Birgit Sippel (SPD) and Peter Liese (CDU), who are both from South Westphalia and interact with cities such as Hagen and Iserlohn.

⁵⁰⁷ Other cases involved the Public Service Intergroup and the Committee on Regional Development (interview Waiz).

shows a high level of fusion, which also affects local authorities. Two often interrelated fields of activities can be distinguished: as the NRW government delivers the programmes of the Structural Funds, it is useful to differentiate between indirect vertical action dealing with the conduct of ERDF and ESF projects on the one hand, and activities of local actors that aim to influence European policies via the regional level.

Due to the formal arrangements for the delivery of the Structural Funds, the NRW government is the main addressee for indirect vertical action in relation to ERDF programmes. The *Land* also interacts with its municipalities beyond its legal obligations and seeks to stimulate pro-active European engagement at the local level.

The most important field in which local authorities need to act through the regional level is European structural policy, as the *Länder* allocate the resources of the ERDF and provide the managing authorities investing into the delivery of ERDF programmes according to three strategic objectives (Scholz, 2007). In a competitive procedure, municipalities⁵⁰⁸ have to apply for the programmes of the Structural Funds at the NRW government. The five administrative districts (*Regierungsbezirke*) of NRW⁵⁰⁹ examine the applications of local authorities and other private and social actors against the Regional Competitiveness and Employment (Objective 2) priorities of the *Land*, legal compliance and financial feasibility. After approval of the applications, the *Regierungsbezirke* monitor the conduction of the programmes⁵¹⁰ (interview Sparding).

Through the distribution of ERDF, local actors have established strong links to the NRW government since the early 1990s, when the *Land* promoted sub-regional development concepts. In particular, cities in the Ruhr area, such as Essen, Dortmund and Hagen, have acquired significant resources under Objective 2 status⁵¹¹. Between 1989 and 2006, the Ruhr area together with the smaller territories of Heinsberg and Aachen, have been the only designated areas within NRW that received EU funding under Objective 2. In order to support structural change through the build-up of infrastructure and technological and business innovation within these areas, they received €1.622 billion from the ERDF.

⁵⁰⁸ Sometimes in collaboration with actors from the private sector.

⁵⁰⁹ Arnsberg, Cologne, Detmold, Dusseldorf, Munster.

⁵¹⁰ The NRW Association of Counties lobbied for fixed sub-regional budgets, like in Lower Saxony, which a county could use autonomously for projects without consulting the NRW government. This plan, however, has been rejected (interview Röllenblech).

⁵¹¹ The city of Dortmund has realised infrastructural projects through the ERDF and as part of the Ruhr metropolitan region, such as the *Hörde Centre* (2007-2013, total costs €22.4 million) and the cycle paths *Achenbach* (2012-2013, estimated total costs €1.7 million) and the *Gartenradweg* (2011-2013, estimated total costs €14.2 million) (see *Metropol Ruhr*, 2010b).

Since 2007, the *Land* has replaced the principle of untargeted subsidies, in favour of competitive applications for innovative projects related to the EU's policy objectives and potentially available to any local authority within NRW. Funding of the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective is not exclusively distributed to geographically defined, structurally weak sub-regions, but given to innovative projects that meet the EU's and NRW's economic priorities⁵¹². For 2007-2013 another €1.26 billion from the ERDF has been made available to the whole of NRW (see MBWSV), whereby the Ruhr area and parts of the *Bergische Land* still enjoy higher priorities⁵¹³ (interviews Blania; Irle; Quaschnik; Verhayen; Wolf).

As Table 6.9 shows, the city of Cologne has been the most active contender for ERDF money in NRW, the *Land* has opened the access to its Objective 2 means⁵¹⁴. Dortmund has forwarded the second most applications after Cologne, whilst Essen belongs to the six most active authorities. Until 2006, the structurally weaker parts of Hagen received the privileged funding opportunities of Objective 2 areas. Hagen has also been active in allocating financial support for Objective 3 projects (Blania, 2006: 289-290). In total Hagen received €20,100,453 EU funding for 2000-2006⁵¹⁵ and has been granted €1,907,342.24 between 2007-2008⁵¹⁶. Iserlohn had not been eligible for Objective 2 funding before 2007, when applications were open to the whole of NRW (*Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2008).

⁵¹² Since 2005, Hagen has been particularly active in the *Wisnet* knowledge network bringing together the city of Hagen, the Ennep-Ruhr county, private businesses, research institutes and universities. *Wisnet* has recently launched another the *Innoprofit* programme another EU funded project to support small and medium-sized businesses in the establishment of innovative and knowledge-based management. The city of Iserlohn acquired €9.1 million EU-funding for the project *Soziale Stadt* (Social City) from the federal and regional governments and from the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective (ERDF) (see *Stadt Iserlohn; Südwestfalen Regionale 13*, 2012). The county of Borken conducted the project *Grenzenlose Naturerlebnisse im Kreis Borken (Erlebnis.NRW)*, total costs €2.6 million) (Eckstein, 2011).

⁵¹³ Medium-sized local authorities with financial difficulties, such as Hagen, increasingly struggle to get the permission and assistance to conduct projects from the *Land*, and therefore have to look for local partners (interview Blania).

⁵¹⁴ Table 6.7 illustrates that Dortmund has been by far the most successful applicant in terms of approved projects and received funding (except for Cologne, which is about twice the size of Dortmund and put in the most applications). Whilst the three rural counties have received less funding than the two cities of the Ruhr area and Cologne, it is surprising that Hagen, which is still within the Ruhr area, is far behind the achievements of the other municipalities. As Hagen's European officer (interview Blania) pointed out, a reason for this is Hagen's budgetary deficit preventing the provision of co-financing. Since the most indigent localities struggle to conduct projects because they cannot match the bids, the initial idea of the cohesion policy has been eroded.

⁵¹⁵ Matched with €8997,994 by the *Land* and €4,767,674 by the *Bund*.

⁵¹⁶ Matched with €1,162,144.60 by the *Land* and €434,933.41 by the *Bund*.

Table 6.9: List of approved projects for county-exempted cities and counties in the first round of the Objective 2 competition in NRW for 2007-2013

List of approved projects of the Objective 2 competition in NRW

Local authority	Applications	Under consideration	Approved projects	Funding from the EU and the Land (€)
City of Dortmund	140	44	33	20.104.564
City of Cologne	173	36	13	19.144.500
City of Essen	71	11	6	8.529.563
<i>Märkischer Kreis</i> (Iserlohn's county)	31	10	6	5.850.748
County of Borken	25	9	9	2.715.604
County of Steinfurt	27	10	4	1.908.199
City of Hagen	9	3	2	376.148

Source: ZIEL2.NRW, 2009

With regard to ESF programmes, NRW's 16 regional agencies (*Regionalagenturen*) were set up by the NRW government to consult and initiate the implementation of projects. The regional agencies are essential for the delivery of ESF programmes, as they transpose the objectives of the EU's social and employment policies into the subsequent operational programmes of the NRW government and finally into individual projects at the local level (interview Thetard; Blania, 2006: 290; Wolf, 2006: 261).

Although the NRW government has the final say over the delivery of ERDF and ESF programmes, it also promotes and supports the conduct of related projects beyond the Structural Funds where the *Land* is not the managing authority⁵¹⁷ (interview Waiz). The current Social Democratic-Green coalition committed itself to reform the funding system of NRW by improving the involvement of municipalities (*Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2010). The funding arrangements in NRW offer a form of 'indirect fusion' of local government as an executive partner of regional government. Through the relationship around the Structural Funds both levels developed cooperative patterns around wider policy issues.

In contrast to the formalised funding arrangements, interaction between regional and local actors on European policy issues is subject to informal rather than to institutionalised arrangements, and represents a strong fusion dynamic within and beyond the hierarchical

⁵¹⁷ The state chancellery adopted a number of measures to gather information about various European funding schemes for Structural Funds as well as for direct programmes. For example, workshops and brochures relevant for municipalities about European Action Programmes for 2007-2013 (*Minister für Bundes- und Europaangelegenheiten*, 2006), rural development (*Landesregierung Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2007a) and the 7th Research Framework Programme (*Landesregierung Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2007b).

government structures of NRW. Since *de jure* municipalities do not represent an autonomous level of government in their own right, regional and local actors interact on a constitutional basis. It is less the structural hierarchy between both levels and more the shared belief that cooperation leads to an effective engagement in European policies beneficial for the whole of NRW⁵¹⁸. As regional and local interests on European issues overlap widely (interview Jostmeister), pooling positions from both levels ensures coherent mobilisation (interview von Lennep).

Since the *Land* represents its municipalities *vis-à-vis* higher levels of government, it also acts on behalf of the local level within the formal negotiations about changes in the European treaties⁵¹⁹ (interviews Waiz; Wirth). But the NRW government does not only act on behalf of its municipalities, it also fosters European engagement within local authorities significantly, and encourages cooperative modes of governance and bottom-up mobilisation rather than top-down implementation of European policies. As Steinfurt's European officer (interview Röllenblech) puts it: 'our government of the *Land* contributes to a great share that the theme Europe and municipalities advances. That is a form of appreciation of municipalities. At the *Land* level, one does not want to walk over the municipalities. This is a bottom-up principle, which is sought to be implemented here, at least partially.'

The Team for Europe and International Affairs of the state chancellery is the most important actor for indirect vertical action within the NRW government, since it defines European policy priorities by analysing the policy agenda of the Commission, by coordinating different political resorts of the NRW government, and by considering municipal interests (which involves a strong horizontal dimension⁵²⁰). Informal contacts or briefings on selected issues between regional and local actors are part of an ongoing

⁵¹⁸ Iserlohn's European officer (interview Quaschnik) states that instead of directly lobbying at the European level, they would forward their position to the NRW Federation of Towns and Municipalities and the Association of Towns, which are increasingly successful in getting heard by the NRW government, or to the relevant minister.

⁵¹⁹ Prior to the failed Constitutional Treaty, there was a mutual exchange of information and the municipal associations forwarded their positions. A telling example of successful interest promotion of the NRW government on behalf of its municipalities refers to Article 14 TFEU, which provides the Council and the EP with a general competence to establish principles and set conditions for services of general economic interest. During the Constitutional Convention, the NRW Brussels representation was able to mitigate the treaty's provision through informal contacts with European officials and with the help of other *Länder* and member states, such as Austria (interviews Waiz; Wirth). Additionally, the protocol on subsidiarity of the Lisbon Treaty also foresees a legal control mechanism for subnational government. However, as local actors currently do not have the capacity to engage with their national and regional governments, they rely on the *Land* (or the *Bund*) to protect their interests (interview Wolf). Considering the time pressures of European legal initiatives, formal involvement in such procedures are unlikely (Münch, 2006a: 121).

⁵²⁰ The interaction between regional and local actors in NRW shows that vertical indirect and horizontal actions are strongly interlinked, and their analytical separation does not reflect the practical realities.

exchange on European issues, particularly in relation to cohesion policy. In this respect, the NRW government presents itself as an example of inclusive and pioneering cooperation with local government within the EU's multilevel compound (interviews Irle; Quaschnik; Waiz; Wolf).

There are semi-formal mechanisms in place to guarantee coherence between local and regional priorities on EU policies. Most significant is the regular 'meeting of European officers' organised by the state chancellery⁵²¹. Since 2005, the Minister for Federal affairs, European and Media⁵²² has invited European officers from various local authorities twice a year to a joint forum, in which the secretary of state informs and discusses issues, such as the future of the cohesion policy or Europe 2020⁵²³. The meeting is more than a top-down arrangement since it is open to input from the municipal participants who described the initiative as an exemplary, valuable exchange through which the NRW government realises the potential of local actors' expertise in the field (interviews Blania; Irle; Leitermann; von Lennep; Waiz; Wolf).⁵²⁴

The coalition agreements of 2010 and 2012 illustrate the political intention to include municipalities in European politics and to enhance further the cooperation between both levels. The Social Democratic-Green government (as well as the former Christian Democratic-Liberal coalition) promotes: the continuation and extension of vertical activities on behalf of municipalities by improving partnership and access for European funding schemes; European competencies within local administrations; and protection of subsidiarity and the right to local self-government, especially with respect to the delivery of services of general economic interest (*Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2010). So far, these commitments have led to the development of a certification of 'Europe-active municipalities in NRW' that are intended to encourage local authorities to participate in European programmes, consultation procedures and policy-making processes (see 6.4.3) (interviews Irle; Ricken; Röllenblech; Thetard; Wolf; also MBME, 2013b). The

⁵²¹ Hagen's European officer played a significant role in the initiation of the meetings, as she already stimulated mutual exchange between the *Land* and local actors in 1999, and she provided the underlying list of European officers to the state chancellery (interview Blania).

⁵²² Former Minister for Federal and European Affairs. The minister is located within the state chancellery.

⁵²³ Previous attempts to consult local actors formally in this process have proved to be too complex and impracticable; especially when 'the going gets rough' within the negotiation between different government resorts (interview Waiz).

⁵²⁴ Further initiatives include two events hosted by the state chancellery between 2005 and 2010, in which best-practice of European engagement of local authorities has been exchanged; within NRW and as well as with municipalities in Belgium and the Netherlands (interview Waiz); and a collected volume by the former Minister for Federal and European Affairs in cooperation with the NRW municipal associations, in which regional and local politicians and civil servants contribute to an empirical study about services of general interest (Krautscheid, 2009).

certification not only demonstrates the outstanding engagement of local authorities in NRW, but also shows that the NRW government is a strong promoter of such engagement with the EU. In March 2013, the certification was awarded for the first time. Amongst the 25 winning municipalities are Essen, Steinfurt, Cologne, Hagen and Iserlohn. The city of Essen obtained a special award for its comprehensive and innovative training activities, and Cologne won the prize for best networking and interest promotion (*Staatskanzlei des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2013).

With regard to the interaction between local and regional levels on European policies, it is fair to speak of an intra-regional fusion process directed and triggered by EU politics and policies. Even though direct fusion dynamics are weaker at the local level, on some issues, local actors use a combination of cooperative and bypassing paradiplomatic tactics to exert influence⁵²⁵. With regard to the cohesion policy 2014-2020, for example, the NRW government coordinates preferences with local actors, but it also encourages them to activate their transnational networks, such as EUROCITIES, as an effective means on their joint behalf (interview Waiz). The idea of interacting at multiple levels to promote policy preferences meets the assumption of fusing governance arenas (MLG type II) embedded in hierarchical territorial jurisdictions (MLG type I).

Horizontal action of local government in NRW

Horizontal action is a priority for about half of the local authorities in NRW. Whilst only about 17 per cent of county-constituent municipalities, about 65 per cent of county-exempted cities and counties participate in networks related to the EU (Landua, 2012). Municipalities in NRW⁵²⁶ have increasingly linked themselves with their counterparts in other member states through transnational associations. For smaller cities like Iserlohn, town-twinning can provide a basis from which to build transnational networks amongst politicians, which can be subsequently used for cooperation on European issues funded by specific programmes such as the Europe for Citizens initiative⁵²⁷ (interview Quaschnik). Some administrations also exchange personnel with their partners in other member states in order to train them and gain insights into the practice of other local governments.

⁵²⁵ Whilst for example the operational programmes are generated by the *Länder*, Cologne is not only pushing for the implementation of partnership and urban preferences within the Objective 2 programmes, but at the European level by acting through EUROCITIES (interviews Granitzka; Wolf).

⁵²⁶ This can even be witnessed within smaller well-connected units (interview Wirth).

⁵²⁷ In 2007, Iserlohn participated in a conference with its partner municipalities and their partners, which in total made over 120 participants from 17 different authorities and 12 different states. This has led to subsequent projects with those partners, for example, in the fields of gender equality, youth and social issues. A current initiative seeks to exchange experience of social inclusion of people with disabilities.

Transnational horizontal action is an important part of the European engagement of local authorities, and is fostered by the Commission, the EP and the CoR in the context of innovative practice promotion and policy delivery through joint projects and programmes.

Various networks in NRW foster European engagement across local authorities and offer a more comprehensive perspective on local government in NRW than would individual actions of major cities⁵²⁸. The most significant platform to engage horizontally with local actors from the whole *Land* is the meeting of European officers organised by the state chancellery. In the semi-formal meetings, local actors can gather relevant information and positions of the NRW government on European topics, and can share opinions and information⁵²⁹ with representatives from the *Land*, as well as with other local officers⁵³⁰ (interviews Eckstein; Röellenblech; Thetard). Horizontal strategies are also fostered by the certification of ‘Europe-active municipalities in NRW’ (see 6.4.3).

The NRW working group of European officers (*EU Werkstatt NRW Kommunen*) provides another forum through which an exclusive selection of local actors in NRW exchanges, articulates and coordinates common positions towards EU policies⁵³¹. The main activity of the *EU Werkstatt* involves a horizontal dimension in order to ensure coherence in vertical mobilisation and to avoid conflicts between urban and rural interests in NRW. The forum also seeks to promote their positions across NRW authorities and actors. Positions are not official documents, as members have no mandate and cannot speak for their authorities without approval. The *EU Werkstatt* has gained a wide attention from relevant actors from the NRW government and MEPs, and involves also bottom-up mobilisation at different levels⁵³² (interviews Röellenblech; Thetard; also Fiedler, 2006: 399).

⁵²⁸ Cologne’s European officer (interview Wolf) observes in NRW ‘that a partner-like network of cooperation is emerging. So far, I see it quite confident and positive, whilst at the same time we are constantly arguing and fighting with each other.’

⁵²⁹ Hagen’s European officer (interview Blania) states: ‘political networking takes place and in fact is a cooperation. They have understood that it makes sense to interchange and to look how we can shape things together for all those who live in NRW. It is exemplary what is happening here.’

⁵³⁰ The meeting takes place twice a year and includes a variety of local actors from the municipal associations, county-exempted and major county-cities, counties and regional associations. County-constituent municipalities are excluded from the meeting, even though some smaller authorities are also very active in European affairs (interview Quaschnik).

⁵³¹ In 2005, the forum emerged as an informal, exclusive working group as the NRW out of the German section of the CEMR, and it was only open to actors from the major cities in NRW. Over time, the *EU Werkstatt* has adopted a formal character with its own statute, and has included other pro-active actors from counties and other municipalities. Membership in the forum is not based on local authorities, but on individuals who have to be invited and accepted by unanimity vote.

⁵³² Since 2010, Steinfurt’s European officer is the so-called *Kümmerer* (care-taker) of the forum. Among the 13 members are actors from the cities of Aachen, Bonn, Cologne, Dortmund, Duisburg, Essen, Krefeld, Munster, Wuppertal, the sub-region Cologne/Bonn and the counties of Rhine-Neuss and Steinfurt.

The working group and the meetings of European officers ensure a strong coherence of actions and positions, and illustrate that local authorities do not only show engagement through the regional level but also an incentive and potential to play a greater role in European governance.

Despite the strong regional structures of the *Land*, the NRW government has also introduced mechanism for enhancing sub-regional cooperation (state-regionalism) to deliver EU programmes (Euro-regionalism). Some localities, such as South Westphalia, and city regions have also developed horizontal links (regio-regionalism) featuring a strong European dynamic (Euro-regionalism). The development of sub-regional arrangements on European issues in NRW is a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes. In 2004, the NRW government introduced the regional agencies, which are part of the regional ESF programme supporting sub-regional cooperation and networks in particular with regard to joint projects (Wolf, 2006: 261; see *Ministerium für Arbeit, Integration und Soziales des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*). Programmes, such as the NRW ESF or LEADER schemes, allow smaller authorities to link themselves as part of a sub-region in order to promote sustainable development and to pool resources (interview Verheyen).⁵³³ The case of Steinfurt (see 6.5.4) will further outline the role of the *Euregios* for horizontal action.

A particularly interesting case of sub-regional cooperation fostered by the *Land* is NRW's *Regionale* programme, through which sub-regions are encouraged to cooperate and build common capacities. On a three-year rota, the *Regionale* programme supports the development of one sub-region including its ability to acquire Objective 2 funding⁵³⁴ (*Regionale*, 2011). For purposes of sub-regional coherence, larger cities have established joint associations which are not exclusively linked to EU policies but are important for coordinating the allocation of funding. Examples are the *Metropole Ruhr* and the *Regionalverband Ruhr*, as well as the Region Cologne-Bonn which established the COMPASS consulting agency for ERDF programmes and a working group on Europe (Wolf, 2006: 258-259; also *Region Köln-Bonn*, 2008).

⁵³³ The promotion of Euroregions and INTERREG-programmes has also been included in the priorities of the coalition agreement from 2010 (*Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2010).

⁵³⁴ In 2007, the counties *Märkischer Kreis*, *Olpe*, *Siegen-Wittgenstein*, *Soest* and the *Hochsauerlandkreis* merged to form South Westphalia, as the 'youngest region' in Germany, and were selected by the *Land* to conduct the *Regionale 2013* programme (*Südwestfalen Regionale 2013, 2012*). Together with other local authorities of South Westphalia, Iserlohn has initialised a series of conferences funded by the ERDF in order to stimulate transnational exchange of good practice amongst local authorities in the sub-region and their international partners (interview Quaschnik).

6.5.3 Action of Essen

Direct vertical action of Essen

The city of Essen has built direct links with EU actors. For the most part, direct vertical action depends on the European officer and her interaction within municipal networks on transnational, regional and sub-regional basis. There are other officers and some Europe-orientated departments which occasionally forward positions on certain policy issues through specific networks, but structured ways of direct engagement are still evolving (interview Thetard).

The city of Essen has been active in the allocation of funding through direct schemes, such as EU action programmes in the fields of culture, youth or Europe for citizens, and INTERREG B programmes⁵³⁵, which provide opportunities for interaction with Commission officials. The most important part of the city's bottom-up mobilisation, is to ensure that in the future the city will be able to access further Objective 2 resources of the ERDF.⁵³⁶ Therefore, Essen approaches the Commission and MEPs, and participates in consultation procedures in order to promote its concerns at the European level. Its memberships in the regional association of the Ruhr area (*Regionalverband Ruhr*)⁵³⁷, the forum of European officers (*EU Werkstatt NRW Kommunen*) and the German section of the CEMR⁵³⁸ are useful to establish contact and speak for a wider range of municipalities. The local actors of the city's European network regularly cooperate with their local MEP Jens Geier⁵³⁹. Through him, Essen accesses exclusive information and in return feeds back local concerns around the facilitated procedures for access to the Structural Funds (interview Thetard).

The city council and administration have conducted their vertical activities and intended to extend them, but rather than confirming a fusion of local government, the case of Essen can be compared to an intermediary group lobbying for its interests. The added quality of

⁵³⁵ Examples for INTERREG IV projects include: MANAGE+ (2008-2013, EU funds €3,097,491, the lead partner is the regional agency *Regionalverband Ruhr*), other projects are not directly conducted by the city of Essen, but by public or private organisations, such as the University of Duisburg and Essen or the *Lippeverband*.

⁵³⁶ Since the 'new' *Länder* are expected to lose their Objective 1 status, Essen seeks to ensure that its own financial means of the ERDF will not be reduced in favour of the former GDR states.

⁵³⁷ Essen participated in a joint position of the Ruhr metropolis on the 5th Report on Economic and Social Cohesion in 2010 in which they promote more regional flexibility, bottom-up involvement and an urban dimension in the delivery of ERDF and ESF programmes (Metropoleruhr, 2011).

⁵³⁸ Essen is not a member of EUROCITIES but evaluating the benefits of membership.

⁵³⁹ MEP Jens Geier became the first MEP from Essen in 2009.

municipal integration is found in the top-down impact and indirect vertical action through the NRW government.

Indirect vertical action of Essen

As part of the Regional Association for the Ruhr area (*Regionalverband Ruhr*), Essen has a long history of allocating funding under Objective 2 in order to foster structural change⁵⁴⁰. Though in 2007 the whole of NRW became eligible for ERDF programmes, one of NRW's three ERDF objectives (€381 million) was designated for Urban and Regional Development in particularly burdened cities (see MBWSV). Essen has been able to maintain considerable funding for a large number of infrastructural projects⁵⁴¹, recreational areas⁵⁴², cycle and walking paths⁵⁴³, as well as cultural and touristic attractions⁵⁴⁴ (*Metropol Ruhr*, 2010a).

As Table 6.9 shows even though Essen and Dortmund have similar population sizes, in the first round of the NRW Objective 2 competition, the former only submitted half the number of applications and received less than half the amount of money than Dortmund obtained. In terms of considered and approved projects, this ratio is worse for Essen – which indicates that other authorities are more active towards ERDF programmes. In addition to ERDF means for urban development, Essen has also acquired projects under the NRW competitions for Strengthening Businesses and an Innovative and Knowledge-based Economy⁵⁴⁵; and cooperates with the regional agencies to conduct projects of the NRW's ESF programmes (interview Thetard).

⁵⁴⁰ This also applies for Dortmund, for example with regard to the foundations of the Technology Parc in 1985 and the Technical University in 1968. Dortmund also has allocated funding from NRW's urban development programme of the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective (see MBWSV). With €227,884,408 between 2000-2006 and €30,387,228.36 for 2007-2008 Dortmund received by far the most financial support from EU funding in NRW. During these periods Essen only allocated €76,543,513 (2000-2006) and €17,867,910.97 (2007-2008) (*Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2008).

⁵⁴¹ For example, *Social City Altendorf* and *Katernberg*; the urban restructuring areas *Bochold/Altendorf-North*, the *Krupp-Park*, the *Niederfeld* and the *Bahndamm Rheinische Bahn* (2007-2015, total costs €20.75 million); and intentionally the part of town *Altenessen-South/Northquarter* (2008-2013, required funding €12.105 million, application in progress).

⁵⁴² *Halde Zollverein* (2012-2013, estimated total costs €1.5 million) and the *Zollvereinpark*.

⁵⁴³ *Zollverein to Schurenbachhalde (Nordsternweg)* (2009-2011, estimated total costs €3.6 million), *Rommelhöller Gleis* (2012-2012, estimated total costs €0.9 million) and *Magistrale Essen-Bottrop* (2012-2015, estimated total costs €7.5 million).

⁵⁴⁴ For example, the visitor centre for industrial culture *Ruhr* (2007-2008, total costs €3.73 million), the historical cinema *Glückhaufhauskino* (2007-2009, funded with €1.150 million); the artist cooperative *Unperfekthaus*; *Speaker's Corner* (€73.500) and *Kultur Parcour* (€41.234), both as part of the competition *Standortinnenstadt.NRW* 2009-2010; and various other projects as part of the European City of Culture programme in the Ruhr area 2010.

⁵⁴⁵ For a list of all EU funded projects (*Stadt Essen*, 2012)

Indirect vertical action of Essen relates mostly to acquisition of funding, in particular to its eligibility to receive prioritised funding under the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective (NRW Objective 2)⁵⁴⁶. Nonetheless, Essen's European engagement illustrates the significance of the regional level for fusion dynamics within multilevel arrangements.

Essen is strongly linked with various regional actors and engages in EU policies beyond the obligatory cooperation with the NRW government to access ERDF and ESF funding. In terms of policy promotion and coordination, the European officer of Essen maintains regular contacts to the departments within the state chancellery responsible for Europe and municipalities, the Ministry for Federal Affairs, Europe and Media, the NRW Brussels representation, the Objective 2 secretary and ZENIT (Centre for Innovation and Technique in NRW). Essen uses the meeting of European officers in the state chancellery and the forum of European officers (*EU Werkstatt NRW Kommunen*) to promote its interest at the regional level. In March 2013, Essen was rewarded as a 'Europe-active municipality' by the NRW government (*Staatskanzlei des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2013).

Even though the NRW government is a major reference for Essen's European engagement, the city deploys a mix of cooperative and bypassing strategies to secure the future of privileged funding. Essen's European officer (interview Thetard) states: 'It is really integrated part of European engagement that one works well across those levels, that one also knows each other personally and that one does things together.' This is not to claim that the city is a major player on the European stage, but rather that Essen's direct and indirect activities around EU policies indicate its role in a wider system of fused governance.

Horizontal action of Essen

Essen's external cooperation with other European actors is only at its early stages. Essen has not been involved in transnational projects, but is looking for potential partners in order to share best-practice⁵⁴⁷. The city is more horizontally active on a regional and sub-regional basis. Apart from horizontal cooperation through the meeting of European officers in the state chancellery and the working group of European officers, the regional

⁵⁴⁶ This is important, as the 'new' *Länder* will lose their Convergence status (former Objective 1) and may either fall into the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective or an in-between status.

⁵⁴⁷ Intended partnerships include Pécs in Hungary; and their partner cities Grenoble (France) and Tampere (Finland) with which Essen submitted a failed application (interview Thetard).

association of the Ruhr area (*Regionalverband Ruhr*⁵⁴⁸) is an important arrangement for Essen. Within the *Regionalverband Ruhr*, county and city councils decide annually about common objectives for the development of the metropolitan region, and they generate coherent concepts to allocate and distribute funding across the cities within the sub-region (see *Metropoleruhr*).

Essen obtained a special award for its comprehensive and innovative training activities from the NRW government in March 2013 (*Staatskanzlei des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2013). A comprehensive approach to the extended city administration ensures that European engagement is not only subject to a small number of officers but is incorporated across different departments. Intra-municipal coordination includes the generation of guidelines for the acquisition of funding for 2007-2013 (see *Stadt Essen*) and the conduct of seminars for the development of European expertise. Essen also established a *Europarunde* (see 6.4.4) in which appointed officers from each administrative department, the economic development agency, the university and the regional agency meet every two months to coordinate European themes. The internal network is part of a wider, comprehensive strategy to improve European competencies within the administration (*Stadt Essen*, 2013) (interview Thetard). This engagement provides the basis for effective vertical action.

6.5.4 Action of Steinfurt

Direct vertical action of Steinfurt

The county of Steinfurt is an exceptionally active case of a rural county in NRW and Germany. A reason for this is the strong Europeanisation and active support of the county political leadership that have led to exceptional vertical activities and Steinfurt's physical presence in Brussels⁵⁴⁹. Though the main focus of direct vertical activities is on financial issues and regional and cohesion policy, the county has a comparatively wide field of action and strategies for promoting local interests.

⁵⁴⁸ The regional agency is not considered for institutional fusion processes, as it only indirectly deals with European policies.

⁵⁴⁹ As Steinfurt's European officer (interview Röllenblech) suggests: 'we are surely blessed that Mr. Kubendorff as our chief executive is quite receptive to it. This is why in the county of Steinfurt we are far ahead with respect to our European work. One has to take the politics on board, that means in some cases within municipalities also the county and city council members. Because without politics and administration one can hardly implement anything.'

EU programmes that trigger European engagement within Steinfurt include INTERREG A which provides a considerable amount of funding, as the county is part of the *Euregio* border region⁵⁵⁰ (see 4.7.2 and 6.4.3); and framework and action programmes in the fields of environment, town-twinning and youth⁵⁵¹ (interview Röllenblech).

Steinfurt's European engagement does not only involve the allocation of funding but also policy work. The European officer was representing Steinfurt, as well as other NRW counties, in Brussels for four years⁵⁵². Steinfurt could maintain personal contacts with the Commission and MEPs, and was strongly involved in lobbying campaigns of local governments⁵⁵³. After this position was taken over by the county of Lippe in 2010, interaction with European actors has become more difficult and has produced less written correspondence. Nevertheless, Steinfurt engages with MEPs⁵⁵⁴, as well as with officers from the Commission, and participates in public consultation procedures (interview Röllenblech). Three examples illustrate how Steinfurt has applied multi-faceted lobbying in order to exert influence on EU policies:

First, state subsidies for coal mining represent an interesting example of how Steinfurt lobbied for an extension of the legal time frames. Initially the subsidy payments were meant to terminate in 2010 but the German government opted for a continuation until 2018. The Commission suggested a compromise date, which would have affected the Ruhr and other areas in NRW significantly. It was Steinfurt that led the discussion and became most active by sending a joint position with actors from the Ruhr area to national, regional and European parliamentarians and to various officials and Commissioners from the DGs for Energy, Competition, Environment and Financial Programming and Budget. Their

⁵⁵⁰ Examples for INTERREG IV A projects in which Steinfurt has participated include: *Energiequell Wallhecke* (2009-2013, total expected costs €861,983, as lead partner), *Energielnd Biores* (2009-2012, EU funds €833,337), *EUREGIO bewegt* (2010-2012, total costs €50,300, *Wohnen im Wandel* (2009-2012, total expected costs €2,076,270) (see <http://www.deutschland-nederland.eu/projekt-datenbank>), *Food Future* (2010-2014, EU funds €4,938,459) (INTERREG *Deutschland – Nederland*, 2010).

⁵⁵¹ For example, Youth in Action (2010-2013).

⁵⁵² Because the voice of a single county would not be heard at the European level, Steinfurt positioned itself as part of the NRW representation in Brussels (interview Eckstein).

⁵⁵³ As part of the NRW Associations of Counties, Steinfurt was highly active in the debate about the Single Point of Contact, wherein different actors across the EU mobilised against the Directive on Services in the Internal Market (2006/123/EC) and achieved the change from the country of origin to the country of destination principle.

⁵⁵⁴ Two MEPs are particularly relevant for Steinfurt: MEP Markus Pieper represents not only the Munsterland but is also vice chairman of the Committee for Regional Development and spokesperson for regional policy of the CDU/CSU. MEP Sabine Verheyen was deputy member of the Committee on Regional Development between 2009-2011, and is now deputy member of the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection, as well as spokesperson for municipal issues of the CDU/CSU.

aggregated efforts were successful and resulted in an extended deadline for coal subsidies until 2018.

Secondly, Steinfurt has also been very active in ensuring the continuation of Objective 2 funding for the sub-region Munsterland, which is characterised by rural and wealthy socio-economic structures. In 2010, Steinfurt submitted a joint position paper from sub-regional actors to their MEP, Markus Pieper, who at that time was the vice chairperson of the REGI Committee⁵⁵⁵, and sent it also to all NRW MEPs and the relevant Commissioners (*Europe direct Steinfurt*, 2010).

Thirdly, in order to lobby for access to a significant share of ERDF and ESF means, Steinfurt has been able to promote its interests as part of the NRW Association of Counties with which it has addressed MEPs and delegates from DG Regio during the 11th *Brüsseler Gespräch zur Kommunalpolitik* (Brussels Talks of Municipal Politics) (Essling, Faber, Röllenblech & Schafmeister, 2011; *Europe direct Steinfurt*, 2010). The county also participated in the consultation procedure for the 5th Report on Economic and Social Cohesion (see European Commission - Regional Policy).⁵⁵⁶

Overall, Steinfurt is continuously aware of relevant EU policies and takes action to influence them according to the county's preferences. This indicates a strong fusion dynamic for a rural county.

Indirect vertical action of Steinfurt

As for most local authorities in NRW, the 2007 ERDF reforms in NRW play an important role for Steinfurt's indirect vertical action, as they allowed the county to access significantly larger sums of funding than before. Steinfurt has been successful in allocating

⁵⁵⁵ MEP Pieper was very receptive to their concerns (Eckstein, 2011).

⁵⁵⁶ The demands of the 11th Brussels Talks and the objectives of the consultation procedure with respect to rural, non-agrarian areas of NRW were: Structural policy must continue to benefit all regions in Europe. Structural policy shall not become sort of catch-all for other policies by being only oriented to some sectors. Local authorities must be more involved in the cohesion policy. It is in principle right to try to further develop growth driving forces and well developed regions. However, it is wrong to locate these growth driving forces exclusively in the urban areas. As a matter of fact, the rural and non-agrarian regions on North Rhine-Westphalia, outside the urban centres, possess a huge future-oriented potential marked by SMEs, innovation and transfer of knowledge and technology. It is positive that the Commission advocates a bottom-up approach. It is exactly why the *Landkreistag* NRW points out the necessity to relocate as many decision competences as possible to a decentralised level... (Essling, Faber, Röllenblech & Schafmeister, 2011)

a number of projects for the county's strategy to be energy self-sufficient by 2050⁵⁵⁷ (Essling, Faber, Röllenblech & Schafmeister, 2011; also *Fachhochschule Münster*, 2012), for broadband activities⁵⁵⁸ and for touristic, culture and leisure activities⁵⁵⁹ (MWME, 2010b).

In comparison to the counties *Märkische Kreis* and Borken (see Table 6.9), in the first round of NRW's Objective 2 competition, Steinfurt has applied for almost the same number of projects, but has received considerably less funding and had only about half the projects approved as its neighbouring county Borken. Steinfurt also acquires means from the NRW ESF programme such as for the project *Betriebsplus Familie*, the FAMM network⁵⁶⁰ and from the LEADER programme of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development which is integrated within the NRW programme for rural spaces 2007-2013.⁵⁶¹

The case of Steinfurt illustrates that fusion processes are hardly subject to formal interaction amongst actors from multiple levels. Instead, informal, flexible links to the NRW government cover the most important EU-related activities. Like Essen, Steinfurt engages with a variety of actors and networks for the purpose of policy promotion including: the meeting of European officers; the departments within state chancellery responsible for Europe and municipalities; the NRW Brussels representation; and the *EU Werkstatt NRW Kommunen* of which Steinfurt's European officer has been regarded as *Kümmerer* (care-taker) since 2010. Steinfurt was rewarded as a 'Europe-active municipality' by the NRW government which indicates the county's strong European engagement, as well as its intention to develop a more coherent approach to EU-related activities (*Kreis Steinfurt – der Landrat*, 2012; *Staatskanzlei des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen*, 2013).

Steinfurt has been strongly engaged in cohesion policy. Working via the county's presence in Brussels, it allied with actors from other member states to achieve the introduction of

⁵⁵⁷ *Energie.ST - energieautark 2050* (Objective 3 competition, *Energie.NRW*, 2008-2012, €176,492), (*Energie.NRW*, 2008-2012, €255,758, in cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences Münster), (*Energie.NRW*, 2008-2012, €119,400, in cooperation with the Westphalian Wilhelms-University Münster).

⁵⁵⁸ *Machbarkeitsstudie 'Breitband'* (€35,700, in cooperation with the counties of Borken and Coesfeld).

⁵⁵⁹ *Naturerlebnis: Mit dem Fahrrad ins Moor - Raderlebnisweg im Emsdettener Venn* (*Erlebnis.NRW*, €293,500); *Naturerlebnis: Das Recker Moor - erkennen – erleben* (*Erlebnis.NRW*, €41,750, in cooperation with *Biologische Station Kreis Steinfurt e.V.*).

⁵⁶⁰ Network Family, Employment, Medium Sized Sector in the Munsterland through which the four counties of the sub-region pursue a local policy of sustainable improvement of compatibility of family and working life in rural areas (Essling, Faber, Röllenblech and Schafmeister, 2011).

⁵⁶¹ The same applies for the neighbouring county of Borken (Eckstein, 2011).

Objective 2 funding for rural areas for the first time for 2007-2013. For the programming period post 2013, the county lobbies the NRW government in order to ensure that financial aid does not only go to the Ruhr area, but also to wealthier, rural sub-regions such as the Munsterland. In 2010, together with other actors within the Munsterland, Steinfurt was able to debate the future of the Structural Funds with the NRW Minister for European affairs during a panel discussion⁵⁶² (WEST, 2011; *Europe direct Steinfurt*, 2010). Actors from Steinfurt forwarded a position paper to the European, federal and regional parliamentarians within the sub-region to promote the continuation of the current distribution of funding in order to guarantee a successful delivery of European policies. The issue was also forwarded through the NRW Association of Towns at the 11th *Brüsseler Gespräche zur Kommunalpolitik* (Brussels Talks of Municipal Politics) (Essling, Faber, Röllenblech & Schafmeister, 2011; *Europe direct Steinfurt*, 2010).

Funding policies illustrate the variety of activities Steinfurt deploys to exert influence. It is not a formal fusion process of local government that makes their lobbying attempts effective, but the combination of direct and indirect vertical informal action, wherein the *Land* plays an important role and has a shared interest in implementing EU policies according to local preferences⁵⁶³. Overall, it is fair to speak of a fusion dynamic through the *Land* rather than a direct fusion of the county.

Horizontal action of of Steinfurt

Except for its membership in the *Euregio*, Steinfurt has not developed systematic horizontal activities on a regional or transnational basis. Transnational cooperation is not subject to a systematic approach in the context of networks, but rather is based on *ad-hoc* activities. For example, the Open Days of the CoR in Brussels provide a platform that Steinfurt uses to exchange knowledge and views on European themes and projects with other local and regional actors⁵⁶⁴ (interview Röllenblech).

⁵⁶² The Minister for Europe Angelica Schwall-Düren comes from the county of Steinfurt and supported the county's claims.

⁵⁶³ Steinfurt's European officer (interview Röllenblech) emphasises the need to address the same argument from different directions and argues that 'municipal European engagement should and must not be a opponent to the politics of the *Land* at the European level, but a complement; there should be a close coordination...If no agreement can be achieved at all, one has to consider whether to advance an opinion for the municipalities or not. But the *Land*, as I know it, especially NRW is receptive in this respect and they do not want bring a regulation into the world, with which the municipalities cannot live...The ability to act is given, but not institutionalised; but rather through the widely spread associations, organisations and direct contacts.'

⁵⁶⁴ In 2010, together with the county of Lippe, Steinfurt participated at the Open Days by organising a panel discussion on the topic 'Local Intermediate Authorities: Mobilising Competitive Territories'.

Within NRW, Steinfurt is coordinating its European engagement through the meetings and the working group of European officers. The most relevant horizontal process for Steinfurt is its cooperation within the sub-regions of the *Euregio* and the Munsterland. Though the *Euregio* (see 4.7.2 and 6.4.3) does not exclusively deal with EU affairs, it provides Steinfurt with more systematic arrangements for horizontal cooperation on policies and joint projects, usually under the INTERREG A programme⁵⁶⁵ (interviews Eckstein; Röllenblech; also Perkmann, 2005). Steinfurt is not only engaged in the *Euregio* cross-border region, but also within the Munsterland sub-region⁵⁶⁶ (interview Röllenblech; *Europe direct Steinfurt*, 2010).

Within the county administration, horizontal action depends on the European officer and is not based on a coherent approach even though actors seek to coordinate their European engagement effectively. Although Steinfurt has a coordinating function for its county-constituent municipalities with regard to European issues, the county only cooperates with its member authorities occasionally on specific projects by exchanging information and supporting of funding applications⁵⁶⁷ (interview Röllenblech).

6.6 Attitudes

The findings of the attitudes indicator are the basis for assessing whether the fusion approach is able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration. In order to explore whether local actors in Germany and NRW adopt a positive, balanced or negative value set towards EU membership, this indicator is based on the assumptions of pragmatic consideration of local actors as suggested by the micro-fusion perspective and applies three complementary concepts - performance fusion, political fusion and compound fusion (see 3.2.5).

Performance fusion is based on the assumption that actors adopt a performance-related mentality and support European integration if it delivers the desired policy outcomes. The sub-indicator looks at the constraints and benefits of EU membership for local government

⁵⁶⁵ The *Euregio* cross-border region is a municipal initiative amongst local authorities in NRW, Lower Saxony and the Netherlands. Through the *Euregio* council, local politicians and officers engage with their counterparts in the Netherlands.

⁵⁶⁶ Steinfurt's funding officer participates and promotes European funding policies in the conference of the economic development agencies within Munsterland (*Wirtschaftsförderungskonferenz Münsterland*).

⁵⁶⁷ As Steinfurt's European officer (interview Röllenblech) points out: 'I think we are most active, but nonetheless, the municipalities should themselves be aware that they should be active in this field.' Within the county administration there are no structured horizontal activities.

in Germany and NRW to assess the attitude of local actors towards the EU. This helps to draw an understanding of local actors' attitudes towards European policies and governance modalities.

Political fusion suggests that national policy-makers adopt a preference for the EU's political and institutional structures to develop in, along a third-way of integration between supranationality and intergovernmental control. Though most local actors are not expected to have articulated such a preference, some do adopt visions of integrative dynamics that account for a stronger involvement and a respect of local government. The constraints that further political integration potentially puts on local and regional autonomy may lead to a 'trade-off scenario' between stronger interference in local practice and the protection of local competences. In a 'United States of Europe', the constitutional guaranteed rights of local self-government might become watered down and adjusted to the majority of member states with less local autonomy (interview Wirth). In an alternative interpretation, however, further integration and subsidiarity are two sides of the same coin. Further integration may only work if regions and municipalities are provided with decision-making capacities and freedom to manoeuvre (interview Waiz). Such a scenario is compatible with the assumptions of the political perspective, since it describes a perspective between pooling and safeguarding local autonomy. Nonetheless, decisions on the macro-trajectories of integration are subject to national governments, and without major support from various member states, local actors will not be able to achieve a major upgrade of their influence within European multilevel governance.

The idea of compound fusion is based on actors' preference to engage in an inclusive system of governance. Compound fusion is a valuable concept for explaining why local and European actors do or do not cooperate. Compound fusion assesses local actors' perceptions of their access to European policy-making and whether they see bypassing as a promising option for bottom-up mobilisation.

All three concepts show an interlinked underlying attitude. Most local actors support the economic, integrative and financial advantages of European integration (performance fusion); some actors appreciate the interaction with the Commission of European programmes (compound fusion) but the majority strongly opposes the threat of European legislation to their autonomy of practice. As long as EU policies do not erode local self-government and subsidiarity and they provide local government with a privileged political

role and greater involvement in the delivery and making of these policies, local actors strongly support European integration (political fusion).

Table 6.10: Summary of the attitude indicator for the German case studies

Attitudes of the German case studies

Performance fusion	Main features	Scenario
Local actors in Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protective attitude towards EU legislation • Dislike of the impact on municipal practice 	Clustered fusion
Local actors in NRW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of the ‘macro-benefits’ of integration and of European funding • Euroscepticism within local administrations caused by constraining impact of EU law, threat to local self-government 	Clustered fusion
Essen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefiter of Objective 2 funding • Overall positive attitude • Compensating potential constraints by developing pro-active strategies 	Infusion
Steinfurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefiter of economic and political integration and funding schemes • Positive attitude amongst political leadership • Resisting towards EU legal impact at officer level 	Infusion
Political fusion		
Local actors in Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal umbrella associations, German section of CEMR and German EUROCITIES members as most important actors • Political preferences include subsidiarity and local self-government 	Clustered fusion for municipal associations Defusion for most local actors
Local actors in NRW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferences for subsidiarity and local self-government, greater involvement and effective multilevel partnership • Integration between pooling and safeguarding local sovereignty 	Clustered fusion major cities Defusion for smaller municipalities
Essen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No political preferences • Bypassing only on issues related to Structural Funds 	Defusion
Steinfurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally not engaged in macro-political preferences • Former chief executive was strongly engaged in the European Convention • Preferences include subsidiarity and local self-government 	Infusion for political leaders

Compound fusion		
Local actors in Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local actors use the flexible channels of access • Rather than appreciation of the EU's compound nature, discontent for not being privileged over other interest groups 	Defusion
Local actors in NRW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Except for DG Regio, lack of effective means to access and influence policy initiatives • Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020 fail to include cities • Prioritisation of local interests wanted • No strong preference for bypassing and the EU's compound policy arrangements 	Defusion
Essen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission is perceived as very accessible • Preference for combination of bypassing and cooperative paradiplomacy 	Clustered fusion
Steinfurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission is perceived as very accessible • Preference for combination of bypassing and cooperative paradiplomacy 	Clustered fusion

6.6.1 Attitudes of local actors in Germany

Performance fusion of local actors in Germany

Generally, local politicians and officers in Germany appreciate the macro-benefits of European integration and accept certain constraints of EU regulations. At the same time, they adopt a protective attitude against the impact of EU legislation. The EU's influence creates legal uncertainty within local administrations⁵⁶⁸ (interview Haarmann) and undermines established municipal practice, particularly in the fields of state aid, public procurement and public services. There is a dislike of the interference of EU legislation within their traditional administrative structures, and especially of the privatisation of public welfare⁵⁶⁹ (interviews Leitermann; Waiz, Wirth; also Krichel, 2008: 340-341).

Political fusion of local actors in Germany

It is fair to say that, unlike political elites at the national level, most local policy-makers in Germany do not engage with questions about more or less political integration. The German municipal umbrella associations, for example, have not generated a common

⁵⁶⁸ German authorities might be more cautious than their counterparts in other member states, because they do not always know how to implement and interpret legal terms, which do not exist in the German practice.

⁵⁶⁹ British, Swedish, Dutch and authorities from new member states are generally more open to the liberalisation/marketisation of public services.

position on the political future over the Union, because the views of their members are too diverse (interview Leitermann).

Local government preferences focus more about the protection of competences in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and local self-government. The ‘municipalophile’ provisions of the Lisbon Treaty have been a major political achievement for German local government. Regional and local bodies, such as the municipal umbrella associations, were persistently lobbying for the recognition of subsidiarity and the right to local self-government, as well as the right of action for the CoR⁵⁷⁰ (interviews Brockes; Leitermann; von Lennepe). The German section of the CEMR strongly promoted local self-government and subsidiarity in the run up to the Constitutional Treaty (Leitermann, 2006: 337). In their Cologne Declaration of 2002, the German EUROCITIES members raised claims to enshrine the right of local self-government in the Constitutional Treaty; to implement subsidiarity; to introduce consultation procedures for local representatives and to integrate the urban dimension into EU policies⁵⁷¹ (*Deutsche EUROCITIES-Städte*, 2002).

For the future development of the EU, various actors would like to see a stronger formal involvement of municipal input in the EU, particularly within the Commission, but also through the CoR (although most engaged local actors assume this to be likely or practicable) (interview Jostmeier).

Compound fusion of local actors in Germany

Although the implementation of the Structural Funds has fostered European engagement of local authorities, the *Länder* are the primary partners of the Commission, whilst local authorities are still not real stakeholders within the partnership arrangements. Nevertheless, the Commission has lost some of its ‘municipal blindness’ over the last decade and has started to consult local representatives frequently (Münch, 2006b: 361). Because the municipal umbrella associations have lobbied strongly for a greater involvement of the local level in the delivery of EU policies, the Commission, especially the DG Regio, has been sensitised towards developments at the local level. Local representatives from

⁵⁷⁰ Subsequent to the Lisbon Treaty, local actors are more concerned about ‘filling the whole thing with life’ than tackling new major political preferences.

⁵⁷¹ Although the umbrella organisations, the German members of the CEMR and EUROCITIES do not agree on a joint political position on the macro-developments of European integration, in the discussion in the run up to the Constitutional Treaty, they did agree on some principal claims as outlined (except for the focus on the urban dimension).

Germany have experienced a growing recognition within the Commission, and use the flexible channels of access, as suggested by compound fusion.

Not all local actors appreciate the EU's inclusive nature. They have a strong self-awareness and constitutional position in Germany that leads to an attitude characterised more by discontent that their voice is not privileged over other interest groups rather than by an appreciation of the EU's compound nature. Local actors view themselves as an interest group with a specific political quality that should be provided with privileged access to consultation procedures⁵⁷² (interview Leitermann; also Maennle, 2003). Municipal concerns do not belong to the core interests of national actors, and are therefore often dropped within negotiations between Council and EP (interview Haarmann).

Despite commitments of the Commission to provide the local actors with more influence in the design of its policies, municipal associations are still awaiting effective changes, such as those promoted by the White Paper on Multilevel Governance or the Lisbon Treaty (interviews Haarmann; Thorstenson). Compound fusion is not irrelevant for local government, but its assumptions are undermined by local actors' desire to obtain privileged access to EU policy-making.

6.6.2 Attitudes of local actors in NRW

Performance fusion of local actors in NRW

Despite the threat to local practice and autonomy, municipalities in NRW are generally very positive about the EU, and see the benefits of integration and the opportunities of European-wide networks (interview Waiz). The rationale to engage in a wider system of governance is based on the 'macro-benefits' of EU membership⁵⁷³, as well as on more direct advantages, such as the allocation of European funding as well as cross-border

⁵⁷² The Commission seems to regard the role of local government only as a means of communicating its policies to the citizens. MEPs seem to be more perceptive of the role of local government as an elected tier close to citizens than the Commission (interview Haarmann).

⁵⁷³ Macro-benefits include freedom, lasting peace, wealth, the Single Market, the Euro, environmental policies and so on. However, Iserlohn's European officer (interview Quaschnik) suggests that around 2007, when Germany held the Council Presidency and the Rome Treaty celebrated its 50th anniversary, local politicians and citizens were more enthusiastic than today in times of financial crisis.

cooperation⁵⁷⁴ (interviews Blania; Brockes; Eckstein; Granitzka; Irle; Quaschnik; von Lennep; Wolf).

Notwithstanding the benefits of European policies, local actors object to the constraining impact of EU regulations, which are often viewed as too detailed and undermining the autonomy of local practice and planning (interviews Brockes; Eckstein; Granitzka; Irle; von Lennep). European integration is often perceived as a threat to local self-government, and scepticism within local administrations towards the EU is high (interview Ricken).

The major resistance towards European interference is caused by the massive administrative burden and legal uncertainty of EU law⁵⁷⁵ (interviews Blania; Quaschnik). In fields such as public procurement⁵⁷⁶, there is a high level of discontent with the EU's legal initiatives, which are perceived as being completely insensitive towards local concerns⁵⁷⁷. Brussels' emphasis on details does not contribute to an 'enthusiasm about Europe' among local actors, but instead causes municipal Euro-scepticism⁵⁷⁸ (interview Waiz).

Despite the resistance towards EU interference in municipal practice, however, local actors in NRW have accepted the integration process and have learned to 'live with it'. Local policy-makers acknowledge the importance of the EU and their role as implementers of European policies and their proximity to the citizens (interview Wirth). Some actors are aware that central government, as a policy implementer and initiator, is partly responsible for the negative impact of EU legislation (but this may not reflect the majority of local actors).

The head of the Brussels office of the German Association of Cities (interview Leitermann) argues that local actors are often too focused on the German arrangements without considering the wider picture of integration. As Cologne's European officer

⁵⁷⁴ These are essential means of generating engagement, openness and understanding of European policies within local authorities.

⁵⁷⁵ Judgements of the Court of Justice have created more clarity on issues such as state aid, in-house service provision and inter-municipal cooperation.

⁵⁷⁶ After costly procurement procedures, municipalities often find out that their own municipal service providers is the cheapest and as capable as private providers. Local actors, therefore, do often not welcome of European regulations (interview Wirth).

⁵⁷⁷ Local actors have expressed statements, such as 'the people from Brussels should come and see what they're causing here'. The bureaucratic burden has been a concern in the implementation of Europe 2020.

⁵⁷⁸ There are strong concerns about the Commission's idea of a 'enabling municipality'. Though some fields such as public transport and social services have been excluded from these plans, the enabling municipality would mean a severe intervention into the municipal practice by surrendering the provision of public services to the private sector; whereby municipalities would lose know-how and local politicians influence (interview Waiz; Waiz & Alkan, 2006: 150-151).

(interview Wolf) puts it: ‘No one wants to be regulated, but at the same time you have to acknowledge that a system of different levels results in one level trying to regulate something which is not quite welcomed by the other level.’⁵⁷⁹ The question is whether the constraining impact of European legislation provokes an attitude that undermines or that fosters prospects for pro-active fusion dynamics.

Political fusion of local actors in NRW

For local politicians and officers of smaller authorities, constitutional issues such as the Lisbon Treaty are too abstract to be on the political agenda (interview Eckstein). Since NRW is the ‘*Land of cities*’, there are a number of major municipalities that develop positions on the development of the EU. Rather than finding a coherent political perspective on the future of the EU, preferences for further integration differ amongst those local politicians that deal actively with the EU. Whilst some of them, for example, tend to prefer a European federal state, others are satisfied with the current state of European integration (interview von Lennepe).

With regard to the Constitutional Treaty, the NRW EUROCITIES members articulated their preferences in the Cologne Declaration (interview Leitermann). Regional and local actors in NRW welcome the Lisbon Treaty as a step forward for local government within the multilevel system. However, not all regional and local actors in NRW believe that these will lead to an actual empowerment of local actors unless they push for it⁵⁸⁰ (interviews von Lennepe; Waiz; Wirth).

The call for greater involvement of local representatives in EU policy-making and the implementation of true partnerships through a systematic dialogue is based on the local actors’ self-understanding that they represent a democratically elected and a politically legitimised level of government. Some actors prefer pro-active strategies towards exerting

⁵⁷⁹ Borken’s European officer (interview Eckstein) shares this view and believes that instead of questioning the overall system it is the job of local officers to implement European policies in correspondence with their own municipal practice.

⁵⁸⁰ The implementation of the Lisbon Treaty will depend on how the Commission, the EP, the CoR and the Court of Justice regard and interpret the new provisions. For example, whilst local government in NRW would benefit from a stronger EP with its pro-municipal movements in the EP; not all actors in the Commission would respect the new role of local government. Legal experts in the Commission and the Court of Justice may treat the new provisions primarily as political declarations without enforcing them. At the same time, the CoR may be able to use subsidiarity as a leverage in negotiations, and the Court of Justice has increasingly acknowledged local concerns and in future cases may judge in favour of subsidiarity (interviews Eckstein; Quaschnik; Waiz; Wirth; Wolf).

influence at the European level, whilst others opt for more protective approaches of European engagement (interviews Blania; Eckstein; Irle; Quaschnik; Wolf).

Compound fusion of local actors in NRW

Among those local actors dealing with European affairs in NRW, there is little indication of a strong preference for the EU's compound policy arrangements. Local actors criticise the lack of effective means to access and to influence policy initiatives on the provision of public services, as well as the prioritisation of other interests⁵⁸¹ (interviews Blania; Quaschnik; Waiz; Wirth). The Commission has even been described as being ignorant towards local and regional self-government, which is best expressed by its idea of an 'enabling authority' ('*Gewährleistungskommune*') (interviews Waiz; Wirth). Instead of providing services itself, the enabling authority follows the English model of public service delivery and ensures that services are supplied by functional (school or hospital boards) rather than territorial (local councils) organisations (Hague & Harrop, 2007: 298).

Cologne's European officer (interview Wolf) notes the way the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020 failed to include cities in the designing process at the European level, as well as in the transformation into national programmes⁵⁸². Instead of having a multilevel compound both levels seem sometimes to be 'wide apart'. Rather than regarding the Commission as a 'good ally' for local government, local actors seek to protect their competences against its interference (interview von Lennep). With the exception of the DG Regio, compound fusion applies marginally to NRW local government, which is a reason for a lacking direct European engagement.

⁵⁸¹ The Commission is said to be conscientious in communicating its policy objectives from Brussels, but it does not listen to and understand the local perspective

⁵⁸² Cologne's European officer distinguishes between the Anglo-Saxon understanding of cooperative multilevel governance and the continental constitutional tradition with a clear allocation of competences. Although the Commission is much more open to their concerns than the federal government, he would welcome a stronger commitment to integrate local actors into the preparation of European policies: 'Decisive is the interaction between different levels. I am municipality and not an adjunct, but an integral part and I expect that we are in contact with each other in such a way that we work together problem-orientated on common challenges. For example, the Commission does neither do climate protection against municipalities nor we do it against the Commission or against the *Bund* or the *Land*, but we can only manage it, if we have got a common strategy.' (interview Wolf)

6.6.3 Attitudes of local actors in Essen

Performance fusion of local actors in Essen

Apart from the advantages of peace and economic and political unity, Essen has received a significant amount of funding as part of the Ruhr area (see 6.4.3). Despite the impact of directives and regulations, the city seeks to compensate potential constraints by developing pro-active strategies to influence relevant policies. Unlike most municipalities, the executive board of the city administration adopts a positive attitude towards the benefits of EU policies, which has led to activities multiplying European competencies and simultaneously to an appreciation of EU policies (interview Thetard). The case of Essen meets the assumption of performance fusion on a local government scale.

Political fusion of local actors in Essen

Although officers are trained to understand the institutional structure of the EU, with regard to political fusion, preferences on the evolution of the EU's political system could not be detected. The European engagement of Essen deals less with political questions and focuses primarily on the allocation of funding and policy promotion.

Compound fusion of local actors in Essen

In contrast to other local and regional actors in NRW, the Commission appears to be easy to approach for the city of Essen. In order to cooperate on issues around cohesion policy and other EU funded programmes, the team for European affairs keeps contacts with officials in Brussels as well as with the Commission's representation in Bonn. The appreciation of the EU's multilevel compound also includes interaction on European issues with the NRW government (interview Thetard). Notwithstanding the positive attitude towards the Commission's accessibility, it is worth noting that Essen has been mostly engaged in issues around EU funding rather than in policies on public services.

6.6.4 Attitudes of local actors in Steinfurt

Performance fusion of local actors in Steinfurt

Like other local authorities, the county of Steinfurt also benefits from economic and political integration, as well as from funding schemes. Although Steinfurt has not been a prioritised target-area, through the *Euregio* cross-border region programme, EU funding has enabled the county to conduct important projects and to exchange innovative practice with other authorities. The political leadership of Steinfurt has acknowledged European integration fully and confirms performance fusion. Many officers in the county administration, however, perceive the EU impact on their work as constrictive. The Euro-crisis has fostered scepticism towards the economic benefits of EU membership, since the risks of bailing out troubled states are hard to assess (interview Röllenblech).

Political fusion of local actors in Steinfurt

The county of Steinfurt as an individual authority does usually not engage in questions about the EU's political future but with policy issues, such as European funding programmes. However, as the first deputy president of the CEMR, Dr. Heinrich Hoffschulte, the former chief executive of Steinfurt, was actively engaged in the European Convention between 2002 and 2003 and has written an influential position paper on subsidiarity and local self-government⁵⁸³ (Hoffschulte, 2006: 69-70; Münch, 2006a: 115; Zimmermann, 2006: 28-29; also Hoffschulte, 2002).

Compound fusion of local actors in Steinfurt

Steinfurt's European officer (interview Röllenblech) finds that EU actors are usually more accessible to local and regional representatives than to those of businesses. The Commission shows a growing appreciation of the input from local actors as direct implementers of European law and policies. Overall, the assumption of compound fusion meets the attitudes of those actors in Steinfurt that are engaged in European politics.

⁵⁸³ The European officer (interview Röllenblech) welcomes the extension of subsidiarity to the local and regional level, but he also argues that this only indirectly applies for local actors and is more relevant to the NRW government, which may guard subsidiarity on behalf of its municipalities.

6.7 Summary of the German case study

The last section of this chapter provides a short summary of the findings of the five As:

1. *Absorption* (see 6.2)

As the absorption indicator clearly shows, European policies and legislation have an extensive top-down impact on local authorities and make the most substantial aspect of European integration from a German local government perspective. As the implementer of EU policies, local authorities take an important role in the integration process.

2. *Attention* (see 6.3)

Local actors have become aware of the EU policy impact. However, except for some authorities, such as Essen and Cologne, which show a higher level of Europeanisation across the whole of their administrations, European ideas have not entered the core of local practice and policy-agenda. A small group of local specialised officers and politicians are particularly Europeanised, but local councils and administrations are not. This has strong implication for the European engagement and for the fusion of local government in Germany and NRW.

3. *Adaptation* (see 6.4)

The adaptation indicator suggests that, in terms of institutionalised procedures, defusion applies for German local government. The CoR is the only body that provides local representatives with formal access to EU policy-making, but with only three seats, local actors do not find it very useful as a means of exerting influence. Whilst institutional adaptation at the national level is also defused for local representatives, the NRW government has established procedures to support and involve local authorities in their European engagement. There is an indirect component to formal fusion through the regional government that in turn is provided with strong institutional access to EU policy-making.

Local government has adapted its politico-administrative structures to deal with the challenges of European integration and engagement with EU policies. The municipal umbrella organisations have done this by adapting their structures

and maintaining offices in Brussels. Many major cities in Germany and NRW have appointed dedicated officers or teams of officers in their administrations. Most of the smaller authorities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants have not reformed their structures. The picture of institutional adaptation at the local level is clustered and partly reflects similar dynamics as outlined by fusion for national governments.

4. *Action* (see 6.5)

As formalised access to EU policy-making is weak for local representatives, fusion of local government needs to be understood as informal patterns of cooperation amongst multiple levels. Informal local action provides the most important indication for the fusion of local government.

European engagement is subject to a fairly small number of local actors and it primarily is about region and cohesion policy and the allocation of funding. However, participation in EU programmes comprises a wide scope of action and often leads to further European engagement. Direct engagement with the EU varies amongst local authorities between non-existent to very active. Direct fusion of individual local authorities is generally weak, but transnational networks, such as the CEMR and EUROCITIES, and the municipal umbrella associations, which claim the sole representation of their members on legal and policy issues, are strongly linked into EU policy-making. Even though fusion of local government is significantly determined by municipal agents and networks, individual authorities also show European engagement. In terms of policy promotion, MEPs offer a better means for local actors than does the CoR.

Whilst municipalities have built strong cooperative patterns on European affairs due to the implementation of ERDF and ESF programmes through the NRW government, the national level plays only a minor role for indirect vertical action. The *Land* represents its authorities within EU policy-making and in treaty negotiations, and fosters interaction amongst local, regional and European actors within multilevel partnerships and compound governance arrangements as assumed by fusion. Fusion is a differentiated and limited dynamic for German local government, and it is particularly a matter of indirect engagement with EU policies through the NRW government.

A comprehensive approach of European integration of local government also needs to account for horizontal activities amongst local government, as a means of integration and policy work. Horizontal action is subject to transnational, national, regional and sub-national networks. The mix of vertical and horizontal action within Europe and NRW illustrates how a cooperative mode of governance has emerged within Europe's and NRW's hierarchical government structures. This perspective offers a valuable adaptation of the fusion approach to the realities of local government in Germany.

5. *Attitudes* (see 6.6)

By analysing the preferences of local actors towards the impact of European integration on their practice, the attitude indicator offers some underlying explanations for local engagement and disengagement with EU policies. As assumed by performance fusion, local actors support generally the integration process because it delivers the economic and integrative macro-benefits of EU membership and provides funding opportunities. At the same time, however, they adopt a protective attitude against the EU's constraining impact on municipal autonomy. Local actors have successfully promoted the recognition of local subsidiarity and the right to local self-government in the Constitutional or Lisbon Treaty respectively. Their political engagement reflects a preference for pooling and safeguarding sovereignty, as suggested by political fusion for the national level.

Actors, such as the European officers from Essen and Steinfurt, have been able to deploy the flexible channels of access in order to promote their concern within the Commission, especially in the DG Regio. This confirms the preference for a compound fusion amongst multiple levels. Many engaged local actors in Germany and NRW, however, do not substantiate this assumption, since they criticise the lack of privileged access and implementation of effective partnership arrangements, for example within the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020. The diversity of perceptions may be explained by looking at different policy fields. Local actors who seek to evoke changes in policies in public services might find the results more frustrating than those who engage in the implementation of European programmes and the allocation of funding. This would explain why some local authorities do not engage with EU policies and consequently show no interest in fusion.

CHAPTER 7: COMPARISON AND ADAPTATION

7.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to explore to what extent the fusion approach can explain the role of local government in the integration process. For this purpose, this chapter provides an analysis of the three hypotheses:

1. That the fusion approach is able to explain the systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level.
2. That local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle to exert joint control over public policies.
3. That the fusion approach is able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration.

The chapter first compares the empirical findings of chapters 5 and 6 in order to outline similarities and differences between local-supranational relations in the NWoE and NRW. The application of the five As provides the evidence for the assessment of the three hypotheses. On the basis of this assessment, this chapter offers some insights about how to understand fusion dynamics at the local level, and thus to advance the well-developed body of fusion literature by introducing an explicit local government perspective.

7.2 Comparison of the empirical findings in the NWoE and NRW

In chapter 3, five indicators were deduced from various bodies of the fusion literature in order to assess and explore politics, policy and polity processes within local-supranational relations. To recap, these were:

- 1) The *absorption* of European legislation and policy by local government (policy).
- 2) The Europeanisation of local actors' *attention* towards supranational policies and legislation (politics).

- 3) Institutional and procedural *adaptation* processes at all relevant levels of government (polity).
- 4) Vertical and horizontal, as well as direct and indirect *action* of municipal authorities in relation to EU policies (politics).
- 5) Local actors' *attitudes* towards European policies and governance (politics).

Table 7.1 gives a comparative overview of the empirical findings in the NWoE (chapter 5) and NRW (chapter 6). For most indicators, the table shows similar results for the NWoE as for NRW: the top-down impact of EU legislation and policies is equally strong in both countries. Europeanisation and action is clustered and only strong amongst a small number of actors. Whilst the national level has only little relevance for bottom-up strategies in both states, the regional level is or used to play a strong role in terms of adaptation and action for the European engagement of local authorities. In the NWoE, however, regional structures were disbanded causing a reduction of the European engagement of local authorities. In contrast, the NRW government continues to foster EU-directed activities of municipalities. Consequently, horizontal activities are generally more developed in NRW than in the NWoE.

Noticeable differences include that institutional adaptation at the European level is more relevant for the NWoE, because, in contrast to in Germany, local councillors are directly represented in the CoR. In both regions, local actors are generally positive about the EU's ability to deliver the desired policy outcomes, in particular in relation to economic benefits and funding opportunities. Whilst some local actors in Germany have a stronger political preference for the EU's development, English actors are more likely to appreciate the inclusiveness of European governance. These differences in attitudes are explained by the distinct constitutional arrangements in both countries. Whereas in Germany, European integration is perceived as a threat to local autonomy, the opposite applies in England, where the EU used to be seen as a means for municipal emancipation. The absence of an encoded constitution makes it possible in England to change municipal practice whenever a new government policy is applied. Severe budget cuts for the public sector and the disbanding of regional governance has caused a disengagement of many local authorities with European policies.

Table 7.1: Comparison of the five As in the NWoE and NRW

The five As in the NWoE and NRW

	NWoE	NRW
Absorption	Infusion	Infusion
Attention	Defusion/clustered for majority, infusion for a small number of actors	Defusion/clustered for majority, infusion for a small number of actors
Adaptation		
European level	Clustered	Defusion
National level	Defusion	Defusion
Regional level	Shift from infusion to defusion	Clustered
Local level	Clustered/infusion for major cities and agents, clustered for counties, defusion/clustered for smaller authorities	Clustered/infusion for major cities and agents, clustered for counties, defusion/clustered for smaller authorities
Action		
Direct vertical	Majority defusion/clustered, infusion for a small number of actors	Defusion/clustered, infusion for agents and networks
Indirect vertical	Defusion through national level Shift from infusion to defusion through regional level	Defusion through national level, clustered through regional level
Horizontal	Defusion/clustered transnationally, defusionnationally, shift from infusion to defusion regionally, clustered sub-regionally	Clustered transnationally, clustered nationally, infusion regionally, clustered sub-regionally
Attitudes		
Performance	Clustered for majority, infusion for a small number of actors	Clustered for majority, infusion for a small number of actors
Political	Defusion for majority, clustered for agents and major cities	Clustered/infusion for small number, defusion for majority of actors
Compound	Defusion for majority, infusion amongst specialists	Clustered

7.3 Exploring fusion's efficacy against three hypotheses

The efficacy of the fusion approach for the study of local government is examined in this thesis against three hypotheses. These were namely: 1) that the fusion approach is able to explain the systemic linkages between macro-trajectories and the corresponding effects at the local level. 2) That local actors and European actors fuse in a common policy-cycle to

exert joint control over public policies. 3) That the fusion approach is able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration.

The three hypotheses are compared to the contrasting state arrangements of England and Germany, as the state remains a strong gatekeeper for the involvement of the local level in European affairs. Through comparison conclusions about the implications of two different politico-administrative structures can be drawn and the assessment of fusion can be grounded in a profound empirical investigation (see Burnham *et al.*, 2008: 70).

The investigation of the three hypotheses has been based on using different politico-administrative systems as the independent variable. Whilst local government in England represents the Anglo-Saxon model with a strong functional but weak political role, German local authorities are not only provided with a strong functional, but also with an important political status (Wollmann, 2001: 158). As a result, municipalities in each country rely on different paradiplomatic strategies correlating with their relationship to central and regional government.

In order to control the influence of factors other than state arrangements, similar intervening variables were sought across investigated local authorities. The English selection resembles the German one with regard to their socio-economic profile. In spite of their contrasting government arrangements, the NWoE and NRW share key characteristics, such as the relations between number and size of local authorities and ongoing periods of economic restructuring due to the decline of their core industries. Although there are different types of local government, both regions offer a variety of similarly structured local authorities and sub-regions defined by large cities with a high density of population and rural areas.

The following sub-sections consider whether fusion is able to explain the *systemic linkages* between European integration and consequential process, *fusion dynamics* and *attitudes* towards integration at the local level in England and Germany.

7.3.1 Analysing systemic linkages of the fusion approach

The fusion approach provides an explanation of the systemic linkages between the EU's evolution and changes at the local level. According to a fusion causality, the increasing

impact of EU policies on local authorities leads to a Europeanisation of local government and subsequently to adaptation processes and responsive mobilisation towards Brussels. As outlined in chapter 4 (see 4.5), it was expected that despite central government's control over access to networks, Structural Funds and financial resources, this logic applies to English local government (see Martin, 1997: 63-65; Martin & Pearce, 1999: 32-37; Mather, 2000: 163 *et seq.*; Smith, 1998: 62; Zerbinati & Massey, 2008: 84; Zerbinati, 2004: 1001); and to some pro-active German municipalities (see Alemann & Münch, 2006: 17-19; Wessels, 2000: 270).

The absorption indicator (see 5.2 and 6.2) provided clear evidence for a strong top-down impact of EU legislation and policies on local government in England and Germany, particularly in relation to the internal market, environmental issues, cohesion policy and Europe 2020 (infusion). As a consequence, municipalities in both countries have to varying degrees turned their attention to the EU. Although specialised officers are aware of legislation affecting their field of tasks, in both investigated cases only a few local policy-makers and officers are Europeanised (clustered fusion). Apart from a few exceptions, such as Liverpool or Essen, local administrations and councils have not incorporated European themes into their policy-agenda. Nonetheless, the examples of Steinfurt, CWAC and Cumbria illustrate that European policy preferences promoted through the Lisbon Strategy, Europe 2020 and regional and cohesion policy have become frameworks to which local councils refer in their strategic plans (see 5.3 and 6.3).

Europeanisation and institutional adaptation are mutually dependent, as EU-orientated actors seek to raise an awareness of European policies within local councils. Nonetheless, the initial introduction of European capacities was the result of an increasing EU impact and a corresponding awareness of this impact. Particularly in the NWoE, the establishment of local government offices in Brussels, of dedicated officers and teams, and the appointment of councillors responsible for European or external affairs have been part of a strong institutional adaptation caused by European integration, similar to developments at national levels (infusion). At the local level in NRW, institutional adaptation has taken place but without the establishment of Brussels representation (with the exception of the county of Steinfurt) and not as comprehensively as in the NWoE (clustered fusion). Due to the budget cuts in England, local offices from the NWoE and other European capacities have been abandoned except for the Merseyside Brussels Office (defusion) (see 5.4 and 6.4).

The absorption of EU law and policies and subsequent Europeanisation have also triggered bottom-up activities in the NWoE and NRW for the primary purpose of allocating and ensuring European funding and, to a more limited extent, for influencing EU policy-making. Policy-promotion, however, is mainly subject to municipal agents and networks, as well as to a few engaged actors (mostly at officer level) from both regions (clustered fusion) (see 5.5 and 6.5).

The *systemic linkages* between top-down, Europeanisation, bottom-up and institutional dynamics is clustered and does not apply to all local authorities. Also, they describe a mid-term perspective for the most part, since in the NWoE defusion has taken place due to public service cuts. It may be concluded that, although the fusion approach offers only attenuated insights, it does have limited relevance.

7.3.2 Analysing fusion of local government

The ‘litmus test’ for the fusion approach is whether local governments are actually fusing with the EU. In order to pass this test, local actors need to fuse with European actors into a common policy-cycle and exert joint control over public policies. Even though there is a strong top-down impact of EU policies, bottom-up action is a more important indicator for fusion, whereby institutions and procedures at different levels are growing and diversifying.

The empirical findings in both countries match the inferences outlined in chapter 4 (see 4.5). The chapter proposed that a decentralisation of power increases cooperative paradiplomacy within states and reduces bypassing activities, as strong local governments are better able to exert influence on their central government (see Tatham, 2010: 77-92). Because English local governments have only limited means to exert influence domestically, they approach European actors directly and are potentially even more engaged with EU policies than are their German counterparts (see John, 2000: 883-885; Reilly, 2001: 6 *et seq.*, Sullivan *et al.*, 2004: 263-264). The empirical findings of chapter 5 and 6 confirm this expectation and show that local authorities in NRW seek to cooperate rather than to compete with their regional government and only bypass it when their interests clash (see 5.5.2 and 6.5.2).

Notwithstanding the clear demarcation of competences amongst local, regional and national levels, in Germany, European governance was expected to envisage less rigid policy arrangements, with the *Länder* having the final say over municipal activities. English local government, in contrast, is used to a more flexible approach of multi-stakeholder and multilevel partnerships. In England, central government remains in control of major fields of European activity, but has not prevented bottom-up mobilisation at the local level (see Bache, 1998: 36 *et seq.*; Laffin, 2009: 23; Martin, 1997: 60-63; Marshall, 2005: 675; Smith, 1998: 52-53). This was also confirmed by chapter 5 and 6 (see 5.5 and 6.5).

It was illustrated that the *Länder* are an important reference for fusion dynamics at the local level and provide stable political arrangements that translate into more durable, but indirect, involvement of local government in European affairs (see Münch, 2006a: 84). Regional governance in England has developed from a top-down initiative (state-regionalism) to more bottom-up strategies driving an infusion of local government (Euro-regionalism). However, the lack of constitutional guarantees causes constant change and inconsistency in EU-related mobilisation, thus in fusion dynamics (see 5.4 and 6.4).

In terms of institutionalised participation of local representatives, the CoR is only of limited value for municipalities in NRW as they have only three seats and find the Committee ineffective in promoting their interests. Even though the four German municipal spokespersons in the EP seek to ensure the input of local government in EU policy-making, in Germany fusion through institutional diversification is weak from a local perspective (see 6.4.1). The situation is slightly different in the NWoE, where through the representation of local councillors in the CoR, local authorities, such as Liverpool, CWAC, Greater Manchester and Cumbria, are directly participating in the European policy-making cycle. Only a few municipalities provide a CoR member, and though their influence has grown, it is still limited *vis-à-vis* the other institutions. Nevertheless, for the NWoE there is evidence of institutional diversification at the European level to involve local actors (see 5.4.1).

Apart from formalised access, informal action also allows local representatives to fuse into a joint policy-making cycle. In both regions, direct vertical action is strongly defined by a few highly engaged actors, either municipal agents or officers. Municipal associations are influential actors at the European stage. Whilst in England the LGA is the only major association representing local authorities (see 5.5.1), in Germany there are the three strong

municipal associations at the national level, as well as their regional counterparts lobbying on behalf of NRW specific concerns. NRW municipalities are particularly well represented in Brussels, as they are directly incorporated into the German Association of Towns, and the Association of Counties is one of the few regional municipal organisations with an officer in Brussels (see 6.5.1).

Transnational networks are further major agents through which local representatives are linked to EU institutions and participate in the working groups of the Commission. As well as more specific networks, the CEMR and EUROCITIES are the most influential agents for local government in both countries (see 5.5.1 and 6.5.1).

Individual authorities are hardly involved directly in EU policy-making. Major cities, such as Cologne, Manchester and Liverpool, as well as exceptionally engaged municipalities like Steinfurt, interact with the Commission and the EP, and thus enter occasionally the joint policy-making cycle, though not on a systematic basis. MEPs play a stronger role for municipal preferences in NRW (see 6.5.1). In turn, local government in the NWoE has maintained more direct contacts with the Commission and has bypassed central government to promote interests that are often in conflict with Westminster (see 5.5.1). However, their ability to fuse with the EU remains contested and depends on the control of national governments over local budgets and policy objectives⁵⁸⁴.

The scope of European engagement is clustered. Cohesion policy and the acquisition of significant amounts of funding are the main fields of policy activity in both cases. It is through multilevel partnerships that local authorities are most effective in exerting control over a joint policy that involves a widening range of related policy objectives linked by various framework initiatives, such as the Structural Funds, the Lisbon Agenda, Europe 2020, European Employment Strategy and rural development. As such policy initiatives and programmes stimulate municipal interest in European governance, they also determine the time frames of local-European interaction. Fusion dynamics are more subject to short- and mid-term than to long-term effects. Particularly at the beginning of new ERDF programmes (2000-2006, 2007-2013, 2014-2020) local actors are highly active in securing their financial shares.

⁵⁸⁴ In comparison to federal and other now well-decentralised member states, where central governments tend to transfer responsibilities downwards, in England the centre still does not seem to trust their localities and strongly remains in control over most initiatives, special grants, taxation and spending. As a consequence, English municipalities are required to work in a partnership with them and bodies from public, private and voluntary sector access national and international funding schemes (Goldsmith, 2002: 105-109).

Indirect vertical action, or cooperative diplomacy respectively, is not to be neglected within the European multilevel compound. Whilst in both countries the national level is of marginal relevance for indirect vertical engagement, the regional level plays or used to play a significant role. Owing to the implementation of ERDF and ESF programmes through the NRW government, local authorities have built strong cooperative patterns on European affairs. The NRW government introduced various procedures to support and involve local authorities in its European engagement. As the *Land* is infused into EU policy-making and is an influential actor representing its authorities through cooperative paradiplomatic strategies, some municipalities are indirectly linked into the European multilevel compound (see 6.5.2).

In spite of English regions not having the same resources and power to be able to engage in Europe as the German *Länder*, regional governance in the NWoE used to be an important channel for cooperative paradiplomacy of local authorities. By bringing local, regional and European actors together, the NWDA, the Regional Leaders Board and the North West Regional Partnership linked local policy-makers to the implementation and preparation processes of the ERDF programmes and other EU initiatives. The closure of the NWDA in 2012 induced a significant defusion of many local actors who subsequently withdrew their engagement in the multilevel partnership. Even though groups such as the Regional Leaders Board, European Cooperation Group, the European Economic Strategy Group and, on a sub-regional basis the LEPs, remain, local government in the NWoE lost major structures that could have enabled fusion (see 5.5.2). As Stockport's funding manager (interview Bleaden) puts it: 'There does not seem to be a real noticeable link anymore between the European level and local level that was provided by the regional bodies.'

Complementary to vertical engagement, local authorities are also cooperating horizontally as a means of exchanging innovative practice and increasing influence. As well as horizontal dynamics on a national, regional or sub-regional scale, participation in transnational networks, such as the CEMR, EUROCITIES, ERRIN, CLUNET, URBACT and ERCN, are an integral part of the European cooperative mode of governance (see 5.5.3 and 6.5.3). However, it is arguable whether horizontal action contributes to effective and sustaining changes of local government in a fusing Europe. As cooperative programmes are only of limited duration and scale and vary greatly in their effects on municipal practice, detailed case studies would be needed to assess the significance of horizontal fusion dynamics.

Overall, as the scope of competences, powers and resources is significantly smaller at the European than at the national level, the *fusion* hypothesis is not strictly compared to national governments. The empirical findings provide a clustered picture of fusion dynamics of local government with a few examples of infusion and many cases of defusion. This thesis did not seek to provide a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer as to whether the fusion hypothesis was validated, but rather a differentiated answer. It shows, in fact, that five major fusion trends are detectable within both regions:

1. Institutionalised procedures for including local representatives in EU policy-making are defused, though more relevant for English municipalities with a councillor sitting in the CoR.
2. Exerting joint control through interaction with local and European actors is subject to municipal agents and networks, as well as to a few highly active individual actors. Local government is represented in EU governance as an intermediary group of a particular quality.
3. Whilst the national level is of marginal relevance in both countries, through regional government/governance arrangements, local authorities from the NWoE and NRW were indirectly (and in the NWoE also directly) linked to EU policy-making. It was shown that the NRW government is in itself infused, whilst in the NWoE regional defusion affected the European engagement of local government negatively.
4. Interaction amongst local and European actors is subject to a limited, but increasing field of policies primarily framed by regional and cohesion policy and Europe 2020. These policy initiatives and programmes do not only determine the range in which infusion takes place but also the time perspective of fusion dynamics, which is more short- and mid-term than long-term.
5. Horizontal action amongst municipal actors is potentially part of a fusing Europe. Its effects on substantial and sustainable changes of local governments are clustered; they need to be distinguished among transnational, national, regional and sub-regional cooperation; and should not be overestimated at this point.

7.3.3 Analysing the attitudes of local actors

The last hypothesis assesses whether the fusion approach is able to explain the attitudes of local actors towards European integration. The research showed that this is the case when local actors appreciate sectoral integration according to beneficial policy outcomes (performance fusion); when they show preferences for a third way integration between intergovernmental cooperation and supranationalism (political fusion); and when they welcome the opportunities and channels of access to EU polity and policy-making (compound fusion).

As expected by performance fusion, despite some constraints and additional bureaucracy of EU legislation, local actors from both countries acknowledge the benefits of integration positively. The support for EU membership is based on economic and integrative macro-benefits, as well as on the financial benefits of the Structural Funds, CAP and rural development policies and opportunities for transnational cooperation (see 5.6.1 and 6.6.1).

The thesis showed a more clustered picture for political and compound fusion. In terms of polity, it was demonstrated that English local actors prefer more flexible, informal ways to engage in EU policies than do their German colleagues, arising from the difference in politico-administrative traditions. Actors from both countries adopt a political preference between supranational solutions to macro-challenges and to local autonomy. This meets political fusion's assumption of a third way integration between intergovernmental cooperation and supranationalism. Whereas chapter 6 showed that German municipalities are more sceptical about the constraining impact of EU legislation and therefore strongly promote a clear demarcation of competences through subsidiarity and the right to local self-government in the Lisbon Treaty (see 6.6.2), their English colleagues were seen to be less engaged in constitutional questions preferring more flexible ways of bypassing central government to interact directly with European actors (see 5.6.2).

The political preferences are reflected in the attitudes towards the EU's compound policy. Even though some local actors from NRW appreciate the flexible channels of access to the Commission, a number of actors criticise the lack of privileged access and implementation of effective partnership arrangements (see 6.6.3). Whilst in the NWoE most local actors may not engage in EU policies, those who have bypassed central government and have

cooperated with the Commission substantiate compound fusion and perceive the Commission to be more accessible than is central government (see 5.6.3).

In summary, the micro-fusion perspective is able to explain the underlying dynamic that inform local actors' attitudes toward European integration, but there are rationales beyond a cost-benefit-analysis determining the European engagement of local governments. Political and compound fusion are clustered, not as clearly articulated at the local as at the national level and are strongly determined by domestic gatekeepers. The micro-fusion perspective suggests valuable motives and addresses important dynamics such as political preferences in a multilevel compound, at least with regard to pro-active actors. It may be concluded that performance fusion applies similarly to both case studies. Political fusion in terms of constitutional or governmental change is stronger among German local actors and relates to the protection of their autonomy even though pro-active actors in general seek a stronger involvement in EU policy-making. Local government in the NWoE shows generally a stronger preference for interaction with the Commission, as assumed by compound fusion.

All three hypotheses demonstrated that local government and engaged actors (rather than local authorities) participate actively in the EU's multilevel compound. There are some limitations to the *systemic linkages* between macro- and micro integration as assumed by the fusion approach, as well as to the actual *fusion* dynamics of local government and fusion's efficacy to explain local actors' *attitudes* towards European integration. The next section thus offers a perspective how to understand and adapt the fusion approach in the context of local government.

7.4 The fusion approach for the study of local government

As well as the substantial empirical findings, this thesis has offered a new dynamic and a comprehensive perspective for the study of local government. Not only has the study deduced and applied five indicators from the fusion literature, it has further assessed the theoretical relevance of fusion against three hypotheses. Although fusion's original focus lies on the evolution of European governance, the corresponding transformation of member states and responsive processes at the national level, fusion is relevant to local government. Local-supranational relations are characterised by some processes similar to

those at the national level, especially regarding *systemic linkages* and *attitudes*. The actual *fusion* hypothesis holds relevant, albeit comparatively little, substance.

Instead of rejecting a fusion of local government, this section of the conclusion advances a theoretical framework by an understanding of local-supranational relations and provides an outlook towards future research agenda. Seven insights complement the fusion approach and potentially inform further studies of local governments in the European multilevel compound. All of those dynamics are fragmented and asymmetrical, or clustered respectively, across the large number of European local authorities.

1. *Local governments are involved in a limited but growing scope of EU policies*

The main incentive for interacting with the Commission and other institutions is the allocation of funding and participation in European programmes and projects. The Lisbon Agenda, Europe 2020, the ERDF, ESF, EAFRD and other policy initiatives provide major frameworks through which institutions from multiple levels interact on a growing breadth of policy fields, including issues around transport, environment, social and technological innovation, employment, energy, waste and so on. Local actors have become effective promoters of their interests and concerns around issues, such as subsidiarity, local self-government and the delivery of public services.

The expanding fields of activities in which local actors engage indicate fusion and can be examined quantitatively, for example through an analysis of policy documents.

2. *Fusion of local government is a medium-term rather than long-term phenomena*

The fusion thesis was designed as a dynamic middle range theory. Considering that local-supranational relations have evolved particularly over the last two decades, a long-term perspective cannot be obtained from the empirical findings. As it is European policy initiatives and programmes that are relevant and stimulate European engagement of local authorities only for a limited period of time, fusion is subject to short- and mid-term rather than to long-term trends.

The time frames for the European engagement of local governments needs to be looked at more closely. Even though individual actors and events such as financial recessions impact on municipal activities, it may be possible to detect some general patterns of local engagement that are linked to European policy frameworks such as Europe 2020 and cohesion policy. Only continuing research can draw valid conclusions about fusion dynamics in the long run.

3. *European integration stimulates only a relatively small number of municipal actors to engage in EU policies and politics*

Assuming that the fusion thesis explains adequately how and why integration takes place, the clearest relationship between the local and the European level refers to the top-down impact of supranational law and policy. The *systemic linkages* hypothesis showed that this does not lead to a comprehensive Europeanisation, adaptation and mobilisation of local government, but only activated a small number of municipal actors. Amongst them are local government agents, networks, major cities and even smaller authorities. Size matters but it is not a crucial determinant.

A growing number of local actors engaging in EU policies would indicate a stronger fusion of local government. Such a dynamic can be assessed through quantitative studies of local actors within member states and regions.

4. *Fusion from a municipal perspective is primarily subject to interaction on an informal basis*

In contrast to the national level, fusion of local government is only marginally subject to institutionalised access to EU policy-making. Without formal participation rights, local government is largely excluded from the EU policy-cycle and has to rely on informal ways of exerting control over public policies. Without overestimating the influence of local actors in the design and shaping of European policies, the Lisbon Treaty and policy initiatives, such as the White Paper on European Governance, the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020 indicate a growing role for local actors as an intermediary group of a particular quality. The study of local-supranational relations needs to account for the

‘living constitution’ of the EU’s multilevel compound: functional blurring across multiple levels; horizontal and vertical interaction amongst actors; and task-specific, intersecting and flexible governance arrangements, as envisaged by MLG type II (see 2.6.2).

Future research could examine the nature of interactive policy processes and styles. This includes the context of interaction, such as European policy initiatives, the assessment of policy networks and governance through multilevel networks, and particularly at informal modes of municipal participation in the design and delivery of EU policies. Not only the quantity of policy initiatives and networks, but especially an increasing quality and effectiveness of interaction would indicate fusion.

5. *Fusion needs to be understood as multilevel compound, wherein municipalities fuse not only directly but also indirectly through regional (and potentially through national) governance/government arrangement*

The involvement of local government in EU policy-making depends strongly on the position of local government in the structure of a state and on the gatekeeper role of central and regional government. Local actors need to cooperate with domestic levels of government. In a ‘Europe of regions’ the regional level offers institutions, mechanisms and resources to pool and to exert influence effectively.

Instead of just focusing on direct interaction amongst local and European actors and institutions, a fusion of local government is also indicated through evolving patterns of intra-state cooperation on European issues. Whether through formal or informal arrangements, further research would need to look at domestic policy initiatives and networks through which local actors engage in European affairs.

6. *Horizontal cooperation amongst local authorities potentially contributes to a fusing Europe*

Horizontal mobilisation is strongly fostered by the EU, contributes to deeper integration and serves as a basis for vertical action. Therefore, it must not be overlooked within a comprehensive integration framework. In addition to

national, regional and sub-regional cooperation, transnational exchange of innovative practice has grown over the last two decades, but its effect on substantial and sustainable changes of local governments requires further research.

In-depth case studies of cooperative networks, projects and programmes are required to assess whether they bring effective and lasting changes of municipal practice and confirm horizontal fusion dynamics at the local level.

7. *Whilst local actors support European integration because it delivers macro- and micro-benefits, they seek to protect their competences and autonomy, as well as a stronger involvement in the delivery and design of EU policies*

Regardless of preferences for constitutional or informal solution, the findings of both case studies allow for some generalisations and confirm the concepts of performance, political and compound fusion, though with varying emphasis and not as clearly articulated as at the national level. The study of local governments needs to take into account differences in state arrangements and administrative cultures to understand the attitudes of local actors towards European integration.

In order to validate further to what extent local actors show a political preference for deeper integration under the condition of a stronger consideration of municipal interests and self-government, quantitative surveys with local policy-makers and relevant officers would help to obtain a differentiated picture.

Further theoretical and empirical research is necessary to test and develop the theory. Additional qualitative and quantitative studies are required to deliver insights into other European member states and assess the relevance of fusion in countries with alternative politico-administrative systems, historical trajectories and geo-political profiles. For that reason, it is necessary to develop 'hard' criteria against which fusion can be tested. Whilst this thesis has been primarily focused on the impact of integration on local government, it would also be interesting to study how municipalities may modify European integration and perhaps even cause a 'municipalisation' of European governance.

7.5 Summary of the comparison and adaptation

This chapter compared the empirical findings of chapters 5 and 6. The most significant differences between local authorities in the NWoE and in NRW refer to the stability of government structures at the regional level. Both regions used to play an essential role for indirect vertical activities of local actors. With the decline of the English regions and with public spending cuts, many local authorities in the NWoE lost an important link to the European level. Since some English local councillors are members in the CoR, formal representation of local government is stronger in the NWoE than in NRW. German municipalities hold only three seats in the CoR via their municipal umbrella organisations, whilst most seats are allocated to the *Länder*. In terms of local actors' attitudes towards the EU, local government in the NWoE tends to be more appreciative of the inclusive, compound nature of European governance structures. Because of the strong constitutional role that municipalities play in the German state arrangements, local actors in Germany show a strong political preference to safeguard their autonomy, and find the Commission unaware of rather than open to their concerns.

The three hypotheses (*systemic linkages, fusion, attitudes*) were used to explore fusion's efficacy for the study of local government. Fusion offers an understanding of the *systemic linkages* between the evolution of European governance structures and the micro-developments at the local level, namely Europeanisation and adaptation processes within local administrations and action in response to EU policies. Whilst the top-down impact of EU law and policies is strong, the consequential processes are only applicable to a few local authorities and actors. Europeanisation, institutional adaptation at local and European level and bottom-up action are only clustered. Though both Liverpool and Essen have incorporated European themes into their policy-agenda, this is not the case for the majority of local authorities. For authorities, such as Steinfurt, CWAC and Cumbria, Europe 2020 and regional and cohesion policy have become relevant policy frameworks. The departure from strong institutional adaptation in the NWoE (as indicated by the establishment of local government offices in Brussels, of dedicated officers and teams) to a decline of such capacities indicates does not falsify the fusion approach, which accounts for defusion processes, but it may be a sign for 'waves of engagement and disengagement'. In NRW, such institutional responses to European integration are less developed. European engagement is, in both cases, limited to the primary purpose of allocating and ensuring European funding. Policy-promotion is mainly subject to municipal agents and networks,

as well as to a few engaged actors. Overall, *systemic linkages* are relevant but rather for local government in general and for a small number than for the majority of local authorities.

With regard to the *fusion* hypothesis, in the German case, the NRW government provides essential capacities for linking local government to EU policies and governance structures. As a result, fusion dynamics in NRW are limited, mostly indirect but more stable than in the English case. In England, formal fusion through the CoR is stronger and informal bypassing activities are more common. Fusion is not relevant to each local authority, albeit municipal agents (on a systematic basis) and some engaged actors participate in the EU policy-making cycle. Although fusion is mostly limited to funding issues and a few policy initiatives, the fields of municipal engagement have been growing through the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020, and German local actors have been highly active in promoting political preferences in the run-up to the Lisbon Treaty. National (and regional) governments in both states act as strong gatekeepers for local fusion dynamics. Horizontal action is relevant for stimulating change and exchange of local government in a fusing Europe, but the actual effectiveness of horizontal cooperation needs to be assessed by further research.

The *attitudes* hypothesis showed that local actors adopt similar preferences as national political elites. Local actors prefer sectoral integration and support for EU membership is based on economic and integrative macro-benefits (performance fusion). Attitudes are clustered and diverse for political and compound fusion. Whilst English local actors prefer flexibility for engaging with European actors, in Germany there is little appreciation of the EU's compound nature, but rather the wish to obtain formal channels of access to EU policy-making (compound fusion). Although local actors are marginalised in major political decisions, they support supranational integration for the purpose of dealing with macro-political challenges. Local actors from NRW seek to safeguard their competences through a clear demarcation and subsidiarity. In the NWoE, flexibility is favoured over constitutional solutions for involvement in the design and delivery of EU policies, wherein the control by central government is a major issue.

Despite fusion's limitations for explaining European integration of local government, this chapter sought to advance fusion's theoretical capacity from a local government perspective rather than denying relevant fusion dynamics. Seven insights outline a future research agenda for the study of local government in the context of the EU's multilevel

compound: 1) local governments are involved in a limited but growing scope of EU policies; 2) fusion of local government is a medium-term rather than a long-term phenomenon; 3) European integration motivates only a relatively small number of municipal actors to engage in EU policies and politics; 4) fusion from a municipal perspective is primarily subject to interaction on an informal basis; 5) fusion needs to be understood as multilevel compound, wherein municipalities fuse not only directly but also indirectly through regional (and potentially through national) governance/government arrangements; 6) horizontal cooperation amongst local authorities contributes potentially to a fusing Europe; 7) whilst local actors support European integration because it delivers macro- and micro-benefits, they seek to protect their competences and autonomy, as well as looking towards a stronger involvement in the delivery and design of EU policies.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

In the 1990s, Wolfgang Wessels (1992, 1997) presented the fusion thesis to an international audience. At that time, the European engagement of local actors and institutions was only just emerging. Since then, however, the local level has grown in significance in the EU's multilevel compound, which led the author of this thesis to engage in the under-studied discussion and to apply the fusion approach to the study of local government.

The thesis has sought to provide a strong theoretical and empirical contribution to the study of subnational government in the light of European integration. It has done so by exploring the efficacy of the fusion approach as a theoretical framework that links the macro-trajectories of European integration to the micro-dynamics at the local level. In order to contribute the development of fusion's theoretical capacities, this thesis offered insights of how to advance the fusion approach by a local government perspective.

This conclusion of the thesis starts with a short overview of the fusion approach and relates it to the concepts of MLG and Europeanisation (see 8.2). This is followed by a summary of the empirical findings of the five As – absorption, attention, adaptation, action and attitudes – in the NWoE and NRW (see 8.3). The conclusion then continues to outline the adequacy of three hypotheses of this thesis – *systemic linkages*, *fusion* and *attitudes*. Based on the analysis of the hypotheses the thesis offers seven dynamics to assist in understanding and adapting the fusion approach for the study of local government (see 8.4). This chapter ends by outlining some implications for the political practice in local-supranational relations (see 8.5).

8.2 Summary of the fusion approach

Designed as a comprehensive middle range theory, the fusion approach offers conceptual tools and a dynamic framework with the potential to capture the bigger picture of integration. Fusion describes a merging of public resources and decision-making capacities from several levels of government (Schneider, 2011a: 26 *et seq.*; Wessels, 1997: 274).

Supranational institutions and procedures are growing into a complex, sub-optimal polity that provides opportunities and channels for systematic relationships amongst European, national and subnational actors. Fusion does not assume that the EU develops in a uniform way, but in differentiated patterns according to selective policy fields (Miles 2011a: 194).

The macro-fusion thesis provides three major reasons for the evolution of European governance and the transformation of the state (see 2.2)

1. The turn of the virtuous into a vicious circle in which member states pool their sovereignty to regain control over welfare provision
2. Third-way integration between intergovernmental cooperation and a joint supranational polity
3. Functional spill-over leading to an extension of policy areas and increasingly complex policy-making procedures

Whilst the macro-fusion thesis accounts for the trajectories of European integration, institutional fusion (see 2.3) and the micro-fusion framework (see 2.5) link the macro-developments of the European polity to Europeanisation, responsive action, institutional adaptation and change at the micro-level. The micro-fusion perspective explains the attitudes and preferences of national (and local) actors towards European integration (see 2.4).

Fusion is not in competition with MLG or Europeanisation concepts, but complementary, as multilevel realities and Europeanisation processes are an implicit part of fusion. Explaining the asymmetrical, differentiated processes of integration is particularly important for the study of the large number of local authorities across Europe. Whilst MLG I relates to government structures and to the organisation of conventional territorial states, MLG type II and fusion share an emphasis on moments of functional blurring and horizontal and vertical interaction amongst actors and institutions from multiple levels and policy arenas in a common policy cycle. This understanding of a polycentric mode of governance under which decisions are made collectively across a larger number of collaborating levels, groups and actors, meets the realities of local government within the EU's multilevel compound. However, although both MLG and Europeanisation account for asymmetries and fragmentation, they are not theories of integration explaining the

underlying reasons for differentiated integration (Dyson & Sepos, 2010: 18-19). Therefore, the fusion approach was chosen as the theoretical framework for exploring the relationship between the macro-trajectories of European integration and the resulting changes at the local level of government.

8.3 Summary of the empirical findings

The empirical application of the five As showed similar dynamics for both case studies: whilst EU legislation and policy have a strong top-down impact on local government, Europeanisation, adaptation and mobilisation involves only a small number of local actors. Local government agents and networks play an important role for bottom-up strategies. The contrasting state structures in both countries have important effects: with public spending cuts and the disbanding of English regions, defusion has taken place in the NWoE. Whilst local actors in Germany are more concerned about protecting local self-government, in England, European governance is more likely to be appreciated for its inclusiveness and as a means for emancipation. The following gives a short outline of the findings of all five indicators in both cases.

1. Absorption (see 5.2 and 6.2)

In both member states, the top-down impact of European policies and legislation is strong and has grown during the last two decades. EU legislation related to the internal market, environmental directives and regional and cohesion policy are the areas primarily relevant for the investigated cases.

2. Attention (see 5.3 and 6.3)

Local actors in both regions have become aware of the EU policy impact but only partially Europeanised. With the exception of a few engaged officers, some local politicians and small number of administration that developed cross-departmental strategies, local EU affairs have not become a primary focus of attention at the local level.

3. Adaptation (see 5.4 and 6.4)

The CoR is the only institutionalised body to involve local representatives in EU policy-making. Whilst local government in NWoE is represented in the CoR

directly through local councillors, it has only three seats in the CoR and finds it not very useful as a means of exerting influence.

In England and Germany, institutional adaptation towards including local actors in EU policies is weak at the national level. Regional arrangements in the NWoE used to be an important driver for indirect fusion processes leading to a blurred division of competences among different levels of governance. The closure of the NWDA in 2012, however, has caused a local disengagement in EU policies and it is not yet clear yet how a sub-regional approach will affect future fusion processes. The NRW government is a strong actor on the European stage and has developed various means of supporting and involving local authorities in their European engagement. The *Land* is thus the main channel for local actors to engage with the EU.

At the local level, institutional adaptation used to be more developed in the NWoE than in NRW. Many medium-sized and large authorities in both regions used to have dedicated officers. Additionally, major local authorities in the NWoE also used to maintain offices in Brussels; had appointed either a councillor for European affairs and had created a specific committee or made it part of a portfolio on planning and economic development. Public service cuts caused withdrawal from all Brussels offices, except for the Merseyside Brussels Office, and some European officers. In NRW, municipal umbrella organisations adapted their structures to deal with European issues on behalf of their member municipalities.

4. *Action* (see 5.5 and 5.6)

Despite local representation in the CoR, formal access to EU policy-making is generally weak for local actors. In both cases, direct European engagement is subject to the informal action of a small number of municipal actors, agents and networks, such as local government associations, the CEMR and EUROCITIES. German MEPs are more relevant for direct local mobilisation than their English colleagues. Both cases demonstrate that European integration of local government is not regarded as about interaction amongst territorial levels of government as assumed by MLG I, but rather to be understood as informal patterns of cooperation amongst actors and networks from multiple levels, as envisaged by MLG type II (see 2.6.2) and the idea of a fusing multilevel compound.

Indirect action through the regional level is an essential part of such a multilevel compound. The decline of English regions caused a defusion of vertical and horizontal engagement with EU policies. The regional government is more relevant for NRW local authorities, which rely primarily on the *Land* to promote and establish links between the local and the European levels.

Through transnational projects and networks, local authorities in the NWoE and NRW conduct horizontal activities to cooperate and exchange best-practice. Horizontal action is also subject to nation-wide (European Officers Network, German section of the CEMR), regional (Regional Leaders Board, European Cooperation Group, *EU Werkstatt NRW*) and sub-regional networks.

5. *Attitudes* (see 5.6 and 6.6)

Local actors in both regions generally favour the European integration process because it delivers the economic and integrative macro-benefits of EU membership, and provides financial support through EU funding. Despite some constraining EU laws, the benefits of EU membership outweigh the constraints and integration is accepted as a necessity – an attitude as assumed by performance fusion.

With regard to political fusion, in both cases, local actors welcome the promotion of the CoR and the expansion of subsidiarity through the Lisbon Treaty. Since in Germany, local government enjoys the right to self-government by constitution, German local actors support more formal solutions to protect their competences *vis-à-vis* EU influence than do their English counterparts. The latter promote direct links between the local and the European level in the context of joint governance arrangements for delivering cohesion policy and Europe 2020 objectives. In spite of the differences in the member states, there is a common preference for supranationality coupled to safeguarding local powers.

Although most local actors in the NWoE do not work directly with European actors, the few engaged actors are generally more positive about the inclusive nature of EU institutions than are their colleagues in NRW. In the NWoE, the opportunities to engage with the Commission may be a welcome change from the lack of cooperation with central government. In NRW, however, local actors maintain good relationships with regional government and therefore favour formal channels of access to EU policy-making.

8.4 Summary of the three hypotheses and the implications on fusion

Fusion's efficacy to explain local-supranational dynamics was tested against three hypotheses (*systemic linkages, fusion, attitudes*). The hypotheses have confirmed a partial relevance of fusion in a municipal context (see 7.3).

Fusion assumes *systemic linkages* between the macro-developments of the EU, the latter's top-down impact on local authorities, Europeanisation of local administrations, institutional adaptation at all relevant levels of government and bottom-up mobilisation of local government for influencing and participating in EU policies. Even though top-down impact of EU law and policies is strong, the corresponding processes are clustered. They only apply for a small proportion of local authorities and actors, and are often limited to the acquisition of funding. Nonetheless, fusion's systemic linkages are relevant, although they apply for local government in general and not for each individual local authority. Fusion does not assume an evolution towards a final state of integration but it does account for defusing processes or waves of engagement and disengagement. The assumption of open-ended integration is especially relevant in the English case where public spending cuts and the decline of regional structures has limited the institutional capacities of local authorities to engage in EU policies.

The *fusion* hypothesis detected five major fusion trends within both case studies: 1) Fusion through institutionalised procedures is weak and limited to the CoR. Formal fusion through the CoR is more relevant to local government in the NWoE which is directly represented by local councillors. 2) Interaction amongst local and European actors is subject to each individual local authority but also depends upon municipal agents, networks and a few active individual actors. 3) Through regional governance/government, local authorities from the NWoE and NRW were/are indirectly linked to EU policy-making. National (and regional) governments remain strong gatekeepers for local fusion dynamics. Due to the federal government structures, fusion dynamics in NRW are strongly determined by indirect but durable links via regional government. Bypassing strategies are more common in the NWoE than in NRW. 4) Interaction amongst local and European actors is subject to a limited, but increasing field of policies. As European funding has been linked to wider policy strategies, such as the Lisbon Agenda and Europe 2020, the fields of municipal engagement are growing. Also, German local actors promoted their preferences in the run-

up to the Lisbon Treaty. 5) Horizontal action amongst municipal actors is part of a fusing Europe, as it stimulates change and exchange of best practice. The effectiveness of horizontal cooperation needs to be assessed by means of future studies.

The *attitudes* hypothesis found that the micro-fusion perspective is useful for explaining local actors' attitudes toward European integration, though political and polity preferences are not always clearly articulated at the local level and vary amongst and within both case studies. Assessment of performance fusion demonstrated that local actors prefer sectoral integration and support for EU membership based on economic and integrative macro-benefits. Examination of compound fusion found that whilst English local actors welcome the flexible and inclusive channels to EU policy-making, actors in NRW are less appreciative. Instead NRW local actors want formal channels of access to EU policy-making. With regard to political fusion, local actors from NRW seek to protect their autonomy through clear demarcation of competences through subsidiarity and the right to local self-government. In the NWoE, flexible arrangements for involvement in the design and delivery of EU programmes and policies and more cooperation with central government is preferred. At the same time, actors in both regions support supranational integration for the purpose of dealing with macro-political challenges, which reflects a preference for supranationality rather than intergovernmentalism, as assumed by political fusion.

Based on the analysis of the five As and the three hypotheses, chapter 7 (see 7.5) aimed to advance the theoretical substance of the fusion body by portraying the role of local government within the European multilevel compound. It suggests that even though fusion dynamics are weaker at the local than at the national level, the approach offers a valuable perspective on local-supranational relations. This thesis offered seven major dynamics about how to understand and research the fusion of local government relating to: 1) the involvement in a limited but growing scope of EU policies; 2) the expectation of medium-term rather than long-term developments; 3) limited motivation on the part of local government for engaging in EU policies and politics; 4) a tendency for interaction on an informal basis; 5) the establishment of a multilevel compound including regional governance/government arrangements; 6) engagement in horizontal cooperation; 7) support for European integration alongside the wish to protect municipal autonomy and to be more strongly involved in the delivery and design of EU policies.

The seven major insights into fusion from a local government perspective can be used as new hypotheses for future research and help to develop a consolidated theoretical account for local-supranational relations. This thesis has thus advanced the body of fusion literature by explicitly introducing a local government perspective, and contributed to the development of theoretical accounts of European integration and subnational government.

8.5 Potential practical implications and future studies

The thesis ends with some observations on the potential practical implications of its theoretical and empirical findings. As MEP Brian Simpson pointed out to the author in an interview:

The fundamental question you need to address is: how effective is local government in the decision-making process in Europe and in member states? How do you bring the diversity of local governments together? How can local government be effective in the process of talking to Europe and getting help from Europe?

This decade will show whether or not local government gains a stronger role in European governance, and integration respectively. It is not clear yet to what extent the Lisbon Treaty practically upgrades local governments or leads to a ‘municipalisation’ within EU governance. Despite the push of local and European actors, municipalities are still not involved effectively in the delivery and design of the EU’s policies. Existing challenges at the local level, such as the lack of practical guidelines, conflicts of interests and the need for adequate capacities to engage in EU policies, have been highlighted by this thesis.

For 2014-2020, the Commission and the EP have initiated a number of tools to integrate the local level more strongly into the design and delivery of the cohesion policy, such as community-led development, integrated sustainable urban development and the building of effective partnerships amongst multiple levels. Insights into the EU’s multilevel compound could further inform local-supranational relations to stimulate European engagement of local government and to increase effective interaction amongst multiple levels. The new programming period offers a valuable occasion to follow up and reassess potential fusion dynamics, and maybe even to move from fusion theory to fusion practice.

The fusion approach needs to be further developed to offer a comprehensive framework to understand the role of local government in the European integration process. To consolidate the fusion approach would mean to develop ‘hard’ criteria against which its

empirical relevance can be tested. Detailed analyses of policy processes can provide further knowledge of fusion dynamics amongst multiple levels of governance. Qualitative and quantitative studies can deliver insights into other European member states for the assessment of fusion processes in countries with alternative politico-administrative systems, historical trajectories and geo-political profiles.

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Interviews for the NWoE case study

1. Bleaden, Andy. Funding and Programmes Manager at Stockport Metropolitan Borough. Manchester, 8th August 2012.
2. Carter Eleanor. Principal Regional and European Policy Officer at Halton Borough Council, member of the European Officers Network (EON), former European Policy Officer for the NW Regional Assembly, 4NW and the Regional Leaders Board, secretary to the European Cooperation Group (ECG). Manchester, 18th July 2012.
3. Caulfield, Richard. Chief Executive of the Voluntary Sector North West, head of the European Cooperation Group. Manchester, 24th September 2012.
4. Clucas, Flo. Former councillor of Liverpool City Council, former deputy leader of the Liberal Democrats, former chairperson of the NW Regional European Partnership, former member of the Programme Monitoring Committee for the Competitiveness area (NW ERDF programme), former member of the CoR for the NWoE. Liverpool, 18th July 2012.
5. European Cooperation Group. Meeting in Manchester, 13th September 2012.
6. Eyres, Martin. Head of European affairs at Liverpool City Council, Office of the Chief Executive. Liverpool, 26th November 2010.
7. Fitzgerald, Ged. Chief Executive of Liverpool City Council. Via email, 12th September 2012.
8. Hope, Louise. Principle Policy Officer in the City Policy Team at Manchester City Council, Office of the Chief Executive. Manchester, 4th July 2012.
9. Hornby, Katie. European Policy Development Officer at Cumbria County Council, *Europe direct* Centre Manager Manchester, 13th September 2012.
10. Lee, Francis. External Funding and Partnerships Manager at Cheshire West and Chester County Council. Chester, 10th December 2011.
11. McCarthy, Arlene. Labour MEP for the NWoE, Vice-Chair of the ECON Committee, substitute member of the JURI Committee. Via email, 12th October 2012.
12. Manley, Herbert. Councillor of Cheshire West and Chester County Council, Executive Member for Prosperity, member of the CoR for the NWoE. Chester, 10th December 2011.
13. Moore, Margaret. Strategic Funding Officer at Lancaster City Council, former European Policy Manager at NWDA and 4NW. Lancaster, 15th August 2012.
14. Pearson, Norman. Head of the former Cheshire Brussels Office. Brussels, 31st March 2010.

15. Rowles, Dominic. European Policy Advisor to the Local Government Association. Brussels, 31st March 2010.
16. Sharples, James. Head of the Merseyside Brussels Office. Via telephone, 27th September 2012.
17. Simpson, Brian. Labour MEP for the NWoE, Chair of the TRAN Committee, substitute member of AGRI Committee. St. Helens, 28th September 2012.
18. Sumner, Suzy. Head of the former North West Brussels Office of the NWDA. Brussels office. Brussels, 31st March 2010.
19. Vaughn, Derek. Labour MEP for Wales, member of the BUDG Committee, substitute member of the REGI and CONT Committees, former councillor for Neath Port Talbot County Borough. Via telephone, 7th September 2012.
20. Yates, Russel. Director of Progressive European Solutions, former Resource Procurement Team Leader at Tameside Metropolitan Borough, responsible for European projects and economic development, former European Funding Officer of Stockport Metropolitan Borough. Manchester, 19th July 2012.

Interviews for the NRW case study

21. Blania, Regina. European Officer of the City of Hagen. Hagen, 14th June 2011.
22. Brockes, Dietmar. Member of the NRW *Landtag*, member of the CoR, substitute member of the FDP parliamentary group, spokesperson for Economy, *Mittelstand* and Energy and Europe. Dusseldorf, 20th April 2010.
23. Eckstein, Gerd. EU Information and Coordination Office of the County of Borken, responsible for Regional Development, Regional Structure Policy. Borken, 17th June 2011.
24. EUCONET. Expert meeting in Cologne, 18th July 2011.
25. Garrelman, Andrea. Advisor for Environmental Law, Building and Planning Law, Measurement and Land Survey Register, Urban Development, Housing of the NRW Association of Counties. Dusseldorf, 20th April 2010.
26. Granitzka, Winrich. Leader of the CDU Council Group, Executive of the Committee on General Administration und Legal Issues/Procurement/International. Cologne, 22nd July 2011.
27. Haarmann, Ulrich. EU Advisor to the German Association of Cities. Brussels, 19th April 2010.
28. Irlé, Cornelia. Office for International Affairs at the Mayor's Office and the Council of the City of Dortmund. Dortmund, 25th May 2011.

29. Jostmeier, Werner. Member of the NRW *Landtag*, executive member of the German Delegation of the CoR, Chair of the Main Committee of the NRW *Landtag*. Dusseldorf, 20th April 2010.
30. Von Lennep, Hans-Gerd. Adjunct Advisor to the NRW Federation of Towns and Municipalities, Department I: Law and Constitution, European Law and Basic Issues, State and Municipal Constitution, Administrative Modernisation, Public Service Law, Immigration Law, Structural Law, E-Government. Dusseldorf, 3rd May 2010.
31. Leitermann, Walter. Head of the Brussels Office of the German Association of Cities, General Secretary to the German Section of the CEMR. Cologne, 21st April 2010.
32. Quaschnik, Matthias. Office for European Affairs at the Mayor's Office of the City of Iserlohn. Iserlohn, 21st July 2011.
33. Rapkay, Bernhard. SPD MEP for NRW, Chair of the SPD Parliamentary Group, member of the JURI, substitute member of the ECON Committee, 1994-1999 substitute member of the REGI Committee, 1999-2000 substitute member of the ITRE Committee, former executive of the SPD Dortmund, former co-opted member of executive board of the Federation of Towns and Municipalities, and is co-opted member of Federal Board of the Social Democratic Community of Municipal Politics (*Bundesvorstand der Sozialdemokratische Gemeinde der Kommunalpolitik*). Dortmund, 21st July 2011.
34. Ricken Nora. Advisor to the State Chancellery of NRW, Department IV A2: Principle EU Issues, European Competences, CoR. Dusseldorf, 20th June 2011.
35. Roellenblech, Udo. EU contact point at the Business Development Corporation (WEST mbH) of the County of Steinfurt, responsible for Europe, Energy, transport, food and *Europe direct*. Steinfurt, 17th June 2011.
36. Sparding, Norbert. Contact for Europe, *Euregio* and the Netherlands of the District Government Munsterland. Via telephone, 22th June 2011.
37. Thetard, Petra. European Officer of the City of Essen at the Office for Urban Development. Essen, 21st July 2011.
38. Thorstenson, Frederike. Advisor to the German Association of Counties, Department 25: Structural Policy, Regional Development, CoR, Foreign Affairs, County-Twinning. Brussels, 19th April 2010.
39. Verheyen, Sabine. CDU MEP for NRW, member of the CULT Committee, substitute member of the IMCO Committee, former substitute member of the REGI Committee, municipal spokesperson of the CDU parliamentary group, 1999-2009 mayor of the city of Aachen, member of the Municipal Political-Association (*Kommunalpolitische Vereinigung*). Aachen, 20th June 2011.
40. Waiz, Eberhard. Head of Department V 1: Basic Issues of EU Funding Programmes, Coordination of the Departmental European Policies of the Ministry of Federal and European Affairs. Dusseldorf, 29th March 2010.

41. Wirth, Theresia. Advisor to department V 1: Basic Issues of EU Funding Programmes, Coordination of the Departmental European Policies of the Ministry of Federal and European Affairs. Dusseldorf, 29th March 2010.
42. Wolf, Frieder. Head of the Office for International Affairs of the City of Cologne. Cologne, 7th July 2011.

APPENDIX INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Absorption

1. Which of local administrative functions are affected by EC legislation?
(Competition law, environmental law etc.)
2. Which EU politics and measures are particularly relevant for your municipality?
3. How would you describe the development of EC legislation that affects local authorities?

Attention

4. In which fields of municipal tasks are local actors aware of the EU as a relevant part of their daily work and in which is it rather a minor issue for them?
5. Has the attention of local actors towards EU politics changed over time and what does it depend upon?
6. Do local actors and authorities pay attention to the developments of EU treaties (Lisbon treaty) in relation to their administrative work?
7. How would you describe the attention of your region/country in comparison to other regions and member states?

Adaptation

8. Is the Committee of Region a useful institution to promote local concerns?
9. Can you give examples for institutional or procedural changes in the relations between local authorities and other domestic levels of government due to the influence of the EU?
10. Is it desirable for local governance to establish institutional and procedural changes at the regional, national or supranational level and how could they look like?
11. Can you give examples for how local authorities adapt their administration to deal effectively with EU business?
12. Which are the most important actors and units for European affairs in local administration?
13. Is it necessary or important for local authorities to adapt to the EU and what would that depend on?
14. Are there examples for procedural or institutional changes in the relations between municipalities or counties due to the EU?

Action

15. What are important opportunities to get access to EU-funding for local authorities?

16. How to promote local interests successfully, what are potential ways for local authorities to exert influence on EU decisions and to participate in EU decision-making? (Examples from active authorities and successful attempts)

17. What are relevant channels and addressees? (Municipal associations, offices in Brussels, regional representations, MEP, Council of Municipalities and Regions of Europe, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities [of the Council of Europe], Assembly of European Regions, EUROCITIES etc.)

18. What are the reasons for not taking action towards the EU?

19. Are there example for how authorities and actors develop common positions and strategies towards the EU – also beyond regional and state borders?

Attitudes

Performance Fusion

20. What are the benefits and constraints of EU membership for local authorities? (Advantages, disadvantages)

22. Is the EU a desirable preference for local actors and is working with the EU a good thing?

Compound Fusion

23. Are traditional domestic structure without interference of the EU preferred by municipal actors?

24. Are there examples where local actors see the EU as an important vehicle to realise their own interests?

25. Does the political structure of the EU provide municipalities with appropriate channels to take influence when their interests are at stake and are local concerns sufficiently represented in Brussels?

26. How and at which level would you see a chance to provide municipalities with more possibilities to take part in the European decision-making process?

Political Fusion

27. Are there examples of authorities bypassing the regional or national government by directly promoting preferred politics at the EU level or with the help of the EU and could there be an advantage for local authorities?

28. How did the role of local governance within the EU develop to from the Maastricht to the Lisbon Treaty? (Upgrade of municipalities?)

29. How would you like to see the EU developing in the future with regard to local preferences?

30. Are a closer European Union, maybe even a European state, or strong autonomous member states preferred from a local perspective?

Attitude +

31. What is particular about local-supranational relations in this region and in this country compared to others?

(Geographical situation, political culture, administrative structures, state arrangement, identity, history, economic situation, Eurosceptic or Europhil etc.)

32. How would you describe the role of municipalities in an increasingly Europeanised political system?

(Passive, active, future prospects)

33. Overall, would you speak of an Europeanization of the local level?

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DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis I presented for the PhD degree of the Manchester Metropolitan University is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and other persons is clearly identified in it). No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institution of learning. The copyright of the thesis rests with the author. Quotation from it is permitted, provided that full acknowledgement is made. The thesis may not be reproduced without the prior written consent of the author. I warrant that this authorisation does not, to the best of my belief, infringe the rights of any third party.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marius Guderjan', written on a light-colored background.

Marius Guderjan

Manchester, 27 March 2013