"Europe with the Regions":
Channels of Regional Representation
in the European Union

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One of the most important consequences of European integration is the multiplication of extra-national channels for subnational political activity. Territorial relations are being transformed: national states are losing control over important areas of decision making, a variety of new channels have been created for regional mobilization, and subnational governments are engaged in innovative, transnational, patterns of interaction. Regions, however, do not engage in these activities equally. There is no congruence in the political role of cities, municipalities, and regions in the European Union. On the contrary, there are enormous differences in the level of organization, financial resources, political autonomy, and political influence of subnational governments across Europe. The result is the unfolding of common threads of change against a background of persisting variation.

One of the most important consequences of European integration is the multiplication of extra-national channels for subnational political activity. Regional governments are no longer constrained to diadic political relations with national state actors, but interact with a variety of actors in diverse arenas. There have been many signs of this in recent years. Local and regional governments from several member states have set up independent offices in Brussels; subnational governments, across the European Union and beyond, have created a complex and still largely uncharted maze of formal and informal networks; in regions designated for cohesion funding by the European Union (EU) subnational officials help design and implement economic development plans alongside national and Commission officials; in Austria, Belgium, and Germany, regional governments participate directly in their country's representation on the Council of Ministers; and subnational governments are represented in highly visible, though still primarily symbolic, assemblies—most notably, the new Committee of the Regions established in the Maastricht Treaty. However, a distinctive feature of multilevel governance in the EU is that all regions do not engage in

these activities equally. There is no congruence, nor even convergence, in the political role of cities, municipalities, and regions in the European Union. Instead, there are enormous differences in the level of organization, financial resources, political autonomy, and political influence of subnational governments across Europe.[1]

This article analyzes the dynamics of subnational involvement in European politics for one set of subnational actors: regional governments. Political channels, both formal and informal, for regional actors have multiplied beyond recognition. These channels now stretch far beyond the boundaries of their respective states, but there are wide differences in the capacity of regional actors to exploit these channels. A multilevel polity has developed, but there is no territorial uniformity in its operation. In fact, the creation of new avenues for regional mobilization brings into focus persistent differences in the organizational and political capacities of regional actors. At one extreme, Austrian *Länder*, German *Länder,* Belgian regions, and Spanish *communidades autónomas* are well funded, strongly institutionalized, entrenched within their respective states, and active in the European arena. At the other extreme, regional governments are weak in Greece, Ireland, Portugal, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries, and they are virtually silent at the European level.[2] If one wishes to find strong subnational political actors in the latter countries, one has to look first and foremost to town and city mayors who, even if they are aware of opportunities in the European political arena, lack the resources to mobilize within that arena.

There is, therefore, little sign of the kind of territorial convergence implied in the notion of a "Europe of the Regions." In perhaps no other area of political institutionalization in the European polity is there greater diversity than in the territorial politics of the member states. Multilevel governance seems to be leading not to uniformity but to continued diversity as contrasting regional actors are brought together within an overarching polity.

In this study, we survey the five principal channels of subnational representation in the European Union: the Committee of the Regions, the Council of Ministers, the Commission, regional offices, and transnational associations. To what extent do these channels empower subnational governments, and, in particular, regional actors within the European Union?

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[1]Gary Marks, François Nielsen, Leonard Ray, and Jane Salk, "Competencies, Cracks, and Conflicts: Regional Mobilization in the European Union," *Comparative Political Studies* 29 (April 1996): 164-192; Charley Jeffery, "Regional Information Offices and the Politics of 'Third Level' Lobbying in Brussels" (paper presented to the UACES Conference, Leicester University, October 1995).

[2]In Ireland and Portugal, regional administrative structures were set up to comply with EU structural funds regulations. Similar reforms are on the agenda in Sweden and Finland. Regional decentralization has been discussed regularly in the Netherlands and Greece. Greece held its first regional elections for a rather weak regional tier of government in Spring 1995.

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

At Maastricht, the member states agreed to create a Committee of the Regions on lines parallel to the existing Economic and Social Committee. This is, in effect, an expansion of the Consultative Council of Regional and Local Authorities, set up by the Commission in 1988 with consultative rights over the formulation and implementation of regional policies. The Committee of the Regions has a larger membership than the previous Consultative Council, and although the new body remains largely symbolic, it is given a wider consultative role.[3] The treaty directs the Council of Ministers and the Commission (not the Parliament) to consult with the Committee of the Regions on regional matters.[4] In addition, the committee can forward its opinion to the Council and Commission "in cases in which it considers such action appropriate."

The Committee of the Regions has advisory, not co-decision, powers. Ultimately, the committee has to rely on persuasion. It has two sources of influence. First, its members speak for regional or local governments that implement European policies. European decisionmakers find it difficult to ignore regional concerns when designing European policies. Second, some of its members (from Belgian, German, Austrian, and Spanish regions in particular) are in a position to pressure their national governments directly through the Council of Ministers or in their respective national arena.

The Committee of the Regions is extremely diverse. One source of division lies in the selection of representatives. In most countries, the national government dominates the selection of subnational representatives on the committee. The twenty-four representatives of the United Kingdom are picked by the national government to represent a patchwork of local and "regional" authorities. In France, not all regions and only a handful of localities are represented, and it is the national government which ultimately decides who goes to Brussels. In the federal or strongly regionalized countries, the national government is constrained by powerful regional governments. Hence, Belgian, Spanish, German, and Austrian regions each have their own seat in the committee, and national governments play no role in the selection process.

[3]*The Maastricht Treaty* (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, 1992), Articles 189a, 189b, and 189c. See also Renaud Dehousse and Thomas Christiansen., eds. *What Model for the Committee of the Regions? Past Experiences and Future Perspectives* (Florence: European University Institute, 1995). The Consultative Council of Regional and Local Authorities (CCRLA) was attached by the European Commission to its Directorate General for Regional Policy (DG XVI) in 1988. The members were appointed by two European-wide subnational associations, the Assembly of European Regions (AER) and the council for European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). The council was expected to give greater legitimacy to the Commission's role in the recently reformed cohesion policy. In reality, the Council played an unassuming role until it was abolished in 1993. The agenda was predominantly set by the Commission. A major cleavage between regional and local authorities hampered the council in asserting greater independence.

[4]More specifically, on education and vocational training, health, culture, trans-European networks, and economic and social cohesion.

The committee is severely divided internally. One line of conflict pits regions, led by the German *Länder,* which demand the principle of institutional representation of regional authorities as in the German *Bundesrat,* against regions and local authorities, led by the Spanish *communidades autónomas,* which insist upon personal representation. The difference is one of principle, but it also has practical consequences because German *Länder* selected their highest ranking officials for the committee. Institutional voting would allow *Land* governments to delegate civil servants to represent them if their presidents who are formal members of the committee were not able to attend in person. Under personal voting, a *Land* loses its influence if its formal representative is not present. The latter view has prevailed so far, but the debate is not closed.

Another cleavage is between local and regional interests. The representatives are mostly regional in Austria, Belgium, Germany, France, Spain, and Italy. In Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, and the UK, they are mostly local. The local-regional divide comes down largely to the difference between federal or regionalized countries, on the one hand, and unitary member-states on the other.[5] This cleavage is crosscut by a rift between the North and the South of Europe, pitting contributors to the EU budget against beneficiaries. The North-South rift is reinforced by a contrast in political styles.[6] Finally, the representatives cannot agree on whether the committee should be predominantly a political forum where subnational representatives debate on general issues of EU governance, or a policymaking body where subnational governments bring to bear their expertise on day-to-day EU policymaking.

It is too early to make firm predictions about the Committee of the Region's role as a channel of regional representation, but there are grounds for believing that the committee's influence will be limited. Its formal powers are consultative, and its informal influence is likely to be constrained by internal division. Weak regions may raise their sights by participating in formal consultation at the European level, but institutionally entrenched regions have a variety of more direct channels for exerting political pressure.

THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Although subnational governments now have a European institution of their own through which they can channel their concerns, this is not necessarily the most effective strategy. Their influence on European decisionmaking may be greater if they are able to work through other European institutions, such as the Council of Ministers or the European Commission,

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[5] The newly elected president, M. Jacques Blanc (representing a French regional council), announced immediately that the committee will advise the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference to divide the committee into two separate institutions, one for regional and another for local authorities. The regions are currently outnumbered by local representatives (about 45 percent to 55 percent).

[6] Some observers expect representatives to line up according to party political affiliation, which would constitute another cleavage.

although this depends on certain conditions. To the extent that subnational governments are entrenched in their respective states, they have been able to exert pressure on their respective state executives to gain a voice on particular policies and institutionalized influence on the most powerful EU institution, the Council of Ministers.

Under Article 146 of the Maastricht Treaty, a member state can be represented by regional ministers with full negotiating powers in the Council of Ministers.[7] This arrangement also applies to all Council working groups that prepare the decisions of the Council of Ministers. Regional authorities as well as regional ministers can be at the center of EU decisionmaking. However, this channel is highly selective. Only Belgian regions (and communities), German *Länder*, and Austrian *Länder* currently have access to it. Spanish regions are demanding a similar arrangement. It is unlikely to be available to subnational authorities in other member states.[8]

In Spain, *Convergencia i Unio* (CiU), the ruling party in Catalonia, exploited its coalition potential after the 1993 election to gain a larger role in EU decisionmaking. In return for CiU's agreement to support the Socialist government, the Socialist party (PSOE) agreed to reevaluate regional representation in all EU organs and to incorporate regional representatives in decisionmaking on regional competencies. PSOE also agreed to set up a bilateral commission to inform state institutions of regional government positions on EU issues.[9]

Formal channels are by no means the only ways to involve subnational authorities in European decisionmaking. Most member states have developed practices to take territorially diverse interests into account. In the UK delegation in Brussels, Welsh and Scottish administrations are represented indirectly through appointments in functional areas of special concern to them. For example, European fisheries policy and regional policy tend to be monitored by civil servants from the Scottish office. However, civil servants in Wales and Scotland work ultimately within a unitary framework.[10] Similarly, the French system of *cumul de mandats*, in combination with party

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[7]Article 146 reads: "The Council shall consist of a representative of each Member State at ministerial level, authorized to commit the government of that Member State."

[8]This arrangement does not allow individual regions to vote in the Council. Regions still operate within the national mold. For example, if a minister of the Walloon region in Belgium casts the vote in the Council, he represents Belgium rather than the Walloon region.

[9]See *El País*, 7 October 1993; Gary Marks and Iván Llamazares, "La transformación de la mobilización regional en la Unión Europea," *Revista de Instituciones Europeas* 22 (March-April 1995): 149-170.

[10]Mette Jensen, "Regional Mobilisation in Response to European Integration. The Potentiality of a Europe of the Regions," (unpublished M. Phil. Th., Oxford, 1994); James Mitchell, "Lobbying Brussels: The Case of Scotland Europa" (paper presented at the European Consortium for Political Research Workshops, Madrid, April 1994); Sonia Mazey and James Mitchell, "Europe of the Regions? Territorial Interests and European Integration: The Scottish Experience," Sonia Mazey, Jeremy Richardson eds. *Lobbying in the European Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 95-121; Barry Jones, "Wales and the European Union: The Development of a Regional Political Economy" (paper presented at the European Consortium for Political Research Workshops, Madrid, April 1994); Michael Keating, "Le Monde pour Horizon. Québec, Catalonia and Scotland in the European Union" (paper presented at the International Political Science Association, Berlin, August 1994).

allegiance, can give regional politicians—not necessarily regional administrations—considerable room to influence the French position.

LINKS WITH THE COMMISSION

A third institutional channel consists of the participation of subnational actors in the EU's structural or cohesion policy, which aims at reducing disparities among the regions in the European Union.[11] The 1988 reform of the structural funds stipulates that the Commission, national authorities, regional or local authorities, and social actors should work in close, equal, and ongoing "partnership."[12] The chief administrative expression of partnership has been the establishment of monitoring committees, which include subnational representatives alongside representatives of the Commission and national government, to formulate, manage, and assess regional programs within broadly defined guidelines.

Cohesion policy has produced a highly uneven pattern of subnational mobilization across the EU. This is partly by design because structural funds policy, which forms the core of EU cohesion policy, is by definition discriminatory. About 40 percent of the population of the EU is covered by the structural funds. This includes Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Greece, southern Italy, and eastern Germany, which receive the most intensive aid. Smaller amounts of money are allocated to selected areas in the UK, Belgium, France (and its overseas territories), and western Germany, and since 1995, parts of Finland, Sweden, and Austria.

Partnership has operated differently from one member state to another.[13] The bulk of the redistribution is organized in Community Support Frameworks, economic development plans for each of the participating member-states and constituent regions. More than any other EU policy, cohesion policy reaches directly into the member states, engaging subnational governments and private actors with the Commission and member-state governments. Unlike the budget for cohesion policy, which is determined largely by intergovernmental bargaining, there is a diverse array of networks across individual member-states concerned with decisionmaking in

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[11]We use the term "cohesion policy" to encompass the Structural Funds created in 1988 and the new Cohesion Fund created under the Maastricht Treaty. On this topic, see Liesbet Hooghe and Michael Keating, "The Politics of EU Regional Policy," *Journal of European Public Policy* 1 (1994): 367-393; Gary Marks, "Structural Policy in the European Community," in Alberta Sbragia, ed. *Europolitics: Institutions and Policymaking in the "New" European Community* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1992), pp. 191-224; Gary Marks, "Structural Policy and Multilevel Governance in the EC," Alan Cafruny and Glenda Rosenthal, eds. *The State of the European Community* (Boulder: CO, Lynne Rienner, 1993): pp. 391-411; and Barry Jones and Michael Keating, eds. *The European Union and the Regions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[12]The original wording in the regulations spoke of "competent authorities designated by the member state at national, regional, local or other level" as the third partner, but it was obvious that regional and local authorities were targeted. The formulation was strengthened in favor of regional and local authorities in the 1993 regulations.

[13]See Liesbet Hooghe, ed. *Cohesion Policy and European Integration: Building Multi-Level Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

structural programming. Actors vary enormously from one network to another, but there is one actor common to all: the European Commission.

To what extent have subnational governments been empowered by the practice of cohesion policy? It would be premature to jump to hard conclusions because structural programming is a recent innovation. The first round of structural programming began in 1989 and was completed in 1993. The second round is, at this time of writing, only just underway. In such a brief time span, one is unlikely to find dramatic institutional recasting of territorial relations. The causal path from structural programming to institutional relations among levels of government is complex. One might look first for rising expectations on the part of key subnational actors as a result of their integration (or lack of integration) in cohesion policy formulation and implementation. Further along the causal path, one might examine the extent to which this has led to mobilization of demands on the part of subnational actors for political influence and perhaps even demands for some constitutional revision of territorial relations. At the same time, one would expect to find some response on the part of national government actors, perhaps a concerted attempt to use cohesion policy to buttress national coordination. Finally, one would have to analyze the dynamics of the resulting contention. One of the basic elements of this story, and arguably of any sensible modelling of causality here, is that it involves a sequence of lags. The time scale for major institutional change as a consequence of these processes may be one of decades rather than months or years.[14]

It is not, perhaps, too early to take stock of initial, more subtle, signs of change that appear to have taken place between the first round of structural programming in 1989 and the beginning of the second round in 1994.

Summarizing the impact of the first round of structural programming in Ireland, Brigid Laffan notes that the 1988 reform of the Funds has eroded the gatekeeper role of national government.[15] Although the overall structure of power has not shifted decisively, cohesion policy has "disturbed" relations between national and local actors. Local community groups have been mobilized; local input into national government policy has been enhanced; local actors have sought greater control over local economic development; and new impetus has been generated for a major overhaul of Irish local government.[16]

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[14]Such analysis is complicated by the fact that cohesion policy is just one, among several, influences on territorial relations. Also, one cannot discount the possibility that these influences may interact in complex ways. To name an example, in Jeffrey Anderson's account of cohesion policy in Germany, the effects of structural programming cannot be understood in isolation from the multiple effects of reunification.

[15]Brigid Laffan, "Ireland: A Region Without Regions-The Odd Man Out?" Hooghe, ed. *Cohesion Policy and European Integration*, pp. 321-341.

[16]See ibid.; Carmel Coyle and Richard Sinnott, "Regional Elites, 'Regional Powerlessness'and European Regional Policy in Ireland," *Regional Politics and Policy* 1/2 (Summer 1992): 71-108.

In Greece, as in Ireland, the first round of structural programming from 1989 to 1993 did not result in a decisive institutional shift in territorial relations. At an informal level, however, P. C. Ioakimidis believes that structural programming has energized subnational government, thereby raising expectations and demands, modernizing bureaucracies, and creating new communication channels for local and regional authorities, linking them with national government, with subnational governments in the rest of Europe, and with the Commission.[17] Ioakimidis asserts that multilevel governance can be discerned in these developments, a strong claim given that Greece remains one of the most centralized states, if not the most centralized, in the European Union.[18]

In Belgium and Spain, cohesion policy feeds into pressures for regionalization and the ongoing conflict concerning the allocation of competencies across levels of government. In both countries, territorial relations have been in flux, but in each case, the effects of cohesion policy interact with deep-seated and more powerful forces rooted in ethnocultural conflicts.

In Belgium, according to Stefaan De Rynck, the introduction of structural programming has coincided with, and reinforced, the territorial restructuring of Belgium. There has been a simultaneous centralization and decentralization of competencies from the first round of structural programming (1989 to 1993) to the second (1994 to 1999) as decisionmaking has shifted to the regions at the expense of both the national state and localities. Structural programming has taken place in a contentious situation in which political actors at each level of government were already mobilized; hence, structural programming has been the object of strategic interaction rather than a source of new expectations or demands as in Ireland or Greece. The chief independent effect of structural programming has been to stir up the already complex institutional pie of Belgian administration by facilitating the creation of new agencies that are controlled by the regional government rather than by local or national authorities.[19] Although new avenues have been offered to local actors, the EU clearly constitutes a window of opportunity for regions to strengthen their position *vis-à-vis* a weak nation-state government.

The effects of structural programming in Spain have interacted with the ongoing process of regionalization and the ongoing conflict between the national state and certain regions, particularly Catalonia and the Basque Country, about regional competencies. The *communidades autónomas,*

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[17]P. C. Ioakimidis, "EU Cohesion Policy in Greece: The Tension Between Bureaucratic Centralism and Regionalism," Hooghe, ed. *Cohesion Policy and European Integration,* pp. 342-363.

[18]Ibid., Susannah Verney and Fouli Papageorgiou, "Prefecture Councils in Greece: Decentralization in the European Community Context," *Regional Politics and Policy* 2/1 (Spring 1992): 109-38.

[19]Stefaan De Rynck, "Europe and Cohesion Policy-making in the Flemish Region," Hooghe, ed. *Cohesion Policy and European Integration,* pp. 129-162.

particularly those empowered under the special statutes, were too strongly entrenched to be excluded from structural programming, but neither have they been integrated into it. Successive Spanish governments have tried to bypass the regions, or where this was not feasible, have tried to contain regional influence by splitting funding between national and regional budgets.

In Italy, coordination problems impeded structural programming, and a significant proportion of allocated EU funds were never spent. Jürgen Grote observes that relations between the European Union and the regional funds take place outside of constitutional and formal political rules.[20] Within this disarticulated context, structural programming appears to have been a pressure for the reform and rationalization of regional-national relations in the direction of informal partnership.

In France, Germany, and the UK, territorial relations are highly institutionalized, and the funds provided by the EU for regional development are either about the same (in the case of France) or less (in the cases of Germany and the UK) than the funds provided by the national government. The Commission has had little influence over policymaking or the allocation of competencies among policy participants. Richard Balme and Bernard Jouve find that, in the case of the Rhônes-Alpes, there is little evidence of new networks replacing previous ones.[21] The national planning agency, DATAR, along with regional prefects, were successful in coordinating subnational governments and, thereby, constraining regional autonomy. Structural programming in Germany has been integrated into the existing, and highly institutionalized, Gemeinschaftsaufgabe networks linking regional governments to the federal government and to each other. Moreover, given that German territorial relations already embody aspects of the partnership principle promulgated by the Commission, EU structural programming advances norms already established in Germany. In the UK, as well, structural programming has left formal institutions intact. Local authorities remain constitutionally impotent and dependent on the national government, which dominates not only resources but also the allocation of competencies across levels of government.

In France, Germany, and the UK, however, there are signs that the experience of structural programming has buttressed demands on the part of subnational actors for participation in regional planning and has, at the very least, intensified contention between subnational and national government.

    [20]Jürgen Grote, "Cohesion in Italy: A View on Non-Economic Disparities," Liesbet Hooghe, ed. *Cohesion Policy and European Integration*, pp. 256-293.
    [21]Richard Balme and Bernard Jouve, "Building the Regional State: Europe and Territorial Organization in France," Hooghe, ed. *Cohesion Policy and European Integration*, pp. 219-255.

Regional councils in France have begun to play a more influential role in negotiating the Contrats de Plan that form the basis for the French Community Support Framework. No longer does DATAR dominate the process of formulating the plans; under the most recent round of structural programming, the plans are determined by negotiation between regional councils and prefectures.[22] The result of this is not that the national government has lost its predominance; rather, the outcome seems to be increased conflict and mistrust across levels of government focused on such issues as the unresolved composition of the monitoring committees and the role of regional councils in cross-border arrangements.

Even the highly institutionalized German system of regional policy making has been affected by European policy, most particularly in the new *Länder*. *Länder* governments were able to play off the European Commission and the German federal government against one another, and gain greater policy autonomy at the expense of Bonn as well as the Commission. Bonn was forced to condone a system of regional aid akin to that in southern Europe, undermining the Gemeinschaftsaufgabe model; the Commission saw its policy model adopted by the *Länder*, but was distanced from actual programming. As a quid pro quo for substantial EU financial support to the new *Länder*, the European Commission pressured the old *Länder* to cut back their regional aid schemes, which were said to distort competition. These developments have brought the established system of Gemeinschaftsaufgabe in German regional policy to the brink of collapse.[23]

In the UK, structural programming has enhanced expectations among subnational actors concerning their role in regional development and has precipitated a variety of new subnational partnerships including, most notably, the North-West Regional Association, a broad-based association of regional actors. Exposure of local government officials to structural programming has opened new perspectives for them and made them impatient with London's resistance to the implementation of partnership.[24] In short, cohesion policy has enhanced the role of subnational authorities in EU policymaking at both national and supranational levels.[25]

REGIONAL OFFICES

In recent years, subnational governments have established independent offices in Brussels which lobby, gather information, and network with other

[22]Thomas Conzelmann, "Patterns of 'Regionalism' in EU Policymaking: Lessons from North Rhine-Westphalia, Nord-Pas de Calais and North West England," (unpublished paper, 1994).

[23]See Jeffrey Anderson, "Germany and the Structural Funds," Hooghe, ed. *Cohesion Policy and European Integration*, pp. 163-194.

[24]Michael Keating, "The Nations and Regions of the United Kingdom and European Integration," Udo Bullmann, ed. *Die Politik der dritten Ebene. Regionen im Europa der Union* (Baden-Baden: 1994), pp. 225-246.

[25]Ian Bache, Stephen George, and R. A. W. Rhodes, "The European Union: Cohesion Policy and Subnational Authorities in the United Kingdom," Hooghe, ed. *Cohesion Policy and European Integration*, pp. 294-319.

regional actors and with EU political actors. The first regional offices were set up in 1985 by Hamburg and Saarland. Three years later, there were eighteen such offices. At this time of writing, there are seventy, if one includes offices representing individual cities and national associations of local governments alongside those representing regions and localities. They range from poorly funded bureaus, staffed by one or two part-time officers, to large quasi-embassies employing (in the case of the Catalan office and several *Länder* offices) as many as twenty representatives in addition to secretarial staff.

The existence and type of regional offices in Brussels vary decisively across countries. All sixteen German *Länder* are represented, and the three Belgian regions are represented, as are half of the Spanish *communidades autónomas.* These are countries with a strong tier of regional representation, and in each case, that tier dominates representation in Brussels. In France, the regional tier of subnational government is weaker, and although most offices were established by régions, two départements also have offices. In the United Kingdom, where subnational government is relatively weak, local authorities, regional quangos, regional enterprise organizations, national local authority organizations, and even universities fund seventeen offices representing an individual city (Birmingham), individual local authorities, regional groupings of local authorities, and a national local authority organization, alongside offices representing the North of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Independent representation of subnational governments in the remaining countries is very weak or nonexistent. Italy provides just two offices, neither of which represent regional governments. An office from Lazio is funded by private business, while the Italian government funds an office representing the Mezzogiorno. Regional governments in Italy are impeded from setting up offices by the 1970 Constitution, which gives the state executive exclusive competence in international affairs. Denmark, which has a weak tier of regional administration, is represented by three towns. Ireland has just one regional office, while no subnational governments in Portugal or Greece have offices in Brussels.

Quantitative analysis of this phenomenon reveals that the regions having representation are not those that receive the most funding from the EU, or the poorest, most needy regions. Instead, the most politically entrenched, most ethnically and politically distinct regions. The greater the overlap between the competencies of a regional government and the EU, the more likely that the regional government will mobilize in Brussels. Regional governments having political interests that are distinct from their respective national governments—reflecting perhaps a strong regional identity—are also more likely to be represented in Brussels.[26]

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[26]See Marks, Nielsen, Ray, and Salk, "Competencies, Cracks, and Conflicts."

Table 1
Regional Offices in Brussels, November 1993

	Level of Representation[*]			
	Nuts 1	Nuts 2	Nuts 3	Other
Belgium				
	Vlaams Gewest[b]			
	Région Wallonne			
	Bruxelles-Capitale			
Denmark				
				Aarhus[c]
				Aalborg[c]
				Odense[c]
Germany				
	Baden-Württemberg			
	Bayern			
	Berlin			
	Brandenburg			
	Bremen			
	Hessen			
	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern			
	Niedersachsen			
	Nordrhein-Westfalen			
	Rheinland-Pfalz			
	Saarland			
	Sachsen			
	Sachsen-Anhalt			
	Thüringen			
				Hanse[d]
Spain				
		Andalucia		
		Cataluña		
		Galicia		
		Madrid[c]		
		Extremadura		
		Pais Vasco		
		Comunidad Valenciana		
		Murcia		
		Canarias[f]		
France				
		Nord Pas-De-Calais[g]		
		Alsace		
		Bretagne[h]		
		Côte d'Azur		
		Martinique		
		Pays de la Loire[h]		
		Picardiel		
		Rhône-Alpes		
			Bouches-du-Rhône	
			Manche Expansion[j]	
				Centre Atlantique[k]
				Grand Est[l]
				Grand Sud[m]

Table 1 (continued)
Regional Offices in Brussels, November 1993

	Level of Representation[a]			
	Nuts 1	Nuts 2	Nuts 3	Other
Italy				
	Lazio[n]			
				Mezzogiorno[o]
United Kingdom				
		North of England		
		Northern Ireland		
		Scotland		
		Wales		
		Yorkshire and Humberside		
			Cornwall and Devon	
			East Midlands	
			Essex[i]	
			Highlands & Islands	
			Kent	
			Lancashire	
			Strathclyde	
			Surrey	
				East of Scotland

[a]To gain comparability across subnational regions, the European Commission has developed three general categories of territorial unit which, in descending size, are designated NUTS (*Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales Statistiques*) 1, 2, and 3.

[b]At this time of writing Flanders has not selected a representative for this office.

[c]The Danish offices represent towns rather than NUTS regions and are not listed by ARE or the *Conseil de la Region Bruxelles-Capitale* list of regional offices.

[d]The Hanse office represents Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein.

[e]Madrid is also a NUTS 1 and NUTS 3 region.

[f]The Canary Islands is also a NUTS 1 region.

[g]Nord Pas-De-Calais is also a NUTS 1 region.

[h]Bretagne and Pays de la Loire share an office.

[i]Picardie and Essex share an office.

[j]The Centre Atlantique office represents Poitou-Charente, Centre, and Castille-Leon.

[k]The Grand Est office represents Champagne-Ardenne, Bourgogne, Lorraine, Alsace, and Franche-Comté.

[l]The Manche Expansion office represents Manche.

[m]The Grand Sud office represents Acquitaine, Mid-Pyrenees, Languedoc-Roussillon, Provence Alpes-Côtes d'Azur, and Corse.

[n]The Lazio office is funded by private firms rather than the regional government of Lazio.

[o]The Mezzogiorno office is funded by the Italian state, not regional governments.

The regions that are represented directly in Brussels engage in both competition and cooperation, depending on the issue. On issues having to do with the institutional structure of the EU and the role of subnational governments within it, subnational governments may develop a common position. They form a variety of loose and opportunistic alliances, often with subnational governments in other countries, to better compete for EU funding, including particularly funding for industrial reconversion and for transborder regions. Several regions and localities also share office space and even personnel in Brussels. Usually these offices represent subnational governments in the same country, but there is one case of a transnational office, set up by Essex and Picardie. Block analysis of data gathered in a survey of subnational offices in Brussels reveals that the informal networks they form with each other are particularly dense among offices in the same country, so there is a strong national basis to regional interaction.[27] These offices also interact intensively with EU institutions, particularly the Commission.

On many issues, subnational governments are intensely competitive. They are in continual competition for EU spending, and this leads them to contend for prior knowledge of funding opportunities, privileged access to information, contacts with private industry, and access to regional coalitions.[28] Regional representation seems to be driven by a dynamic of competitive mobilization and counter-mobilization across and particularly within countries that induces regional governments to establish offices so as not to be at a relative disadvantage in competing for scarce resources.

TRANSNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The past decade has seen the emergence of a diverse and growing number of overarching and specialized transnational organizations representing subnational governments, including the Assembly of European Regions, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, the "Four Motors for Europe," Eurocities, the Association of Regions of Traditional Industry, C-6 (a network of six French and Spanish Mediterranean cities), the European Association of Border Regions, the Union of Capital Regions, associations covering the western, central, and eastern Alps and the Pyrenees, the Association of Frontier Regions, and the Coalfields Communities Campaign, among many others.[29]

[27]Jane Salk, François Nielsen, and Gary Marks, "Patterns and Determinants of Cooperation Among Subnational Offices in Brussels: An Empirical Investigation" (unpublished paper, 1994).

[28]Sonia Mazey and Jeremy Richardson make the point that the complexity of the decisionmaking leads to an "unstable and multi-dimensional environment" which is highly unpredictable for interest groups. Gaining advance warning of EU policy initiatives is thus a not insignificant function for regional offices in Brussels. See Sonia Mazey and Jeremy Richardson, "Introduction: Transference of Power, Decision Rules, and Rules of the Game," Mazey and Richardson, eds. *Lobbying in the European Community*, pp. 3-26.

[29]See Francesc Morata and Xavier Muñoz, "Vying for European Funds: Territorial Restructuring in Spain," Hooghe, ed. *Cohesion Policy and European Integration*; Sonia Mazey and James Mitchell, "Europe of the Regions? Territorial Interests and European Integration: The Scottish Experience;" Mazey

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) was founded in 1985 by nine interregional associations. In 1993, AER was made up of delegates of 235 regional parliaments representing about 80 percent of the EU's population.[30] The blind spots are in Ireland, Greece, the United Kingdom (mainly the Southeast), and Denmark.

AER has developed a close working relationship with the European Commission, particularly in the area of structural funds, but also on institutional issues. It has pushed for increased involvement of regions in European decisionmaking, pressing for a Committee of the Regions, Article 146, and the inclusion of the subsidiarity principle in the Maastricht Treaty. AER was instrumental in the practical preparation for the Committee of the Regions, although its relations with the new body have become tenuous.[31] AER may become a more traditional interest-group organization as the Committee of the Regions gains greater standing.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), which was founded in 1951, is the European section of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA). Although its name (dating from 1984) suggests differently, it really represents local interests. Its role in the European arena is similar to that of AER.

Alongside AER and CEMR are more functionally specific transnational networks, essentially of three types. Some have been created expressly by the Commission and are attached to a specific Community program or initiative; they are the direct top-down spin-off from European policy. Examples include associations for Objective 2 regions and for Objective 1 regions, and narrower networks built around Community initiatives like Leader (local networks in rural areas), Rechar (conversion of coalmining areas), Retex (textile areas), or Renaval (shipbuilding).[32] Some are composed of regional governments, others of local authorities.

and Richardson, eds. *Lobbying in the European Community*, pp. 95-121, and Gary Marks, "Structural Policy and Multilevel Governance in the EC," Alan W. Cafruny and Glenda G. Rosenthal, eds. *The State of the European Community: The Maastricht Debates and Beyond*, vol.2 (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), pp. 391-410.

[30]Failing this (which is the case in six member-states), they are appointed by an association or body constituted at the regional level by the local authorities at the level immediately below.

[31]Interview with a spokesperson of AER in Brussels, June 1994. AER regards itself as a promoter of the interests of the weaker regional authorities in particular. It had therefore asked for a privileged link with the committee as institutionalized "patron" for the weaker regions, but was rebuffed.

[32]Hooghe and Keating, "The Politics of EU Regional Policy;" Paul McAleavey, "The Political Logic of the European Community Structural Funds Budget: Lobbying Efforts by Declining Industrial Regions," (European University Paper RSC No.94/2, 1994). According to McAleavey, the Objective 2 network had its origins in a meeting held in Brussels in July 1991, which brought together the sixty regions eligible for Objective 2 assistance (regions in industrial decline). It was organized by the European Commission. Ostensibly a gathering of experts on regional economic development, it had also a clear political goal: to put pressure on the European institutions as well as the national governments to support further funding for Objective 2. The Commission let it be known that further initiative would have to come from the regions. Within two weeks, eleven Objective 2 regions came together to organize a follow-up meeting. That second gathering appointed a core group of eight regions to represent the interests of the Objective 2 regions in meetings with Commissioners and representatives of other EU institutions.

In addition, the Commission runs specific networking programs that are not limited to structural policy. One is the Exchange of Experience Programme (EEP), to aid transfers of knowhow between developed and disadvantaged regions, which was initiated by the European Parliament in 1989 and then adopted (and partly financed) by the Commission. To receive EU money, regions from at least three different countries must design a joint yearlong program. There were 60 such projects in 1993, involving more than 100 of the 183 regions in the EU.

Recite (Regions and Cities of Europe) was launched in 1991 by the Commission to fund thirty-seven subnational networks focused on self-help exchange programs. For example, *Roc Nord* allows Danish subnational representatives to share knowhow in economic and environmental planning with Crete. The *Quartiers en crise* project links twenty-five cities on problems of social exclusion, and *Dionysos* pools technology among ten French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese wine-growing regions. These programs involve the peak subnational organizations. AER helps the Commission oversee the Exchange of Experience Program, and CEMR acts as the intermediary between the subnational authorities and the Commission on Recite projects.

A second set of networks has its origins in self-directed mobilization among regions with common territorial features or policy problems. Networks in this category include the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), the *Alpes* associations, the Working Community of the Pyrenees, the Working Community of the Jura, and the Association of European Regions of Industrial Technology (RETI, in fact, regions in industrial decline).[33]

An important factor influencing the effectiveness of such associations as lobbyists is their capacity to recruit widely. The European Commission is eager to exchange information and collaborate with regional associations, but has been reluctant to deal with those that are narrowly based.[34] Diversity of members and interests often causes significant strains within broad-based organizations, but they have succeeded in being accepted by the Commission as the most representative interlocutors for subnational interests.

AER runs a few policy-specific networks on its own. In 1989, for example, it took the lead in initiating an Interregional Cultural Network (ICON) for exchange of information and implementation of joint projects. It has intensified collaboration between regional cultural offices for which it received EU funding. It has also been engaged in similar initiatives for local authority associations over the past twenty years.

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[33]See Susanna Borras, "The Four Motors for Europe and its Promotion of R&D Linkages Beyond Geographic Contiguity in Interregional Agreements," *Regional Politics and Policy* 3 (Summer 1993): 163-176.

[34]W. Averyt, "Eurogroups, Clientela and the European Community," *International Organization* 29 (1975): 949-972; Justin Greenwood, Jürgen Grote, and Karsten Ronit, eds. *Organized Interests and the European Community* (London: Sage, 1992); Robert Hull, "Lobbying Brussels: A View from Within," Mazey and Richardson, eds. *Lobbying in the European Community*, pp. 82-92.

Networks of this second type are often concerned with reducing regional inequalities. Most focus on, or include, less well-off areas of the European Union, which often are in desperate need of EU money for restructuring and development. Hence, they represent the bottom-up cohesion effort by subnational authorities, but have in the process become dependent on the European Commission.

A third type of network entails self-organization on the part of relatively successful regions. The most famous example is the Four Motors association initiated in 1988 between Baden-Württemberg, Rhône-Alpes, Catalonia, and Lombardy. This association involves the most dynamic regions in their respective countries in promoting technological collaboration, research and development, and economic and cultural exchange. The signatories of the agreement explicitly endorse greater European integration. Wales established links with the four in 1990 and 1991. Essentially, governments in these regions act as brokers, setting a broad regulatory framework and bringing interested parties together, while decisions concerning collaboration are left mainly to business or to other private actors. Other examples of self-generated associations among thriving regions are the *Euroregio* partnerships, such as the *Euregio* encompassing the three-country border region of Maastricht in the Netherlands, Liège, and Hasselt in Belgium, and Aachen and Cologne in Germany. On the local side, many long-standing town-twinning schemes have been broadened to include economic partnerships and trading and technology transfers. The open-textured nature of networking makes it very difficult to come up with reliable data on the density of the networks. The British Audit Commission estimated that 22 percent of British local councils are involved in programs outside the structural funds.[35]

This third category of networks is driven largely by economic factors. Subnational political leaders and civil servants act as "ministers of external trade" for their respective subnational territories. That role is in line with a current paradigm in regional development policy in which subnational political leaders are expected to act as brokers rather than planners.[36] Brokerage involves political connections rather than direct economic controls. In this paradigm, regional government leaders are not in the business of

[35]Quoted in Stephen George, Ian Bache, and Rod Rhodes, "The UK and the Committee of the Regions," Jens J. Hesse, ed. *The Institutionalization of the EC Committee of the Regions* (First Intermediate Report to the German *Länder*, 1993). Further sources are Peter John, "The Presence and Influence of United Kingdom Local Authorities in Brussels," Patrick Dunleavy and Jeffrey Stanyer eds. *Contemporary Political Studies, 1994* (Political Studies Association of Britain, 1994), pp. 906-922; Barry Jones, "Wales and the European Union: The Development of a Regional Political Economy," (paper presented at the European Consortium for Political Research Workshops, Madrid, April 1994).

[36]See Udo Bullmann, Michael Goldsmith, and Edward C. Page, "Subnational Government Autonomy and Political Authority: Regions, Localities and the Shifting Balance of Authority in Europe" (paper presented at the American Political Science Association, New York, September 1994); Michael Goldsmith, "The Europeanization of Local Government," *Urban Studies* 4/5 (Spring 1993): 683-699; Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Nanetti, eds. *The Regions and European Integration. The Case of Emilia-Romagna* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990).

providing new services or funding large development projects, but can mobilize resources from the private sector and from European coffers.

CONCLUSION

The institutional changes outlined above have brought subnational actors directly into the European arena. National states still provide important arenas for subnational influence, and, as we have stressed, the participation of regional governments at the European level reflects their institutional capacity within their respective political systems. National governments, however, no longer play the critical role of intermediary between subnational government and international relations, and subnational governments are no longer nested exclusively within national states. They have created dense networks of communication and influence with supranational actors, particularly the Commission, and with subnational actors in different states. There is no hard-and-fast line for subnational governments separating their respective state arenas from the European arena. European integration is domesticating what would previously have been described as international relations.

The outcome of this process is not captured by the notion of a Europe of the Regions.[37] There is no overarching model of governance across the EU, but a variety of mutually exclusive models with widely different conceptions of how authority should be organized territorially. Basic units of subnational governance are widely divergent. As a consequence, mobilization of subnational units within the EU varies enormously from country to country and increasingly, within countries. Hence, representation of subnational governments in the Committee of the Regions is disparate and contested. Territory matters more than any other basis of identity in the emerging European polity, but once we probe beneath the shell of national states, there are no common principles of political organization that might provide a coherent basis for a European polity.

It is possible to argue that this is merely a transitional phase in a process of convergence. Subnational governments in several countries are now in routine communication with each other. Where regional governments are weak or absent, as in Greece, Ireland, or Portugal, subnational officials who participate on the Committee of the Regions can see close at hand the powers wielded by regional actors in Spain or Germany, and they may demand the same for themselves. There are strong grounds for expecting diffusion as an unintended outcome of multilevel governance. But one would also expect that where institutional reforms are generated, they are assimilated within the particular context of the country concerned.

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[37]This point is made by Jeffrey Anderson, "Skeptical Reflections on a 'Europe of Regions': Britain, Germany, and the European Regional Development Fund," *Journal of Public Policy* 10:4 (1990): 417-447.

We suggest that far from being a transitory situation, the absence of an overarching model of governance is a fundamental feature of the European polity. Multilevel governance describes authority relations that are unstable, contested, territorially heterogeneous, and non-hierarchical, rather than stable, consensual, territorially uniform, and hierarchical. Multilevel governance is a result of two sets of developments, European integration and regionalism, that converge in pulling decisionmaking away from national states. What we are seeing is a messy process of deconstruction and reconstruction, rather than the replacement of one stable political order by another. Territorial relations throughout Europe are moving, rather than fixed, targets.

While we diagnose some common directions of development, there are few grounds for supposing territorial convergence in the EU. The powers of subnational governments vary immensely across the member states, from financially, politically, and organizationally entrenched Belgian regions, German *Länder*, and more recently, Spanish *communidades autónomas*, to weak, poor, and organizationally unarticulated subnational governments in several countries on the periphery of the EU.

We have argued that territorial relations across the EU are being transformed in ways that one can generalize about: national states are losing control over important areas of decisionmaking; new opportunities have been created for regional mobilization; and innovative, transnational patterns of interaction have been established among actors at several levels of government. The result is the unfolding of common threads of change against a background of persisting variation.