Local government transnational networking in Europe: a study of 14 local authorities in England and France

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Abstract

Local authorities play a key role in European Union (EU) governance. They are no longer simply ‘passive receivers’ of EU policy, but proactively engage at the European level. This active engagement includes participation in local government transnational networking (LGTN), an activity which sees local authorities form links with their counterparts in other countries. The contemporary prevalence of LGTN presents an interesting empirical puzzle. Local authorities lack the formal competence to engage beyond their territories. Furthermore, since the financial crisis councils’ budgets have been restricted. Why, then, are local authorities participating in LGTN when they lack both the formal competence and the financial resources? This thesis tackles this puzzle. In particular it explores three broad questions relating to LGTN:

- What is the extent of LGTN?
- Why do local authorities participate?
- What determines effective participation?

By focusing on the local authorities within transnational networks, this thesis makes an empirical contribution to knowledge and informs a body of literature which has until now overlooked the perceptions of local actors in EU governance. It further informs conceptual debates surrounding multi-level governance and local level Europeanization. This focus is achieved through a cross-national analysis of 14 local authorities in south-east England and northern France, and adopting a qualitative empirical approach which draws data from semi-structured interviews, document analysis and participant observation.

The findings show that LGTN continues to be a prevalent phenomenon and is therefore an important feature of the EU’s multi-level system of governance. However, engagement is not uniform. While all local authorities are involved, variation is present in the number of links councils engage in, the type of networks they target and their motivations for participation. In all cases, however, engagement in LGTN is driven by a rationalist logic, as councils seek to achieve individual pre-determined strategic aims and improve their relative positions. A number of local and external factors are shown to impact how effectively councils engage in LGTN and, ultimately, explains why the process of local level Europeanization is marked by differentiation rather than convergence.
Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

Word count

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AER</td>
<td>Assembly of European Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMRIE</td>
<td>Alliance of Maritime Regional Interests in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>Airport Regions Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AREFLH</td>
<td>Assembly of the European Regions Producing Fruit, Vegetables and Plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AREPO</td>
<td>Association of European Regions for Products of Origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIS</td>
<td>Department for Business, Innovation and Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAQDAS</td>
<td>Computer aided qualitative data analysis software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCP</td>
<td>Cities for Climate Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEMR</td>
<td>Council of European Municipalities and Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIVITAS</td>
<td>City-Vitality-Sustainability network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoE</td>
<td>Council of Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoR</td>
<td>Committee of the Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPMR</td>
<td>Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EARLALL</td>
<td>European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGTC</td>
<td>European Grouping of Territorial Co-operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERDF</td>
<td>European Regional Development Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERRIN</td>
<td>European Regions Research and Innovation Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTSs</td>
<td>Joint technical secretariats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEPs</td>
<td>Local Enterprise Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGTN</td>
<td>Local government transnational networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEP</td>
<td>Member of the European Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLG</td>
<td>Multi-level governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOT</td>
<td>Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NECSTouR</td>
<td>Network of European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEREUS</td>
<td>Network of European Regions Using Space Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPLD</td>
<td>Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nrg4SD</td>
<td>Network of Regional Government for Sustainable Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUTS</td>
<td>Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLIS</td>
<td>Providing Operational Links through Integrated Systems network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PURPLE</td>
<td>Peri-Urban Regions PPlatform Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Research aim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECITE</td>
<td>Regions and Cities of Europe community initiative programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RETI</td>
<td>Association of Traditional Industrial Regions / Association of European Regions of Industrial Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>Research question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELP</td>
<td>Southern England Local Partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMEs</td>
<td>Small and medium enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLACE</td>
<td>The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
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Dissemination

Journal articles


Conference papers


**Poster presentations**


*Shortlisted as a poster competition finalist.*


**Other publications**


**Publications in progress or under review**

‘Revisiting subnational transnational networking in the English Channel Region’. Revise and resubmit at *Regional Studies*. 

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Research focus and relevance

This thesis investigates local government transnational networking (LGTN) undertaken by local authorities in unitary and centralized polities in the European Union (EU).

Underpinning this research focus is a recognition that local authorities are important actors in EU governance. They are directly responsible for the implementation of around 70 per cent of EU legislation and policy (Briggs, 2010, p. 12; Klausen & Goldsmith, 1997, pp. 238–239; LGA, 2010; Van Bever, Reynaert, & Steyvers, 2011a, p. 16). Local government is also the main beneficiary of the EU’s regional policy, an activity which accounted for a third of the Union’s total budget in

1 The literature uses a variety of terms to refer to this activity, including ‘transnational local authority networks’ (Benington, 1994), ‘transnational municipal networks’ (Bouteligier, 2013; Bulkeley, 2005), ‘Bulkeley et al., 2003’, ‘Kern & Bulkeley, 2009’, ‘Lee & van de Meent, 2012’, ‘inter-urban networks’ (Balme & Le Gales, 1997; Leitner, Pavlik, & Sheppard, 2002; Payre, 2010; van der Heiden, 2010), ‘trans-European local authority networking’ (Pheips, McNeill, & Parsons, 2002) and ‘metropolitan co-operation’ (Heeg, Klagge, & Ossenbruggen, 2003). This thesis adopts the term ‘local government transnational networking’ (LGTN) as it encompasses all levels of local government involved in this activity, regardless of their size, level within the state hierarchy and whether they are urban or not.

2 A range of other terms are used to refer to local authorities in the literature, including ‘non-central government’, ‘subnational authorities / government’ and ‘sub-central government’. For consistency this thesis uses the terms ‘local government’ and ‘local authorities’. These terms are applied universally to refer to all levels of government below that of the central state, and so make no distinction between so-called ‘regional’ and lower levels.
2014. More generally, “local and regional authorities are responsible for between 50 per cent and 70 per cent of public investment in Europe” (Le Galès 2002 p. 91).

The importance of local government is recognized by the EU. As highlighted by Schausberger (2013 p. 32):

Although EU Member States are under no obligation to choose a particular model for their institutional structure or for decentralization, it has to be pointed out that the EU treaties recognize and respect local and regional self-government, showing that the EU sees local and regional democracy as one of the foundations of its own legitimacy.

This has led to formal institutional recognition of local authorities at the EU level in the form of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) (see Hönnig & Panke 2013; Loughlin 1996; Warleigh 1997). The local level has also been actively engaged in the development and delivery of EU policy—especially regional policy—through the encouragement of the ‘partnership principle’ (see Bache 1998; Bauer & Börzel 2010; Hooghe 1996a; Sodupe 1999).

Local government itself has undertaken a range of informal external engagement activities, often collectively referred to as ‘paradiplomacy’ (see Aldecoa & Keating 1999; Keating 2000; Lecours 2002; Stegmann McCallion 2011). The contemporary extent of this is such that Briggs (2010) argues foreign policy:

has gone from being the preserve of a closed group of policy-makers and departments, to a cross-government and cross-society endeavour. Foreign policy is no longer something that happens within one government department; it is a national activity and involves actors of different types at the local, regional, national and international levels.

In the EU, this manifests itself in well over 200 subnational offices in Brussels, acting as ‘mini-embassies’ for local authorities (Huysseune & Jans 2008 p. 1; Jans & Stouhuysen 2007 p. 209; Tatham 2010 p. 81; Tatham & Thau 2014 p. 257). The number of local authority staff present in Brussels is said to outnumber those employed by national permanent representations (Tatham & Thau 2014 p. 258).
Part of this external engagement activity includes LGTN. This sees local authorities form links and co-operate with their counterparts in other countries. While it is worth noting that LGTN is not just a European phenomenon and can be observed globally\(^3\), it is nevertheless most intense in the EU. LGTN provides a way for local authorities to access EU resources. It also provides opportunities to influence the EU policy process and a way to come together and share innovative policy ideas and ‘best practices’. Networks such as Eurocities, the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR), Energy Cities and Providing Operational Links through Integrated Systems (POLIS) are now well established actors in EU governance. They are joined by a myriad of other local authority networks representing a diverse range of policy sectors (see Appendix A). In this way LGTN is seen to play a role in the wider process of European integration (Church & Reid, 1999, p. 644; Ward & Williams, 1997, p. 444). As argued by Sodupe (1999, p. 58), “there is no doubt that the activities of these organizations serve to increase interdependence and, as a result, favour the construction of a united Europe”.

The emergence and proliferation of LGTN in the EU has been charted by scholars since the 1990s (see Section 2.2.2). Along with broader trends in governance—such as the hollowing out of the state and the increased role of non-governmental actors—the presence of LGTN has led to conceptual debates surrounding the nature of the EU as a ‘multi-level’ or ‘networked’ polity (for example Ansell, 2000; Börzel, 1997; 1998; Hooghe & Marks, 2001a). However it also presents an interesting, yet under explored, empirical puzzle. It is addressing this empirical question where this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge on LGTN.

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1.2 The empirical puzzle

Local authorities in unitary and centralized polities—such as England and France—are mandated to implement the policies of central governments. They have limited scope to pursue their own initiatives. They have no statutory duty to engage in activity beyond their territorial limits (Keating, 1999, pp. 11–12). As a result, local government’s legal authority and competence to participate in LGTN is questionable (Casson & Dardanelli, 2012, p. 602). Similarly, from the perspective of the EU, LGTN does not constitute a ‘formal’ channel for local authorities to interact with it (Blatter, Kreutzer, Rentl, & Thiele, 2008; Hooghe, 1995). Despite this context, however, LGTN is a fact of life in contemporary European politics. Identifying why local authorities engage in LGTN, therefore, warrants further investigation.

This question has taken on additional significance since the impact of the financial crisis, which has seen local authorities across the EU face austerity and public finance pressures, limiting their capacity to deliver their statutory responsibilities. A recent report by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and Dexia Crédit Local (2012, p. 16) shows that central government grants to local authorities across Europe—including England and France—have reduced. In England, the cuts to local government have been described by the English Local Government Association (LGA) as “the worst in living memory” (Bailey, Bramley, & Hastings, 2015, p. 571). This, compounded by a reduction in local tax revenues, has led to an EU-wide decrease in local authority budgets since the start of the financial crisis (Davey, 2012, p. 43). One English council leader has proclaimed this adverse financial climate constitutes “the end of local government as we know it” (Dudman, 2012). This leads to a question of why local authorities continue to invest in discretionary external engagement activities—such as LGTN—despite the obvious resource constraints they face in delivering their core statutory services.

Studying LGTN in this context is therefore both relevant and timely. To address
1. Introduction

this empirical puzzle, this thesis tackles three broad questions relating to contemporary LGTN:

1. What is the extent of LGTN? (becomes RQ1)
2. Why do local authorities participate? (becomes RQ2)
3. What determines effective participation? (becomes RQ3)

1.3 Contribution to the existing literature

Despite the importance of local government in wider EU governance and the active role played by councils, there is a recognition among scholars that the local dimension to European—and indeed international—politics is often neglected over analyses of the member states or the institutions themselves (Blatter et al., 2008, p. 469; Briggs, 2010, p. 5; Guderjan, 2012; Jeffery, 2000; Lefèvre & d’Albergo, 2007, p. 318; Van Bever et al., 2011a, p. 13). As Blatter et al. (2008, p. 469) argue, “there remain major gaps, ambiguities and uncertainties in our knowledge of the foreign activities of sub-national governments”. This certainly applies to LGTN, with Betsill and Bulkeley (2004, p. 476) noting that “the role of transnational networks of subnational governments . . . has been overlooked”, and Payre (2010, p. 263) more recently commenting that it represents “a kind of ‘black box’ that is only rarely opened”. This thesis therefore seeks to open this black box. Given the consensus in the existing literature that LGTN is under researched (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004, p. 476; Bouteligier, 2013, p. 3; Casson & Dardanelli, 2012, p. 601; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 310; Payre, 2010, p. 263), this thesis makes a clear contribution to knowledge in this under explored area.

Where the local level is the focus of analysis, local authorities are often viewed in a top–down manner; they are regarded as incidental actors in EU governance or merely passive receivers of EU policy (Jeffery, 2000, p. 8; Van Bever et al., 2011a, p. 26). This

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4 These are formulated into the study’s research questions (RQs1–3), which are discussed in more detail in Section 1.7.
1. Introduction

lack of attention represents a significant gap in existing European studies scholarship, particularly as it does not correspond with the empirical reality. As argued by Van Bever et al. (2011a, p. 27):

[While] local governments in recent years have become more dependent on Europe in terms of policy implementation and eligibility for funding in absolute terms, the balance today seems to be in favour of a more active orientation of local governments’ activities in the EU multi-level system. As a consequence, it seems of equal importance to tackle the more voluntary aspects of local governments “adaptation to Europe”.

Given this voluntary ‘active orientation’, the need to view EU engagement by local authorities from the bottom–up is important. By focusing on the perceptions of local actors throughout, this thesis addresses this gap in the existing literature on local government in the EU.

Aside from this, this study makes a number of empirical contributions relating to the three broad questions set out above.

What is the extent of LGTN?

During the 1990s, the relative novelty of LGTN led Benington and Harvey (1998) to ask if it was a “passing fashion or new paradigm”. To date, this question remains unanswered. Existing studies on LGTN have either focused on a handful of transnational networks (for example Griffiths, 1995; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008; Lee & van de Meene, 2012; Sampaio, 1994; Wisc, 2000b, 2000a), or been conducted as singular case studies of one local authority’s activities (for example Baert, 2010; Casson & Dardanelli, 2012; Hamedinger, 2011; Payre, 2010; Pichler-Milanovic, 2010; Tosics, 2010). While in some cases the literature has provided surveys of the extent of LGTN—such as the studies on transnational co-operation across the English Channel (for example Church & Reid, 1995, 1996, 1999; Heddebert, 2001, 2004; Sparke, 2000; Thomas, 2006)—this is now too dated to inform an assessment of the current picture.

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5 Van der Heiden’s (2010) study of seven EU and Swiss cities is an exception here.
1. Introduction

This thesis therefore addresses this by contributing a contemporary survey of the extent of LGTN.

Why do local authorities participate?

In trying to account for the presence of LGTN, scholars have sought to uncover what role it has in EU governance. However, analyses of LGTN tend to focus primarily on the level of the networks, rather than the actors within them (for example Bouteligier, 2013; Griffiths, 1995; Heinelt & Niederhahner, 2008; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Ward & Williams, 1997). Therefore, while these studies reveal the function of transnational networks, they do not necessarily account for the motivations held by those participating. In addition, existing literature on LGTN focuses heavily on its role in EU regional policy, the allocation of structural funds and engagement in EU funded transnational projects (for example Benington & Harvey, 1998; Benz & Eberlein, 1999; Church & Reid, 1996, 1999; Lawrence, 2000; McAlavey & Mitchell, 1994; Pflieger, 2014; Sodupe, 1999). Given the amount of EU funding available to local authorities, this is to be expected. However this narrow focus has been criticized by some scholars (John, 2000, p. 881; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 310), and it potentially overlooks LGTN in other policy areas which might be important for local authorities.

This thesis addresses these weaknesses and makes a contribution to knowledge here by uncovering the motivations held by local authorities participating in LGTN. The inductive research design adopted does not limit the analysis to individual policy areas, and so offers a more complete analysis of councils’ engagement than existing studies have been able to offer.

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6 A body of literature on the role of LGTN in environmental and climate change policy goes some way to address this weakness although arguably still confines itself to one policy area (for example Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004, 2006; Bouteligier, 2013; Bulkeley, 2005; Bouteligier, 2013; Lee & van de Meene, 2012; Kern, 2010, 2014; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Ward & Williams, 1997).
What barriers do local authorities face when participating?

The question of local authority’s ‘effectiveness’ in engaging in LGTN remains largely unexplored by the literature. While some scholarship investigates the effectiveness of transnational networks themselves (for example Bouteligier 2013, Heinelt & Niederhafner 2008, Lee & van de Meene 2012, Kern & Bulkeley 2009), these analyses rarely extend to the local level. Yet how local authorities perceive the effectiveness of their LGTN activities is an important factor in their consideration to continue participation. It is posited that a range of factors contribute to local authorities’ effective engagement. By investigating these factors and their presence among the councils participating, this thesis makes an empirical contribution to knowledge and to our understanding of LGTN.

1.4 Defining LGTN

While the existence of LGTN is recognized, it is not consistently defined in the literature. This makes it necessary to outline what is meant by ‘LGTN’. Sodupe (1999, p. 62) defines local government transnational networks as:

associations formed between regional entities of different states whose ultimate purpose is to act as pressure groups in the European institutions, and foster co-operation based upon common interests, needs and aspirations.

Karvounis (2011, p. 218) expands on this definition, outlining six features which characterize LGTN:

- A) The voluntary character and autonomy of the members of a network.
- B) Participation of partners … from different countries, having a distinct legal status.
- C) Commitment to common objective(s) … and to the preparation of one or more initiatives.
- D) Optional or legal consolidation of the network. In case it is not legally consolidated, the network ought to be set up according to a Charter of Commitments signed by each partner.
E) Observance of the rules of sound economic management and transparency.

F) Respect of the principles of mutual understanding and toleration among the partners and collective responsibility in the course of the implementation of an initiative.

Kern and Bulkeley (2009, pp. 309–310) identify three key features of transnational networks:

1. Members are autonomous and are free to leave or join.
2. They are non-hierarchical, poly-centric and horizontal, and as such can be regarded as a form of self-governance.
3. Decisions taken by the network are implemented by members.

These features—along with the almost exclusive involvement of local authorities over other actors—make LGTN a unique feature of EU governance. As argued by Bulkeley et al. (2003, p. 241), transnational networks on the one hand:

exhibit the characteristics of a social movement, yet on the other by virtue of their membership, they have a close association with the formal institutions of government and administration at the local level.

To this end, they might be characterized as “quasi-governmental” (Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 241). For clarity, the definition of LGTN adopted by this thesis is as follows:

- Participation in voluntary associations formed of at least two local authorities from at least two different countries, which can be characterized by their horizontal and non-hierarchical nature.

This definition means a number of organizations which the literature elsewhere identifies as cases of LGTN (see Appendix A) are not classified as such for the purposes of this thesis.7 This delimitation aside, the definition adopted still encompasses a diverse range of transnational activities. To this end, a three-fold classification of LGTN is advanced in Section 4.1 to aid in the analysis of this activity.

7 For example, the CEMR is not defined here as a case of LGTN as its members are national local government associations—such as the English LGA—not local authorities themselves (Happaerts, 2008, p. 6; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008, pp. 177–179; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 122).
1. Introduction

1.5 Research approach

Given the nature of the empirical puzzle outlined in Section 1.2 and the gaps identified in the existing literature in Section 1.3, this thesis seeks to understand engagement in LGTN from the perspectives of the local authorities involved. To this end an inductive research design is adopted, utilizing a qualitative empirical approach which is able to capture the perceptions of local level actors. This includes qualitative semi-structured interviews with 68 participants—local officers, councillors and others directly involved with LGTN—an analysis of 117 local authority produced reports and documents, and participant observation during ten LGTN events. In line with the focus on local government in unitary and centralized polities, this thesis makes use of a cross-national case selection, investigating the LGTN activities undertaken by 14 English and French local authorities. These methods and the case selection are discussed further in Chapter 3.

1.6 Conceptual framework

For its conceptual framework, this thesis utilizes the approaches of multi-level governance (MLG) and Europeanization to analyse LGTN. Both approaches emerged as part of the ‘governance turn’ in European studies (see Kohler-Koch & Rittberger, 2006), and facilitate the analysis of the EU as an already functioning political system, rather than trying to explain the process of integration (Bache, 2004b p. 2; Ladrech, 2010, p. 8).

MLG points to a system of governance where political activity and decision making is dispersed across multiple territorial levels and between a range of state and non-state actors (see Hooghe & Marks, 2001a). LGTN is seen as a feature of this

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8 Both the United Kingdom (UK) and France are classified as unitary and centralized states by Lijphart (2012, p. 178), although the UK’s system of asymmetric federalism complicates this classification somewhat. Nevertheless, while devolution has occurred in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, England remains highly centralized (Lijphart 2012, p. 17). This is also the case in France, despite attempts at decentralization during the 1980s (Lijphart 2012, p. 180).
complex multi-level system. The presence of LGTN in the EU, therefore, confirms its characterization as a multi-level polity. However, MLG only provides a description of the EU’s political system, limiting its analytical capacity as a concept (Jordan, 2001, p. 201). This thesis overcomes this weakness by also applying a Europeanization framework.

Europeanization refers to domestic adaptation to the EU. Here participation in LGTN is viewed as a local authority response to the reality of European integration. In other words, Europeanization explores participation in LGTN as a process which leads to MLG. As Kern and Bulkeley (2009, p. 312) argue, “the debate on Europeanization . . . complements the analysis of the European multi-level system by providing a sense of the means by which multi-level governance is accomplished”. Applying a Europeanization framework allows the thesis to explore the extent and differentiation of engagement in LGTN (RQ₁), the directionality of and the underlying logic driving participation in LGTN (RQ₂), and the mediating factors which affect participation (RQ₃). Both MLG and Europeanization are discussed further in Section 2.1.

1.7 Research aims and questions

The overall aim of this thesis is to gain an insight into LGTN from the perspective of local authorities. Following from the gaps in the literature identified in Section 1.3 and the desire to address the empirical puzzle outlined in Section 1.2, this study aims to:

- RA₁: Identify contemporary examples of LGTN by local authorities in south-east England and northern France.
- RA₂: Establish the rationale, from a local authority perspective, for participation in LGTN.
- RA₃: Identify the factors which determine effective engagement in LGTN.

These research aims (RAs₁–₃) translate into the following research questions:
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- RQ₁: What is the current extent of LGTN in south-east England and northern France?
- RQ₂: What benefits do local authorities seek from their involvement in LGTN?
- RQ₃: What factors determine effective engagement in LGTN?

These questions are now further elaborated.

**RQ₁: What is the current extent of LGTN in south-east England and northern France?**

LGTN has been recognized as a phenomenon emerging from the late 1980s (see Section 2.2.2), and a plethora of networks have since been identified by scholars (see Appendix A). However, while the existence of this activity is acknowledged, the contemporary extent of participation by local authorities remains largely unexplored. During the 1990s, Benington and Harvey (1998) asked if LGTN was a “passing fashion or new paradigm”. At the same time, Church and Reid (1996, pp. 1300–1301) argued “debates over the politics of cooperation and networks maybe exaggerating their importance, since such relationships can be transitory and can lack stability”. Therefore, this thesis begins its empirical analysis by identifying the LGTN activities undertaken by local authorities in south-east England and northern France. Doing this provides an answer to Benington and Harvey’s (1998) question and confirms the importance of this activity. Furthermore, findings from a body of literature which investigated LGTN in these areas during the 1990s (for example, Church and Reid, 1995, 1996, 1999; Heddebaut, 2001, 2004; Sparke, 2000; Thomas, 2006) are updated with contemporary empirical evidence.

Two supplementary questions follow. The first concerns how participation in LGTN has evolved—if at all—over time (RQ₁ₐ). Since LGTN was first identified during the 1990s, the EU has undergone enlargement and seen its policy competences increase. Local authorities have also had to respond to the pressures of the financial
1. Introduction

crisis and austerity. How has engagement in LGTN changed in this context? The second sub-question concerns whether participation in LGTN is uniform across local authorities or marked by heterogeneity (RQ1b). Early studies of local government engagement in the EU pointed to high degrees of differentiation among councils (for example Balme & Le Galès 1997; Goldsmith & Sperling 1997). To what extent does this continue to be the case, or has there been convergence in local authorities’ approach to LGTN? These supplementary questions facilitate an assessment of the extent of local level Europeanization (RQ1a), and its differential impact on local government (RQ1b). As well as an empirical contribution, therefore, this research question informs the conceptual debates on local level Europeanization and the status of MLG in the EU.

RQ2: What benefits do local authorities seek from their involvement in LGTN?

Having assessed the extent of LGTN the thesis moves to address the question of why local authorities participate. The focus here is founded on the premise that LGTN is led from the bottom–up, and “has not been a strategy simply imposed on local government” (Bulkeley et al. 2003, p. 237). By trying to understand why local authorities participate in LGTN—despite lacking the formal competence and simultaneously facing financial pressures affecting their capacity to deliver statutory services—this question tackles the core of the empirical puzzle outlined in Section 1.2. As explained above, while scholarship has charted the function of transnational networks, little remains known about the actual motivations of the actors participating. Therefore assessing this activity from the perspective of the local authorities involved fills a gap in the existing literature on LGTN.

As with RQ1, two supplementary questions serve to deepen the empirical analysis by contributing to the conceptual debate on local level Europeanization. Firstly, what do local authorities’ motivations for engaging in LGTN reveal about the directionality—top–down, bottom–up or horizontal—of local level Europeanization
1. Introduction

(RQ_{2a})? This ultimately speaks to the debate surrounding the nature of the local government–EU relationship: is it ‘hierarchical’ or ‘co-operative’ (Kern, 2010)? Secondly, following the application of a new institutionalist approach to Europeanization (Börzel & Risse, 2003; Hamedinger & Wolffhardt, 2010), what is the underlying logic driving participation in LGTN (RQ_{2b})? Do local authorities see LGTN as a strategic tool or ‘opportunity structure’ to improve their relative positions (the rationalist explanation), or is it a case of “me-tooism” (Duchacek, 1984, p. 18), where participation is seen as the ‘right’ thing to do (the sociological explanation)?

RQ_{3}: What factors determine effective engagement in LGTN?

This question focuses on the ‘effectiveness’ of LGTN and investigates the factors which determine effective engagement. It is rooted in the strategic approach local authorities take to their LGTN activities (revealed by RQ_{2}), and is founded on the empirical observation that councils undertake regular assessments of their effectiveness in securing benefits from LGTN. It further recognizes the differential participation in LGTN by local authorities (revealed by RQ_{1}), and seeks to understand the factors which cause this variation. Empirically, this question addresses Bulkeley et al.’s (2003, p. 248) concern that “to date, there has been no formal evaluation of the effectiveness of networks”. Indeed, while some studies have touched on the effectiveness of networks themselves (for example Bouteligier, 2013; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Lee & van de Meene, 2012), little remains understood at the local level.

In line with the rationalist approach, effectiveness here is assessed from the perspective of the local authorities participating in LGTN. This focuses attention on a number of factors which affect how well councils participate. Conceptually, a link is provided to the literature on local level Europeanization, which suggests the presence of mediating factors accounts for differential engagement of local authorities (de Rooij, 2002; Risse, Cowles, & Caporaso, 2001).
1.8 Thesis structure

The rest of this thesis is structured as follows:

**Chapter 2** summarizes the conceptual and empirical background to this thesis. While the contribution of this thesis is primarily empirical, the first section briefly conceptualizes LGTN as a feature of MLG, brought about through the process of local level Europeanization. An overview of both approaches is provided. This not only emphasizes the need to employ both concepts together, but also highlights the usefulness of the Europeanization approach as an analytical tool, providing a means to assess the directionality of LGTN, its extent and differentiation, and the underlying logic driving participation. The chapter then provides the empirical background to LGTN. A summary of the relationship between local government and the EU is given, before a background to LGTN more specifically is provided.

**Chapter 3** outlines the research design and methods employed by this thesis. It starts by rationalizing two main characteristics of this study’s research design: its inductive research design and its use of a qualitative empirical approach. The chapter then discusses the case selection for this thesis, outlining the challenges faced in determining suitable units of analysis, the adoption of case studies and the 14 cases selected. The final substantive section of this chapter discusses the data collection methods employed: document analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews with local officers and councillors.

**Chapter 4** addresses RQ1 and therefore contributes a contemporary account of the extent of LGTN in south-east England and northern France. It starts by advancing a three-fold categorization of LGTN to aid the analysis of this activity. A background to LGTN in south-east England and northern France is then provided, firstly discussing the prevailing context during the late 1980s and 1990s, followed by an account of the initial transnational links which emerged out of this. The empirical data from this study is then presented and organized according to the categorization developed earlier.
The findings show that LGTN remains prevalent among the councils studied; indeed all councils participate. Links are then made to the debates on MLG and local level Europeanization. Firstly, the presence of LGTN as a feature of MLG is emphasized. Secondly, the chapter explores how participation in LGTN has changed since the 1990s (RQ\textsubscript{1a}). This shows there has been a general evolution in local authorities’ approach, marked by an increase in links, a shift from bilateral to multilateral networking and moves to pursue more inter-regional and thematically focused networks as opposed to general purpose and cross-border ones. This shows that local authorities have become increasingly Europeanized. Thirdly, the differential engagement in LGTN is uncovered (RQ\textsubscript{1b}), confirming the Europeanization literature’s expectation.

**Chapter 5** tackles RQ\textsubscript{2} and in so doing addresses the empirical puzzle set out in Section 1.2. The chapter begins by reviewing existing literature on the benefits local authorities seek from LGTN. This shows that while scholarship has uncovered the function of networks, the motivations of the local authorities within have been largely overlooked. The empirical findings are then presented and structured around the three main motivations identified in the data: obtaining funding, lobbying and influence and policy transfer. This is followed by a summary of other motivations which are also identified, including promoting economic development, enhancing local authorities’ profile and professional and organizational development. These findings are then analysed against a Europeanization framework to identify the directionality of LGTN (RQ\textsubscript{2a}) and the underlying logic driving participation (RQ\textsubscript{2b}). In terms of directionality, this shows that LGTN simultaneously encompasses top–down, bottom–up and horizontal Europeanization dynamics. In terms of logic, LGTN is shown to be a case of rationalist Europeanization.

**Chapter 6** addresses RQ\textsubscript{3} and explores the relatively under researched topic of the ‘effectiveness’ of LGTN. The chapter begins by conceptualizing effectiveness. This draws on public administration literature, emphasizing the need to identify the factors which determine effective networking. It is then argued this needs to be done from
the perspective of the local actors involved in LGTN. The practitioner and academic literature are then reviewed. This provides an analytical framework which accounts for factors determining effective participation in LGTN located both at the level of local authorities and external to them. This framework is then applied to the empirical data. The findings show that many of these factors are located at the local level, and so fall within local authorities’ control. However their presence varies between councils. A link to the Europeanization literature is made by drawing on the concept of ‘mediating factors’. This shows that the variation in factors determining effective LGTN accounts for the differential engagement witnessed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 7 summarizes and concludes this thesis. It begins by returning to the thesis’s three research questions (RQs1–3) as the foundation of this study’s contribution to knowledge. These findings are then linked back to the literature on MLG and local level Europeanization. The limitations to this study are then identified, and it is argued these provide avenues for future research on LGTN. The thesis concludes by considering the wider implications of this study’s findings for LGTN in an era of austerity.
Chapter 2

Conceptual and empirical background

This chapter provides the conceptual and empirical background to this thesis. It begins by outlining the approaches of multi-level governance (MLG) and Europeanization (Section 2.1). Both have implications for the study of local government transnational networking (LGTN); LGTN is seen as a feature of the EU’s multi-level system, come about through the process of local level Europeanization. As a result it is argued both approaches need to be utilized to provide a complete analysis of LGTN. The chapter then outlines the empirical background (Section 2.2). This begins by surveying the relationship between local government and the EU. The emergence and proliferation of LGTN more specifically is then charted.

2.1 Conceptual background

LGTN can be characterized as a feature of multi-level governance (MLG) in the European Union (EU), brought about through the process of local level Europeanization. That is, LGTN constitutes an adaptive response by local authorities to the reality of European integration. Furthermore, the presence of LGTN has—among
other features of EU governance—led to the dispersal of political activity across
multiple levels of government away from central states. Despite being developed
separately, the concepts of MLG and Europeanization are interconnected (Bache,
Kern, & Bulkeley, 2009). Indeed both emerged out of the so-called
‘governance turn’ in EU studies, which places emphasis on exploring the EU as an
already functioning political system, rather then trying to develop grand theories to
explain the process of integration (Kohler-Koch & Rittberger, 2006). It is argued
here that both approaches require mobilizing in order to facilitate an analysis of
LGTN.

This section situates the thesis within this conceptual context. Overviews of both
MLG (Section 2.1.1) and Europeanization (Section 2.1.2) are provided, highlighting
their relevance and implications for the local level and LGTN more specifically. The
linkage between the two concepts is then briefly explored along with the need to employ
both in the analysis of LGTN (Section 2.1.3).

2.1.1 Multi-level governance

MLG developed as a response to the perceived limits of state centric explanations of
European integration, such as those falling under the intergovernmentalist umbrella
(for example Moravcsik, 1993). As such it rejects the notion that member state

9 Church and Reid (1996, pp. 1301–1303) identify a range of other conceptual approaches which
may be employed to study LGTN. These include institutional approaches (Church &
Reid, 1999), public choice theory, urban regime theory and regulation theory. They also identify
globalization and rescaling of the state approaches which have found application among some
scholars studying the internationalization of cities (Bouteligier, 2013; Bulkeley, 2005;
Heeg et al., 2003; Leitner, 2004; Leitner et al., 2002; Leitner & Sheppard, 2002; Payne, 2010;
vander Heiden, 2010). The policy networks approach is also identified by Church and Reid
(1996, p. 1301). While this has been used by some (Ward & Williams, 1997), its
suitability for analysing LGTN has been criticized (Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 240; Happaerts et
al., 2011, p. 324; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 313). While initially developed to assist in the analysis of
the EU, MLG has since found wider applicability beyond European integration (Bache & Flinders,
2004; Enderlein, Wälti, & Zürn, 2010).
governments have a monopoly on engagement in EU decision making and governance. It observes a transformation of traditional hierarchical governance, whereby “formal authority has been dispersed from central states both up to supranational institutions and down to regional and local governments” (Marks & Hooghe, 2004, p. 15).

Hooghe and Marks (2001a, pp. 3–4)—often credited for being the approach’s architects—outline three characteristics of MLG. Firstly, “decision-making competencies are shared by actors at different levels rather than monopolized by national governments” (Hooghe & Marks, 2001a, p. 3). In other words the involvement of member states in decision making is not exclusive and their role is complemented by actors at the supranational and subnational levels who have independent influence. Secondly, “collective decision making among states involves a significant loss of control for individual national governments” (Hooghe & Marks, 2001a, p. 4). That is to say where decisions are made between states, EU decision making processes—such as qualified majority voting—remove the ability for individual states to retain full control. Finally, “political arenas are interconnected rather than nested” (Hooghe & Marks, 2001a, p. 4). Subnational actors do not rigidly adhere to territorial hierarchies—as per the ‘Russian doll’ model—and can operate in other arenas. This includes the ability for them to ‘bypass’ the national level entirely in order to directly operate at the supranational level. Distinctions between different government levels have therefore become blurred (Kern, 2014, p. 113). The specific impact of MLG on subnational actors is outlined by Hooghe (1995, p. 178):

Subnational units do not need member states to have access to the European arena. . . . Subnational mobilisation does not erode, but complements the aggregating role of member states. Hierarchical relationships are weak but interdependence is high. Actors are linked through networks, which span several levels and in which each actor brings in valuable resources.

MLG, then, addresses the criticism of the state centric literature on European integration in that attention is also given to supranational and subnational levels. However, neither does it assume the demise of the national level (Hooghe, 1995, p. 178).
2. Conceptual and empirical background


MLG is further developed by distinguishing between two ideal types: Type I and Type II (Hooghe & Marks 2001b, 2003, 2010; Marks & Hooghe 2004). Type I MLG describes institutions at various levels of government which have multiple responsibilities. The boundaries of these jurisdictions do not intersect. In this way it is similar to traditional federal-like structures, except for the explicit inclusion of the supranational level. Type II MLG describes more functionally specific institutions which cross the boundaries of jurisdictional levels. While Type I structures are stable, Type II structures are often not. As Hooghe and Marks (2003, p. 236) acknowledge, “there is no great fixity in their existence. They tend to be lean and flexible—they come and go as demands for governance change”.

LGTN is seen as a feature of this multi-level system (Hooghe & Marks 2001a; Kern 2010, 2014; Kern & Bulkeley 2009). Indeed, Hooghe and Marks (2001a, p. 4) argue that the ability for subnational governments to operate at the supranational level leads to the creation of “transnational associations” between subnational actors. Regarding the two types of MLG, LGTN fits both models. Under the Type I model, formal hierarchy is challenged by the bypassing role LGTN plays, facilitating direct contacts between the local and EU levels (Bulkeley et al. 2003 pp. 238–239). Nevertheless, LGTN is most readily associated with the Type II categorization (Bulkeley et al. 2003). Indeed cross-border co-operation—itself a form of LGTN (see Section 4.1)—is explicitly classified as a case of Type II MLG by Hooghe and Marks (2003, p. 238) themselves. The logic for this classification is three-fold. Firstly, the Type II model accounts for the horizontal and non-hierarchical nature of LGTN, which transcends the boundaries of local and national jurisdictions. As Bulkeley et al. (2003, pp. 239–240) put it, they represent “a new political space or sphere of authority” (see also Bulkeley 2005; Leitner & Sheppard 2002). Secondly, it accounts for the fact that most transnational networks are functionally orientated, addressing specific policy areas. Thirdly, it acknowledges
that transnational networks are not permanent, and many come and go.[11]

It is important to highlight some of the perceived limits to MLG. Jordan (2001, pp. 201–202) outlines seven criticisms of MLG[12] two of which are particularly relevant to this thesis. Firstly, Jordan (2001, p. 201) argues that MLG “provides a ‘thick’ though compelling, description of contemporary changes in European governance but, in contrast to standard theories, lacks a causal motor of integration”. In other words it describes the EU as a form of MLG, but does not explain how this came to be. For George (2004, p. 113) this criticism is unfair, especially given MLG never set out to explain the process of European integration. Rather it seeks to facilitate the understanding of the EU by providing an account of it as an already functioning political system (George, 2004, p. 113). In line with this, this thesis views MLG as a characterization of the EU’s political system which recognizes the involvement of and interactions between actors at different jurisdictional levels; LGTN is seen as a feature of this system.

The second of Jordan’s (2001, p. 201) criticisms relevant to this thesis is that MLG “implicitly adopts a somewhat top–down view of subnational authorities, who are (at least initially) assumed to accept passively power handed down to them from Brussels/national capitals”. This criticism is based on Jeffery’s (2000) review of MLG research, which notes that although the role of subnational levels is recognized, the primary focus remains on EU–member state relations. The result is that subnational authorities:

are typically portrayed as essentially inconsequential and passive players until either an incidental by-product of central state–EU interplay provides an opportunity for mobilization, or a central government decision is taken which passes decision-making powers down. (Jeffery, 2000, p. 8)

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11 These features are explored in more detail in Section 4.5.

12 The seven criticisms against MLG which Jordan (2001, pp. 201–202) makes are: it is an amalgam of existing theories; it provides a descriptive, not explanatory account of the EU; it overstates the autonomy of subnational government; it adopts a top–down view of subnational government; non-governmental subnational actors are excluded; evidence of subnational mobilization is conflated with evidence of subnational influence; and it ignores the international level. George (2004) reviews these criticisms, finding they have variable validity.
2. Conceptual and empirical background

Jeffery (2000, p. 8) goes on to note that:

This perspective plays down the possibility that [subnational authorities] may themselves and from the ‘bottom up’, actively seek to change and succeed in changing those dynamics in ways which facilitate European policy mobilization.

Blatter et al. (2008, pp. 464–465) note that where the focus has been on subnational authorities, too much attention has been given to the vertical relationship between local government and the EU (Type I MLG), neglecting other forms of local government European activity, such as LGTN and other ‘horizontal’ links (Type II MLG) (see also Kern, 2014, p. 115).

These criticisms mean our understanding of MLG in the EU, and the role of local government in this system, is therefore incomplete. Adopting a Europeanization framework addresses this by providing an account of the process which leads to MLG.

2.1.2 Europeanization

Studies of ‘Europeanization’ have applied the term in a variety of ways (see Bache & Jordan, 2006; Featherstone, 2003; Olsen, 2002). Without prejudice to other uses of the term, Europeanization is taken here to mean “the domestic adaptation to European regional integration” (Vink & Graziano, 2007, p. 7). This notion of ‘domestic adaptation’ is rooted in Ladrech’s (1994, p. 17) early study of France—often cited as the first to substantively use the concept—in which Europeanization is defined as:

an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics becomes part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making.

A range of definitions have since been offered by other scholars. For example:

Olsen (2002, pp. 923–924) identifies five uses of the terms. Firstly, linked to the EU’s external boundaries and the process of enlargement. Secondly, the development of European-wide norms and practices contributing a new form of governance. Thirdly, the impact of EU governance on domestic politics. Fourthly, the exporting of European norms internationally. Finally, the building of a common European identity. This thesis’s interpretation falls within the third definition.
2. Conceptual and empirical background

a process of change at the domestic level in which the member states adapt their processes, policies, and institutions to new practices, norms, rules, and procedures that emanate from the emergence of a European system of governance. (Börzel & Risse, 2000)

the reorientation or reshaping of politics in the domestic arena in ways that reflect policies, practices and preferences advanced through the EU system of governance. (Bache & Jordan 2006, p. 30)

Processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion, and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies. (Radaelli 2003, p. 30)


While it is important to recognize that Europeanization pressures can emanate from a broad range of European institutions, many studies remain primarily concerned with the effect of the EU—as an independent variable—on domestic politics. (Bache 2008, p. 9; Bulmer & Lequesne 2013 p. 17; Flockhart 2010 p. 790; Graziano & Vink 2013, p. 39; Olsen 2002, p. 932; Vink & Graziano 2007, pp. 11–12). This thesis similarly adopts this approach. The rationale behind these heuristic delimitations—the focus on

14 Another body of literature—while focused on subnational government—is primarily concerned with the effect of Europeanization on broader territorial and centre–local relations, as opposed to how local authorities themselves adapt to Europe (for example Bache 2008, Börzel 2001, Bursens 2007, Ladrech 2010).

15 To this end some have suggested “EU-ization” might be a more accurate term (Bulmer & Lequesne 2013 p. 17; Flockhart 2010 p. 790; Radaelli 2003 p. 27).
2. Conceptual and empirical background

domestic adaptation to the EU—is outlined by Bache (2008, p. 9), who argues that “it places a boundary around what is already a complex task of empirical research”, and follows Bulmer and Lequesne’s (2013, p. 18) advice that those employing the concept of Europeanization should be clear about how they are using it.

Börzel (2005, p. 47) identifies three questions which the Europeanization literature attempts to address:

(1) Where does the European Union affect the member states (dimensions of domestic change)?
(2) How does the European Union affect the member states (mechanisms of domestic change)?
(3) What is the effect of the European Union on the member states (outcome of domestic change)?

To these, a fourth can be added:

(4) Why does the European Union affect the member states (the logic of domestic change)?

The following overview of Europeanization is structured around these questions, with specific reference to the local level and LGTN where relevant.

Dimensions of domestic change

In assessing where change takes place at the domestic level, scholars often employ a three-fold heuristic categorization, where Europeanization affects the realms of ‘polity’, ‘policy’ and ‘politics’ (Bache & Jordan 2006; Börzel 2005; Börzel & Risse 2003; Graziano & Vink 2013; Ladrech 2010). Subnational governments—and the intergovernmental relations between national and local levels—broadly fall under the polity dimension. Murphy (2007, p. 293) therefore argues that the wider domestic response to Europe includes that made by subnational government

16 Indeed, a broad interpretation allows “all political actors and institutions within a member state”—not just national governments—to be included within the scope of domestic politics (Bulmer & Lequesne 2013, p. 3).
2. Conceptual and empirical background

The presence of Europeanization processes at the local level is confirmed in a number of comparative studies (for example Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997; Denters & Rose, 2005a; John, 2001; Le Galès, 2002). As Le Galès (2002, p. 96) argues, “European public policies, rules, procedures, conflict-solving mechanisms, debates, and norms are now relevant to all cities within the EU”. Denters and Rose (2005b, p. 4) summarize the impact of Europeanization on local government:

Local authorities may be directly affected by EU policies when these policies imply rules and regulations that impact upon local government activities, or when the EU provides local government with new sources of funding for local programmes. But there are also a variety of indirect effects. The rise of the EU has in many instances changed the balance of power between central and sub-national governments. Partly stimulated by EU subsidies, moreover, many local authorities have also broadened their horizons and become more active in all sorts of international networks and partnerships.

The impact of the EU on the local level therefore creates a new context of constraints and opportunities which local authorities adapt to:

Europeanization processes provide a new structure of opportunities for cities and incentives to engage with other actors to promote their spatial or sectoral interests through both vertical and horizontal networks. But they also represent a new structure of constraints, of rules which limit their autonomy and overlap with national or regional institutions. The EU therefore sets new parameters within which urban governance modes may be organized and are encouraged. (Le Galès, 2002, p. 96)

Participation in LGTN is therefore seen to constitute part of the adaptive response to the EU undertaken by local authorities, and is regularly cited as an indicator for the presence of local level Europeanization (Goldsmith, 2003; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008; John, 2000, 2001; Kern, 2010; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Le Galès, 2002; Payre, 2010; Van Bever et al., 2011a). Indeed, Kern and Bulkeley (2009, p. 328) argue that participation in LGTN is an “emblematic” part of the Europeanization process.

Mechanisms of domestic change: directionality

Given Europeanization is focused on Europe’s impact at the national level—and
below—it is an inherently top–down conceptualization of the relationship between the EU and member states. European policies, processes and practices are seen to be ‘downloaded’ by member states. Indeed early adopters of the concept—the so-called ‘first generation’ of Europeanization studies—followed this reasoning (Bache & Jordan, 2006, p. 19; Graziano & Vink, 2013, p. 38); Ladrech’s (1994, p. 17) initial definition, for example, is fundamentally top–down. However, seeing Europeanization as a strict downward process is too simplistic (Bulmer & Lequesne, 2013, p. 20; Ladrech, 2010, p. 22). As Ladrech (2010, p. 22) argues, “to view a ‘top–down’ approach in isolation from domestic political dynamics is to miss the empirical reality”. According to Börzel (2005, p. 62):

The relationship between the EU and its member states is not a one-way street. Member states are not merely passive receivers of European demands for domestic change. They may proactively shape European policies, institutions, and processes to which they have to adapt later.

In this way member states ‘upload’ their preferences to the EU. This might be done, for example, to reduce the eventual costs of ‘downloading’ EU policy (Börzel, 2002, p. 196). Europeanization can therefore be viewed as a circular process, where member states feed into the development of policies, practices and norms they will later be expected to apply (Bulmer & Lequesne, 2013, p. 20); this is captured by Radaelli’s (2003, p. 20) definition of Europeanization.

In addition to these vertical dynamics, scholars have also identified horizontal Europeanization processes (Graziano & Vink, 2013, p. 47; Bulmer & Lequesne, 2013, p. 20). As Graziano and Vink (2013, p. 47) argue:

Europeanization needs to be understood not only as ‘vertical’ processes (bottom–up versus top–down) but also as a ‘horizontal’ process. Such horizontal Europeanization results from the fact that, in an integrated Europe, actors—civil servants, lobbyists, entrepreneurs etc.—increasingly have cross-border contacts and exchange information and expertise. In such a conception, Europeanization is not about a Brussels-induced ‘top–down’ domestic adaptation, but rather about change induced by policy learning and diffusion.
While the EU is not directly involved in the process of change, it nevertheless provides a ‘reference point’ for actors to co-operate and share—or ‘crossload’—policies and practices with each other (Bulmer & Lequesne 2013 p. 20).

For Pfieger (2014 p. 332), studying the directionality of local level Europeanization “allows us a wider view of relations between levels of government”. All three directional dynamics—top-down, bottom-up and horizontal—have been observed at the local level (Kern 2010 2014; Van Bever et al. 2011a). Top-down Europeanization is often associated with the local level for several reasons. Firstly, like member states, local authorities must comply with a range of EU legislation, regulatory instruments and policies. Secondly, local government is responsible for much of the day-to-day implementation of EU policy, over which they have little say. Thirdly, where local authorities are able to make decisions of their own, they have to take account of EU policy—in addition to national policy—to ensure compliance (Van Bever et al. 2011a, pp. 16–17). Finally, when accessing EU funds, local authorities must abide by the relevant eligibility rules and conditions set by the EU in order to benefit (Dąbrowski 2013 p. 1366; Van Bever et al. 2011a p. 18). Local authorities are therefore seen as “passive policy-takers, rather than active policy-makers in the EU decision-making process” (Van Bever et al. 2011a p. 17). Europeanization here is ‘hierarchical’ (Kern 2010). Pfieger (2014), however, suggests limits to download Europeanization, especially when accessing EU funds, as the incentives for adaption offered by the EU are not sufficient enough to trigger change.

This leads to a bottom-up view of local level Europeanization (de Rooij 2002 p. 449). Here the EU is seen as a new ‘opportunity structure’ for local government (Keating 1999). Through a myriad of individual representation offices in Brussels and LGTN, local preferences are ‘uploaded’ during the EU policy process (Van Bever et al. 2011a pp. 18–20). As noted by Marshall (2006 p. 101), Europeanization

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17 Regarding the allocation of EU funds national governments also retain a great deal of control and the local level’s role is relatively weak (Bache 1998 John 2000 p. 886). This remains the case with the latest programming period (see Huggins 2014b).
has taken place as local authorities “have used sub-national offices and thematic networks to spread their preferences to the EU level”. This bottom–up view also encompasses uploading best practice policy solutions to a corpus of European policy knowledge—often through EU-funded projects—which might then be adopted Europe-wide (Tadesco, 2010). The presence of both top–down and bottom–up dynamics has led scholars to identify local level Europeanization as a two-way, cyclical process; local authorities are simultaneously policy takers and policy makers (Schultze, 2003). Kern (2010) refers to this as “co-operative Europeanization”\(^{18}\).

Kern (2010), Kern and Bulkeley (2009) and Van Bever et al. (2011a) emphasize the horizontal dimension to local level Europeanization, particularly where local authorities co-operate with each other across national borders, for example through cross-border co-operation and LGTN. As explained by Kern and Bulkeley (2009, p. 312), local authorities “are becoming more Europeanized because they co-operate transnationally, exchange experience and jointly develop innovative solutions for problems with which they are similarly confronted”. Policy learning and transfer between local authorities is a feature of this process (Kern, 2010, 2014).

The boundaries between these vertical and horizontal mechanisms can be blurred (Van Bever et al., 2011a, pp. 27–28). As will be shown in Chapter 5, this is the case with LGTN, which features all three dynamics. LGTN is inherently horizontal as actors interact with each other directly across national borders, rather than through the EU. LGTN also performs the function of ‘uploading’ policy preferences to the EU. ‘Downloading’ can also be observed; networking and the role of networks in European governance is actively encouraged by the EU (see European Commission, 2001), and in the case of accessing EU funds, their membership and organization reflects EU requirements.\(^{19}\)

\(^{18}\) Referred to as “vertical governance” by Kern (2014).

\(^{19}\) The functions of LGTN, the benefits local authorities seek to gain from it and the implications for the directionality of Europeanization are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.
Mechanisms of domestic change: the ‘goodness of fit’ and mediating factors

In exploring the process of Europeanization, Risse et al. (2001) advance a ‘three-step’ model (Figure 2.1) which leads to domestic change (see also Caporaso, 2007). The first step refers to the process of European integration itself, which creates a number of pressures member states are expected to adapt to (Caporaso, 2007, p. 28). These pressures include implementing and complying with EU legislation, adhering to European Court of Justice decisions and operating in accordance with European norms and practices (Risse et al., 2001, p. 6).

The second step refers to the so-called ‘goodness of fit’ between the pressures created by integration and existing domestic structures. The degree of fit—or misfit—between the two determines the level of pressure domestic institutions face to adapt. As Risse et al. (2001, p. 7) argue:

The degree of adaptational pressure generated by Europeanization depends on the ‘fit’ or ‘misfit’ between European institutions and the domestic structures. The lower the compatibility (fit) between European institutions, on the one hand, and national institutions, on the other, the higher the adaptational pressures.

Two types of ‘misfit’ are identified in the literature: policy and institutional (Börzel, 2005; Börzel & Risse, 2003). Policy misfit is where European policies and regulations challenge those present at the domestic level, effectively creating “compliance problems” (Börzel, 2005, p. 50; Börzel & Risse, 2003, p. 61). Institutional misfit can also emerge, “challenging domestic rules and procedures and the collective understandings

\footnote{In the first iteration of the three step model by Risse et al. (2001), the term ‘Europeanization’ is used as a synonym for European integration. Radaelli (2000, 2003) argues this is misleading. European integration refers to the process of supranational political and policy development, while Europeanization refers to the consequences of this process (Bulmer & Lequesne, 2013, p. 18).}
attached to them” (Börzel, 2005, p. 50; Börzel & Risse, 2003, p. 62). The ‘goodness of fit’ concept suggests adaptational pressures felt at the domestic level will vary, “since political, economic, legal, and societal institutions differ among member states, the degree of adaptational pressures varies as well” (Risse et al., 2001, p. 7).

To suggest there is a causal link between the adaptational pressures generated through the goodness of fit and the actual adaption undertaken at the domestic level is too simplistic, however (Risse et al., 2001, pp. 8–9). Indeed, as Ladrech (2010, p. 33) argues “there is no automatic response to such pressures”. Börzel and Risse (2003, p. 63) clarify this, noting that the presence of ‘misfit’:

is only the necessary condition for domestic change. Whether misfits produce a substantial effect at the domestic level depends on the presence of various factors facilitating adaptation and serving as catalysts for domestic change.

This is addressed by Risse et al.’s (2001) third step in their model: the presence of ‘mediating factors’ at the domestic level. Risse et al. (2001, pp. 9–12) identify five mediating factors which can be divided into structure and agency: multiple veto points, mediating formal institutions and political and organizational culture (structural factors), and the differential empowerment of actors and learning (agency factors). Risse et al. (2001, p. 9) argue that “the presence or absence of mediating factors is crucial for the degree to which domestic change adjusting to Europeanization should be expected”. Differences in mediating factors will therefore lead to variation in Europeanization’s impact.

Research applying Risse et al.’s (2001) three-step model to the local level is scarce. Nevertheless, the presence domestic level mediating factors is recognized. Kettunen and Kungla (2005) study Estonia and Finland’s adaptation to EU regional policy, particularly with the development of a regional tier of administration. Europeanization is seen to have a limited impact in both cases despite the presence of misfit between existing regional institutions and the EU’s policy requirements. In Estonia regional policy remains administered by the central government (Kettunen & Kungla, 2005).
2. Conceptual and empirical background

p. 367). While in Finland regional councils have been established, their creation is better explained by domestic political factors, rather than EU pressure (Kettunen & Kungla, 2005, p. 373). This leads to the conclusion that “European influences are mediated by the domestic context and cause different outcomes across countries” (Kettunen & Kungla, 2005, p. 375). In this case the relevant mediating factors are an existing regional policy legacy, the number of veto points and interest constellation (Kettunen & Kungla, 2005, p. 373).

De Rooij (2002, p. 449) also points to the impact of domestic factors—such as local authorities’ constitutional position and competences—which filter the effects of Europeanization. However, the impact of these factors is not felt equally by all local authorities within the same country. This means mediating factors present at the local level—“for example, money, personnel, location or access to politicians or officials”—also need consideration (de Rooij, 2002, p. 449). In an analysis of how actively Dutch local authorities engaged with EU opportunities, de Rooij (2002, pp. 462–463) found the size of municipalities to be a significant factor, as those which were larger had greater financial, staff and informational resources to mobilize. In relation to LGTN, literature has identified a range of factors affecting engagement, albeit primarily located at the national and network levels (for example Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004; Bouteligier, 2013; Happaerts, van der Brande, & Bruyninckx, 2010; Karvounis, 2011; Payre, 2010; van der Heiden, 2010). Baldersheim, Bucek, and Swianiewicz (2002, p. 128) in particular identify the role of local level “facilitating factors”, which act as intervening variables affecting the engagement of local authorities in transnational networks for policy learning.

Outcome of domestic change: extent and differentiation

Börzel and Risse (2003, pp. 69–70) make a distinction between three different degrees of change: absorption, accommodation and transformation. ‘Absorption’ refers to a

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21 These factors are reviewed in more detail in Section 6.2
low degree of change where European policies and ideas are incorporated into domestic structures and policies, but without the need for substantial change. ‘Accommodation’ refers to a modest degree of change; while member states adapt to Europe, core features and the understandings attached to them remain unchanged. ‘Transformation’ covers instances marked by a high degree of change. Here member states replace their domestic policies and structures with substantially different ones, also leading to a fundamental change in core features and the understandings attached to them (Börzel & Risse, 2003, pp. 69–70). Börzel (2005, pp. 58–59) adds two categories to this. In the case of ‘inertia’ no change takes place, usually because member states resist adaptational pressures. In the case of ‘retrenchment’, change takes place but does not conform to the pressures emanating from Europe; change is ‘negative’ (Börzel, 2005, p. 58).

While Europeanization implies member states adapt to and—in a top–down conceptualization—download European policies, processes and practices, it does not imply convergence; indeed variation is expected (Börzel, 2005; Ladrech, 2010; Radaelli, 2003; Risse et al., 2001). This is explained by Risse et al.’s (2001) model outlined above. The varied ‘goodness of fit’ across member states and differing mediating factors at the national level means member states respond to Europeanization pressures in different ways and to different extents. The result is that Europeanization has a differential impact. As Risse et al. (2001, p. 18) argue: “Full convergence is unlikely … This does not imply that Europeanization has no structural effects. Far from it. It just simply implies differentiated responses”. This variation was recognized early on in Europeanization research. Indeed, Ladrech’s (1994, p. 71) analysis highlighted the need to account for “the distinct nature of the pre-existing national framework which mediates this process of adjustment”.

Early research on local level Europeanization was primarily concerned with the extent to which local government had been affected by Europe and become ‘Europeanized’ (Goldsmith, 1993; Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997; John, 2000, 2001). Like Börzel (2005), John (2001, pp. 72–73) identified different degrees of Europeanization,
conceptualized as a ‘ladder’. As local authorities climb, they become more Europeanized. John’s (2001, p. 72) ladder is made up of nine steps:

A) Responding to EU directives and regulations.
B) Managing European information.
C) Communicating to the private sector and the public.
D) Maximizing EU grants.
E) Facilitating economic regeneration (through D).
F) Linking with other local organizations participating in the EU.
G) Participating in EU international networks and co-operating in joint projects.
H) Advising the EU on implementation issues.
I) Making the council’s policies more ‘European’.

Steps A to C represent largely compulsory activities and so reflect “minimal” Europeanization. Steps A to E represent a “financially orientated” form of Europeanization. The next stage, “networking”, is achieved through steps A to G. Councils are considered “fully Europeanized” when they adopt steps A to I (John 2001, p. 72). Klausen and Goldsmith (1997, pp. 239–242) advance a similar classification, where local government’s relationship with Europe is either ‘counteractive’, ‘passive’, ‘reactive’ or ‘proactive’.

The results from local level analyses are consistent with the message of differentiation found in broader Europeanization research (for example de Rooij 2002; Goldsmith & Klausen 1997; Hamedinger & Wolffhardt 2010; John 2001; Le Galès 2002). John (2001, p. 79) observes that “local and regional authorities vary in the way they respond to the EU”. This is also acknowledged by Le Galès (2002, p. 98), who notes that “not all local authorities in Europe have fallen into line overnight with injunctions from Brussels to follow the norms, policies, and modes of organization that Brussels wants”. The result is that:

there is no such thing as a Europe of regions or cities in the making; instead we have a ‘variable geometry’ Europe within which cities and regions sometimes becomes [sic] actors or systems of action. (Le Galès 2002, p. 110)
2. Conceptual and empirical background

The differentiation of local level Europeanization occurs within, as well as across, member states. Klausen and Goldsmith (1997, p. 242) observe that “all the EU member countries have their proactive and counteractive municipalities, as well as their reactive and passive ones”. In an analysis of French local government, Balme and Le Galès (1997) point to the presence of ‘bright stars’ of Europeanization, as well as ‘black holes’. As discussed above, scholars highlight a number of mediating factors—at national and local levels—which account for these differences. This is recognized by Le Galès (2002, p. 98), who argues “Europeanization processes affect individuals, organizations, and institutions within cities, which may adapt, resist, or change”.

This picture of varied engagement extends to participation in LGTN. While Ward and Williams (1997, p. 456) note that all EU member states have ‘networkers’ they also identify wide variation in the extent of participation; not every local authority takes part. Even where local government is engaged, it is possible to make a distinction between ‘active’ and ‘passive’ actors involved in LGTN (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 315).

The logic of domestic change

In addressing the question of why member states adapt to Europe, scholars draw on new institutionalism. Börzel and Risse (2003) adapt March and Olsen’s (1998) work, advancing a model where Europeanization either follows the logic of rational choice institutionalism or sociological institutionalism (see also Börzel, 2005). Under rational Europeanization actors follow the ‘logic of consequentialism’. They are goal-oriented, seeking to improve their position. Europeanization is thus a reaction to potential opportunities or constraints, and engagement in it is the result of a cost–benefit analysis, where the cost of becoming Europeanized is more than outweighed by the benefits it brings. Such benefits might include additional resources, competitive advantage or reducing the costs associated with Europeanization itself (Börzel & Risse, 2003, pp. 63–65; Hamedinger & Wolffhardt, 2010, pp. 15–16). The fact actors seek to pursue their own interests does not preclude them working together, since there is an
observed resource dependence between them. As Börzel (2005, p. 52) argues:

As any individual or corporate actor is dependent on others to achieve his or her goals, actors have to exchange their resources to produce desired outcomes. The resource exchange is based on the mutual assessment of resources, strategies, and interests. Actors will engage in strategic interaction using their resources to maximize influence over outcomes, while trying to become as little dependent as possible on the others with whom they interact.

Under sociological Europeanization, actors follow the ‘logic of appropriateness’. Their behaviour is determined by EU rules, norms and preferences which become internalized through learning and socialization processes (Börzel & Risse 2003, pp. 65–67; Hamedinger & Wolffhardt 2010, p. 16). As Börzel (2005, p. 54) argues, “rather than maximizing their subjective desires, actors seek to ‘do the right thing’ (that is, to fulfil social expectations in a given situation)”.

The potential utility of applying this rational–sociological model to local level Europeanization has been recognized (Hamedinger & Wolffhardt 2010). While not explicitly applying this rationalist–sociological framework, existing research has touched on some of its themes. Indeed, some scholars view local level Europeanization as a process of change marked by the learning EU rules and norms, fitting with the sociological explanation. The final step on John’s ladder (discussed above), for example, sees Europeanization as:

a more fundamental transformation that goes beyond short-term instrumental behaviour, whereby local policy-making becomes an aspect of the EU, and European ideas and practices become transferred to the core of local decision-making. (John 2000, p. 882)

This is echoed by Marshall (2005, pp. 676–677) who observes that participation in EU structural funds has meant English local authorities have “adjusted to European norms of direct lobbying, partnership working and long-term strategic programming”; as a result localities are “revisioning” themselves in European terms. Literature focusing more specifically on LGTN similarly sheds some light on the rational–sociological
question. Betsill and Bulkeley’s (2004, p. 471) analysis of the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) network suggests a more rationalist orientation, concluding that “local governments most effectively engage[d] with the network are mobilized more by the financial and political resources it offers”. Likewise Pfieger’s (2014) study of French cities showed participation in the EU’s City-Vitality-Sustainability (CIVITAS) programme was a means to achieve pre-existing strategic goals and promote the cities involved. Van der Heiden (2010, pp. 142–143) similarly finds that cities are rationally driven and aim to secure competitive advantage vis-à-vis others.\(^{22}\)

Dąbrowski (2012, p. 742) cautions that rational choice and sociological logics of Europeanization represent “ideal type models”. His own research (Dąbrowski, 2012, 2013) into the impact of EU cohesion policy on local government in Poland shows that both can occur simultaneously. For example, following a rationalist logic local authorities may choose to undergo Europeanization processes to access benefits. In this way applying EU rules and practices surrounding funds was seen as “a necessary evil” in order to qualify (Dąbrowski, 2012, p. 739). Yet as local actors remained engaged in EU policy, some of these rules and other EU norms became internalized. In other words while a local authority may become Europeanized for rationalist reasons, sociological Europeanization can still take place (Dąbrowski, 2013, p. 1370). Bache (2008, p. 158) supports this arguing “the process of learning is initially strategic and only becomes deeper over time”.

However, while recognizing it takes place, both Dąbrowski (2012, 2013) and Marshall (2005) suggest limits to sociological Europeanization. Marshall’s (2005, pp. 681–682) findings shows that European norms do not extend beyond councils’ European activities. Dąbrowski (2013, p. 1370) notes that internalization of norms only took place where there was a good ‘fit’ between those norms and existing local interests, meaning their impact was limited. This research aside, empirical analysis

\(^{22}\) Although for this reason van der Heiden (2010, p. 134) concludes “interurban networking is most likely to occur in policy areas on which the competitiveness of the involved city regions is less directly affected”.

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into the rationalist and/or sociological logic driving Europeanization at the local level—and especially Europeanization through LGTN—remains limited.

**Europeanization or globalization?**

Scholars of Europeanization caution the need to distinguish between the EU and other possible explanations—such as globalization—as the ‘motor’ for domestic change (Bulmer & Lequesne, 2013 pp. 19–20; Ladrech, 2010, p. 40; Vink & Graziano, 2007, p. 16). This equally applies when researching local level Europeanization, as local authorities not only face adaptational pressures from the EU, but also from globalization (Goldsmith, 1993; John, 2001; Le Galès, 2002; van der Heiden, 2010) and broader trends in the restructuring and regionalization of territory (for example Keating, 2013). To this end a number of scholars have examined participation in LGTN as a response to the processes of globalization and the rescaling of the state, rather than Europeanization (for example Bouteligier, 2013; Bulkeley, 2005; Heeg et al., 2003; Leitner, 2004; Leitner et al., 2002; Leitner & Sheppard, 2002; Payre, 2010; van der Heiden, 2010). Furthermore, literature on ‘paradiplomacy’—rooted in the international relations discipline—points to cases of international engagement by subnational governments outside of the EU, for example in Canada or the United States (for example Casson & Dardanelli, 2012; Duchacek, 1984; Lecours, 2002; Mingus, 2006). Nevertheless, van der Heiden’s (2010) comparative study—which adopts a globalization perspective—finds LGTN is more intense among local authorities within the EU. Here Europeanization pressures can be seen to reinforce those created by globalization. As Börzel (2005, p. 62) argues, “Europe is not always the driving force but complements and enhances trends that were already affecting the member states”.

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23 These studies tend to have an exclusive focus on LGTN undertaken by cities, as urban areas are perceived to be ‘nodal points’ of globalization (Bouteligier, 2013 p. 16; Heeg et al., 2003 p. 141; van der Heiden, 2010 p. 10).
2. Conceptual and empirical background

2.1.3 Linking MLG and Europeanization

Despite being developed in relative isolation from each other, the concepts of MLG and Europeanization are connected (Bache, 2008; Benz & Fürst, 2002; Karvounis, 2011; Kern, 2010; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). It is argued here that both concepts need to be employed in order to provide a complete analysis of LGTN. Indeed, while neither constitutes a true ‘theory’ of integration (Bulmer & Lequesne, 2013, p. 19; Jordan, 2001, p. 201), taken together they provide a useful analytical framework to assess LGTN as a feature of contemporary governance, both at the local and EU levels.

Section 2.1.1 noted one of the criticisms levied against MLG is that it describes the EU as a multi-level system, but does not explain how this came to be (Jordan, 2001, p. 201). Indeed, while MLG draws attention to the presence of LGTN and its role in wider EU governance, it does not account for how or why LGTN has developed. Applying a Europeanization framework addresses this weakness. As Kern and Bulkeley (2009, p. 312) argue “the debate on Europeanization . . . complements the analysis of the European multi-level system by providing a sense of the means by which multi-level governance is accomplished”. Put simply, Europeanization is the process, while MLG is the end result. By adopting a Europeanization framework the presence of LGTN—itself a feature of MLG in the EU—is accounted for by characterizing it as a local authority response to the reality of European integration. Like MLG, Europeanization is not a theory of integration (Bulmer & Lequesne, 2013, p. 19). However, as outlined in Section 2.1.2, adopting the approach as an analytical tool further deepens the assessment of LGTN by exploring aspects of its directionality, the extent and expected differentiation of engagement and —through the application of new institutionalism—the underlying logic driving participation.
2. Conceptual and empirical background

2.2 Empirical background

Having explored the conceptual traditions underpinning this thesis, this chapter now reviews the empirical background to LGTN. This section begins by outlining local government’s relationship with the EU (Section 2.2.1), before briefly surveying the emergence of LGTN itself (Section 2.2.2).

2.2.1 Local government’s relationship with the EU

As noted in the previous chapter, local government plays an important role in wider EU governance which is often overlooked. The purpose of this section is to briefly explore this relationship in order to contextualize LGTN. Hooghe (1995) points to a number of channels at the national and European levels—or intra- and extra-state routes (Happaerts 2008)—where subnational government participation at the European level is formally and informally institutionalized (see also Hooghe & Marks 1996, Hooghe & Marks 2001a, pp. 81–92). For Keating (1999) these channels represent an ‘opportunity structure’ for local authorities, enabling them to engage at the European level.

At the national level, channels to Europe include the need for subnational government to approve EU treaty amendments, having regional observers attached to member state permanent representations, participation in Council working groups, participation in Commission working groups, and European Parliamentary electoral districts representing subnational entities (Hooghe 1995, p. 183). However, these opportunities are not shared uniformly across the whole EU; they tend to favour federal countries—such as Belgium and Germany—where subnational entities have constitutional safeguards to ensure their interests are adequately represented.

Channels also exist at the European level. For many, the Maastricht Treaty represented a new opportunity for local authorities to engage at the European level (Benington 1994, Bogdanor 1992), with Keating (1999, p. 7) commenting that this was the “high-water mark” for subnational engagement with the EU. Indeed, writing
at the time, Bogdanor (1992, p. 9) concluded that Maastricht “confirms that the European Community is in the process of creating a new relationship with sub-national government”. As part of this relationship, Maastricht introduced the principle of subsidiarity (Payre 2010, p. 267), the principle that decisions should be taken at the closest possible level to the citizen. In practice, however, the subsidiarity principle was not targeted at local authorities, but rather to reassure national governments that the EU would not encroach upon member state competences (Bogdanor 1992 pp. 6–7). Nevertheless, Maastricht included a number of provisions aimed at strengthening subnational involvement.

One such provision was introduced in Article 146. This gave member states the option to send regional representatives to Council meetings instead of national ministers (Hooghe 1995, p. 180). So far, however, this has only seen limited use and the option has only been exercised by the federal states of Austria, Belgium and Germany (Keating 1999, p. 7; Keating & Hooghe 2006, p. 243). Furthermore there are restraints placed on regional representatives in Council meetings; they can only participate where constitutional competencies permit them to do so, and they are there only to represent the member state as a whole, not their individual region (Bauer & Börzel 2010, p. 257; Hooghe 1995, p. 180; Keating 1999, p. 7; Keating & Hooghe 2006, p. 243). Nevertheless, for Keating (1999, p. 7) this represents “an important breach in the principle that only national governments are represented in Europe”.

The Maastricht Treaty also established the Committee of the Regions (CoR), creating a body which formalized subnational interests into the EU’s institutional architecture (see Loughlin 1996; Warleigh 1997). Again, however, there remain limits to this innovation. Firstly membership to the CoR is determined by member state governments, not subnational authorities themselves. Secondly, membership of the CoR is fragmented and divided between those representing ‘regional’ and ‘local’ interests. Finally, the CoR is only an advisory body and has no powers to block or amend EU legislation (Benington 1994, p. 27; Hooghe 1995, pp. 180–182; Keating & Hooghe...
2. Conceptual and empirical background

As a result of these weaknesses the CoR is often regarded as having failed to live up to expectations. As Bauer and Börzel (2010, p. 257) argue:

the CoR has disappointed any hopes that it might become a third chamber in the EU representing subnational territorial interests. As a consultative body, it lacks real political authority. Moreover, its membership is too diverse to allow for the formulation of common positions.

Nevertheless, the CoR has led to a shift in how local authorities have engaged at the European level. As argued by Benington (1994, p. 27), the CoR’s real achievement:

lies perhaps less in the Committee’s formal status and role, than in the fact that it brings together 189 elected councillors for the regions and localities of all the member states, and puts them into a direct dialogical relationship with the European policy process and policy community.

In other words the CoR has exposed local government to the European arena and EU governance by recognizing local interests in the EU’s institutional architecture (Bogdanor 1992, p. 8).24

The EU’s regional policy, and in particular structural funds, represented another channel for local government to engage with the EU (Bache 1998; Bauer & Börzel 2010; Hooghe 1995). The structural funds have been part of EU regional policy since the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was created in 1975, although there was no initial role of subnational government save for implementation (Bache 1998, p. 47).26 This limited role for subnational government continued through the 1980s (Bache 1998). However, this changed with the 1988 reform. This saw the budget for structural funds allocation increase from 4.8 per cent in 1975 to 25 per cent of the EU’s budget by 1993 (Bache 1998, p. 70). More significantly, the Commission further emphasized the need to apply the ‘partnership principle’. In other words the

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24 For a recent analysis of the CoR’s impact and influence in the EU policy process see Hönig and Panke (2013).
25 As will be shown in Section 2.2 EU regional policy and the structural funds have also led to the development of a number of transnational links between local authorities.
26 See Bache (1998) and Bachtler, Mendez, and Wishlade (2013) for backgrounds to the creation of EU regional policy and its early operation.
EU, national government and subnational authorities were required to work together in the design and implementation of regional policy programmes (Bache 1998, pp. 74–75; Payre 2010, p. 267). Bache (1998, p. 70) noted that “partnerships would be established to oversee the administration of the funds and would require the formal involvement of subnational authorities for the first time”.

Despite the significant development of the partnership principle, there remained limits. The involvement of national governments meant that how regional policy operated was not uniform across the whole EU; national governments tended to dominate in states with a traditionally weak subnational level (Hooghe 1995, p. 182; Hooghe 1996a; Keating & Hooghe 2006, p. 250). Indeed analyses by Bache (1999) and Bachter et al. (2013) have argued that national governments remain the primary actors in EU regional policy. This was the case in England with the Audit Commission (1991, pp. 14–15) observing that the partnership principle:

was heralded ... as local authorities’ entree to greater influence over the content of EC regional policy. But, from the local authority’s point of view, what it has meant in practice is that central government retains the right of submission, and so can still effectively veto/amend the content of any Operational Programme.

Furthermore, Keating and Hooghe (2006, p. 250) witnessed a re-centralization of regional policy since the 1988 reforms, particularly in England and France, where the role of local actors has become further diminished.

Overall local government’s relationship with the EU through these ‘formal’ channels—both national and European—is uneven, despite the fact that in principle the opportunities are the same for local authorities across the EU. In reality they tend to favour subnational authorities in federal countries such as Belgium or Germany (Hooghe 1995, p. 184). To address this, local authorities have sought access to Europe through ‘informal’ channels. Indeed the creation of official institutionalized routes to the European arena—such as the CoR—if anything seems to have acted as a catalyst for a number of informal routes being used by local government (Blatter et al. 2008).
2. Conceptual and empirical background

These informal channels to Europe seem to address the inequality found in the formal channels; while there is still differentiation, the inequalities are not as large as those found with the formal channels (Hooghe, 1995, p. 185).

One informal approach is the use of subnational Brussels offices (Audit Commission, 1991; Bogdanor, 1992; Donas & Beyers, 2013; Hooghe, 1995; John, 1994b, 1994a; Marks, Haesly, & Mbaye, 2002; Moore, 2007; Rowe, 2011; Tatham, 2008, 2010; Tatham & Thau, 2014). The number of these offices has grown steadily since the mid-1980s (see Table 2.1), and by the early 1990s had become “the latest thing in Euro-chic” for local authorities (Audit Commission, 1991, p. 35). Recent estimates place the current number of Brussels offices representing local authorities at well over 200 (Huysseune & Jans, 2008, p. 1; Jans & Stouhuysen, 2007, p. 209; Tatham, 2010, p. 81; Tatham & Thau, 2014, p. 257) and the number of staff employed by these offices is claimed to outnumber those in national permanent representations (Tatham & Thau, 2014, p. 258).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Approx. no. of offices</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Hooghe (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>60 to 70</td>
<td>Ercole, Walters, and Goldsmith (1997); Hooghe (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>John (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>250 to 280</td>
<td>Jans and Stouhuysen (2007); Moore (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>Huysseune and Jans (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>Tatham (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>Donas and Beyers (2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Number of Brussels offices identified in the literature

27 These estimates vary over time and depend on how a single office is measured, for example if they are recognized by the Brussels–Europe Liaison Office. This makes estimating the exact number of actors or subnational offices present in Brussels difficult to assess (Tatham, 2010, p. 81).
2. Conceptual and empirical background

Hooghe (1995, p. 186) summarizes the role of these offices as follows:

They provide the Commission and Parliament with regional viewpoints on issues that concern them; they survey the European scene for upcoming issues and bring them to the attention of policy-makers in their home governments; they participate in networks with other regional offices or with other organisations; they provide a rudimentary welcome service to private sector actors from their region; and they lobby for a greater voice in EU decision-making.

Brussels offices thus perform a “two-way function” (Bogdanor 1992, p. 16). Whereas bodies such as the CoR or transnational networks—discussed below—attempt to advance a representative voice on behalf of European local government as a whole, Brussels offices allow local authorities to pursue their own individual interests (Hooghe 1995, p. 187).

2.2.2 The emergence of LGTN

Another informal channel to Europe is LGTN. While it is generally accepted that this activity began to proliferate from the 1980s and through the 1990s (Benington 1994, p. 31; Bulkeley et al. 2003, p. 236; Happaerts 2008, p. 4; Karvounis 2011, p. 217; Payre 2010, p. 270; Phelps et al. 2002, p. 212), there is evidence to suggest it was well established before this. Local authorities have long developed town twinning links with European counterparts, although such initiatives have been confined to largely ceremonial and cultural spheres (Benington 1994, p. 28). However, more substantive co-operation before the 1980s has been identified. Koch (1974), for example, identifies LGTN undertaken by the Alsace regional government since the 1960s. Indeed cross-border co-operation has been a feature of the wider Upper Rhine Valley area since the 1960s (Beck 2008, p. 39), while Anderson (2010) and Baycan-Levent, Kundak, and Gülümser (2008, p. 85) identify cases of co-operation dating well before this. Payre (2010, pp. 269–270) draws attention to networking between municipalities as far back as the late 1800s. Nevertheless, “the institutionalization of the EU . . .
provided a new impetus and focus for trans-national networks of local and regional authorities” (Le Gâles, 2002, p. 106). It is in this context of European integration where contemporary LGTN has proliferated.

Much of the existing literature is primarily concerned with LGTN that is fundamentally cross-border in nature (Church & Reid, 1995, 1996, 1999; Duchacek, 1984; Lange, 2012; Perkmann, 1999, 2003, 2007). This consists of “the various formal institutions or compacts and informal networks, which have brought contiguous subnational authorities into binational or trinational cooperation associations along and across national borders” (Duchacek, 1984 p. 9). Such cross-border links have long been encouraged by the Council of Europe (CoE) (Murphy, 1993, p. 111; Sodupe, 1999, p. 63) which has adopted a number of conventions and protocols on cross-border co-operation (for example CoE, 1980, 1995, 1998). Examples of the cross-border links identified in the literature include the Working Communities in the Alps and the Working Community of the Pyrenees (Sodupe, 1999, p. 64). From the 1990s, however, there was a recognition that these cross-border networks were being supplemented by those that were ‘inter-regional’. In other words “the existence of a border was no longer relevant”; rather it was shared—often thematic—interests that mattered (Sodupe, 1999, p. 64).

Several scholars identify a number of such multilateral networks (see Appendix A). As shown in Appendix A, there are an array of networks which span several policy areas. Some of these networks have broad appeal and can be classified as general or multi purpose. Networks such as the AER, for example, seek to represent a broad ‘regional’ interest at the European level (Hooghe, 1995, p. 187; Sodupe, 1999, p. 62). However, thematically focused or geographically limited networks, whose membership is much more exclusive and usually based on functional characteristics, also exist (Hooghe).

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28 There are, in fact, three such working communities, covering the central, eastern and western Alps (Sodupe, 1999, p. 64).
29 As will be discussed in Section 4.1, LGTN can be categorized into cases of bilateral networking, multilateral networking and transnational projects.
For example, Bouteligier (2013), Ward and Williams (1997) and Kern and Bulkeley (2009) identify a number of networks operating in climate change and environmental policy, while Happaerts (2008) identifies several working in sustainable development policy. Other networks focus on transport policy (Pflieger 2014), urban policy (Griffiths 1995; Sampaio 1994) and engage in locational politics (Payre 2010; van der Heiden 2010).

Some trends are evident in the literature, such as how engagement in such multilateral networks has evolved over time. One aspect of this evolution is that LGTN has become more formalized and now plays a significant part in EU politics. For example, Payre (2010, p. 263) notes that the Eurocities network has evolved:

> from a relatively informal group of ‘second cities’ to an urban interest group with a presence and voice in Brussels. The network itself has thus been institutionalized and acquired a central infrastructure.

Another observed trend is a more defined focus on thematic policy areas. Early networks, such as the AER, had a broad regional agenda, covering several policy areas simultaneously. Recently however, networks have become more specialized, focusing on specific policy areas (Ward & Williams 1997). For example, Happaerts et al. (2011, p. 329) note how transnational networks focusing on sustainable development have only recently emerged. However, the broader focused networks have adapted to this environment, by incorporating sectoral policy areas into their work. An increase in thematic networks can also be explained by so-called “network-breeding”, where transnational networks create or sponsor smaller ones to deal with niche policy issues (Ward & Williams 1997, p. 462).

Drawing on the structural fund budget, the EU set up a number of ‘community initiatives’ in 1988 to facilitate co-operation between local and regional actors through

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30 When established, the community initiatives represented 15 per cent of the EU’s ERDF resources. Unlike the other 85 per cent—which member states retained effective control over—the Commission was given discretion over the priorities for and allocation of this section of the structural funds (Bachtler et al. 2013, p. 48).
part funding joint projects (Hooghe, 1995, pp. 188–189; Rees, 1997; Sodupe, 1999). The largest of these programmes—Interreg—is said to have played a pivotal role in developing a number of transnational links through the projects it funded (Church, 2007). Other programmes also existed, such as URBAN which targeted and promoted co-operation among cities and urban areas (Payre, 2010, p. 268). Indeed, as noted by Sodupe (1999, p. 67) community initiatives—such as Interreg—have enabled firstly cross-border co-operation to take place, followed later on by broader LGTN. While Interreg was initially only targeted at cross-border co-operation, the Commission launched the ‘C’ strand of the programme in 1996. This facilitated much broader transnational co-operation, as a shared border was no longer a requirement for project partnerships (Sodupe, 1999, pp. 72–73). A number of other schemes based on specific policy sectors were also established, such as RENAVAL for ship building or LEADER for rural areas (Benington & Harvey, 1999; Hooghe, 1995, p. 188; Le Galès, 2002, p. 107). However, while supporting co-operation, such programmes were initially very restrictive and only a small minority of local authorities were eligible to participate (Audit Commission, 1991, pp. 13–14).

While the community initiatives brought together local authorities through time-limited co-operation projects, the Regions and Cities in Europe (RECITE) programme funded more permanent networks aimed at sharing expertise between local areas facing economic restructuring (Hooghe, 1995, p. 189; Payre, 2010, p. 267; Phelps et al., 2002, p. 212). Examples included MILAN, focused on the motor industry, EUROCERAM, for the ceramics industry, and DEMILITARIZED for the defence industry (Phelps et al., 2002, p. 212).

Due to the EU’s role in facilitating many of these links through regional policy instruments, Hooghe (1995, p. 188) notes that “for most networks, it is often difficult to determine whether the initiative came from the Commission or from subnational entrepreneurs”. Likewise van der Heiden (2010, p. 176) argues “the distinction between bottom–up and top–down networks is increasingly blurred”. Nevertheless, van der
2. Conceptual and empirical background

Heiden (2010, p. 176) argues the fact many networks receive or are targeted towards obtaining EU funds means “hardly any interurban networks can be labelled as totally bottom–up, almost all of them have some connections to the EU”. Pflieger’s (2014) study of the CIVITAS network comes to a different conclusion; despite being set up and funded by the Commission, the network’s activities, agenda and policy positions remain driven by the local authorities participating. While in some cases EU support has been gained, LGTN often pre-dates this. Phelps et al.’s (2002, p. 215) study of the Edge Cities network, for example, showed how it was in operation three years before receiving EU support, and when such support was obtained this was only initially guaranteed for a three year period. This leads Phelps et al. (2002, p. 218) to conclude:

the story of the formation of the edge cities network appears, as in other examples of EU funded networking, to confirm a level of commitment to networking even in the absence of such funding.

Overall, Sodupe (1999, p. 78) concludes that EU funding “does not make an altogether significant contribution to the development of inter-regional co-operation”.

While this leads to the characterization of LGTN as a bottom–up endeavour driven by local authorities (Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 237; Payre, 2010, p. 263), its importance and usefulness to the EU—and in particular the Commission—should be recognized. LGTN provides a way for the Commission to address claims of a democratic deficit and to legitimize its policy proposals (Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 250; John, 2000, p. 890). LGTN is particularly advantaged in this situation because networks are made up of the directly elected level closest to the citizen. They can also be said to aggregate citizens’ interests, rather than those of other self-interested stakeholders present in Brussels (Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008, p. 175; Ward & Williams, 1997, p. 444). The

31 Beyond the Commission, Heinelt and Niederhafner (2008, pp. 175–176) note transnational networks offer a range of benefits to the European Parliament and—to a more limited extent—the Council of the EU.

32 There remain debates, however, over the democratic credibility of networks in EU governance (for example Esmark, 2007; Sorensen & Torfing, 2005). Referring to LGTN, Bulkeley et al. (2003, p. 250) note that it is often hard to assess their democratic credentials as their structure is not always transparent and the active role of elected officials is not necessarily guaranteed.
2. Conceptual and empirical background

drafting of Commission proposals also requires expert knowledge, something which the Commission lacks in-house (Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008, pp. 174–175). LGTN here offers an opportunity for the Commission to access such expertise, especially as local authorities have a key role to play in the implementation of EU policy, so are in a good position to assess the viability of proposals ‘on the ground’ (Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008, p. 175; Ward & Williams, 1997, pp. 443–444).

LGTN also assists the Commission by providing a way to manage the plethora of actors operating at the European level. In other words, it helps the Commission to avoid “lobbying overload” by providing co-ordinated access to pan-European opinion and expertise (Ward & Williams, 1997, p. 444). Networks can also assist the Commission in implementing EU policy (Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 243). Bulkeley et al. (2003) note how transnational networks can be partners in EU-funded projects aiming to contribute to EU policy objectives. According to Heinelt and Niederhafner (2008, p. 176), transnational networks and their members can also act as ‘watchdogs’ on behalf of the Commission, to make sure policy is being implemented correctly. They are also seen as a way to mitigate against some of the negative effects of European integration—particularly the Single European Market—by promoting co-operation to break down regional disparities, and they are seen to play a role in fostering a common European identity (Ward & Williams, 1997, p. 444).

The perceived benefits to the EU are such that horizontal transnational networking is actively promoted and featured heavily in the European Commission’s (2001) White Paper on European Governance, as well as the more recent White Paper on Multilevel Governance by the CoR (2009). In this way, LGTN is seen to have “mutual attraction” for both local authorities and the EU alike (Ward & Williams, 1997, p. 443), and it has become ‘incorporated’ and ‘institutionalized’—albeit informally—into wider EU governance (Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 236; Ward & Williams, 1997, p. 461).

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33 In particular the White Paper (European Commission, 2001) stresses the need to include a range of actors in policy making, including subnational government (p. 3) and the role networks can play in achieving the goals of integration (p. 18).
While LGTN has developed over the last 20 years and became an important feature of EU governance, it is worth noting that initial legal initiatives to formalize and institutionalize this form of co-operation were not made by the EU, but by the CoE (Sodupe 1999, p. 75). Indeed, a lack of formal legal and administrative systems within the EU to recognize cross-border co-operation remained a significant barrier (Ercole et al. 1997, p. 226; Lange 2012, p. 12). In 2006, however, the EU adopted the European Grouping of Territorial Co-operation (EGTC) instrument in an attempt to provide a uniform framework for cross-border co-operation to take place and be given a legal personality (Lange 2012). By 2013, there were 45 cases of co-operation utilizing the EGTC framework (see Figure 2.2), involving around 750 subnational and national authorities (CoR 2014, p. 1). Despite this development, however, most cases of LGTN continue to operate outside of the EGTC framework.

2.3 Summary

This chapter has outlined the conceptual and empirical context of this thesis. It began by characterizing LGTN as a feature of MLG in the EU, brought about through the process of local level Europeanization. The approaches of MLG and Europeanization were reviewed. This showed that while MLG offers a useful description of the EU’s system of governance, including the presence of LGTN, it does not account for how this developed or why LGTN emerged. It was argued that adopting a Europeanization approach addresses this weakness, by conceptualizing LGTN as a local authority response to the reality of the European integration. In other words, Europeanization accounts for the process through which MLG is achieved. The review of the Europeanization literature further highlighted the approach’s usefulness as an analytical framework to discuss the extent and expected differentiation of engagement in LGTN, its directionality and—through new institutionalism—the underlying logic driving participation.
2. Conceptual and empirical background

Figure 2.2: EGTCs in operation as at 2014 (taken from the MOT)
The empirical context was then reviewed. This showed that local government has enjoyed a direct relationship with the EU since the Maastricht Treaty. This relationship manifests itself in a number of formal and informal channels which local authorities use to access the European level. In terms of formal channels local authorities are represented through participation in Council meetings, representation in the CoR and through the application of the partnership principle in EU regional policy. However, local authorities' ability to make use of these formal opportunities has been mixed, and so a number of informal channels—such as subnational Brussels offices—have emerged. LGTN represents one of these informal channels. Some key trends were noted in the literature. Firstly, LGTN has proliferated since the late 1980s. Secondly, it has evolved over time; initial LGTN was cross-border in nature and featured broad general purpose networks. A shift was witnessed where as LGTN has become more formalized, networks have also become more thematically focused. Thirdly, the EU has sought to promote LGTN through various regional policy instruments, although it remains debated as to whether the EU’s intervention has had an impact. Finally, as well as serving local government purposes, LGTN also provides the EU with a number of benefits, such as providing expertise on local policy implementation or offering legitimacy to policy proposals.
Chapter 3

Research design and methods

This chapter provides a description of and rationalizes the methods employed in the study. It firstly discusses the use of a qualitative empirical approach as the foundation for this thesis’s contribution to knowledge (Section 3.1). It then explains the cross-national case selection. This includes discussions on the units of analysis chosen, the use of case studies and the cases themselves (Section 3.2). The three data collection methods used in this study—document analysis, participant observation and semi-structured interviews—are then outlined (Section 3.3). The chapter concludes with brief discussions on language considerations, data analysis and research ethics.

3.1 Overview of method

Section 1.3 highlighted a number of gaps in the existing literature on local government transnational networking (LGTN) that have informed the study’s overall focus and main research aims and questions (RAs1–3 and RQs1–3). Chief among the gaps identified was a lack of knowledge surrounding the perceptions of local actors engaged in this activity.\footnote{As argued in Section 1.3, research which adopts a ‘local’ focus is notably absent in the literature on local government and EU in general (Guderjan 2012; Jeffery 2000; Van Bever et al. 2011a, p. 13).} For example, while the existing literature provides indications of the function...
of transnational networks it does not reveal the motivations held by local authorities for participating in them. As Bouteligier (2013, p. 71) argues “theoretical assumptions only give an abstract and simplistic reflection and networks’ initial aims are not always translated into actuality”. Addressing this gap in our understanding of LGTN therefore requires an empirical investigation. It further necessitates the use of an inductive research design, seeking to draw conclusions about LGTN from the empirical findings rather than testing pre-determined hypotheses (Harrison, 2001, pp. 6–7).

In order to access local perceptions on LGTN this study adopts what John (2006, p. 75) refers to as an ‘urban political science’ approach. This takes “the city or locality as the primary focus, and then examine[s] other levels of government as further elaborations” (John, 2006, p. 75). This allows for an in-depth analysis into the LGTN activity undertaken by local authorities, drawing on the perspectives of the officers and councillors involved.

John (2006, 2009, pp. 21–22) highlights two unique features of local government that need to be considered when choosing between a quantitative and qualitative approach: ‘numerosity’ and ‘propinquity’. Numerosity refers to the multiple occurrences of local government within a nation state. Propinquity refers to the ‘closeness’ of local actors to each other, the social processes affecting localities and the impact of their decisions.

Studies that focus on aspects of numerosity are suited to a quantitative approach, particularly as the large number of cases is conducive to statistical generalization. Studies focusing on aspects of propinquity are generally suited to a qualitative approach. The closeness of local actors to the impact of their decisions leads to a focus on their intentions and perceptions, requiring the use of methods which directly engage those actors (John, 2006). A similar distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches applies when studying networking. Questions around network structure, cohesion, degrees of centrality and so on lend themselves to quantitative approaches. Questions around processes, content of interactions, motives and actors’ perceptions are more suited to qualitative approaches (Börzel, 1998, p. 255).
3. Research design and methods

The methods chosen to investigate LGTN are therefore determined by the aims and research questions of the study and its overriding focus. Here these are particularly concerned with local actors’ perceptions on LGTN. For Firestone (1993, p. 12) “qualitative research is best for understanding the processes that go on in a situation and the beliefs and perceptions of those in it”. Local actors are in a strong position to give accounts of their networking activities as they are close to the decisions being made and to the impact of those decisions. In this way, this study capitalizes on the propinquity of local actors’ involvement in LGTN, further necessitating a qualitative approach. This focus on actors’ intentions and perceptions also calls for qualitative approaches to the study of networking. This thesis, therefore, adopts a qualitative empirical approach, making use of semi-structured interviews, document analysis and participant observation (see Section 3.3).

3.2 Case selection

3.2.1 Identifying the units of analysis

Establishing a functionally equivalent level of analysis is inherently difficult for cross-national and comparative studies of local government. This is because administrative structures, constitutional traditions and local government competences differ between—and often within—countries (Bauer & Börzel 2010, p. 253; Stoker 2006). Indeed, despite both being unitary and centralized polities (Lijphart 2012, p. 178), England and France have very different local government structures in place.

The French system of local government is split into three levels. The régions occupy the highest level and are therefore the directly elected local administrative unit that is closest to the state. There are 22 régions. Below the régions there are 96 départements. Below these are over 36,000 communes, ranging from large cities to small hamlets. Although départements fall within the boundaries of régions, and

These figures do not include the French overseas départements and territories.
3. Research design and methods

Communes within départements, there is no formal hierarchy between the different levels (Cole 2011; Négrier & Nicolas 2011). Complexity is introduced by the fact different administrative arrangements are in place for the largest French cities and that the smaller communes often co-operate in associations under the communauté system. The presence of several quasi-public local service providers further adds to the institutional complexity (Stoker 2006, pp. 497–498).

Compared to France, with three levels applied in a largely uniform way across the country, the English system is rather more chaotic and, as noted by Martin (2011, p. 91), “in a state of almost constant change and flux”. It is subdivided into a mixture of single-tier and two-tier and other sui generis arrangements. In single-tier areas, one council covers all local authority functions within a given territory. These so-called ‘unitary authorities’ can cover anything between the area of a small city to a large county. In two-tier areas, local authority functions are split between one—usually a county—council and then a number of smaller districts below it. These different structures are applied inconsistently across England. In addition to asymmetric administrative structures, local government competences vary between the two countries. Illustrations of the two local government structures can be found in Appendix B.

The asymmetrical administrative structures and varying competences mean English local authorities have no directly comparable counterpart in France. While départements and counties may be spatially similar, they are markedly different in terms of competences and their relationship with the centre and other tiers of local government.

Lidström (1998) and Stoker (2006) identify a plethora of classification systems aimed to facilitate the comparative study of local government. However, “there is no consensus in the literature on the basis for any institutional demarcations” (Stoker).

As well as a methodological challenge this causes difficulties for engagement in LGTN itself, something which will be explored in Section 6.3.3.
Even labels applied to levels of subnational government are not uniform across different countries. As noted by Rees (1997, p. 388) there is:

wide variation in the nature and role of regions in Europe. For example, regions have always been powerful in Germany and Austria . . . In other states, such as the UK, Ireland and Greece, the notion of region has far less meaning and in some cases not at all. Defining what is a region, beyond determining that it is a territorial entity, is like determining how long is a piece of string.

Indeed the European Commission itself has no consistent definition of a ‘region’ (Keating & Hooghe, 2006, p. 248). While it has developed its own classification of subnational entities—the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS)—Goldsmith (2011, p. 37) cautions against the use of this in analysis. While in some cases the NUTS classification corresponds to local government structures—as is the case with French régions and NUTS2 units, for example—in many cases they do not (Sodupe, 1999, p. 60). There is no single local authority covering the ‘Hampshire and Isle of Wight’ NUTS2 region, for example. Indeed, some member states have created regional structures adhering to NUTS boundaries with limited—if any—competence simply to meet EU requirements on structural funds eligibility (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 37; Sodupe, 1999, p. 60).

As this study is interested in the motivations of local authorities, units of analysis are required which represent local authorities as actors in their own right. This study therefore adopts the approach of focusing on ‘upper-tier’ local authorities. Following Sodupe (1999, p. 59) this is defined as “a territorial unit immediately below the sovereign state, which has a system of self-government”, or in Tatham and Thau’s (2014, p. 262) words “the level of government/administration below that of the state”. This leads to an analysis of county councils and unitary authorities in England, and régions in France. While these councils may appear radically different in terms of

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37 Some scholars even take the term ‘region’ to mean the level above the nation state (for example Happaerts, 2008).

38 The NUTS system was developed by the EU, mainly to assist in the delivery of regional policy. Each member state’s territory is divided into three levels—NUTS1 (the largest), NUTS2 and NUTS3 (the smallest)—which broadly reflect existing administrative structures.
size, they share a common status in that they are the level of directly elected local
government which is closest to the state. Furthermore, both English counties and
French régions are ranked close together on the regional authority index (Hooghe, 
Marks, & Schakel, 2010). This focus on upper-tier authorities has been successfully 
employed by other scholars investigating the role of subnational government in Europe 
(for example Blatter et al., 2008; Donas & Beyers, 2013; Marks, Nielsen, Ray, & Salk, 
1996; Tatham & Thau, 2014), and this study builds on this tradition.

This approach was vindicated during the research. Indeed, the notion of including 
‘upper-tier’ authorities within a broader definition of ‘regions’ is in use by those 
taking part in LGTN themselves. Many multilateral networks, such as the Assembly 
of European Regions (AER), use this definition in their membership criteria (Sodupe, 
1999, p. 60). As one member of multilateral network staff said:

Regions we understand as the level next to the state.  

One English councillor noted:

In the UK we have problems with the word ‘region’ . . . to us we’re a county 
but we’re accepted into the Assembly of European Regions because they define 
a region as the highest elected body next to the government, so there’s nothing 
higher than a county council.

Of course, smaller spatial units are involved in LGTN alongside their larger 
counterparts (Marks et al., 2002). As Casson and Dardanelli (2012, p. 602) argue:

international work is not confined to the largest authorities as councils of all 
sizes, from the small district councils to the large metropolitan and county 
councils, are engaged in international co-operation.

39 The regional authority index developed by Hooghe et al. (2010) is a measure of the authority 
of regional government in 42 countries between 1950 and 2006. It therefore provides a basis to 
compare the extent of decentralization in these countries. Local and regional governments are 
given a score out of 24 based on characteristics of self- and shared-rule. In 2006 English counties 
scored 9.0 whereas French régions scored 8.0 (Hooghe et al., 2010).

40 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 30).

41 Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 01).
3. Research design and methods

The Commission itself seeks the engagement of all levels of subnational government (Keating & Hooghe 2006 p. 248). Again, this was highlighted during the research. As a member of multilateral network staff noted:

There’s some diversity in terms of who we have as members. We have small towns, we have big cities, we have counties and the like, so there is some diversity there from across Europe.\(^{42}\)

As recognized by another participant:

in fact it’s surprising sometimes to find that relatively small, what I would regard as small authorities . . . are quite active in transnational co-operation. It’s not just perhaps the most obvious bigger players.\(^{43}\)

Other networks, such as Eurocities or the European Edge Cities Network\(^{44}\) are founded on the principle of representing cities and smaller geographical areas vis à vis larger regional bodies (Griffiths 1995; Payre 2010; Phelps et al. 2002).

To ensure smaller areas were adequately represented, data was also collected from a small number of participants representing ‘lower-tier’ local authorities in the case study areas. This approach of including lower levels of subnational government alongside upper levels in analyses of LGTN has also been employed in other studies (for example Church & Reid 1995, 1996, 1999).

3.2.2 Case study approach

This thesis makes use of case studies to address the research aims and questions. This section outlines this approach and the cases selected. Yin (2009 p. 18) defines a case study as:

an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined.

\(^{42}\) Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23).
\(^{43}\) Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26).
\(^{44}\) See Baycan-Levent et al. (2008); Griffiths (1995); Payre (2010) and Sampaio (1994) for an overview of the Eurocities network. See Phelps et al. (2002) for an overview of the Edge Cities Network.
The emphasis in case study research is therefore both on the actual phenomenon being investigated—in this instance LGTN—and the context or setting in which it is situated (Robson 2002, p. 179; Yin 2009, p. 18). For this reason case studies are particularly suited to the aims of this research; LGTN is a ‘contemporary phenomenon’ situated within a ‘real-life context’ of local government activity, as well as the wider processes of multi-level governance (MLG) and local level Europeanization. Furthermore, the boundaries between LGTN and the context in which it occurs are blurred. Indeed RQ3 seeks to identify the factors determining the effectiveness of LGTN; administrative, institutional and cultural contexts are all factors which can affect local government activity (Cole & John 2001, p. 1).

Adopting the case study approach also allowed the research to be conducted with limited resources. It was not feasible to investigate LGTN at a wider scale in sufficient detail to address the research aims and provide insightful answers to the research questions. The use of case studies therefore allowed an in-depth investigation of LGTN within the confines of the chosen cases. The flexibility of the case study approach also allowed for the use of multiple methods of data collection. This means the study does not have to rely on interviews alone, but can use other sources—such as documentation and participant observation—to triangulate findings and reinforce validity (see Section 3.3).

Case studies can serve different purposes. Stake (2005, pp. 445–447) distinguishes between three types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. Intrinsic case studies focus on achieving an understanding of the case itself. Instrumental case studies are used to provide insight into a wider phenomenon. Like instrumental case studies, collective case studies seek to understand a wider phenomenon, but employ several cases. This thesis follows the collective case study approach by adopting a cross-national case selection of local authorities (see Section 3.2.3).

Despite the advantages of case studies, they are often criticized. One of the major criticisms levied against them is that by focusing on a single or limited number of cases,
they do not allow for wider generalization through sample-to-population extrapolation or analytic generalization (Firestone 1993, Yin 2009, p. 15). Yet generalization is not the aim of this study. Rather it aims for ‘transferability’ defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 124) as:

a direct function of the similarity between two contexts ... If Context A and Context B are ‘sufficiently’ congruent, then working hypotheses from the sending originating context may be applicable in the receiving context.

In order for the research to achieve this and to be applicable elsewhere, it is necessary for the analysis to consider and report on the context as well as the phenomenon under investigation in detail. As Firestone (1993, p. 18) argues:

while transfer of findings from one case study to another is done by the reader, the researcher has an obligation to provide a rich, detailed, thick description of the case.

Using case studies allows this.

Case studies have been employed by other scholars investigating LGTN (for example Adshead 2002, Benington & Harvey 1998, Church & Reid 1995, 1996, 1999, Salskov-Iversen 2006). However, many are limited to analyses of a single case (for example Baert 2010, Casson & Dardanelli 2012, Payre 2010, Pichler-Milanović 2010, Tosics 2010) placing limits on the transferability of their findings. To address this concern and ensure the study’s findings have a broader applicability, this thesis makes use of a cross-national case selection, drawing data from 14 cases.

3.2.3 The 14 cases

This thesis draws its cases from two areas: south-east England and northern France. It was initially envisaged that the whole English Channel area would be the focus of the study. However, while there are only five upper tier authorities occupying the French
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coast of the Channel, this increases to 16 in England. Therefore, to avoid a heavy focus on English councils, the English cases are restricted to those authorities on the Channel coast in south-east England. Table 3.1 identifies the local authorities whose LGTN activity was studied, and Figure 3.1 illustrates their geographical location.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South-east England</th>
<th>Northern France</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>Conseil régional du Nord-Pas de Calais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medway Council</td>
<td>Conseil régional de Picardie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex County Council</td>
<td>Conseil régional de Haute-Normandie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton and Hove City Council</td>
<td>Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sussex County Council</td>
<td>Conseil régional de Bretagne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire County Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth City Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton City Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isle of Wight Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Local authorities researched as part of the study (ordered geographically east to west)

A number of factors motivate the choice of these cases. Notwithstanding the administrative and structural differences outlined above, local authorities in south-east England and northern France have much in common. Many of these similarities are mapped out by Buléon and Shurmer-Smith (2008) and Turbout (2013). History in the two areas is largely “shared” and interconnected. Both areas face similar policy challenges, especially regarding maritime issues and the environment. Geographically, both are peri-urban in nature. Furthermore—as with local government across Europe—local authorities in both areas are moving towards more collaborative and networked ways of working (Cole & John, 2001, p. 1), and are increasingly “pushed towards internationalization” (Payre, 2010, p. 260).

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Buléon and Shurmer-Smith’s (2008) volume *Espace Manche: un monde en Europe / Channel Spaces: a World Within Europe* was itself the output of local authority co-operation as part of the Espace Manche Development Initiative (EMDI) transnational project. This co-operation continued until 2013 as part of the Channel Arc Manche Integrated Strategy (CAMIS) transnational project, where much of Buléon and Shurmer-Smith’s data is kept up to date through an online Cross Channel Atlas, available at: http://atlas-transmanche.certic.unicaen.fr/.
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Yet, there are also differences. As already noted, administrative structure varies between the two countries. In addition bureaucratic culture is different, as are the relationships between politicians and officers, along with their respective roles. Consequently, the selection of cases from south-east England and northern France allows the comparison of approaches to LGTN by local authorities operating in different institutional and cultural contexts, yet in response to very similar policy challenges.

There is also a well established tradition of local government co-operation between authorities in south-east England and northern France (Barber, 1997; Buléon &
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Shurmer-Smith, 2008, pp. 174–175; Church & Reid, 1995, 1996, 1999; Heddebaut, 2001, 2004; Sparke, 2000, 2006). This means the level of LGTN in this area warrants investigation. Indeed, post-war civic and cultural twinning links are extremely prevalent (see Figure 3.2). More substantive links, in the form of bilateral co-operation agreements between authorities, were developed from the late 1980s. This activity was led by Kent County Council and the Conseil régional du Nord-Pas de Calais—two of the councils examined in the study—mainly in response to the building of the Channel Tunnel and the creation of the single European market (Barber, 1997, p. 20; Church & Reid, 1995, p. 298). The signing of co-operation accords continued throughout the late 1980s and the 1990s and eventually multilateral co-operation in the Channel area was institutionalized in the form of a number of networks, including the Arc Manche (Poussard, n.d.). This context of co-operation is discussed further in Section 4.2.2.

Figure 3.2: Cross-Channel twinning links (taken from the Cross Channel Atlas)

Another motivation was researcher convenience. John (2009, p. 22) argues that the propinquity of local government allows research to take place “out of one’s back door”, taking advantage of the researcher’s proximity to the cases they are studying. This is further identified as an advantage to the study of LGTN by Ercole et al. (1997, p. 227), who note it is easier to access data when the researcher is in close proximity to the activity.
Selecting cases in both England and France also allows the gathering of cross-national data. This has a number of advantages. Firstly, as LGTN by its very nature involves local authorities from several different countries, an approach which only investigates participation by local authorities in one country would fail to adequately capture the inherently ‘transnational’ character of this activity. Secondly, Betsill and Bulkeley (2006, pp. 152–153) speculate that LGTN is affected by factors within states such as national legislation or administrative structures. By gathering data from both English and French local authorities the impact of these different national contexts on LGTN can be assessed (contributing to RQ3). As noted by Cole and John (2001, p. 2) “there is a long tradition of Anglo–French comparison”, especially of local government. While this thesis does not adopt a strict comparative method, the analysis of cross-national data yields valuable insights and sheds light on wider trends. As Cole and John (2001, p. 4) argue:

In so far as they represent distinctive traditions within the EU, Anglo–French comparisons make sense; good Anglo–French comparisons allow for the examination of similar policy challenges in specific contexts. When common trends appear in the case of France and England, it is likely they will have a more general validity across EU states.

Thus by focusing on cases from these two countries, the results of the research and its conclusions and recommendations have relevance and applicability beyond the cases studied, thus ensuring the transferability of the research.

3.3 Data collection methods

To ensure validity this study practices ‘triangulation’: the process of “using different data and methods to uncover the same results” (Harrison 2001, p. 83). Indeed, while interviews comprise the majority of data collected in this study, document analysis and participant observation are also employed. At least two data sources contribute to each of the study’s research questions, ensuring the overall analysis relies on no single
source of data. Table 3.2 summarizes how each data source was used to address the study’s main research questions. Triangulation assists as each data collection method has inherent strengths and weaknesses, as outlined in Table 3.3. Each of these data sources are discussed in detail below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research question</th>
<th>Data collection methods used</th>
<th>Chapter in thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: What is the current extent of LGTN in south-east England and northern France?</td>
<td>Document analysis, internet searches, interviews.</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: What benefits do local authorities seek to gain from their involvement in LGTN?</td>
<td>Document analysis, interviews.</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Research questions and data sources

3.3.1 Document analysis

117 local government policy documents, strategies and committee reports produced by local authorities studied are collected and analysed as part of the study (see Appendix C). These documents are obtained from council websites using a number of keyword search terms (see Appendix D). The search was broadly limited to a ten year period between 2001 and 2011, although documents outside this time frame were included if

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48 Triangulation is also practised by interviewing several categories of participants, for example local government officers and multilateral network staff, and active and retired staff (see Section 3.3.3). In places, data has also been supplemented with perspectives appearing in trade magazines and journals, such as Government Gazette, Europolitics or EU Observer Magazine: Regions & Cities. A body of practitioner literature has also been used (for example Aitken 2008b; Audit Commission 1991; Bogdanor 1992; Clifton 2008; Handley 2006; Iacopini & Klemm 2009; LGA 2010; MOT & CoE 2006).

49 In some cases interview participants provided additional documents, and where relevant these have been included in the analysis.

50 This ten year period is selected as it is immediately prior to the interview fieldwork being carried out. It also covers the start of the financial crisis, so ensures the findings are relevant to the empirical puzzle outlined in Section 1.2.
3. Research design and methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research method</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document analysis</td>
<td>Contents unaffected by research process.</td>
<td>Potential bias in favour of document’s purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identified potential interview participants.</td>
<td>Only likely to contain information authors are happy to share.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assisted development of interview questions and preliminary coding scheme.</td>
<td>Written for a purpose other than the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identified cases of LGTN and justification for participation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unobtrusive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documents freely available.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant observation</td>
<td>Observe activity in its real life setting.</td>
<td>Researcher might impact observed activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reveals information not discussed by interviewees or documentation.</td>
<td>Difficult to determine if observed event is typical of activity in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can assess impact of wider context on activity.</td>
<td>Reliant on researcher’s interpretation of activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reveals information interviewees not aware of.</td>
<td>Limited access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Appropriate for focusing on participants’ perspectives.</td>
<td>Potential impact of interviewer bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to capture information not within documents or other sources.</td>
<td>Participants could distort information due to memory lapse or altering accounts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct contact with participants.</td>
<td>Time and resource intensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can follow up and probe responses for more detail.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can tailor question wording and order to participant’s context.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Advantages and disadvantages of data collection methods
3. Research design and methods

it was felt appropriate. Documents were mostly retrieved during January and February 2012.

Unlike interviewing participants, the collection of data from documents is unobtrusive; documents are freely available and can be accessed and analysed without contacting participants. Furthermore the content of documents remains unchanged from when they are created and it is not altered in response to being researched (Robson, 2002, p. 349). These documents therefore provide a useful means for triangulating data retrieved through interviews (Robson, 2002, p. 352) and are thus an important method for ensuring the validity of the conclusions drawn from the study. Additionally, the document analysis serves five purposes specific to this study. Firstly, it identifies cases of LGTN, thus contributing to RQ1. Secondly, these documents—in particular the committee reports—provide insight into how local authorities justify their participation in LGTN, thus addressing RQ2. Thirdly, they identify several actors who were involved in LGTN, thereby contributing to an initial purposive sample for interviews. Fourthly, their content can inform the development of the interview questions. Finally, document analysis aids the development of a preliminary coding scheme which will be used as the starting point for analysing the interview data (see Section 3.3).

While using documents provides a number of benefits to the study, it is recognized that there are limitations. Firstly, documents are written for a specific purpose and not for the research (Robson, 2002, p. 358). Indeed committee documents, for example, are usually written by local officers to be presented to councillors at formal committee meetings and it is important to acknowledge that these documents are written with this audience in mind. Furthermore committee documents often seek permission to undertake work or—particularly in the case of scrutiny committee documentation—are being presented to justify LGTN activities. Information in these documents is therefore presented in support of each report’s recommendations. Documents are also publicly available, so it is likely they would only include information their authors are
comfortable disclosing to the public. To mitigate against these limitations, data from documents is not used in isolation, but rather in conjunction with other sources (participant observation and interviews).

### 3.3.2 Participant observation

Ten networking events involving local authorities in the case study areas were attended (see Table 3.4). These events allow for the direct observation of LGTN. Rather than being a passive observer, the researcher followed Harrison’s (2001, p. 81) advice, supporting observations with conversations and discussions with those involved.

Observation provides a number of benefits. As noted by Robson (2002, p. 310) it is an “appropriate technique for getting at ‘real life’ in the real world”. In this way it allows LGTN to be observed within its real world context and enables an assessment of how that context might influence networking activities (contributing to RQ3) (Harrison, 2001, p. 81). Observation additionally allows the researcher to collect data first-hand rather than relying solely on interview participants and local government documentation. As well as assuring the researcher of the accuracy of the data being collected, it yields information which interview participants may not wish to—or cannot—discuss. Observation also overcomes instances where interview participants may not be fully aware of certain activities or situations, or be unsure of answers (Harrison, 2001, p. 81). It consequently provides a way to “look beyond the ‘public’ and ‘official’ versions of reality” (Burns, 2000, quoted in Harrison, 2001, p. 87) offered by documentation and interviews, and therefore provides a useful means of triangulation. Additionally, events observed frequently involved practitioners from local authorities outside of the 14 cases. Observation therefore provides an opportunity to test the transferability of research findings in different contexts.

While observation brings benefits, weaknesses are recognized. According to Robson (2002, p. 311) “there is a major issue concerning the extent to which an observer
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obs. 1</td>
<td>French regions networking event</td>
<td>10 July 2012</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs. 2</td>
<td>SELP annual European congress</td>
<td>14 September 2012</td>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs. 3</td>
<td>Third cross-Channel forum</td>
<td>20 September 2012</td>
<td>Southampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs. 4</td>
<td>EU open days</td>
<td>8 October 2012 to 10 October 2012</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs. 5</td>
<td>Interreg IVa France–Channel–England conference</td>
<td>21 November 2012 to 22 November 2012</td>
<td>Bognor Regis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs. 6</td>
<td>Fourth cross-Channel forum</td>
<td>20 March 2013</td>
<td>Caen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs. 7</td>
<td>Europeanising Devolution conference: round table discussion with regional government practitioners</td>
<td>24 May 2013</td>
<td>Cardiff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs. 8</td>
<td>SELP council meeting and annual European congress</td>
<td>4 October 2013</td>
<td>Poole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs. 9</td>
<td>EU open days</td>
<td>7 October 2013 to 10 October 2013</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obs. 10</td>
<td>Fusing Localities workshop: panel discussion with local and regional government practitioners</td>
<td>29 November 2013</td>
<td>Manchester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Networking events observed
affects the situation under observation”. This situation—known as ‘reactivity’—makes it difficult to assess if what is being observed is a typical reflection of the activity (Harrison, 2001, p. 81). Getting access to observe activities and events presents another challenge (Harrison, 2001, p. 82; Robson, 2002, p. 311). Indeed, the small number of events observed reflects the limited opportunities the researcher was given to attend as an external observer. As with the document analysis, these weaknesses are mitigated by ensuring data collected through observation is not used in isolation.

3.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are used to collect the bulk of the data for this study. Qualitative interviews are a useful and appropriate method for studies which focus on phenomena from participants’ perspectives (Robson, 2002, p. 271). By interviewing those involved in LGTN, an in-depth understanding into the rationale for participation, difficulties encountered and characteristics of effective networking can be gained. Crucially, interviews capture perspectives which would not be present in other sources of information such as documentation (Harrison, 2001, p. 94). Interviews also allow direct contact with participants, providing opportunities to follow up responses to questions or probe for more detail (Robson, 2002, pp. 272–273). Interviewing has successfully been applied to other studies on LGTN (for example Benington & Harvey, 1998; Church & Reid, 1996, 1999; Lawrence, 2000; Payre, 2010; Pfieger, 2014; Salskov-Iversen, 2006; van der Heiden, 2010). This study therefore builds upon these previous successes.

A number of limitations with interviewing are acknowledged. From a practical perspective, Robson (2002, p. 273) highlights the resource and time intensive nature of setting up and conducting interviews. Richards (1996) also argues the success of interviewing is dependent on the researcher’s practical application of the method in the field. The reliability of data provided by interviewees can also be questioned; for

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52 Further details about the practical execution of interviews in the field are discussed in more detail in Huggins (2014a).
example participants may have memory lapses or may distort information to portray themselves or their organization more positively (Harrison 2001, pp. 94–95). Harrison (2001, p. 96) also points to the effect the interviewer might have on the interviewee, highlighting the need to phrase questions in such a way to avoid participants being led in their answers. Again, this is mitigated against by ensuring interviews are not used in isolation and triangulating results with data gathered through document analysis and participant observation.

Participants

A non-probability sampling method is used to select participants. Two sampling approaches are used: purposive and snowball. A purposive approach is used to identify actors with direct experience of LGTN. These actors are either situated within the local authorities studied or have direct experience of those local authorities’ LGTN activities as members of staff working for multilateral networks, national associations or Interreg joint technical secretariats (JTSs). These participants are identified primarily through the document analysis and internet searches, in addition to drawing on the researcher’s existing contacts. Secondly, a snowball approach is used, where participants are asked to identify others who are potentially relevant for the study. Snowball sampling is particularly suited to this research as LGTN is characterized by the relationships between actors. Indeed, this approach was particularly useful for identifying several participants.

Participants fall into four broad categories, outlined in Table 3.5. It is important that both administrative and political representatives of the 14 local authorities are included, as both play a role in LGTN. While a range of local officers and councillors are interviewed in south-east England, it is much harder to access French local politicians. Indeed, requests to interview French politicians were either refused, referred to local officers or ignored. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, English proficiency is lower among French politicians than it is amongst local officers, limiting the number of
3. Research design and methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant category</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local government administrative staff / local officers</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government politicians / councillors</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transnational network and Interreg JTS staff</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total participants</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: Participant categories

politicians who would be able to be interviewed in English. Secondly, French politicians have less free time to be interviewed, partly as a result of the practice of the so-called ‘cumul des mandats’, or holding multiple public offices. Thirdly, the more hierarchical nature of French local government means senior politicians refer to local officers within the authority. To address this, every opportunity was sought to engage with French politicians while observing the networking events outlined in Table 3.4.

While this study is primarily interested in local perceptions of LGTN, it also included staff of multilateral networks, as well as those working for Interreg JTSs and other national associations. These participants are able to offer a broader picture of the topic. They are also well placed to identify instances of local authorities engaging effectively in LGTN, so can assist in addressing RQ3. Additionally, participants who have direct experience of LGTN, but are no longer active—for example retired local government staff—are also included as they are able to share their experiences without any organizational constraints. This variety of participants provides additional and insightful perspectives and also serves as a means of triangulation, again ensuring validity (see Appendix E for a profile of participants and interview information).

**Interview questions and format**

Interviews were conducted in what [Robson (2002, p. 270)] defines as a ‘semi-structured’ format. That is, an interview that:
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has predetermined questions, but the order can be modified based upon the interviewer’s perception of what seems most appropriate. Question wording can be changed and explanations given. (Robson, 2002, p. 270)

This approach allows a core set of questions to be asked while providing the flexibility for specific areas of interest to be explored if they arise. This semi-structured approach also allows question wording to be tailored to participants. This is useful as participants refer to ‘transnational networking’ in different ways, for example “European partnership working”, “European links” or simply “co-operation”.

Questions posed to participants (see Appendix F) are developed from the study’s research questions. In line with the study’s inductive research design “spontaneous and rich descriptions” are sought, as advocated by Kvale (1996, p. 130). Questions are therefore posed to illicit in-depth open-ended responses. This is essential in ensuring participants’ perspectives are captured. Other than changing the wording and order of questions as a response to a participant’s context, questions remain the same throughout the fieldwork and all questions are asked to all participants. This addresses the concerns outlined above, regarding the reliability of data provided by interviews or the impact the researcher has on participants’ responses (Harrison, 2001, pp. 94–95). In some cases additional questions are posed to clarify certain responses or to explore an area of interest in more depth.

Face-to-face interviews are preferred as they allow a rapport to be built with participants. They also allow in-depth answers to be obtained; while telephone interviews allow the same questions to be asked, “answers to open questions tend to be shorter and the whole interview procedure tends to proceed more briskly than in the case of face-to-face interviews” (Thomas & Purdon, 1994). In some cases travel costs were too prohibitive or travel arrangements were unfeasible. In these instances, telephone interviews were offered instead as it was felt it was more important to include these participants and their perspectives rather than exclude them. Telephone interviews were also offered as a compromise when participants were unwilling to meet
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face-to-face.

The majority of interviews took place on a one-to-one basis, as was preferred. However, in five cases participants from the same organization requested they be interviewed together. This was particularly the case with French local officers. Again, while this was not ideal, it was felt it was more important to include these participants in the study rather than exclude them.

Overall this study draws on 63 interviews conducted with 68 participants. Four of these interviews were carried out by telephone and the rest were face-to-face. Interviews were conducted between April and December 2012.

Pilot interviews

Following van Teijlingen and Hundley’s (2001) advice, two pilot interviews were conducted to test the suitability of the questions and interview approach, and to highlight practical problems which may have been encountered. Two participants who no longer had a direct day-to-day role—but still an arm’s length interest—in LGTN were selected. This meant that if the interviews were unsuccessful, the quality of data from key participants would not be compromised. The pilot interviews were successful and given the insights offered by these participants this data is included in the analysis with the main interviews.

The interview process

Once the initial purposive sample had been gathered, potential participants were contacted by email, asking if they would be willing to participate in the study (see Appendix G for a sample invitation). Follow-up contacts were made if there was no reply. Invitations sent to potential participants based in France included a French translation. All contacts made and interviews arranged were recorded in a database to aid with organization and to ensure an audit trail.

Participants were sent a confirmation letter and information sheet outlining
what the study was about, what information would be gathered, confidentiality and anonymity issues, participants’ roles and how the results would be disseminated (see Appendix II). Some participants requested to see the interview questions in advance. In these cases, participants were given a copy of the interview schedule, but informed wording, structure and questions might be altered depending on issues raised during the interview.

Most interviews took place in participants’ offices or meeting rooms within their organization. In a few cases participants preferred to meet on ‘neutral ground’ and interviews were arranged to take place in a local café. Where possible interviews were audio recorded. This provided a number of advantages. Firstly, it meant a permanent record of the interview could be kept. Secondly, as noted by Kvale (1996, p. 160), recording allows the researcher to focus on the actual interview and topic being discussed. Overall, 55 of the 63 interviews were recorded. During all interviews, notes were taken and made on a form which structured the notes against specific questions (see Appendix I). This form also ensured participants were asked the same set of core questions. Interviews lasted on average 30 minutes. Following the interview, participants were sent a letter of thanks (see Appendix J).

Audio recorded interviews were later transcribed. While many computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) packages have functionality to code and analyse audio files directly, transcription to a written format is still preferred. It provides a written record of the interview which can not only be analysed, but participants can also receive a copy to check and confirm it. Transcription was carried out by the researcher. While this was time-consuming the decision was influenced by Kvale’s (1996, p. 160) argument that “rather than being a simple clerical task, transcription is itself an interpretive process”. Indeed, as Wainwright and Russell (2010).

\footnote{In some cases this was unfeasible because of too much background noise, despite efforts to ensure interviews took place in a distraction-free location. In one case the recording equipment failed to operate. Telephone interviews were also not recorded. In all of these cases data was captured in the form of detailed notes.}
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p. 3) note, the transcription process immerses researchers in their data by listening to a recording, writing it out, and re-reading it. This arguably heightens sensory interaction with the data.

Participants were sent a copy of the transcript, asking them to check it for errors or misinterpretations and to confirm it. As well as reducing the risk of transcription errors, this confirmation process reassured participants that they were not going to be misinterpreted or misrepresented. In some cases participants requested changes, either to correct a transcription error or to express a point more clearly. All amendments to transcripts were clearly highlighted\(^{54}\) (see Appendix E for interview information).

3.4 Language considerations

English is not the first language of several participants, including some working in English local authorities. This required careful consideration as language can play an important role in the dynamics and effectiveness of LGTN \cite{Kern2009, Lawrence2000, vanderHeiden2010}.

The use of translation services was considered, however their high cost makes this unfeasible. Furthermore, Birbili (2000) notes that there are significant methodological challenges involved when using interpreters and even in collecting data in different languages. In light of the potential cost and challenges involved using interpreters, all interviews are conducted in English. Participants are therefore selected who can speak a sufficient level of English. Documents analysed are also predominantly in English, although some French documents are included.

Initial concerns that this approach would lead to a lack of data from French local authorities proved unfounded, although this had an impact on the number of French politicians interviewed (see above). Many participants note that the language barrier

\(^{54}\) Where detailed notes were taken instead of a recording, these notes were typed out and sent to participants for their confirmation instead.

\(^{55}\) Many participants also noted this when discussing their experiences. This is explored in Section 6.3.3.
is less of a difficulty than it used to be and most transnational networks operate exclusively in English (see Section 6.3.3). Indeed, the lower number of interviews arranged with participants from French local government is more attributable to two factors other than language. Firstly, there are only five French cases compared with nine in south-east England. Secondly, the more hierarchical and closed bureaucratic culture of French local authorities means only one or two officials—usually a head of service or department—are appointed to be interviewed on behalf of all staff contacted in the organization.

### 3.5 Data analysis

Reviews of the literature (contained within Chapters 4, 5 and 6) lead to the development of a preliminary coding scheme. This scheme allows interviews and documents to be analysed using what Saldana (2009, p. 120) calls a ‘provisional coding’ method. Data is coded using a predetermined scheme, which is based on the review of literature and the researcher’s a priori knowledge. As data is analysed, codes are “revised, modified or expanded” (Saldana, 2009, pp. 120–121); although there is a predetermined scheme it is flexible enough to react to the data being analysed.

Throughout the analysis a CAQDAS package was used to assist in the organization and coding of data. It was fully recognized that CAQDAS only serves as an organizational aid to qualitative data analysis and cannot replace the researcher who is still required to code, interpret and analyse the data (MacMillan & Koenig, 2007, p. 181; Saldana, 2009, p. 22).

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56 The software used was Dedoose.
3.6 Ethical considerations

Full attention was given to the Economic and Social Research Council’s Framework for Research Ethics (2010) to ensure the research was legitimate, credible and that participants took part voluntarily on the basis of informed consent. Additionally, careful consideration was given to Kvale’s (1996, pp. 119–120) five questions relating to the ethics of interviewing:

- “What are the beneficial consequences of the study?”
- “How can the informed consent . . . be obtained?”
- “How can confidentiality . . . be protected?”
- “What are the consequences of the study for the participating subjects?”
- “How will the researcher’s role affect the study?”

These issues were outlined in an ethics report, which was assessed and given a favourable ethical opinion by the University of Portsmouth’s Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee before any data was collected (see Appendix K for the ethics report and favourable opinion).

One area given consideration was confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as in many cases there is only one officer and one councillor per local authority working on LGTN. This would mean it would be obvious who will have participated in this study. Furthermore, in order to address RQ3, participants were asked to provide details of how they feel their authorities apply best practice when it came to their participation in LGTN. This data also has the potential to inform and improve local authorities’ engagement. For these reasons, results are therefore not made confidential, although interviews were anonymized. This was clearly communicated before informed consent was obtained, and no participants refused to be interviewed on this ground.\(^{57}\)

\(^{57}\) This supports John’s (2009, p. 22) claim that local politicians and officials are much more open and willing to be interviewed compared with their national counterparts.
Chapter 4

The contemporary extent of local government transnational networking

While the presence of local government transnational networking (LGTN) in the European Union (EU) is widely acknowledged—and numerous examples have been identified by the literature (see Appendix A)—little remains known about the true extent of this activity. This is particularly the case in south-east England and northern France. While a body of literature identified cases of LGTN in the English Channel region during the 1990s (for example Church & Reid, 1995, 1996, 1999), a lack of recent empirical evidence limits our contemporary understanding of this activity. To address this gap in the literature, this chapter draws on document analysis, interviews and website searches to contribute a contemporary empirical account of LGTN carried out by local authorities in the case study area. In doing this it addresses the first research aim of this thesis:

- RA$_1$: Identify contemporary examples of LGTN by local authorities in south-east England and northern France.
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And answers the first research question:

- RQ$_1$: What is the current extent of LGTN in south-east England and France?

Two supplementary questions serve to deepen the analysis here:

- RQ$_{1a}$: How has participation in LGTN evolved—if at all—over time, and what does this say about the extent of local level Europeanization?

- RQ$_{1b}$: Is participation in LGTN uniform across all authorities or marked by differentiation?

Addressing RQ$_1$ is relevant as—in addition to addressing a lack of contemporary empirical evidence—it reveals the significance of LGTN. When LGTN was first observed by scholars in the 1990s, Benington and Harvey (1998) asked if it was a “passing fashion or new paradigm”. Similarly, Church and Reid (1996, pp. 1300–1301) drew attention to its unstable nature, noting that if it failed to sustain itself its importance may have been overstated. By revealing LGTN’s current extent, this chapter answers Benington and Harvey’s (1998) question, and underscores its importance in contemporary European governance.

This chapter shows that LGTN has not only remained a prevalent phenomenon in south-east England and northern France, it also has increased in intensity since the 1990s. Two key patterns characterize this overall finding. Firstly, the way local authorities have approached LGTN has evolved. Where in the 1990s bilateral and cross-border networks dominated, now multilateral and wider inter-regional networking is the norm. Secondly, while all local authorities are involved, there is marked variation in the extent of their engagement and in their approach.

As well as addressing RQ$_1$ and contributing a contemporary empirical account of LGTN to the literature, these findings serve to contextualize the later discussions on the motivations of local authorities participating in this activity (Chapter 5), and the factors affecting effective engagement (Chapter 6). These findings further make...
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a contribution to the debate on the extent and expected differentiation of local level Europeanization, and to the nature of MLG in the EU. An overall increase in the extent of local level Europeanization is observed, but still marked by differentiation and heterogeneity. While LGTN confirms the presence of MLG in the EU, its impact is not uniform, leading to a “‘variable geometry’ Europe” (Le Gales 2002, p. 110).

This chapter is structured as follows. To assist the analysis of LGTN, it first contributes a three-fold categorization of the forms of transnational co-operation local authorities engage in (Section 4.1). To contextualize the contemporary empirical analysis, the chapter then provides a background to the networking activity undertaken by local government in south-east England and northern France during the late 1980s and 1990s. This surveys both the prevailing context and cases of LGTN present at that time (Section 4.2). The empirical analysis of contemporary LGTN is then presented and structured according to the categorization developed earlier (Sections 4.3 and 4.4). This confirms the continued engagement of local authorities in LGTN. Two overriding patterns of engagement are then identified and provide a link to the debate on local level Europeanization: that local authorities’ approach to LGTN has evolved since the 1990s and that their engagement in the activity continues to be marked by variety (Section 4.5).

4.1 Categorizing LGTN

According to Benington (1994, pp. 31–32):

There seems to be no end to the number or variety of transnational local authority networks which are being spawned within the European Community, and the limit may not be reached until the acronyms run out!

Indeed the networks identified in the existing literature (see Appendix A) demonstrate this. In order to make sense of the diversity of LGTN, this thesis advances a three-fold categorization which captures the empirical reality of this activity.
Attempts to categorize cases of LGTN have already been undertaken by scholars. Benington and Harvey (1994) proposed a four-fold categorization where transnational networks were either ‘peak’, ‘spatial’, ‘thematic’ or ‘sectoral’ (see also Ward & Williams 1997, p. 441). Peak networks are pan-European associations, with a broad membership. Spatial networks reflected co-operation within distinct geographical boundaries. Thematic networks brought together actors around specific policy areas. Sectoral networks reflected shared economic interests. Ward and Williams (1997, p. 441) are critical of this categorization for two reasons. Firstly, it does not account for the fact that cases of LGTN often fall into two or more categories. Secondly, while it is descriptively helpful, it does not necessarily assist in understanding networks. Sodupe (1999) offers a two-fold categorization of networks: those which are representative and those which are functional. Like Benington and Harvey’s (1994) categorization, however, this also cannot account for those cases where networks undertake both representative and functional activities simultaneously. Other typologies have been developed which focus on territorial scope—whether European or international—and policy specialization (for example Bulkeley et al., 2003). Others attempt to categorize transnational networks according to their dedication to particular policy areas (for example Happaerts 2008; Happaerts et al., 2011), but these are limited to those areas of policy, so cannot account for the broader range of LGTN activities local authorities engage in. Crucially, however, these existing attempts at categorization do not reflect how local authorities themselves view participation in LGTN.

Given the limitations of existing attempts to capture the range of LGTN, this thesis contributes its own classification to the literature. Based on previous cases and on contemporary empirical evidence gathered in this thesis, it is posited that LGTN can be disaggregated into three categories, determined by the number of local authorities involved and whether or not the networking activity is time limited. These are: ‘bilateral networking’, ‘multilateral networking’ and ‘transnational projects’ (see Table 4.1). This builds on similar distinctions made by some scholars studying LGTN.
4. Extent of transnational networking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral networking</td>
<td>Involves two local authorities, each in different countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilateral networking</td>
<td>Involves three or more local authorities located in at least two different countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transnational projects</td>
<td>Involves at least two local authorities in at least two different countries. Unlike bilateral and multilateral networking co-operation in transnational projects has a fixed life-span and aimed at achieving specific policy outcomes and deliverables.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Categorization of LGTN

(for example Karvounis, 2011, p. 217; Keating, 2000; Kern, 2010; Kern, 2014, p. 115; Lefèvre & d’Albergo, 2007, p. 319). Crucially, the categorization advanced here builds on these earlier attempts as it is founded in the perceptions of local actors who are involved in LGTN. Indeed, such distinctions were regularly made by participants during interviews, showing local government itself applied this categorization to their own networking activities.58

Bilateral networking

Bilateral networking involves two local authorities, each in a different country.59 These bilateral links differ from the more traditional twinning links which aim to build civic or ceremonial ties, and were largely set up during the post-war years to facilitate cultural exchange.60 Rather they are underpinned by a commitment to co-operate on certain issues or in particular areas of policy, usually in economic or commercial fields (Heddebaert, 2001, pp. 62–63). These links can be between local authorities on

58 Interview with English local officer, May 2012, and French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 12; Int. 36). This categorization was further made during a presentation of Manchester City Council’s European activity made by a local councillor at the Fusing Localities panel discussion in November 2013 (Obs. 10), suggesting it can be transferred to other contexts outside of the case study areas. The councillor spoke of Manchester’s involvement in LGTN and broke down their activities by participation in multilateral networks—particularly Eurocities—direct bilateral links with the cities of Lille, France and Tampere, Finland, and transnational projects with European partners funded by the URBACT programme.

59 Baycan-Levent et al. (2008) use the term ‘sister cities’ to refer to such links.

60 Town twinning and sister city links are often omitted from other studies for this reason (for example Ercole et al., 1997, p. 219). This study also excludes such twinning links.
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either side of a national frontier—known as ‘adjunct twinning’ (Ercole et al. 1997, p. 225)—or between authorities further apart. In other words geographic contiguity is not a requirement. Often a partnership agreement or co-operation accord—signed by the political leaders of both local authorities—formalizes this form of LGTN and sets out the areas of collaboration, although this is not necessary in all cases.

Multilateral networking

Multilateral networking refers to groups of three or more local authorities. Instead of co-operating directly with each other, local authorities are usually members of LGTN organizations, operating under a transnational ‘brand’. Through these networks, local authorities are linked to several others in Europe who are also members. Multilateral networks can be further categorized as cases of ‘cross-border regions’ or ‘inter-regional co-operation’ using Perkmann’s typology. Cross-border regions are cases of geographically contiguous co-operation, often formed along either side of national borders. Inter-regional co-operation refers to long-distance, often non-contiguous, co-operation. Multilateral networks may be further sub-categorized into ‘general / multi purpose networks’ and ‘thematically focused networks’. General and multi purpose networks offer co-operation on a broad range of policy areas and seek to represent their members as subnational authorities; examples include the Assembly of European Regions (AER). Thematically focused networks are

61 The terms ‘peak associations’ (for example Hooghe 1995; Perkmann 2003) or ‘trans-regional associations’ (for example Donas & Beyers 2013) are also regularly used in the literature to describe such networks.

62 A similar distinction is made by Sodupe (1999) and Ercole et al. (1997).

63 Within inter-regional co-operation Perkmann (2003, p. 158) makes a further distinction between ‘inter-regional and inter-urban co-operation’ and ‘peak associations’. The first of these categories is used to define networks established by individual or groups of localities. While some of these continue to form permanent networks, many disband after funding or support is withdrawn. Peak associations refers to forms of organized network usually based on membership which seek to represent their members’ interests at a European level and provide a platform for exchanging knowledge and expertise. While most multilateral networks that councils participate in may be categorized as peak associations, the boundaries between the two are often blurred, making it difficult to differentiate between them (Perkmann 2003, p. 158).
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instead organized around specific policy areas, which are sometimes very narrow and specialized; for example the Airport Regions Conference (ARC) or the Network of European Regions Using Space Technologies (NEREUS).

Multilateral networks usually have a secretariat co-ordinating the work of the network and managing its membership. A membership fee is also sometimes levied. Additionally, local authorities may have to meet certain eligibility criteria, such as a minimum population size. The membership of these networks varies. Some, such as the Four Motors network, are relatively small while others are extremely large; the AER, for example, has a membership of around 250.

Transnational projects

The third category, transnational projects, differs from bilateral networking and multilateral networks as the co-operation is time limited and established to achieve specific deliverables in the form of a collaborative project. While these projects are often temporary, they nevertheless bring together local authorities from different countries and operate across national borders meaning they can be considered as cases of LGTN (Bulkeley, 2005, p. 876; John, 2000, pp. 888–889; 2001, pp. 87–88). Indeed the term ‘networking’ was used by participants and local authorities themselves during the research to refer to this activity. As with multilateral networking, local authorities are linked to others in Europe who also participate in the project. These projects are often—although not always—directly supported by the EU through various funding programmes designed to promote co-operation, such as Interreg or URBACT. While the purpose of the network is to implement the project, co-operation usually starts well before this while the project proposal is developed and bidding for funding takes

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64 Eurocities, for example, applies a minimum population rule (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2008; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008, p. 179; Payré, 2010, p. 266).
65 The Four Motors network, between Catalonia, the Rhône-Alpes, Baden-Württemburg and Lombardy, aims to promote investment and economic development in these industrialized European regions. See Borras (1993) and Murphy (1993) for a fuller discussion of this network.
66 As well as local government, project partners can also include a variety of other local actors such as universities, civil society organizations, local businesses and so on.
place.

As will be demonstrated below, the boundaries between each of these categories can be blurred. For example, a temporary partnership to deliver a transnational project might develop into a more lasting bilateral or multilateral network. Nevertheless, this categorization provides a useful framework to analyse cases of LGTN, both in historical (Section 4.2.2) and contemporary (Section 4.3) contexts.

4.2 Background to contemporary LGTN

As identified in Chapter 2, LGTN by European local authorities—including those in south-east England and northern France—largely rose to prominence during the late 1980s and 1990s. This was facilitated by a number of contextual factors, some of which were unique to the English Channel region. This section provides an overview of this context (Section 4.2.1) and the LGTN activity which developed in south-east England and northern France during this time (Section 4.2.2). This discussion serves to contextualize the empirical evidence on the contemporary activity by these councils, which will be discussed in Section 4.3.

4.2.1 The 1980s and 1990s context

Before providing an overview of early LGTN undertaken by councils in the case study area, it is necessary to highlight a number of contextual factors. Indeed as Church and Reid (1995, p. 298) argue, the development of LGTN in south-east England and northern France was “a clear policy response” to wider events happening at the time.

The construction of the Channel Tunnel is considered to be one of the major contextual factors, presenting both opportunities and challenges. This was particularly the case for Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais which, as will be shown, pioneered LGTN in south-east England and northern France. On the one hand the tunnel could bring
economic benefits. Both regions were in economic decline. Nord-Pas de Calais was facing rapid decline in its coal mining and engineering industries. Kent also faced industrial decline, compounded by poor performance in its traditional agriculture sector and seaside resorts (Sinclair & Page 1993, p. 480; Thomas, 2006, p. 16; Vickerman 1998, p. 175). The tunnel thus provided an opportunity to restructure the economy in these lagging regions. However, there was a fear that the resulting high speed link would lead to a ‘corridor effect’, whereby the regions would be bypassed in favour of larger economic centres and national capitals (Heddebaut 2001, p. 62; Sinclair & Page 1993, p. 479; Sparke 2000, p. 198; Vickerman 1998, p. 179).

Indeed Vickerman’s (1998) analysis suggests the Channel Tunnel had very little positive impact on Kent’s economy as most investment was attracted to London instead. Co-operating was thus seen as a way to capitalize on the opportunities and address the challenges that the tunnel brought. Indeed, Sparke (2000, p. 195) argues that it was the “anticipated infrastructural link that served as the major catalyst for ... cross-border cooperation”. Luchaire (1992, quoted in Heddebaut, 2004, p. 71) likewise saw Anglo–French co-operation as “the natural child” of the tunnel.

As discussed in Section 2.2.2, the development of community initiative funding programmes facilitated a number of transnational links (Rees, 1997; Sodupe, 1999). Interreg was one such programme. It aimed to promote cross-border co-operation by providing part funding for collaborative projects involving partners from more than one country. However, Interreg was initially only available for regional co-operation across land borders. Through the framework of their bilateral co-operation agreement, Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais embarked on an intensive lobbying campaign to be deemed eligible for Interreg I support. Their main success was persuading their respective national governments and the European Commission that the Channel

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67 As noted by Heddebaut (2001, p. 62) the Channel Tunnel’s primary function “is to connect networks (road and rail) between [the] capitals Paris, London and Brussels”. Heddebaut (2001, p. 61) also argues that the Channel Tunnel actually reduced the number of connections between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais, as competition with the ferry companies led to a concentration of routes between Dover and Calais at the expense of other routes between the two regions.

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Tunnel constituted a land border between the two regions (Barber, 1997, p. 20; Church & Reid, 1999, p. 646). Indeed, as Sinclair and Page (1993, p. 479) note, “by reducing the significance of the boundary between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais, the Tunnel provided the rationale for the establishment of the UK’s first Transfrontier Development Programme”. Consequently, the Transmanche Region became the first Interreg programme to cross a maritime border, as well as the first programme in Great Britain (Church & Reid, 1999, p. 646; Sparke, 2000, p. 203).

Having seen the success of Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais, other local authorities in south-east England and northern France lobbied for their inclusion in the next programme. Given the highly competitive process and a lack of central government support (Church & Reid, 1995, p. 303), many of these attempts were unsuccessful. However the wider geographical scope of the Interreg II programme (1994–1999) meant the county of East Sussex and the French départements of the Somme and Seine-Maritime were eligible to participate under the so-called Rives-Manche area, in addition to a new programme between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais (Church & Reid, 1996, p. 1308).

More broadly, the completion of the Single European Market in 1993 was another important contextual factor. This effectively removed economic barriers and, like the Channel Tunnel, had the potential to bring significant economic benefits (Church & Reid, 1995, p. 298). Significant growth was expected, particularly through the transport links between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais (Casson & Dardanelli, 2012, p. 603). However, while administrative and economic barriers were removed, geographical barriers—namely the Channel itself—still persisted (Heddebaut, 2001, pp. 61–62). Again, co-operation was seen as a way to capitalize on opportunities and address challenges.

LGTN therefore developed in response to these contextual factors; it was a reaction to a new political reality brought about through closer transport links and European integration (Church & Reid, 1999, p. 646). Sparke (2000) frames this new reality as a
series of ‘geographical imaginations’: ‘infrastructural’, based on the Channel Tunnel and new transport links, ‘Eurocratic’, based on EU programmes such as Interreg designed to promote co-operation, and ‘entrepreneurial’, based on the economic identity of a new cross-border region. The impact and potential opportunities of this ‘new reality’ overrode marked administrative, geographical and economic differences between south-east England and northern France (Church & Reid, 1995, p. 302), not to mention the often opposing ideological and cultural foundations of their leaders (Barber, 1997, p. 20; Church & Reid 1996, p. 1305). As Sparke (2000, p. 196) observed, co-operation:

developed in the context of a highly uneven and divided social, political, and economic geography, marked by a long history of disconnection and division . . . Thus, the initial plans for cross-channel cooperation were made by very different areas with contrasting regional identities, policy-making environments, and economies, and with few common understandings of regional interdependence.

4.2.2 Early examples of LGTN

Existing literature has charted the development of LGTN by councils in the English Channel region during the 1990s. In particular, Church and Reid (1995, 1996, 1999) provided comprehensive research into several cases of cross-border co-operation in this area. The emergence of this networking activity is now summarized.

Early examples of bilateral networking

From the late 1980s a number of cross-border bilateral agreements were signed by councils on either side of the English Channel. Buléon and Shurmer-Smith (2008, p. 174) observed that the first cross-Channel bilateral agreement actually dates from 1971 between Devon County Council and the département of Calvados. This was followed by a tri-lateral agreement between Somerset County Council, Dorset County Council and the Manche département in 1984. However,
4. Extent of transnational networking

between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais (Kent County Council & Conseil régional du Nord-Pas de Calais, 1987) was the first of its kind between English and French local authorities. This agreement established the so-called ‘Transmanche Region’ which provided a framework for co-operation between the two authorities in the areas of strategic planning, economic development, training, cultural and artistic exchange, tourism and joint promotional campaigns (Barber, 1997, p. 20). This was targeted at each authority’s coastal areas (Church & Reid, 1995, 1996, pp. 1303–1304; Heddebaud, 2001, p. 64).70

Hampshire’s agreement with Basse-Normandie followed in 1989. Following the Kent–Nord-Pas de Calais example, this accord formalized co-operation in certain policy areas; namely transportation, tourism, technology, research and training and education (Hampshire County Council & Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie, 1989). Another co-operation agreement, between East Sussex and Haute-Normandie, was signed in 1993 (East Sussex County Council & Conseil régional de Haute-Normandie, 1993). This trend of bilateral co-operation continued across the Channel through the 1990s. By 1996, 11 such agreements were in place between local authorities in England and France along the Channel coast (Poussard, n.d.)71. Table 4.2 lists these bilateral links which were present between the local authorities studied.

While cross-border co-operation was the main focus, a small number of links further afield were also made. For example Bretagne signed a co-operation agreement with Saxony in Germany (Conseil régional de Bretagne & Freistaat Sachsen, 1995). Similarly, East Sussex signed accords with Veszprém in Hungary (East Sussex County Council & Veszprém Megyei Onkormányzata, 1996) and Kreis Pinneberg in Germany (East Sussex County Council & Kreis Pinneberg, n.d.). In all cases, bilateral

70 For a fuller discussion of the Kent–Nord-Pas de Calais link and the development of the Transmanche Region during the 1990s see Barber (1997) and Church and Reid (1995, 1996).

71 Not including the multilateral Arc Manche network, which is discussed below.
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Bilateral cross-border links

Kent County Council & Conseil régional du Nord-Pas de Calais.
East Sussex County Council & Conseil régional de Haute-Normandie.
East Sussex County Council & Conseil général de la Somme.
West Sussex County Council & Conseil régional de Haute-Normandie.
Hampshire County Council & Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie.
Conseil régional de Picardie & Essex County Council.
Conseil régional de Bretagne & Cornwall County Council.

Table 4.2: Bilateral cross-border networking in the case study areas during the mid-1990s (Buléon & Shurmer-Smith, 2008, p. 175; Poussard, n.d.-a)

accords were established to focus co-operation between local authorities in specific, yet substantive, policy areas, usually surrounding economic development. This marked a departure from the traditional town twinning links, which merely fostered cultural and civic exchange.

Early examples of multilateral networking

While this bilateral networking proliferated, multilateral networking also began to emerge. Towards the west of the case study area Hampshire, Bretagne, Haute-Normandie, Basse-Normandie and Picardie were involved in the Atlantic Arc Commission, which also included members from the rest of the UK and France, Ireland, Spain and Portugal. The formation of this network, during the late 1980s, was a bottom–up endeavour by the local and regional authorities involved, and seen as a way to counteract the adverse effects of peripherality and perceived centralization in European Community decision making (Wise, 2000b, p. 866). The Isle of Wight was a member of a similar body known as the Islands Commission while Nord-Pas de Calais was a member of the North Sea Commission. All of these commissions came under the umbrella of a wider multilateral network, the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime

\[^{72}\text{For a fuller discussion on the Atlantic Arc Commission during the 1990s see Poussard (1997) and Wise (2000b, 2000a).}\]
Regions (CPMR), which had a membership from across Europe.

A similar—although not under the umbrella of the CPMR—network is the Arc Manche, formed in 1995. By 1997 it included all the northern French régions along with Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight on the English side. As with the Atlantic Arc Commission, the initiative to form the Arc Manche came from the local and regional authorities involved and was seen as a way to complement the existing bilateral links between many of its members, working on the assumption that a larger grouping of authorities would be in a better position to achieve their aims (Church & Reid 1999, p. 650). Its main policy concern was around maritime issues and seeking to influence European policy regarding the Channel area (Barber 1997, p. 22). It received no external funding and relied mainly on the voluntary support of officer time from member authorities (Church & Reid 1999, p. 650).

Towards the east of the case study area, Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais joined the Belgian regions of Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels-Capital in 1991 in a network under the name of ‘Euroregion’. While this was a development on the existing bilateral Transmanche Region between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais, the Euroregion aimed to complement this relationship rather than replace it (Barber 1997, p. 21; Church & Reid 1995, p. 301; 1996, p. 1305; 1999, p. 647). With a secretariat in Brussels, the work of the Euroregion focused on economic development, strategic planning and transport, the environment, exchange of expertise and promoting the Euroregion (Barber 1997, p. 22; Thomas, 2006, p. 14). As with the Arc Manche, the Euroregion was not significantly funded and was resourced by staff time from the authorities involved (Church & Reid 1999, p. 647). While the Euroregion was foremostly composed of the local and regional authorities concerned, it also sought to involve other local actors, such

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73 This was before the 1998 local government re-organization in the UK, so the unitary authorities of Brighton and Hove City Council, Medway Council, Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council did not exist in their current form at this time.

74 For a fuller discussion of Arc Manche during the 1990s see Church and Reid (1999). The role of LGTN in lobbying and influencing the EU is explored in detail in Section 5.3.
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as chambers of commerce, universities and the private sector (Barber, 1997, p. 22).

While these examples of LGTN involved regional and county level local authorities, there were also cases involving lower tiers of local government. The Transmanche Metropole involved the local authorities of Caen, Le Havre and Rouen in France and Southampton, Portsmouth, Bournemouth and Poole in England. This multilateral network built upon existing national networks between these cities (Church & Reid, 1995, pp. 302–303). Although it was formed around a “loose” economic accord (Church & Reid, 1995, p. 303), its aim was to promote co-operative ventures and thus bid for support under the EU’s Interreg programme (Church & Reid, 1996, pp. 1307–1308). While this was not initially successful, it did nevertheless highlight the impact Interreg had on LGTN.

Early examples of transnational projects

Interreg led to the development of a number of transnational links. The Interreg I programme between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais (1990–1993) led to 68 projects between local actors, many involving local authorities. This in turn led to several long-standing partnerships between these actors, many of which continued well beyond the life of the programme itself (Barber, 1997, p. 21). This was the same case under wider Interreg II Rives-Manche programme which—as with the initial Kent–Nord-Pas de Calais Interreg I programme—stimulated cross-border co-operation between a variety of local actors in south-east England and northern France (Church & Reid, 1996, p. 1309). While many local authorities were engaged in LGTN before they were

75 For a fuller discussion of the Euroregion during the 1990s see Barber (1997); Heddebat (2001) and Thomas (2006).
76 Church and Reid (1995, pp. 302–303; 1996, p. 1307) also note that the UK cities involved in the Transmanche Metropole were motivated by a desire to promote their own local identities and, as local government re-organization had yet to take place, were looking for a way to counteract county council policies they did not agree with. This was confirmed by one of the study's participants who worked for one of the councils concerned at the time (Interview with former English local officer, July 2012 [Int. 38]).
77 For a fuller discussion of the Transmanche Metropole during the 1990s see Church and Reid (1995, 1996).
4. Extent of transnational networking

eligible for Interreg support, Church and Reid (1995, p. 304) argue that it was the prospect of EU funding which often “provided the catalyst” for co-operation, whether this was participating in joint projects or co-ordinating lobbying efforts.78

Summary

This section has provided an overview of LGTN undertaken by local authorities in south-east England and northern France during the 1990s. During this period local authorities proactively built bilateral links with their cross-border colleagues and these links were gradually supplemented with emerging multilateral networks involving several authorities. The Interreg programmes, and the gradual increase in the eligible areas for support, also served as a catalyst to co-operation, facilitating a number of transnational projects between English and French local authorities. Rees (1997) shows this facilitation role applied across western Europe at the time. The overlapping and complementary cross-border links operating across the Channel which developed led to what Church and Reid (1995, p. 302) called a “complex organizational context”. Additionally, it demonstrated local authorities’ ability to be dynamic and flexible in their approach to LGTN while remaining committed to co-operation (Church & Reid, 1999, pp. 647–648).

While LGTN proliferated, the literature focused mainly on the cross-border links. Indeed, many of the examples noted above are identified as ‘cross-border regions’ by Perkmann (2003).79 This is despite evidence that wider inter-regional networking was also present at this time.80 Indeed Church and Reid (1999, p. 651) mention Brighton’s

78 For a fuller discussion of the development of the Interreg programmes in south-east England and northern France during the 1990s see Church (2007).
79 Those specifically identified by Perkmann (2003, pp. 161–162) as cross-border regions involving local government in south-east England and northern France are the Kent–Nord-Pas de Calais bilateral link, the Euroregion, the Atlantic Arc Commission, the Arc Manche and the Rives-Manche area.
80 Evidence does exist in the literature at this time of wider inter-regional networks, such as Eurocities (see Griffiths, 1995; Sampaio, 1994) or the Four Motors (see Borrás, 1993; Murphy, 1993). However, no reference is made to the involvement of local government in south-east England or northern France, with the exception of McAleavey and Mitchell’s (1994) examination of RETI.
involvement in four multilateral networks\textsuperscript{81}. This was further confirmed by interview participants who had experience of LGTN during the 1990s and who were able to offer examples, such as Southampton’s involvement in the Telecities\textsuperscript{82} and Smartcities network.\textsuperscript{83} This focus on cross-border co-operation may be as a result of Church and Reid’s (\textit{1995}, p. 305) assertion that it is the “most explicit” form of LGTN.

An exception is McAleavey and Mitchell’s (\textit{1994}) examination of the Association of European Regions of Industrial Technology (RETI) network, which involved Nord-Pas de Calais along with other local and regional authorities from across Europe (see also Benington & Harvey \textit{1998}, Lawrence \textit{2000}). RETI formed out of the Objective 2 lobby and sought to make the case for continued support for regions with declining industry\textsuperscript{84}.

Nevertheless, this heavy focus on cross-border networking as opposed to wider transnational activity represents a shortcoming in existing scholarship. A lack of contemporary literature on LGTN in the English Channel region represents another. As will be shown below, LGTN has evolved since the 1990s; it has increased in intensity and moved beyond geographical contiguity. The existing literature is therefore unable to contribute an understanding of the current extent of LGTN undertaken by local authorities in south-east England and northern France\textsuperscript{85}. To address these gaps, this chapter now presents a contemporary analysis of this activity.

\textsuperscript{81} These were the Medium Sized Cities Commission, the Co-ordinated Action for Seaside Towns Network (COAST), HELIOS and Telecities (Church & Reid \textit{1999}, p. 651).

\textsuperscript{82} See Götzell (\textit{2002}) and Serra (\textit{2005}) for a discussion on the Telecities network.

\textsuperscript{83} Interview with former English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 38).

\textsuperscript{84} RETI also provided a forum to discuss and exchange ideas between its members. For a fuller discussion of the Objective 2 lobby and RETI during the 1990s see McAleavey and Mitchell \textit{(1994)} and Lawrence \textit{(2000)}.

\textsuperscript{85} Thomas’s (\textit{2006}) analysis of the Euroregion is an exception to this, although it is focused largely on the Euroregion’s activity and context during the 1990s.
4. Extent of transnational networking

4.3 Overview of LGTN: 2001–2011

The empirical data gathered for this study reveal a number of general findings relating to local government’s contemporary participation in LGTN. Altogether the 14 councils studied were involved in 302 transnational links between 2001 and 2011. These links are summarized in Table 4.3 and visualized in Figure 4.1. Visualizations for individual councils are included in Appendix L.86

The visualization of this activity and the summary of links illustrate a number of key points. Firstly, LGTN remains prevalent in south-east England and northern France and continues during a period marked by austerity and public finance pressures. This reinforces the relevance of the empirical puzzle discussed in Section 1.2. The number of links varies between councils. For example in England, Kent is by far the most active with 47 links, while Portsmouth has only eight. Similarly in France, Nord-Pas de Calais has 34 links while Picardie only has 13. Nonetheless, all of the councils studied participated in LGTN in one form or another. Overall, councils were involved in an average of just over 20 transnational links.87 In both countries the authorities closest to international borders—Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais—have the most links. This suggests geographical proximity to a border may affect the level of participation in LGTN.88

Secondly, some councils often prefer participating in certain forms of LGTN as opposed to others. For example, Bretagne prefers participating in multilateral networks as opposed to bilateral networking or transnational projects. Medway Council, on the other hand, favours transnational projects, while bilateral networking forms a large proportion of East Sussex County Council’s activity.

86 These visualizations were carried out using social network analysis software. Transnational links engaged in by the councils in the case study areas were entered into this software which then visually mapped them. The purpose here was to visualize the prevalence of LGTN rather than to carry out any quantitative social network analysis.
87 The average (mean) number of links for a council in south-east England was 21.11 and in northern France was 22.4.
88 Although Chapter 6 reveals a diverse range of factors account for this variation.
4. Extent of transnational networking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilateral networks</th>
<th>Multilateral networks</th>
<th>Transnational projects</th>
<th>Total links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medway Council</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex County Council</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton and Hove City Council</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sussex County Council</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire County Council</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth City Council</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton City Council</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isle of Wight Council</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conseil régional du Nord-Pas de Calais</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conseil régional de Picardie</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conseil régional de Haute-Normandie</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conseil régional de Bretagne</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>74</strong></td>
<td><strong>193</strong></td>
<td><strong>302</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Summary of transnational links participated in by local authorities in south-east England and northern France, 2001–2011
4. Extent of transnational networking

Figure 4.1: Visualization of LGTN activity undertaken by local authorities in south-east England and northern France, 2001–2011

Key
- Case study
- Local authority in another country
- Transnational networking organisation
- Transnational project

Figure 4.1: Visualization of LGTN activity undertaken by local authorities in south-east England and northern France, 2001–2011
Thirdly, Figure 4.1 illustrates the complexity of LGTN. Different councils were often members of the same networks. For example, all the councils studied except Medway and Portsmouth were members of the Arc Manche network. Similarly Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and all the northern French régions have all been members of the CPMR. These mutual links also applied beyond the councils studied. For example, while Basse-Normandie had formed a bilateral relationship with Tuscany in Italy, they were further linked through their mutual membership of five other multilateral networks. Tuscany’s membership of these networks meant it also had indirect links with all the other northern French régions along with Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and West Sussex, and several other local and regional authorities elsewhere in Europe outside of the case study area. These overlapping links were regarded by some local authorities as a way to further reinforce co-operation. In many cases, pre-existing bilateral networking led to further co-operation in the form of transnational projects, sometimes involving other partners too. The most illustrative example of this is the bilateral link between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais and the resulting participation in transnational projects this led to; between 2001 and 2011 these two councils participated in 11 mutual projects along with four mutual multilateral networks (see Figure 4.2).

On other occasions multilateral networks themselves are involved in projects which their members are participating in. This confirms earlier observations by Benington (1994, p. 31) and Ward and Williams (1997, p. 462) that such networks often act as a sponsor or incubator for sub-networks. For example the REALM project led by Hampshire County Council has the support of the AER, of which Hampshire is also a member. The AER has also developed direct links with other multilateral networks, for example the Arc Manche, the Assembly of the European Regions

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89 The networks linking Basse-Normandie and Tuscany are the CPMR, GMO-free Regions Network, AREFLH, AREPO and ERRIN.
90 Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).
91 The REALM project (Regional Adult Learning Multipliers and the Europe 2020 Flagship Initiatives) aimed to better connect adult learning in European regions with EU policy development. Further information is available at: [www3.hants.gov.uk/realm.htm](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/realm.htm)
4. Extent of transnational networking

Figure 4.2: Mutual transnational links between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais

Producing Fruit, Vegetables and Plants (AREFLH), the European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN) and NEREUS (AER, 2012a, 2012b). This trend of networks interacting with each other has been identified elsewhere in the literature (Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 247). The AER’s—and other networks’—overlapping links with local authorities, transnational projects and other multilateral networks is an illustration of how complex LGTN has become (see Figure 4.3). Further complexity is introduced by the fact multilateral networks and transnational projects sometimes also involved non-local authority members. Multilateral networks such as Eurocities and NEREUS include business partners, while ERRIN involves local and regional research establishments and universities.

Fourthly, as expected, there is a degree of overlap between bilateral links, multilateral networks and transnational projects. In some cases bilateral networking

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92 While networks co-operate, they also compete with each other for limited resources and members (Bulkeley et al. 2003, p. 247).
4. Extent of transnational networking

Figure 4.3: Direct links developed by the AER

provides the foundation for wider multilateral networks. For example, the bilateral links between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais, and West Sussex and Haute-Normandie ultimately led to the creation of the Euroregion and the Arc Manche respectively. As noted above, bilateral links have also led to transnational projects. In other cases permanent multilateral networks have been born out of seemingly temporary transnational projects; the Promoting Operational Links through Integrated Systems (POLIS) network is one example of this [93] as is the Energy Cities network [Kern & Bulkeley 2009, p. 317].

While Table 4.3 and Figure 4.1 show the links case study councils engaged in between 2001 and 2011, they do not account for how the level of participation changes over time. As will be demonstrated in the following sections, the level of engagement with LGTN is in a constant state of flux. As one French regional officer stated:

93 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23).
4. Extent of transnational networking

it’s a kind of wave, it’s always changing.\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 50).}

An English local officer similarly observed that:

a lot of local authorities have had peaks and troughs of interest in engagement.\footnote{Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08).}

This instability has been observed elsewhere in the empirical literature, with van der Heiden (2010, p. 150) noting that “many of these international interurban networks disappear as quickly as they emerged”. These cases are considered in this analysis as, in the words of Handley (2006, p. 23), “it is not necessary to dismiss a partnership simply because it has been inactive in recent years”.\footnote{This fluctuation is accounted for in Section 5.7.2 which shows that local authorities would cease engagement where LGTN no longer served their interests.}

The above analysis shows not only that LGTN remains prevalent, but also that this activity is characterized by complexity and overlapping relationships operating at a European level. While complex, the diversity of links present provides local government with a degree of flexibility to pursue specific networking opportunities in line with a local authority’s context or strategic objectives.\footnote{This strategic approach is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.}

Having provided an overview, LGTN is now discussed in more detail, following the categorization advanced in Section 4.1.

4.4 Contemporary LGTN in detail

4.4.1 Contemporary bilateral networking

Many local authorities in south-east England and northern France have continued their involvement in the bilateral networks formed since the late 1980s. In addition new ones have been formed. Indeed, while the number of bilateral links differs from council to council, all of the local authorities studied except one—the Isle of Wight—have
4. Extent of transnational networking

participated in bilateral networking with European counterparts. These are outlined in Table 4.4. In most cases a co-operation agreement forms the basis of these bilateral links, which usually focuses co-operation on specific policy areas (for example Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie & Hordaland Fylkeskommune 2013, Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie & Regione Toscana Consiglio Regionale 2005, East Sussex County Council). It is also worth noting that some of the councils studied have engaged in bilateral networking beyond Europe. In south-east England, for example, Kent County Council has built a link with Virginia in the US (see Casson & Dardanelli, 2012) (Interviews with English local officer, May 2012, and English councillor, May 2012 [Int. 04; Int. 05]), and Southampton City Council with Qingdao in China (Southampton City Council, 2007b). Similarly in northern France, Nord-Pas de Calais has bilateral links with regions in Brazil, Morocco, Mali and Senegal, and Haute-Normandie has links with Madagascar and Algeria (Interviews with French regional officers, September 2012 [Int. 50; Int. 61; Int. 62]). These links are not included in this study as it is primarily concerned with European LGTN.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>Bilateral links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>Bács-Kiskun (Hungary), Nord-Pas de Calais (France), Pas-de-Calais (France), West Flanders (Belgium)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medway</td>
<td>Dunkirk (France)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex</td>
<td>Haute-Normandie (France), Kreis Pinneberg (Germany), Seine-Maritime (France), Somme (France), Veszprém (Hungary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton and Hove</td>
<td>Aalborg (Denmark)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sussex</td>
<td>Haute-Normandie (France), Tolna (Hungary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>Basse-Normandie (France)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
<td>Caen (France)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>Kaliningrad (Russia), Kalisz (Poland), Le Havre (France), Rems Murr-Kreis (Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isle of Wight</td>
<td>No bilateral links present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nord-Pas de Calais</td>
<td>Flanders (Belgium), Kent (UK), Wallonia (Belgium)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picardie</td>
<td>Thüringen (Germany), Trenčín (Slovakia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haute-Normandie</td>
<td>East Sussex (UK), Lower Saxony (Germany), Pomerania (Poland), West Sussex (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basse-Normandie</td>
<td>Bremen (Germany), Hampshire (UK), Hordaland (Norway), Tuscany (Italy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bretagne</td>
<td>Saxony (Germany), Wales (UK), Wielkopolska (Poland)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Bilateral networking between councils studied and other European local authorities, 2001–2011

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\[98\] It is also worth noting that some of the councils studied have engaged in bilateral networking beyond Europe. In south-east England, for example, Kent County Council has built a link with Virginia in the US (see Casson & Dardanelli, 2012) (Interviews with English local officer, May 2012, and English councillor, May 2012 [Int. 04; Int. 05]), and Southampton City Council with Qingdao in China (Southampton City Council, 2007b). Similarly in northern France, Nord-Pas de Calais has bilateral links with regions in Brazil, Morocco, Mali and Senegal, and Haute-Normandie has links with Madagascar and Algeria (Interviews with French regional officers, September 2012 [Int. 50; Int. 61; Int. 62]). These links are not included in this study as it is primarily concerned with European LGTN.
4. Extent of transnational networking

In some cases, however, a formal agreement is not present and co-operation exists on an informal basis.

Among the bilateral links that are present are the more obvious cross-border ones, for example between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais or between Nord-Pas de Calais and Wallonia. As discussed, many of these formed during the late 1980s and early 1990s. While most of these links have continued, new cross-border relationships have been established, for example between Kent and the départment of Pas-de-Calais, or between Bretagne and Wales (Conseil régional de Bretagne & Welsh Assembly Government 2004; Kent County Council & Conseil général du Pas-de-Calais 2005).

Also during this period, French régions sought to re-affirm some of their existing bilateral links, usually through joint declarations or renewed co-operation agreements (for example Conseil régional de Bretagne & Freistaat Sachsen 2005; Conseil régional de Picardie & Freistaat Thüringen (2003, 2007, 2009).

Bilateral networking has also been sustained through joint working. This takes a number of forms. For example the leader of Kent County Council and the president of the Pas-de-Calais départment participate in an annual meeting to establish a programme of work for the forthcoming year. Another example is the case of the Hampshire–Basse-Normandie bilateral link, where each council takes it in turns to host an annual delegation from the other.

Additionally councils now participate in bilateral networking beyond their traditional cross-border and historical ties. This is particularly the case with local authorities in central and eastern Europe. Examples include links between Kent

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100 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 04).

101 Interviews with English local officers, July 2012 and September 2012 (Int. 21; Int. 45).
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and Bács-Kiskun in Hungary, Bretagne and Wielkopolska in Poland, and Picardie and Trenčín in Slovenia. This confirms Church and Reid’s (1996, p. 1304) earlier observation that experience through initial cross-border links encourages wider LGTN, often with authorities further afield. Again, in many cases co-operation agreements formalize these relationships (for example East Sussex County Council & Veszprém Megye Őnkormányzata 1996, Kent County Council & Bács-Kiskun County General Assembly 2004, Conseil régional de Bretagne & Województwo Wielkopolskie 2005a), although not in all.

While the evidence suggests the number of these bilateral links has increased since the 1990s, participants stated the level of interest and engagement in these links varies over time. One participant noted:

those alliances have already been formed and they ebb and flow, so there'll be swathes of time when they're not doing anything at all and it's just a notional partnership.

For example, the link between Kent and the région of Nord-Pas de Calais has become less active over the previous few years, in part because preference had been given to developing a link with the département of Pas-de-Calais. However, there was once again interest to re-establish it. It was also noted that Basse-Normandie’s links with Tuscany and Hampshire were not currently in use, despite them being active in 2006. The West Sussex–Haute-Normandie link has also recently become inactive.

In some cases bilateral networking was not actively pursued. For the relatively new English unitary councils this was because there was no tradition of bilateral

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102 A link between East Sussex County Council and Veszprém in Hungary has existed since the mid-1990s (East Sussex County Council & Veszprém Megye Őnkormányzata 1996).
103 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).
104 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 04).
105 Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 37) and personal communication with French regional officer, July 2013. This is confirmed on a recent map produced by Basse-Normandie which describes their co-operation agreements with Hampshire and Tuscany as “coopération en veille” or ‘co-operation on standby’ (Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie 2014).
106 Personal communication with English local officer, July 2013.
co-operation or civic twinning, as had developed with the older county councils during the 1990s. One local officer from a unitary council commented:

As a relatively new council, unitary authority, which was set up in 1997 we don’t have traditional town twinning links, we don’t have that background . . . So our approach has always been around networks and multilateral links rather than bilateral links, we found that’s the way we want to go.\footnote{107}

Other councils, such as Medway, preferred to co-operate with European local authorities on a case by case basis through transnational projects rather than being tied into working with a limited number of authorities through co-operation agreements\footnote{108}.

\subsection*{4.4.2 Contemporary multilateral networking}

All councils studied, except Medway and Portsmouth, participated in multilateral network\footnote{109}. These links are outlined in Table 4.5. These multilateral networks can be sub-categorized into cases of cross-border regions and inter-regional networks (see Table 4.6). While the focus during the 1990s was on membership to cross-border networks such as the Euroregion or the Arc Manche, the contemporary empirical evidence indicates that most local authorities have become members of wider inter-regional networks and that these networks are far more prevalent than their cross-border counterparts. This supports the argument that local government’s approach to LGTN has gradually evolved from the initial bilateral networking developed from the late 1980s, to the multilateral cross-border networks of the mid-1990s, to the wider inter-regional networks of the present day.

The categorization between cross-border and inter-regional networks also illustrates the wide variety of policy areas covered by the multilateral networks local authorities

\footnote{107}{Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 12).}
\footnote{108}{Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 40).}
\footnote{109}{Sometimes there were different levels of membership for networks. For example most councils studied were full members of the Arc Manche, however East Sussex and the Isle of Wight were only ‘associate members’. This study does not make a distinction in such cases as regardless of membership level, councils are still engaged in the network.}
### 4. Extent of transnational networking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>Multilateral networks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>Arc Manche, EU Straits Initiative, European Network of High Speed Regions, Euroregion, MOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medway</td>
<td>No participation in multilateral networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex</td>
<td>Arc Manche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sussex</td>
<td>AER, ARC, Arc Manche, Dynamo Regions Network, POLIS, PURPLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>AER, Arc Manche, Atlantic Arc Commission, CIVITAS Network, CPMR, Dynamo Regions Network, POLIS, TransChannel Partnership Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
<td>No participation in multilateral networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>AMRIE, Arc Manche, Energy Cities, Eurocities, Maritime Cities Network, POLIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isle of Wight</td>
<td>Arc Manche, CPMR, Islands Commission, Dynamo Regions Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nord-Pas de Calais</td>
<td>Arc Manche, CPMR, EGTC Flandre–Dunkerque–Côte d’Opale, ERRIN, Eurometropole Lille–Kortrijk–Tournai, European Network of High Speed Regions, Euroregion, GMO-free Regions Network, MOT, North Sea Commission, PURPLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picardie</td>
<td>AER, Arc Manche, CPMR, ERRIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haute-Normandie</td>
<td>Arc Manche, CPMR, Dynamo Regions Network, GMO-free Regions Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basse-Normandie</td>
<td>Arc Manche, AREFLH, AREPO, Atlantic Arc Commission, CPMR, ERRIN, GMO-free Regions Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bretagne</td>
<td>AER, Arc Manche, AREFLH, AREPO, Atlantic Arc Commission, CPMR, EARLALL, ERRIN, GMO-free Regions Network, NECSTouR, NEREUS, NPLD, nrg4SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Membership to multilateral networks by councils studied, 2001–2011
4. Extent of transnational networking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross-border regions</th>
<th>Inter-regional networks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arc Manche</td>
<td>AER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Arc Commission</td>
<td>AMRIE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurometropole Lille–Kortrijk–Tournai</td>
<td>ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euroregion</td>
<td>AREFLH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGTC Flandre–Dunkerque–Côte d’Opale</td>
<td>AREPO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Sea Commission</td>
<td>CIVITAS Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TransChannel Partnership Network</td>
<td>CPMR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dynamo Regions Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EARLALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Energy Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ERRIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EU Straits Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eurocities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European Cities Tourism Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European Network of High Speed Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eurotowns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GMO-free Regions Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islands Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maritime Cities Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NECSTouR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NEREUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NPLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nrg4SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POLIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PURPLE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Categorization of multilateral networks according to Perkmann’s (2003) typology
4. Extent of transnational networking

are members of. Indeed most multilateral networks can be considered as ‘thematically focused’ rather than general or multi purpose (see Table 4.7). This represents another departure from the activity of the 1990s, where early examples of LGTN—such as the Arc Manche and the Euroregion—predominantly facilitated co-operation in a number of different policy areas simultaneously rather than specialize in one field. Local authorities can therefore choose from a portfolio of European transnational networks to suit their local circumstances and in line with their strategic aims or priority policy areas. Indeed, local authorities are aware of this diversity, observing “that the Brussels regional scene has well developed networks” covering several niche areas of policy (SEERA 2005b).

In some cases councils played a role in establishing some of these networks. West Sussex and Haute-Normandie, for example, led on the development of the Arc Manche network. West Sussex also—with North Holland—established the ARC. Bretagne played an important role in the establishment of the Atlantic Arc Commission and the related CPMR. In other cases local authorities play an important role in the strategic leadership of some of these networks. For example Bretagne held the vice presidency of the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL). Basse-Normandie was on ERRIN’s board, Hampshire has been a member of the AER’s presidium and Brighton and Hove twice held the presidency of the Eurotowns network. While these leadership roles frequently change, they further indicate the importance of LGTN to local government.

As with bilateral networking, the level of involvement in multilateral networking changed over time; local authorities regularly leave networks and join new ones. For

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110 This strategic approach to LGTN is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.
111 Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 02).
112 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).
113 Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).
114 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 10).
115 Interview with English local officer, September 2012 (Int. 45).
116 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 12).
### Extent of transnational networking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General / multi purpose networks</th>
<th>Thematically focused networks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AER</td>
<td>AMRIE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arc Manche</td>
<td>ARC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamo Regions Network</td>
<td>AREFLH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGTC Flandre–Dunkeraque–Côte d’Opale</td>
<td>AREPO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurocities</td>
<td>Atlantic Arc Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurometropole Lille–Kortrijk–Tournai</td>
<td>CIVITAS Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euroregion</td>
<td>CPMR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurotowns</td>
<td>EARLALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière</td>
<td>Energy Cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TransChannel Partnership Network</td>
<td>ERRIN</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European Cities Tourism Network</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>EU Straits Initiative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GMO-free Regions Network</td>
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<td>Islands Commission</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>NECSTouR</td>
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<td>nrg4SD</td>
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<td>POLIS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PURPLE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: General purpose vs. thematically focused multilateral networks
example the Isle of Wight withdrew from the CPMR in 2005 (Isle of Wight Council, 2005). Hampshire County Council withdrew from the same network in 2012. West Sussex County Council left the Arc Manche network in 2011 (West Sussex County Council, 2011), and it had also left the ARC. This is not to suggest local authorities are cutting their links, however. For example, while West Sussex had earlier left the AER, it immediately sought other opportunities to form new links at a European level (West Sussex County Council, 2000). Similarly, Brighton and Hove City Council left the Eurotowns network in 2008 but then sought membership of the larger Eurocities network as it was felt this would better serve the council’s interests (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2008b). This trend of constantly reviewing membership to networks is not new, having been identified by Church and Reid (1999, p. 651) during the mid-1990s.

Networks also fluctuate in terms of how active they are. The Arc Manche was cited by many participants as an example of a network which regularly ebbed and flowed in terms of activity. As one former English local officer stated:

Arc Manche fluctuated in terms of its strengths . . . started off strongly and then there was a bit of a die down in activity in the late 1990s and then there was a bit of a relaunch in the early 2000s.

While this relaunch led to a renewed declaration of co-operation between the Arc Manche members (Arc Manche, 2003), participants on both sides of the Channel noted the network was recently in a lull of activity. Nevertheless, there was interest in reviving it again. Indeed, local politicians were invited to discuss Arc Manche activity during two cross-Channel forum events in Southampton in September 2012 and Caen in March 2013.

Multilateral networks also come and go. Indeed some networks which existed during

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117 Interview with English councillor, July 2012 (Int. 25).
118 Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 49).
119 Interview with former English local officer (Int. 29).
120 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 11; Int. 22; Int. 45; Int. 49).
121 Interviews with French regional officer, September 2012, and Interreg staff May 2012 (Int. 22; Int. 49).
122 Participant observation, cross-Channel forums, September 2012 and March 2013 (Obs. 3; Obs. 6).
the 1990s no longer do. For example the Transmanche Metropole had been operating “in a low key manner” since it was unable to secure Interreg II funding (Church & Reid 1999, p. 649) and is now no longer active. Even some of the networks which local authorities participated in between 2001 and 2011 appear to be—as of September 2014—disbanded, for example the Dynamo Regions network or the Alliance of Maritime Regional Interests in Europe (AMRIE). The Euroregion, involving Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais, is another example of a network no longer operating, having become effectively dormant since 2003 (Thomas, 2006, p. 14), and ending in 2004 (Kent County Council 2010a). Other networks appear to have undergone a re-branding exercise, for example the European Cities Tourism Network is now known as ‘European Cities Marketing’.

4.4.3 Contemporary transnational projects

Participation in transnational projects forms the majority of LGTN activity undertaken by local government, accounting for 193 links across the 14 councils studied. As already noted, these networks involve a range of governmental and non-governmental actors. As one participant highlighted:

> one of the fundamental conditions of Interreg is to involve, to try to achieve a form of triple-helix partnerships, which means public sector, private sector and academic sector.

As with bilateral and multilateral networking, the level of participation varies between councils, but has increased overall since the 1990s. One explanation is the expansion of eligible areas for Interreg and other EU funding programmes. Under the

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123 Interview with former English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 38).
124 Another example of this is RETI, which changed its name from the Association of Traditional Industrial Regions of Europe to the Association of European Regions of Industrial Technology. According to McAleavey and Mitchell (1994, p. 245) this was “an attempt to dispel the image of smokestack skylines conjured up by the concept of traditional industry in an effort to recruit as many regions as possible”. The engagement and disengagement in LGTN is explored further in Chapter 5, which argues it is a result of local authorities’ strategic approach.
125 Interview with former English regional officer, June 2012 (Int. 27).
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Interreg III programme (2000–2006) the number of eligible areas across the EU was reduced. This meant the Transmanche area between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais and the Rives-Manche area between East Sussex, the Somme and Seine-Maritime were merged into one programme (Church 2007). While the eligible area for the cross-border programme stayed largely the same between Interreg II and Interreg III, local authorities across south-east England and northern France could now access funding through the North West Europe transnational programme created under the new ‘B’ strand of Interreg. This covered all of the UK, Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and included areas in northern France, western Germany and the south of the Netherlands (Buléon & Shurmer-Smith 2008 p. 174). The eligible areas for cross-border Interreg funding were further increased under Interreg IV (2007–2013), and now covers the whole Channel area (see Figure 4.4). The introduction of the URBACT programme in 2002 provided another opportunity for urban areas to bid for funding for transnational projects. Local authorities are also able to access a range of other EU funded programmes.

However, while it is assumed such programmes promote LGTN (Church 2007; Church & Reid 1995, 1996; Rees 1997), the empirical evidence here points to a more nuanced picture. While Interreg offers financial support and a framework for transnational projects to take place—and participants recognized this—it is not the only way local authorities can engage in this activity. East Sussex, for example, participated in a range of transnational projects with French colleagues that were independent of EU funding programmes. Furthermore, as the above background to LGTN (see Section 4.2.2) shows, local authorities were collaborating well before Interreg and other EU programmes were available to them. Indeed, one member of

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126 The expansion of the eligible area was largely brought about by the lobbying action of undertaken by the Arc Manche network (Interview with Interreg staff, September 2012 [Int. 64]).

127 These included for the 2007–2013 programming period: the Interreg IVa France–Wallonie–Vlaanderen programme, the Interreg IVb North West Europe programme, the Interreg IVb Atlantic Area programme, Interreg IVc, the Life Environment programme and several others.

128 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 13).
4. Extent of transnational networking

Figure 4.4: Interreg IVa programmes covering south-east England and northern France (Cross Channel Atlas)
Interreg staff noted that the majority of project bids they received were based on well established pre-existing partnerships, which long outdated the Interreg programmes.\footnote{Interview with Interreg staff, September 2012 (Int. 64).}

Generally speaking, participation in transnational projects was higher among local authorities in south-east England than it was in northern France. The English councils participated in an average of 15.11 projects, whereas the French regions only participated in an average of 11.4.\footnote{Mean averages.} This was also highlighted by staff working for the Interreg programmes, with one observing:

There is a different participation . . . In France, maybe, what we found more in terms of participation, it’s a more strong participation of non-government organizations. In the UK there is a big presence of counties, for example . . . whereas in France it’s much more open to civil society somehow.\footnote{Interview with Interreg staff, September 2012 (Int. 63).}

This difference can be attributed to the different approaches English and French local authorities take to transnational projects, especially those part-funded by the EU. Generally speaking, English local authorities frequently participated directly in transnational projects as partners and lead partners,\footnote{Although this was not the case in all English local authorities studied. One English local officer noted they spend 80 to 90 per cent of their time supporting project bids to organizations external to the council, in a similar way to the French model (Interview with English local officer, May 2012 [Int. 13]).} while French local government preferred to take on a facilitation role, encouraging local stakeholders to participate rather than take part themselves.\footnote{Interviews with French regional officers, August 2012 and September 2012 (Int. 37; Int. 46; Int. 50; Int. 65; Int. 66).} This was confirmed by one French regional officer who referred to the regional council’s role as “building bridges” between EU regional policy and local stakeholders.\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 50).} Nonetheless, there were still differences between councils within England and France. In particular local authorities who had no experience of previous Interreg programmes before their expansion across the entire English Channel—such as West Sussex or Bretagne—were less likely to participate.\footnote{Interview with Interreg staff, May 2012 (Int. 22).}
4. Extent of transnational networking

Where local authorities are involved in transnational projects, many are based on existing bilateral relationships or membership to common multilateral networks. Indeed, Interreg staff saw transnational projects as a way to build upon existing links and produce something tangible out of them. However, in some cases local authorities preferred not to depend on these pre-existing relationships, instead choosing project partners on a case by case basis. Medway is an example of this. As one participant explained:

All our European projects have got all different partnerships ... when we develop a European project, we always accept any partner from the eligible area, from any organization. We don’t refuse a partner because we haven’t worked with them, we’re always open to it. That’s maybe different to some organizations who like existing partnerships over ten years.

The subjects and policy areas covered by transnational projects are diverse. Accordingly these projects often involve other actors besides local government, for example universities, charities, local businesses and a range of others. The number of partners also varies from project to project, as does the policy focus. Table 4.8 illustrates this diversity and provides an overview of a small number of example projects illustrating this diversity.

4.5 LGTN, MLG and local level Europeanization

As the preceding analysis has shown, engagement in LGTN has continued through the 2000s. The continued presence of LGTN, and with it the recognition that local authorities actively engage beyond their borders and mobilize at the European level, serves to reinforce claims that the EU can be viewed as a multi-level polity. Section 2.1.1 outlined how LGTN could by characterized as a feature of Type II MLG in particular. The empirical evidence presented in this chapter confirms this characterization. Three

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136 Interview with Interreg staff, September 2012 (Int. 64).
137 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 40).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project name</th>
<th>Total partners</th>
<th>Partners in case study area</th>
<th>Project summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAMIS (Interreg IVa Channel)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Kent, West Sussex, Hampshire, Nord-Pas de Calais, Picardie, Haute-Normandie, Basse-Normandie, Bretagne.</td>
<td>The CAMIS (Channel Arc Manche Integrated Strategy) project aims to develop and promote the implementation of an integrated maritime strategy in the Channel area. This is achieved through a number of 'cross-Channel forums' bringing together relevant stakeholders from southern England and northern France.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSE (Interreg IVa Two Seas)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Southampton.</td>
<td>The TSE (Tackling Social Exclusion) project aims to identify the factors affecting social exclusion and look at innovative methods to tackle it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPAIR (URBACT II)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Medway.</td>
<td>The REPAIR (Realising the Potential of Abandoned Military Sites) project aims to demonstrate that abandoned military and heritage sites can act as a catalyst to deliver sustainable urban development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOSTRA (Interreg IVc)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Kent, Nord-Pas de Calais.</td>
<td>The NOSTRA (Network of STRAits) project aims to preserve the biodiversity and natural heritage of maritime straits and ensure their sustainable development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REALM (Life Long Learning programme)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Hampshire.</td>
<td>The REALM (Regional Adult Learning Multipliers and the Europe 2020 Flagship Initiatives) project aimed to better connect adult learning in European regions with EU policy development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESPONSE (Life programme)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Isle of Wight.</td>
<td>The RESPONSE (Responding to the Risks of Climate Change on the Coast) project provides a framework for understanding and preparing for the impacts of climate change on coastal areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8: Example transnational projects
features are indicative of the Type II model: it describes functionally specific governance arrangements, these arrangements transcend jurisdictional levels, and they are marked by flexible designs which can come and go according to demands (Hooghe & Marks 2003; Marks & Hooghe 2004). On all three counts, LGTN fits this model, and confirms it as a feature of MLG more generally. Firstly, LGTN by its very nature clearly transcends both local and national borders.

Secondly, the majority of networks identified were functionally specific. This was particularly clear with multilateral networks, where most focus on thematic policy areas such as aviation policy, maritime policy, research and innovation or agriculture (see Table 4.7). Many general purpose multilateral networks are also functionally orientated, albeit often focusing on several thematic policy areas simultaneously. This is particularly evident in cases of cross-border co-operation, where cross-border policy challenges necessitate a joint and functional cross-border response. It was also shown that multi purpose networks have set up policy specific sub-groups and specialized thematic forums. This functionally specific orientation can also be observed in other categories of LGTN. The accords used to establish bilateral networking focus co-operation on specific policy areas. For example, it was observed that the Kent–Nord-Pas de Calais link was focused on strategic planning, economic development, training, cultural and artistic exchange, tourism and joint promotional campaigns, while the Hampshire–Basse-Normandie link focused on transportation, tourism, technology, research and training and education (Barber 1997, p. 20; Hampshire County Council & Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie 1989). Transnational projects seek to deliver very specific policy goals and deliverables (see examples in Table 4.8).

Finally, as observed throughout this chapter, LGTN does not remain static and local authorities take a flexible approach to their engagement. While a general increase in participation has been observed, it has also been witnessed that local authorities disengage and that networks come and go. Transnational projects, for
example, are temporary by their very nature and co-operation in this form of networking usually ceases once the project’s aims have been achieved. Instability was also observed with cases of bilateral and multilateral networking. A number of bilateral networks have become less active (for example the Kent–Nord-Pas de Calais, Basse-Normandie–Tuscany, and West Sussex–Haute-Normandie links). In some cases individual local authorities have withdrawn from multilateral networks (for example West Sussex withdrawing from the AER and the Isle of Wight withdrawing from the CPMR) and a number of multilateral networks, such as the Transmanche Metropole, the Dynamo Regions network and AMRIE, have been disbanded entirely.

Two supplementary questions serve to shed light on more general patterns of engagement in this activity and make the link between the empirical analysis and local level Europeanization. Firstly, how has participation in LGTN evolved—if at all—over time, and what does this say about the extent of local level Europeanization (RQ\(_{1a}\))? Secondly, is participation in LGTN uniform across all local authorities, or marked by differentiation as identified in previous MLG analyses and as expected by the Europeanization literature (RQ\(_{1b}\))? These questions are now discussed with reference to the above findings.

### 4.5.1 An evolving approach to LGTN

The first supplementary question (RQ\(_{1a}\)) seeks to identify how patterns of contemporary participation in LGTN compare with earlier engagement by local authorities. When compared to the 1980s and 1990s examples of LGTN identified by the early literature (see Section 4.2.2), the empirical analysis in this chapter (see Sections 4.3 and 4.4) points to an overall evolution in local government’s approach. That is to say local authorities have not continued to engage in LGTN in the same way they did in the 1990s. Three key trends characterize this evolution: an increase in engagement, a shift from bilateral to multilateral partnerships and move from
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cross-border to wider inter-regional co-operation.

Firstly, there has been a marked increase in participation in LGTN since the 1990s. This is most evident with engagement in transnational projects, of which 193 examples were identified. This can partly—although not exclusively—be explained by the gradual expansion of the eligibility area for EU regional policy programmes—such as Interreg and URBACT—which have sought to promote cross-border and inter-regional co-operation through co-financing projects. As noted in Section 4.4.3 this was complemented by pre-existing bilateral and multilateral networks, which provided a basis for the development of project partnerships, and in turn facilitated the rapid growth in transnational projects. Participation in both bilateral and multilateral networks has also increased. As shown in Section 4.4.1 local authorities capitalized upon the 2004 enlargement of the EU by developing bilateral links with authorities in central and eastern Europe (for example Kent and Bács-Kiscun, Bretagne and Wielkopolska, and Picardie and Trenčín). Similarly, while LGTN was a relatively new phenomenon at the beginning of the 1990s, by the late 1990s the number had increased, facilitated in part by established networks ‘breeding’ smaller ones covering niche policy areas (Ward & Williams, 1997, p. 462). Local authorities began to recognize through the 2000s that the range of multilateral networks and the policy areas they covered had increased, and so provided more opportunities for engagement (SEERA, 2005b).

Secondly, local authorities have shifted their focus from bilateral to multilateral partnerships. This was already witnessed during the 1990s as initial bilateral networks developed from the late 1980s led to early multilateral partnerships such as the Transmanche Euroregion (following the initiative of the Kent–Nord-Pas de Calais link) and the Arc Manche (following the initiative of the West Sussex–Haute-Normandie link). This trend has continued through the 2000s, and across the cases studied participation in multilateral forms of LGTN now outweigh cases of bilateral networking (74 versus 34, see Table 4.3). The fact that many bilateral links have become less active over time (for example Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais, Basse-Normandie and Tuscany,
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and West Sussex and Haute-Normandie) is a further illustration of this. The large number of multilateral networks identified elsewhere in the literature (see Appendix A) shows this is a trend affecting wider European LGTN.

Thirdly, while the 1990s was characterized predominantly by cross-border networking—marked by geographical contiguity—contemporary LGTN moves beyond this and is more ‘inter-regional’ in character as local authorities pursue links with their counterparts further afield. This applies to all three categories of LGTN observed: bilateral networking, multilateral networking (see Table 4.6) and transnational projects. Part of this is a result of local authorities pursuing more thematically focused transnational networks—such as the ARC, ERRIN and POLIS—which do not place requirements on the needs for partners to share geographical proximity with one another. Again, the diversity of policy fields represented by networks identified elsewhere in the literature (see Appendix A) illustrates this trend had affected LGTN beyond the councils studied.

Overall, the increased level of engagement in LGTN witnessed here suggests local authorities have become increasingly Europeanized since the 1990s. Indeed, all of the councils studied have made it to the sixth and seventh steps—out of nine—on John’s (2001, pp. 72–73) ladder of Europeanization (“linking with other local organizations participating in the EU” and “participating in EU international networks and co-operating in joint projects” respectively). Similarly all councils fall into Klausen and Goldsmith’s (1997, pp. 239–242) category of ‘proactive’ local authorities. This increased Europeanization—indicated by increased engagement in LGTN—is unsurprising given that adaptation to Europe is triggered by the process of integration itself (Caporaso 2007; Risse et al. 2001). Indeed, as the cases explored in the chapter show, local authorities have adapted to the ongoing reality of integration. For example, EU enlargement led to the development of bilateral networks with local authorities in central and eastern Europe. The EU’s increasing policy competence has led to a number of specialist policy-specific multilateral networks proliferating. And developments in EU
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Regional policy—such as the expansion of Interreg eligibility areas—has led to greater participation in transnational projects.

4.5.2 LGTN and differential engagement

The second supplementary question (RQ1b) seeks to uncover the heterogeneous engagement by local authorities in LGTN. As discussed in Section 2.1.2, literature on the process of Europeanization expects differentiated outcomes (Börzel, 2005; Ladrech, 2010; Radaelli, 2003; Risse et al., 2001). Early studies on French and English local government engagement with Europe initially confirmed this expectation. Balme and Le Galès (1997), for example, noted that French local authorities could be divided between those which were “stars” of European engagement and others which could be considered “black holes”. Variation of engagement across English local government was also observed in earlier studies (Goldsmith & Sperling, 1997). This variation has similarly been observed in analyses of MLG more generally (for example Bache, 2008; Hooghe, 1996b), with Le Galès (2002, p. 110) pointing to a “‘variable geometry’ Europe”. However, the extent to which this holds true with contemporary LGTN is contested. Lefèvre and d’Albergo (2007, p. 318) predict convergence towards more uniformity in local governments’ approach to international activities. Nevertheless, while Karvounis (2011, pp. 214–215) claims that the majority of European local authorities are members of transnational networks, Briggs (2010, pp. 5–6) stresses variation, noting that “some places build long-term and meaningful partnerships . . . but for others contact is piecemeal”. The empirical analysis in this chapter is able to assess these conflicting claims and contributes to a wider understanding of the differentiation—or otherwise—of LGTN and local level Europeanization.

While there has been an overall increase in LGTN activity, the empirical analysis presented here points to continued variation. This confirms the expectation of differentiation held by the Europeanization literature. There are two aspects to this
variation. Firstly, while all local authorities studied were engaged in LGTN, levels of participation greatly varied; Kent for example had 47 transnational links between 2001 and 2011, while Portsmouth had only eight (see Table 4.3). While an overall increase in LGTN suggests local authorities have become more ‘Europeanized’, the impact of local level Europeanization is not felt equally.

Secondly, local authorities varied in how they engaged in LGTN. Councils held varying preferences regarding the type of transnational networks they participated in. Bretagne, for example, favoured participation in multilateral networks, while Portsmouth and Medway did not pursue this activity at all. Contrastingly, East Sussex placed great emphasis on bilateral networking, while for many others (Medway, Brighton and Hove, Hampshire, Portsmouth, the Isle of Wight and Picardie) this only formed a small—or sometimes no—proportion of their overall LGTN activities. To this extent Handley’s (2006, p. 4) observation that LGTN offers a number of flexible options for local authorities to develop partnerships with their counterparts abroad is confirmed.

In comparative perspective, participation in LGTN was similar in both south-east England and northern France and authorities in both areas have increased their level of engagement since the 1990s. Indeed, councils in both areas continue to take part in a variety of links. While there is variation, this occurs predominantly within national borders, rather than across them. This suggests the presence of a number of mediating factors present at the local level affect the level of participation (de Rooij, 2002), rather than national contexts. These factors go some way to account for the varied engagement in LGTN and impact of local level Europeanization, and will be explored further in Chapter 6.

One area where national differences were observed, however, was participation in transnational projects, which was generally lower among the French councils. Data from interviews identified the root cause of this being that French régions preferred to adopt a ‘facilitation’ role, encouraging local stakeholders to participate in projects.
This was different from the approach of English councils, who would themselves actively participate as project partners.

Levèvre and d’Albergo’s (2007, p. 318) prediction that local authorities will adopt a more uniform approach to international activities is—for now at least—not borne out. Indeed, while participation in LGTN has continued and indeed increased since the 1990s, the local authorities studied continue to adopt differing approaches and rates of participation vary. This finding resonates with other studies on local level Europeanization and MLG, which emphasize varying degrees of engagement—both across and within countries—by local government at the European level (Bache 2008; Hamedinger & Wolffhardt 2010; Hooghe 1996a; Le Galès 2002; Tatham & Thau 2014).

4.6 Summary

As noted in Section 2.2.2, LGTN in the EU has become increasingly prevalent since the late 1980s. However, a systematic review of the extent of this activity remained largely absent from existing literature. Studies on the extent of LGTN in south-east England and northern France were dated (for example Barber 1997; Church & Reid 1995, 1996, 1999; Sparke 2000) and did not account for the contemporary picture. This chapter has addressed these gaps and therefore made a contribution to the literature here by presenting a contemporary empirical analysis of the activities of local authorities in south-east England and northern France. In doing this it has addressed the first research question of this thesis:

- RQ1: What is the current extent of LGTN in south-east England and northern France?

The analysis in this chapter has confirmed that councils in south-east England and northern France continue to engage in LGTN. Indeed, all 14 local authorities studied
were involved. In this way, LGTN remains a prevalent phenomenon in south-east England and northern France. Returning to Benington and Harvey’s (1998) question set out at the start of this chapter, the findings show that LGTN fits the ‘new paradigm’ characterization, rather than being a mere ‘passing fashion’. Indeed, the fact LGTN has continued through a period of public finance pressures demonstrates its significance in contemporary European governance, and further reinforces the need to tackle the empirical puzzle outlined in Section 1.2.

Two supplementary questions (RQ$_{1a}$ and RQ$_{1b}$) were able to shed light on a number of emerging patterns and serve to elaborate the overall finding of this chapter. Firstly, the approach local authorities take to LGTN has evolved since the 1990s. Not only have they increased the level of engagement, they have also changed how they engage. While the late 1980s and 1990s were marked by engagement in bilateral networks, multilateral partnerships now dominate. Furthermore councils have shifted their attention from predominantly cross-border and general purpose networks to those which are more inter-regional and thematically focused. The networking activities identified elsewhere in the literature (see Appendix A) broadly confirms this pattern Europe-wide. Secondly, while engagement in LGTN remains prevalent, it is marked by variation between the authorities studied. Differences are present in both the extent to which local authorities engage in LGTN and the approach they take, for example by favouring one category of networks—bilateral, multilateral and transnational projects—over others.

Applied to a Europeanization framework, these findings make two contributions to the literature. Firstly, the continued prevalence of LGTN among all councils studied shows that they have all undergone Europeanization processes, and an increased level of engagement demonstrates the intensity of local level Europeanization has increased. Secondly, although the level of Europeanization has increased overall, its impact has not been uniform across all local authorities and is marked by variation. This confirms assumptions held by the literature, that Europeanization does not equate to convergence and differentiation is to be expected.
The continued engagement in LGTN by local authorities further highlights the contemporary relevance of the empirical puzzle this thesis seeks to address (see Section 1.2). In particular it leads to two key questions. Firstly, why do they participate? Secondly, what accounts for the variation of engagement observed? These questions are taken up and addressed in the following two chapters.
Chapter 5

Local motivations for transnational networking

The continued prevalence of local government transnational networking (LGTN) identified in the previous chapter reinforces the need to address the empirical puzzle identified in Section 1.2. Local authorities in unitary and centralized polities often lack the formal competence to engage beyond their local borders. Given this context, identifying why local government chooses to engage in this activity warrants further investigation. This question has gained added importance in the contemporary context of austerity and public finance pressures. As the previous chapter showed, LGTN has continued despite these pressures. This leads to a question of why local authorities continue to invest in this activity despite the difficulties they face to deliver their core statutory services. This chapter investigates this. In so doing it addresses the second research aim of this thesis:

- RA$_2$: Establish the rationale, from a local government perspective, for participation in LGTN.

And answers the second research question:

- RQ$_2$: What benefits do local authorities seek from their involvement in LGTN?
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

By addressing this question, this chapter contributes a response to this empirical puzzle.

Two supplementary questions facilitate a link to the local level Europeanization literature:

- **RQ2a**: What do local authorities’ motivations for engaging in LGTN reveal about the directionality of local level Europeanization?

- **RQ2b**: What is the underlying logic driving participation in LGTN?

At the heart of this analysis is a recognition that LGTN is driven by local authorities. In the words of [Bulkeley et al.] (2003, p. 237) it “has not been a strategy simply imposed on local government”. It is developed and led by local government itself ([Payre] 2010, p. 263). Despite this, however, Section 5.1 shows that much of the existing literature focuses on the level of transnational networks themselves, overlooking the actors within (for example [Bouteligier] 2013, [Heinelt & Niederhafner] 2008, [Kern & Bulkeley] 2009, [Ward & Williams] 1997). The case selection and methods adopted by this thesis (see Chapter 3) directly addresses this limitation. By focusing on 14 local authorities and gathering rich empirical data directly from local authorities and individuals involved in LGTN, the perceptions of a range of local actors are accessed. This chapter therefore offers an empirical contribution to the literature on motivations for participation in LGTN, by complementing our existing understanding of the function of transnational networks with knowledge of the motivations held by those participating.

This chapter shows that local authorities engage in LGTN for a diverse range of reasons. Three motivations in particular are consistently stated among all councils: obtaining funding, lobbying and influence and policy transfer. These are often supplemented with a range of other motivations. In all cases, local authorities were motivated to participate in response to a number of perceived contextual factors. However, while seeking benefits from LGTN, local authorities are also aware of the potential limits.
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

While making an empirical contribution to knowledge, this analysis also engages in the debate on local level Europeanization in two ways. Firstly, in relation to directionality, LGTN is not merely a horizontal form of Europeanization, but contains top–down and bottom–up dynamics too. Secondly, this chapter contributes a new institutionalist analysis of local level Europeanization (Börzel & Risse, 2003), something currently lacking in the existing literature (save for Dąbrowski, 2012, 2013). Here, the motivations local authorities have for engaging in LGTN confirm the process of local level Europeanization to be a rational response, rather than a sociological one.

This chapter is structured as follows. Existing literature on the motivations local authorities have for engaging in LGTN is first briefly summarized (Section 5.1). The empirical data is then presented. This highlights the motivations of obtaining funding (Section 5.2), lobbying and influence (Section 5.3) and policy transfer (Section 5.4). A range of other motivations are also identified (Section 5.5) and a number of general conclusions are then presented (Section 5.6). This chapter’s findings are then discussed within a Europeanization framework, highlighting the simultaneous top–down, bottom–up and horizontal directional dynamics of LGTN and the rationalist logic driving participation (Section 5.7).

5.1 Motivations for engagement in LGTN: dominant themes in the literature

From a practitioner perspective, a handbook published by the Local Government Information Bureau (LGIB) (Handley, 2006, pp. 6–8) outlines several benefits local authorities and their communities can expect from participation in LGTN:

- Improving service delivery and problem solving.
- Increasing global and European awareness.
- Accessing EU funding.
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

- Staff ... [and] ... Member development and training.
- Promoting tolerance and increasing understanding.
- Promoting stronger community partnerships.
- Enhancing youth activities.
- Promoting community well being.
- Public awareness and learning.
- Education.
- Economic and business development.
- Making a global difference.

Many of these motivations have been identified elsewhere in literature, and are briefly summarized below.\(^{138}\)

**Obtaining funding**

Engaging in LGTN to obtain funding is one motivation identified in the literature (for example **Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004**; **Karvounis, 2011**; **McAleavey & Mitchell, 1994**; **Pflieger, 2014**; **Phelps et al., 2002**; **Ward & Williams, 1997**). This is most often linked to European Union (EU) regional policy programmes, which, as stated earlier, usually offer co-finance for transnational projects. While participation in LGTN itself might not directly lead to obtaining funding, it does cultivate contacts and awareness of various funding opportunities, such as EU programmes, among those local authorities participating (**Payre, 2010** p. 277; **Phelps et al., 2002** p. 213). Many EU programmes require transnational partnerships to be eligible for funding, so transnational networks play another role here, providing their members with a ready-made network of potential partners who may be willing to collaborate in order to bid for an EU-funded project (**Bulkeley et al., 2003** p. 245). Indeed **Phelps et al., 2002** pp. 220–221) show how the Spanish city of Getafe used the Edge Cities network as a platform to involve themselves in EU-funded project bids.

\(^{138}\) In line with the provisional coding method adopted during the data analysis, the motivations identified in the literature here formed the basis of a preliminary coding scheme which was used to analyse the empirical data gathered.
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Lobbying and influence

The use of transnational networks to lobby and influence the EU is another motivation identified in literature (for example Bulkeley et al., 2003; Happaerts, 2008; Happaerts et al., 2011; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008; Hooghe, 1995; Karvounis, 2011; McAleavey & Mitchell, 1994; Payre, 2010; Phelps et al., 2002; Sørensen, 1998; Ward & Williams, 1997). Indeed, the multi-level governance (MLG) thesis suggests that as competences shift from the national to the European level, local authorities wishing to mobilize their interests will equally shift their attention from the national to the European level (Hooghe, 1995, p. 179). LGTN is seen to provide a means for local authorities to collectively access and influence the EU, something which would be difficult to achieve individually. As noted by Phelps et al. (2002, p. 212), “local authorities quickly realized that lobbying for EU funding or to influence policy has more effect when done as a representative grouping rather than as an individual authority”. Indeed the primary aim of many multilateral networks, such as Eurocities, is to lobby the Commission and other EU institutions on behalf of their members (Payre, 2010, p. 265).

However, while local authorities are drawn to LGTN for the potential to influence policy, it is hard to assess the actual impact of this activity on EU policy development. Bulkeley et al. (2003, p. 249) note that:

although there is anecdotal evidence to suggest transnational networks are beginning to influence policy formulation at the level of the EU, there is little in the way of empirical evidence to indicate the extent to which this might be occurring.

John (2000, p. 890) agrees, arguing that there is little evidence of subnational government influencing decisions, and their impact is likely to be confined to legitimizing EU policy.
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Policy transfer

Policy transfer is defined as:

the process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system ... is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system. (Dolowitz & Marsh 2000, p. 5)\footnote{Rose 1991, 2005 uses the term ‘lesson-drawing’.
}

This motivation for LGTN is identified by several scholars (for example Baldersheim et al. 2002; Baycan-Levent et al. 2008; Betsill & Bulkeley 2004; Bouteligier 2013; Bulkeley et al. 2003; Happaerts 2008; Happaerts et al. 2010, 2011; Karvounis 2011; Kern 2014; Kern & Bulkeley 2009; Lee & van de Meene 2012; Marsden, Frick, May, & Deakin 2011; Payré 2010; Phelps et al. 2002; Salskov-Iversen 2006; Van Bever et al. 2011a). A number of networks are seen to fulfil this role. The primary aim of the Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) network, for example, is to facilitate the sharing of policy information among its membership (Betsill & Bulkeley 2004, p. 478). This is also the case for the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (Lee & van de Meene 2012). Eurocities, in addition to lobbying the EU, also offers its members opportunities to share best practice (Payré 2010). As noted by Baycan-Levent et al. (2008, p. 86):

Eurocities provides a platform for its member cities to share knowledge and ideas, to exchange experiences, to analyse common problems and to develop innovative solutions, through a wide range of forums, working groups, projects, activities and events.

Policy transfer is seen as a resource for councils lacking in-house expertise in certain policy areas, such as climate change (Betsill & Bulkeley 2004, p. 478). It can also be used by local authorities to validate their approaches to policy or to make sure “what they are doing is right” (Payré 2010, p. 266). In some cases this recognition serves to promote localities as policy leaders within their own national contexts and to strengthen their positions vis-à-vis national governments; Lausanne used its participation in the Energy Cities network as a way to influence domestic relations with the Swiss federal
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government, for example (van der Heiden, 2010, p. 71). LGTN also serves to legitimize particular interpretations of policy or courses of action at the local level (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004, p. 487; Pfieger, 2014, p. 341).

Policy transfer can go both ways. For example, Happaerts et al. (2011, p. 334) points to Wallonia’s desire to be not only a ‘learner’ but also a ‘teacher’. In this way local authorities use policy transfer to showcase areas where they are innovative. Indeed, Lyon is shown to proactively promote its role as an innovator in high speed rail (Payre, 2010, p. 277). The sharing of knowledge through LGTN—and the building of collective expertise—is also seen to have a positive effect on lobbying success as “expertise becomes a resource for representing interests” (Payre, 2010, p. 267). Policy innovators also have the opportunity to shape norms of ‘good governance’ in a range of policy areas (Bulkeley, 2005, p. 895).

LGTN facilitates policy transfer in a number of ways. For example presentations at conferences and events, study visits, case studies hosted on networks’ websites, databases of best practice and benchmarking activities are all methods recognized to promote policy innovation (Bouteligier, 2013, p. 84; Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 244; Happaerts et al., 2010, p. 134; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 332; Phelps et al., 2002, p. 213). Multilateral networks may also offer formal recognition or ‘awards’ for the adoption of best practice akin to ‘peer pressure’ (Bulkeley et al., 2003, pp. 245–246; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 332), and participation in LGTN may in itself be an indicator of best practice in particular policy areas (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004).

Enhancing a local authority’s profile

Promoting a local authority’s profile abroad constitutes another motivation (for example Payre, 2010; Pfieger, 2014; Phelps et al., 2002). As argued by Payre (2010, p. 263), LGTN provides a local authority with the opportunity to “distinguish itself from an old-style town council and acquire a more modern image”. Many transnational networks perform this role. Indeed participation in Eurocities is regarded by some
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scholars as an indicator of prestige for major cities (Griffiths 1995 pp. 215–216; Payre 2010 p. 271). Some networks—particularly those focused on thematic policy areas such as climate change—offer a form of accreditation, international recognition or ‘seal of approval’, which further adds “political kudos” for those involved (Betsill & Bulkeley 2004 p. 483; Pfieger 2014). For Phelps et al. (2002 pp. 214–215), the need to increase the profile of a locality is bound in the logic of economic competitiveness; local authorities want to make themselves stand out and distance themselves from their rivals in order to attract investment.

For others the desire to promote a local profile is linked to regional identity and politics. Indeed regions seek to promote their own culture—and sometimes language—as distinctive from that of their host countries (Keating 1999). This is supported by Happaerts (2008 pp. 14–15) and Happaerts et al. (2011 pp. 332–333), who note that Flanders and Wallonia were driven to LGTN to pursue ‘identity politics’; in other words promoting their respective identities both nationally and internationally. These regions sought international support, recognition and legitimacy for their national aspirations and to improve their autonomy within the state. Happaerts (2008 p. 16) supports this view, arguing that Flemish participation in a number of transnational networks was a means to pursue its foreign policy objective of putting “Flanders on the international map and to gain a political voice in the international arena”.

In some cases this profile raising is targeted at a domestic audience. Payre (2010 p. 276) notes how, when hosting the Eurocities conference, Lyon marketed itself to its residents as “capital of Eurocities”. It is also a way to enhance a locality’s position within the state or in relation to their neighbours. Phelps et al. (2002 p. 219) argue Croydon’s participation in the Edge Cities network was determined by its proximity

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140 This was also a key benefit sought by the Basque Country’s involvement in LGTN (Happaerts et al. 2010 p. 139).

141 The ultimate goal of this activity may be separatism or secession from the nation state, as is the case with Québec (Duchacek 1984 p. 18; Lecours 2002). This is sometimes labelled as ‘protodiplomacy’ (Aguirre 1999).
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to London and had “its origins in longer and more firmly locally held beliefs in the borough’s being a city in its own right”.

By enhancing a local authority’s profile through playing an active role in LGTN, a number of positive knock on benefits can be expected, such as greater access to EU decision making. As argued by Payre (2010, p. 276):

the more a city makes a name for itself in a transnational network and acquires a position in its burgeoning structure, the greater access it has to the supranational authorities”.

Increased profile through participation in the City-Vitality-Sustainability (CIVITAS) network provided a means for politicians in French cities to locally legitimize local transport policies and justify spending on public transport at a time of austerity (Pflieger, 2014, p. 341).

Promoting economic development

Studies focused on the globalization of cities stress the need for local authorities to engage in LGTN to promote local economic development (for example Baycan-Levent et al., 2008; Heeg et al., 2003; Payre, 2010; Phelps et al., 2002). As noted above, promoting economic development is linked to enhancing a local profile through the process of competitive advantage and locational politics (Church & Reid, 1999; Phelps et al., 2002; van der Heiden, 2010). Linked to this are efforts to increase tourism by using LGTN to enhance a locality’s international credentials or their European ‘brand’. This goes some way to explain Barcelona’s and Birmingham’s engagement in Eurocities, for example (Payre, 2010, p. 273).

Bypassing national government

The literature often refers to the use of LGTN by local authorities to ‘bypass’ the national level (for example Bulkeley, 2005; Bulkeley et al., 2003; Duchacek, 1984; Leitner & Sheppard, 2002; Ward & Williams, 1997). As noted by Duchacek (1984,
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...subnational leaders and their publics often oppose the center on the grounds that it is unwieldy, big, over-bureaucratized, dehumanized, and above all, distant and unfamiliar with where the local and regional shoe pinches.

Engaging abroad is therefore seen as a way to overcome the dominance of the centre in these situations. For Leitner and Sheppard (2002, pp. 509–510) LGTN provides:

new political spaces for localities. By creating space for cooperation ... and by operating across the boundaries of territorially based political systems, such networks present participating cities with the opportunity to challenge extant state structures and relations.

This is especially true where national and local interests do not align. For example, the presence of many English local authorities participating in transnational networks is seen as a result of the “oppositional stance of the UK national government” (Ward & Williams, 1997, p. 457). Indeed, Bulkeley et al. (2003, p. 237) assert LGTN may be seen by local authorities “as an opportunity to subvert centralisation strategies of the state in order to manufacture a stronger mandate to represent the interests of localities”.

It is claimed the EU itself promotes LGTN for this very reason. As van der Heiden (2010, p. 181) argues, “the EU has an incentive to strengthen urban areas and their interlinkages in order to bypass the national state”. Nevertheless, van der Heiden’s (2010, pp. 171–174) own analysis presents a more mixed picture here, noting that in only one case (Lyon) out of seven is LGTN targeted at bypassing the state with a view to acting against the national level.

Other motivations

A number of other motivations are also identified by the literature. Karvounis (2011) observes that LGTN can be used by local authorities as a tool to develop the skills of their staff and politicians. Benington (1994) and Casson and Dardanelli (2012, p. 607) note LGTN serves to promote the profile of local politicians at a European level.
What motivations are important to local government?

The above summary of themes present in the existing literature demonstrates the variety of motivations which exist for participating in LGTN. Yet scholars disagree over what the most important benefits are. Betsill and Bulkeley (2004, p. 490), for example, argue that policy transfer has limited significance compared to financial and political resources. Overall, however, the literature highlights variation in motivations for engaging in LGTN. Research by Happaerts (2008) and Happaerts et al. (2010, 2011) demonstrates this, showing that the regions of Flanders, Wallonia, the Basque Country and North-Rhine Westphalia participated in the same transnational networks but for different reasons. Phelps et al.’s (2002) study of the Edge Cities network also showed that different local authorities sought different benefits from participation; Croydon pursued an enhanced profile, while Getafe was focused on opportunities to exchange best practice and participate in EU-funded projects. Baldersheim et al.’s (2002, p. 127) study of central and eastern European local authorities also points to variation in motivations.

This variation further reinforces the need to explore the motivations of individual local authorities involved in LGTN. Existing research, however, has yet to tackle this directly. Of the studies that exist, most focus on the function of transnational networks. Heinelt and Niederhafner (2008), for example, investigate the role of Eurocities and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) as platforms to lobby the EU. Kern and Bulkeley (2009) and Bouteligier (2013) focus on a range of transnational networks with an environmental and climate change policy remit, and their role as facilitators of policy transfer. As a result of this focus, local motivations for engagement in LGTN remain largely unexplored\footnote{Van der Heiden’s (2010) study of seven EU and Swiss cities, and Payre’s (2010) investigation of Lyon are exceptions here.}. The empirical findings now presented, therefore, address this gap in the literature and make a contribution to knowledge on LGTN.
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5.2 LGTN for obtaining funding

While the exclusive focus in the existing literature on LGTN for obtaining funding has been criticized by some scholars (Kern & Bulkeley 2009, p. 310), this study reveals it is nevertheless one of the main motivations local authorities held for participation in LGTN. This was cited in a number of European and international strategies produced and adopted by local authorities (Brighton & Hove City Council 2007c; Conseil régional de Bretagne 2011; East Sussex County Council 2000; Kent County Council 2007c; Medway Council 1999; Southampton City Council 2007b; West Sussex County Council 2001, 2002b, 2006a). Local officers and councillors also stated during interviews that obtaining funding was a motive\(^{143}\). This was often explicitly stated, for example:

> In a rather naked way I’d say well look, we want some money out of Europe and if it can help us acquire money then that’s good.\(^{144}\)

> I would say that the mainstay of the council’s European work has been through European funded activities and activities relating to trying to get European funding.\(^{145}\)

This section outlines the context behind this motivation identified by local authorities, the benefits sought from it and the role of LGTN. It also highlights some of the limitations identified by local authorities when seeking funding this way\(^{146}\).

5.2.1 Identified contextual factors

Local authorities noted that in seeking funding, they were responding to a number of contextual factors. The recession and its impact on local government finances—particularly in England—led many local authorities to seek external funding,

\(^{143}\) Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 04; Int. 15; Int. 24; Int. 25; Int. 43; Int. 46; Int. 48; Int. 50; Int. 57; Int. 60; Int. 61; Int. 65).

\(^{144}\) Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 01).

\(^{145}\) Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 24).

\(^{146}\) This analytical framework is also adopted for the discussion of the lobbying and influence and policy transfer motivations.
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mainly from EU funded programmes. From 2009 local government committee reports began to stress the economic climate and the importance of this for obtaining funding to mitigate against budgetary pressures. For example:

The last year has continued to be dominated by heavy pressure on public funding and budgetary reductions within the County Council. Whilst this might have made it more difficult for KCC to maintain an outward-looking focus and international profile, the importance of this activity ... has, if anything, increased. (Kent County Council 2011)

Interreg IVa is a priority funding stream for the city council ... In the current economic climate and following the reduction of national and regional bidding opportunities, this EU funding programme has become increasingly important as a source of external income. (Brighton & Hove City Council 2012)[147]

The economic climate was similarly acknowledged by participants, for example:

One of the main things with the recession is to find other sources of funding, so there is a need for going through a European project.[148]

Local officers in south-east England also made direct references to cuts facing local authorities’ central government grants[149]. As emphasized by one:

[the need to obtain funding is] absolutely key, particularly in light of increasing central government reduction in funding.[150]

Another officer explained:

there was going to be a very high level of cutbacks in local government across the board. In crude terms it’s in the order of 20 to 25 per cent of cuts and savings. So any form of money that you can bring in to assist what you’re doing began to be recognized as, well actually if there are pots of money out there to be accessed to enable us to do what we want to do, then it’s got to be worth exploring. So in some ways we had a renewed interest in Europe because of that.[151]

[147] Other examples of committee documentation referring to the economic climate include Brighton & Hove City Council (2011), Kent County Council (2009a) and Portsmouth City Council (2010).
[148] Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 53).
[149] Interviews with English local officers, May 2012, July 2012 and August 2012 (Int. 08; Int. 40; Int. 48; Int. 51).
[150] Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 48).
[151] Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08).
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Both countries’ positions as a net-contributor to the EU budget was also seen as a contextual factor. Participants felt that cross-border and transnational funding programmes provided a means for returning some of the investment made through member state contributions.\footnote{152} This situation was recognized by both English and French authorities. As argued by one former officer, now working for a multilateral network:

> there is money there potentially which we may as well have, it’s our money, it’s gone in as a contribution.\footnote{153}

In this way local authorities felt they should be:

> maximising the benefits of UK membership of the European Union (West Sussex County Council, 2006a).

In light of this, local government recognized the availability of a wide range of schemes and co-operation programmes, such as Interreg and URBACT. Through these initiatives, local authorities could expect to receive up to 50 per cent funding for various projects providing they worked with partners in other European countries\footnote{154}. Yet, while EU funding was available, it was also felt that this was extremely competitive, with several other local authorities and other bodies bidding for limited resources. This was particularly the case since the 2004 enlargement of the EU. Councils recognized this competitive environment in official documentation, for example:

> The competition in Europe for funding allocation is getting fiercer, for a number of reasons:
> • UK authorities are getting cleverer at submitting bids and submitting more bids.

\footnote{152} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 18; Int. 26; Int. 51; Int. 70).
\footnote{153} Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26).
\footnote{154} The rules of individual programmes are often more specific about the number, nature and nationality and geographical scope of partners required. For example the Interreg IVa strand of programmes focus on cross-border co-operation, limiting partnership to eligible localities either side of national borders (see Figure 4.3 for an illustration of this) while the Interreg IVc programme promotes wider inter-regional partnerships from any EU member state.
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- With accession to the European Union of the Central and Eastern European Countries, competition for funding will intensify. The new accession countries, with their comparatively poorer economic status, will disadvantage the more affluent counties such as West Sussex. ([West Sussex County Council, 2001](#))

Indeed, as noted by one English councillor:

> there are far more countries in Europe, I think these pots of funding are dwindling away because there are many many more people after that money. A) because they’ve not got money within their own country to look for; and B) because there are more countries now involved in the European Union, which makes it really a lot more competitive than it was a few years ago. ([156](#))

### 5.2.2 Overview of obtaining funding and benefits sought

An assessment of this context, including the availability of EU funds, led all of the local authorities studied to pursue funding and take advantage of this opportunity. Indeed in two cases ([Brighton & Hove City Council, 2007c](#) [Southampton City Council, 2007b](#)) the timescales of local European strategies were deliberately aligned to match the 2007–2013 period adopted by EU regional policy programmes.

While funding was a motive for both English and French local government, it was given greater attention by English councils, as was evidenced in interviews. This heavy focus on funding was also observed by participants external to English local government. As one French local officer observed:

> If I speak about the British, I think they . . . see the EU as an opportunity to get funds. ([157](#))

One member of Interreg staff, who had previous experience working in English local government, similarly observed:

> When I was on that side, a lot of it was about what type of funding, or how much funding can we bring into the area to do what we want ([158](#)).

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155 This is also recognized in reports by [Brighton & Hove City Council, 2005](#) and [Kent County Council, 2007c](#).
156 Interview with English councillor, September 2012 (Int. 60).
157 Interview with French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 44).
158 Interview with Interreg staff, September 2012 (Int. 47).
The heavy focus given to funding by English local government compared with their French counterparts did not mean, however, that funding was not considered important by French local authorities. Indeed a number of French participants noted it is a key motivation for their engagement in LGTN\textsuperscript{159}.

Funding was important to local government for a number of reasons. Obtaining funding through LGTN provided local authorities with additional resources to undertake work already planned. As one participant argued:

\begin{quote}
\text{it’s about bringing in additional resource to deliver what we are attempting to do.}\textsuperscript{160}
\end{quote}

In this way there was a clear emphasis on securing such funding in order to deliver pre-existing strategic priorities, and funding was only sought where such a contribution could be made\textsuperscript{161}. In cases where local authorities had already committed funding—or received funding from national or regional sources—for priority projects, EU funding was seen as a way to further increase and complement this. This would increase the budget of a project and thus the scope and quality of work a local authority could undertake. The prospect of increasing a project’s budget was viewed as an advantage by many local authorities, with one Interreg facilitator noting:

\begin{quote}
the way I try and persuade people to get involved is to say ‘well look, what funding do you currently have to do something, and in fact you could double that funding by working with a European partner’, so you might have a great scheme in place but you could double the amount of money you get for doing that and tackle that challenge by working with European partners. So normally that’s quite an attractive offer.\textsuperscript{162}
\end{quote}

While EU funding can contribute to priority projects, there was also a recognition that it could pay for work councils wanted to do, but could not otherwise afford\textsuperscript{163}.

\textsuperscript{159} Multiple interviews with French participants (Int. 46; Int. 50; Int. 57; Int. 61; Int. 65).
\textsuperscript{160} Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08).
\textsuperscript{161} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 08; Int. 21; Int. 24; Int. 29; Int. 43; Int. 45; Int. 52; Int. 53; Int. 58). This supports Pfieger’s (2014, p. 339) analysis, which noted the acquisition of EU funds by French cities merely accelerated pre-existing projects which would have been undertaken regardless of whether EU funding was obtained or not.
\textsuperscript{162} Interview with Interreg staff, June 2012 (Int. 20).
\textsuperscript{163} Interview with Interreg staff, May 2012 (Int. 22).
For example, the Isle of Wight faced significant coastal erosion and landslip problems which the council would be unable to address with its own limited resources. The EU funding which the council received allowed it to undertake a number of studies into these risks.

As well as contributing to priority projects, some English local authorities saw EU funding as a means of income generation, whereby it contributed to councils’ core budgets. Indeed, one of the headings in Kent County Council’s international strategy made it clear they:

must maximise the benefits to Kent of income generation opportunities.

Local officers also highlighted the need to secure income for the council, with one explicitly stating that EU funding was sought:

to supplement the council’s ever-dwindling core funding.

In some cases councils set themselves targets to achieve specific amounts of funding. EU funding was also seen to have direct employment benefits for councils. Medway Council, for example, sought EU funding to employ project officers to oversee several European projects and funding bids. The Isle of Wight

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164 Interviews with English local officer, May 2012, and former English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08; Int. 29). Examples of such projects include FRANE (Future Risk Assessment as a New European Approach to Landslide Hazards) funded by the Commission’s Civil Protection financial instrument, IMAPS (Integrated Management of Risks and Environmental Factors for Sustainable Development of Peripheral Port Areas) funded by the Interreg IIIc programme, MESSINA (Monitoring European Shorelines and Sharing Information on Near Shore Areas) funded by the Interreg IIIc programme, OIKOS (Originating Innovative methods to learn and teach Knowledge in the field of earth and natural sciences derived from an Original and combined use of application Software) funded by the Leonardo da Vinci programme, PROTECT (Prediction Of The Erosion of Cliffted Terrains) funded by the Fifth Framework programme and RESPONSE (Responding to the risks from climate change) funded by the Life programme. Further information about transnational research projects involving the Isle of Wight Council can be found at: \text{http://www.coastalwight.gov.uk/research.htm}.

165 Interviews with multiple English local officers (Int. 08; Int. 14; Int. 39; Int. 48).

166 Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 48).

167 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 08; Int. 22; Int. 29; Int. 51).
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Council was able to use EU funds to employ specialist coastal officers\footnote{Interviews with English local officers, May 2012 and August 2012, and former English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08; Int. 29; Int. 51).}. As a result of the availability of EU funding available to councils and the benefits it brought, participants felt that such opportunities were important to take up. In the words of one:

Needless to say EU funding, usually about 50 per cent, was also something that could not be ignored. So there is money there so why wouldn’t we want to be out there bidding for it?\footnote{Interview with English local councillor, June 2012 (Int. 32).}

Local officers felt that funding was a particularly attractive motivation for local politicians\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 08; Int. 15; Int. 21; Int. 24; Int. 29; Int. 34; Int. 38; Int. 43; Int. 51).}. Indeed it was usually the prospect of securing funding which made councillors support LGTN. As noted by one participant:

Well the thing that makes councillors decide to do this is that they can raise money. They wanted to access European funds, that is the bottom line really.\footnote{Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).}

Staff working for multilateral networks similarly confirmed this, for example:

it’s important that elected leaders and mayors can show that they’re bringing back more money than they’re spending.\footnote{Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06). This echoes one of Dąbrowski’s (2012, p. 735) findings, where the local electorate assesses local politician performance by the amount of funding they brought in.}

Beyond councillors, obtaining funding provided an easy way to justify participation in LGTN. The acquisition of external funding was itself a visible benefit and quantitative figures of funding received are easily understood. As one participant argued:

When you are involved in a project with ERDF grant, it’s easy to understand that half of your budget is co-financed.\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 46).}
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

Another participant noted that bringing EU money in was a very visible source of how European and EU work can benefit.\textsuperscript{174}

As a result, figures and tables outlining the amount of secured funding were often used in local government documentation. Reports to scrutiny committees, for example, regularly report information in this way, as demonstrated in Figure 5.1.\textsuperscript{175} In some cases whole reports were dedicated to outlining how much funding had been achieved, produced both by local authorities (for example, Conseil r\^egional de Basse-Normandie 2012; Conseil r\^egional de Bretagne 2012) and joint technical secretariats (JTSs) of European funding programmes (for example, Interreg IVa 2 Seas 2012; Interreg IVa France–Channel–England 2012; Interreg IVc 2009).

Figure 5.1: Example of funding results displayed in a committee report (Kent County Council, 2011)

\textsuperscript{174} Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 24).

\textsuperscript{175} Figure 5.5 also illustrates how the amount of funding secured through LGTN can be reported by local government in committee documentation. Other examples include Brighton & Hove City Council (2006); Conseil r\^egional de Bretagne (2011); East Sussex County Council (2000); Hampshire County Council (2005b); Isle of Wight Council (2004a); Kent County Council (2007c, 2007b, 2008, 2009, 2010b, 2011); Portsmouth City Council (2010); Southampton City Council (2005, 2007b, 2007a); and West Sussex County Council (2001).
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

5.2.3 The role of LGTN in obtaining funding

Local authorities felt LGTN was essential for obtaining funding. As stated by one participant:

I don’t think we need to lie or whatever, partnership working equals funding opportunities.\footnote{Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 40).}

As already discussed, many EU programmes required the involvement of project partners from different European countries. This was recognized in several strategic documents and committee reports produced by councils and by several participants. Multilateral networks—such as those identified in Chapter 4—were seen to provide members with a ‘ready-made’ network of contacts and other localities who were potentially willing to participate in joint projects and bid for funding. The Arc Manche network, for example, was seen in this way, providing the:

Provision of a ‘ready made’ partnership to access EU funds to support practical projects of common interest. (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2003)\footnote{Indeed, members of the Arc Manche network fall within the eligible areas of the Two Seas and France (Channel) England Interreg IVa cross-border programmes, as well as the wider transnational programmes such as Interreg IVb North West Europe.}

Furthermore, as highlighted by West Sussex County Council (2006a):

Most EU funding can only be accessed via partnerships comprising two or three different countries. Therefore networks as as the Assembly of European Regions, POLIS, Airport Regions Conference, the Channel Arc Assembly\footnote{Referring to the Arc Manche network.} and others . . . provide an ideal platform from which to access EU funding.

The role of such multilateral networks in facilitating project partnerships for funding bids was highlighted by several participants\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 12; Int. 18; Int. 19; Int. 24; Int. 36; Int. 43; Int. 44; Int. 61).}. As noted by two:

We can also imagine that we can also make links between the Interreg projects and the European networks, because it helps to find partners if you already have contacts or you know some people.\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).}

\footnote{176} Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 40).
\footnote{177} Indeed, members of the Arc Manche network fall within the eligible areas of the Two Seas and France (Channel) England Interreg IVa cross-border programmes, as well as the wider transnational programmes such as Interreg IVb North West Europe.
\footnote{178} Referring to the Arc Manche network.
\footnote{179} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 12; Int. 18; Int. 19; Int. 24; Int. 36; Int. 43; Int. 44; Int. 61).
\footnote{180} Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).
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by being members of the AER ... we’re making the contacts so if we want to make a bid for project funding, we have immediately got partners.¹⁸¹

Multilateral network staff themselves also recognized this role.¹⁸² As one claimed:

As a member of Eurocities ... you’ve got a ready-made network for creating partnerships, transnational partnerships to run projects.¹⁸³

Multilateral networks focusing on specific policy areas were seen as particularly useful for finding potential partners with similar policy priorities.¹⁸⁴ For example:

through specific or thematic networks, you know which regions can work with you on which specific subjects.¹⁸⁵

Sometimes we can build projects together with regions that we have met within a network. It’s the case with ERRIN for example. ERRIN is also a very good tool for us to build R and D projects.¹⁸⁶

Consequently it was felt that participation in multilateral networks made putting together partnerships and bidding for funding a lot easier and quicker, as well as limiting some of the risks involved:

a big part go our participation in Eurocities is to get to know certain cities that have the same interests and priorities as ourselves, and you’ve got that ready-made link so when a big opportunity comes up you’re not rushing to get to know the partner, or signing up with a partner you’ve never met. You have that link and understanding, and it makes for a high quality project.¹⁸⁷

Bilateral partnerships were also seen to play a similar role in fostering relationships which would lead to potential joint funding bids. As noted in Section 4.3, Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais’s link led to 11 joint EU funded transnational projects (see

¹⁸¹ Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 01).
¹⁸² Interviews with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06; Int. 30; Int. 33).
¹⁸³ Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06).
¹⁸⁴ Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 12; Int. 19; Int. 24; Int. 29; Int. 36; Int. 53).
¹⁸⁵ Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).
¹⁸⁶ Interview with French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 19).
¹⁸⁷ Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 12).
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Figure 4.2. The link between Portsmouth and Caen was also seen as important to assist in developing joint projects which would be eligible for European funding (Portsmouth City Council, 2009a, 2009b). This bilateral link led to the MONC project, for example. Involvement in transnational projects themselves was also seen to be a self-perpetuating process, whereby participation in one led to opportunities for participation in others. For example, as acknowledged by Brighton and Hove City Council (2008a):

> Once a city has been a partner on one CIVITAS bid, it can lead on another. As such, participation in the CIVITAS programme opens up an opportunity for Brighton & Hove to access further funding.

It was felt LGTN could also assist in obtaining funding by providing technical support to navigate the complexities of many EU funding programmes. Local officers and councillors realized that multilateral networks provided information about forthcoming funding opportunities as well as advice on submitting bids and increased profile among the core funding bodies such as the European Commission or Interreg JTSs. In the words of one participant:

> it’s not as clear cut as join the AER you will automatically get funding, but it is you will get to be seen and known.

Again, multilateral networks recognized the role they had to play in supporting local government to access EU funds. For example:

> there’s also a very utilitarian motivation which is about the money, that by participating in Eurocities ... you get from your peers in other cities and from the things you attend, you get the connections within the Commission and

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188 Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 53).
189 The MONC (Mysteries of Our Neighbour’s Culture) project—which aims to foster transnational links between schools and promote cultural exchanges—is an example where bilateral co-operation between Portsmouth City Council and Caen led to a successful Interreg funding bid (Portsmouth City Council, 2009b). Further information about the project is available at: [www.caen.fr/monc/portsmouth/projet.htm](http://www.caen.fr/monc/portsmouth/projet.htm).
190 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 08; Int. 25; Int. 50; Int. 53).
191 Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 01).
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the understanding of how the programmes work and you stand a much better chance of bringing in resources.\textsuperscript{192}

LGTN also assisted in addressing the increasingly competitive nature of EU funds. Local authorities felt that as a result of increased competition for EU funds there was a need to co-operate with these countries. This motivated the development of a number of bilateral partnerships between the case study local authorities and those in central and eastern Europe, as discussed in Chapter 4 (Conseil régional de Bretagne & Województwo Wielkopolskie\textsuperscript{2005a}; East Sussex County Council & Veszprém Megye Önkormányzata\textsuperscript{1996}; Kent County Council & Bács-Kiskun County General Assembly, 2004). Indeed, the co-operation accord between East Sussex and Veszprém states:

We will seek jointly to take advantage of appropriate opportunities to seek funding, particularly from the European Union. (East Sussex County Council & Veszprém Megye Önkormányzata\textsuperscript{1996})\textsuperscript{193}

As one participant explained:

I could see that structural funds in Europe were gradually going to shift towards helping eastern Europe, because that’s where the money was needed, and if we as a British county wanted to go on receiving we need to have links with them so we could do joint projects with them.\textsuperscript{194}

The prospect of securing funding by working in partnership with central and eastern European local authorities therefore explains the shift observed in Chapter 4 from cross-border bilateral networking to wider ‘inter-regional’ bilateral networking.

\textsuperscript{192} Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06). The role of LGTN to support accessing EU funding has been noted elsewhere beyond the case study area. Smets (2013, p. 65) notes how Croatian regions have sought bilateral partnerships with regions elsewhere in Europe to gather information about effective project applications and other aspects of the structural funds.

\textsuperscript{193} Similar references to seeking funding are present in the co-operation agreements between Kent and Bács-Kiskun (Kent County Council & Bács-Kiskun County General Assembly, 2004) and Bretagne and Wielkopolska (Conseil régional de Bretagne & Województwo Wielkopolskie, 2005a).

\textsuperscript{194} Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).
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5.2.4 Perceived limits to obtaining funding through LGTN

While funding was sought, local authorities placed a number of caveats on the ability for them to achieve this through LGTN. Firstly, in order to achieve high levels of funding significant upfront investment had to be made. For example, as noted by Kent County Council (2007b):

the County Council should be seeking to secure EU funding into Kent of some €100 million over the next few years . . . However, in order to achieve this target, KCC will also need to invest significant resources, in particular to the process of project facilitation, as well as to strengthened communication, awareness-raising and partnership working.

Participants likewise reflected that funding was only achieved where investment had been made in staff resources. In the words of two participants:

Well West Sussex always had a big European team. It started out I think around 2000 and had a big European team and I think that actually paid off because they got a lot of European funding in.

Certainly when I think about regions like Lower Normandy, they have four or five Interreg officers who just trawl everywhere looking for projects that they can participate in, that’s a useful way of bringing in more funding.

The other form of investment required to bid for European funding is to provide so-called ‘match funding’. EU programmes usually only provide 50 per cent co-financing with the project partners expected to contribute the rest. As one Interreg facilitator emphasized:

It’s a purely practical thing. If the organization doesn’t have the match in place then they just can’t do the project. Simple as that.

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195 See also Kent County Council (2010a).
196 Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 18).
197 Interview with English local officer, September 2012 (Int. 45).
198 Interview with Interreg staff, June 2012 (Int. 20).
Providing match funding was difficult for councils in both south-east England and northern France, particularly in light of the public finance pressures facing local government in the current economic climate. This was confirmed in a recent survey of English councils by the Local Government Association (LGA) (2011), which showed that over two-thirds were not confident about the availability of match funding. Consequently the amount of EU funding sought by local government was limited. Indeed in most cases where European funding came into a locality it was not received by the actual local authority. As highlighted by one participant:

the money that we brought in, which in total would have been millions into the county, mostly didn’t go to the county council, it only went to the county council if the county council ran a project . . . Most of the projects we did we’ve got to find 50 per cent and whatever the European programme was put up 50 per cent. That’s why . . . in the county as a whole we had a lot of projects, but the council as such had very few because they couldn’t afford to fund the matching funding.

This was particularly the case with the French regional councils who—as already noted in Section 4.4.3—preferred to encourage local stakeholders to participate in European projects, rather than directly participate themselves.

As a consequence of the investment required in terms of staff resources and match funding, and the fact that most of the time funding does not come directly to local authorities, it was felt that there was no overall financial return:

you don’t make money. That misconception that you make money, you don’t.

Indeed, participants felt that obtaining EU funding was only worth pursuing if additional benefits beyond the funding itself could be sought. It was felt that simply ‘chasing’ EU funds to reap financial gains alone would not work, lead to unsuccessful projects and

199 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 13; Int. 16; Int. 20; Int. 34; Int. 39; Int. 46; Int. 48; Int. 69).
200 Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).
201 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 43).
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It was recognized that the benefits of obtaining EU funding were ephemeral by nature, being limited to the duration of the project being funded. One local officer noted that there was a danger of councils falling into a ‘self-perpetuation trap’, whereby the local authority employed staff and built the funding into their core budget, only for this funding to run out within two or three years, putting further pressure on the council to bid for more funding as a way of maintaining staffing and budgetary levels.

Another limitation recognized by local authorities was that accessing EU funding—even with the assistance of LGTN—is onerous. A number of local officers and councillors recognized the difficulties involved in bidding for EU funds. Among the difficulties present in bidding for EU funds, the administrative burden and a high risk of a bid being unsuccessful were the greatest barriers. As cautioned by East Sussex County Council:

The complexity of applying for funds and the uncertainty of the outcome can often deter hard-pressed staff from devoting time to bids.

As similarly observed by one participant:

Other departments don’t do European funding at all, not interested at all. If you mention Interreg they seem to run away ... People are worried about audit, retention and recording and the bureaucracy that goes with European funding. We’ve had one or two audits and they were fine but it’s a lot of work. Some colleagues have actually said there’s no point going for Interreg if you don’t go for really big amounts of money because there’s so much work in delivering the project, also all the claims and paperwork that you need to keep and produce, it’s very time-consuming.

Other participants also recognized that bidding for EU funding was a lot of effort for little gain. As one observed:

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202 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 08; Int. 41; Int. 43 Int. 54; Int. 58; Int. 69; Int. 70).
203 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23).
204 Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 51).
205 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 13; Int. 43; Int. 48; Int. 60).
206 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 13).
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You know it’s hundreds of thousands but it wasn’t millions, and yet the work that was put in you’d think you were bidding for millions.\(^{207}\)

Again, this was found in the LGA (2011) survey, as well as a separate survey commissioned by the Assembly of European Regions (AER) (2011), with several respondents highlighting the administrative rules as too complex and burdensome, and that there was a need for greater simplification in applying for and administering EU funds. This was also brought up during a United Kingdom (UK) national government consultation on the administration of the 2014–2020 structural funds (BIS, 2012, p. 5)\(^{208}\).

It was felt that applying to EU programmes was not worth the effort given that other schemes were less burdensome and often paid more, especially for smaller organizations with limited resources\(^{209}\). This was particularly the case in France, where national and regional funding schemes were more readily available than in England. As argued by two French regional officers:

Another difficulty is for small organizations that don’t have human resources, sometimes they don’t understand why find European money if regional money is more easy to have?\(^{210}\)

You received one funding from the state, so why do you bother with the multiple funding? And you have to do a lot of control and have to justify every time what you do. A lot of organizations are quite afraid.\(^{211}\)

Additionally in France, local authorities were less accustomed to the processes of building partnerships and bidding for funding (Payre, 2010). For this reason French

\(^{207}\) Interview with English councillor, June 2012 (Int. 32).

\(^{208}\) The 2014–2020 EU funding programmes have additional checks applied to them designed to make sure funding is well spent. These are macro-economic conditionality, the need for a member state’s to match EU budget rule—arguably something local and regional government has no control over, and as such has been strongly contested—and ex ante conditionality, or withholding a proportion of funding until the project is successfully completed and delivering results meeting EU objectives. These additional checks are likely to present further administrative barriers to accessing EU funding.

\(^{209}\) Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 13; Int. 32; Int. 37; Int. 46; Int. 61).

\(^{210}\) Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 46).

\(^{211}\) Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 65).
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local authorities—and other eligible local stakeholders—were more likely to pursue national and regional funding schemes rather than access EU programmes.\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 37). Many of the French régions employed staff to promote EU funding programmes among local stakeholders. Interreg joint technical secretariats (JTSs) have also employed regional ‘facilitators’ in northern France and south-east England to promote their programmes to local authorities and other local actors.}

5.3 LGTN for lobbying and influence

Another aim regularly stated in strategic documentation was lobbying EU institutions and influencing EU policy (Brighton & Hove City Council\footnote{Kent County Council},\footnote{West Sussex County Council\footnote{This motivation was also outlined in various committee reports (East Sussex County Council\footnote{Hampshire County Council\footnote{Isle of Wight Council\footnote{Kent County Council\footnote{Southampton City Council\footnote{West Sussex County Council\footnote{In this context is outlined on page 163.}}}}}}}}\footnote{2001b};\footnote{2002};\footnote{2005a};\footnote{Isle of Wight Council\footnote{Kent County Council\footnote{2007b}}};\footnote{2010a};\footnote{Southampton City Council\footnote{2005}};\footnote{West Sussex County Council\footnote{2003a}}}). This was further confirmed during interviews with local officers and councillors from both England and France.\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 08; Int. 19; Int. 21; Int. 24; Int. 32; Int. 34; Int. 37).\footnote{Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 21).}\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 19). This participant was referring to the negotiations for the 2014–2020 European Structural and Investment Funds. This context is outlined on page 163.}}

As noted by two participants:

I have really understood why we take part in it . . . and the opportunity to be able to influence European politics is chief among those.\footnote{Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 21).}

let’s say the main goal, especially now because of this negotiation period, it’s the lobbying work.\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 19).}

This section surveys this motivation.

5.3.1 Identified contextual factors

As with funding, local authorities identified a number of contextual factors which led them to seek influence in EU policy. Chief among these was the impact of EU legislation on a wide range of local government policies (see Briggs\footnote{Briggs, 2010} p. 12; Kern\footnote{2014} p. 116;
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Almost all council services are affected by EU laws in one way or another ... whether it’s EU legislation on energy efficiency, equalities, procurement, recycling, waste and working hours, it is by and large councils that implement it.

This situation was recognized by the local authorities studied, which generally estimated between 70 and 80 per cent of EU legislation directly impacted their work:

As a practical concern, 70% to 80% of European legislation can be said to directly impact on the work of local authorities. (Kent County Council, 2007c)

European legislation sets an increasing context for the County Council’s work. Local government implements approximately 70% of policy and legislation that emanates from Brussels, for example waste directives on the recycling of fridges, cars and batteries, transport policies on cleaner fuels, business regulations on part-time worker’s rights or the opening up of services to competition. (West Sussex County Council, 2006a)

Participants likewise highlighted this during interviews217. In this way, local authorities saw themselves as implementers of EU legislation, and this justified their role in seeking to influence such legislation. As argued in one report aimed at local government: “if local authorities are, of necessity, concerned with policy implementation, they ought to be systematically involved in the policy-formation process” (Bogdanor, 1992, p. 18). However, despite this role, local authorities felt left out of the decision-making process:

Local authorities are primarily seen as implementers and enforcers of EU policy and legislation, but in spite of this have traditionally had a weak voice in the EU decision-making process. (West Sussex County Council, 2006a)

There was a feeling among councils that their opinions on policy came at the expense of national government preferences. As recognized by two participants:

217 The impact of EU legislation on local services is also outlined by the (Isle of Wight Council, 2005).
218 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 10; Int. 18; Int. 21).
the European Commission often overlooks regions and local authorities, they talk to member states, but not to local authorities.\textsuperscript{219}

There’s also the issue of perceived democratic deficit if you like. If you look at how the European Union’s set up, whereby the Parliament aside... you’re then purely in the grip of national government who attend obviously the Council of Ministers.\textsuperscript{220}

While it was recognized that national government had more influence in EU policy-making, local authorities felt that there were occasions when local and national interests were not aligned. This was particularly the case for England and France, where local government operates in centralized systems with little legislative capacity of their own. Referring to the UK government’s seat in the Council, one participant noted:

in some cases, probably in many cases, those interests will align quite nicely with what goes on at a local level, but there will be some cases where they might not ... there’s a need for local authorities to do it themselves, to go out there and press its own case where those incidents are not aligned with national government.\textsuperscript{221}

A French regional councillor made a similar remark at a conference, noting that Bretagne and its interests were largely ignored by the central government in Paris \textsuperscript{222} Indeed, participants from both countries were able to highlight a number of examples where the national government position differed from that of local authorities. \textsuperscript{223}

Local authorities felt they were better placed to inform discussions on EU policy due to their closeness to citizens, something seen as an advantage by the Commission \textsuperscript{224}

\textsuperscript{219} Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 18).
\textsuperscript{220} Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).
\textsuperscript{221} Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).
\textsuperscript{222} Participant observation, Europeanising devolution conference, May 2013 (Obs. 7).
\textsuperscript{223} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 34; Int. 37; Int. 38).
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It is important that local government continues to be recognised as a legitimate actor in European affairs. It is the level that delivers key services to residents, business and the voluntary sectors and as such is in a favourable position to provide input to the EU institutions on how European policies and legislation work on the ground. (Isle of Wight Council, 2004b)

As similarly argued by a member of multilateral network staff:

What is very important for your analysis on the last question is about the big difference between the national level and the other levels, and I mean here regional and/or local level, is that we are concrete, pragmatic, we know the key players, we know also what are the needs of the local and regional SMEs, what are the needs of citizens, what are the problems in the regions, what are the potentials. So, I don’t know if a national state knows it better.\textsuperscript{224}

As identified in Section 2.2, the EU is open to local government involvement in the policy process (for example Bulkeley et al., 2003; Goldsmith, 1993; John, 2000; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008; Ward & Williams, 1997). Indeed Bogdanor (1992, p. 10)—in an early report aimed at local authorities—notes that, in comparison to national governments, the EU:

is both more complex and more open to a range of different influences. This offers excellent opportunities for local authorities, both collectively and individually.

This was recognized by the local authorities studied, who felt that although national governments remained influential, the EU was becoming more receptive to local opinion and that this presented an opportunity to become involved:

there is a growing recognition at all levels that local government must be more effectively engaged in policy debates at an earlier stage in order to ensure robust EU policies and legislation. (West Sussex County Council, 2006a)

Whist in the past the European Institutions have tended to negotiate at National government level, the last few years have seen an increased desire to consult with (and listen to) local and regional government as this is seen as being closer to the citizen. (Isle of Wight Council, 2005)

\textsuperscript{224} Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 35).
An observable steady increase in the number of local and regional Brussels offices supports this ([Rowe, 2011, pp. 6–7](#)). Events such as the annual EU Open Days also served to reinforce the perception that the EU is attune to local needs and open to influence. During these events, the EU invites thousands of local actors to Brussels every year to attend workshops hosted by the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions (CoR), and to interact directly with EU officials.

While the EU appeared to be receptive to local input in the policy process, councils recognized that they were unable to have an impact on EU policy individually given their relatively small size and limited resources. Many participants highlighted the competitive environment in which EU lobbying takes place and felt they were likely to be ‘drowned out’ if they acted alone ([Int. 01; Int. 11; Int. 12; Int. 18; Int. 19; Int. 34; Int. 36 Int. 44](#)). As noted in Section 2.2.1, several local authorities have established representation offices in Brussels. The number of individual local and regional authorities with a fixed presence in Brussels was recently estimated at 297 ([Donas & Beyers, 2013, pp. 535–536](#)) with ([Ebels, 2012 p. 12](#)) suggesting there are 1,500 individuals engaged in lobbying in Brussels on behalf of subnational government. In addition, local and regional authorities were operating alongside a plethora of other organized interests, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and corporate groups. As recognized by [West Sussex County Council (2006a)](#):

> Brussels is a crowded arena, with thousands of local authorities, organisations, businesses and governments trying to put their point of view across. The voice of a single local authority can easily get lost, therefore partnerships and alliances are strategically important.

This led to the assessment that:

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225 Participant observation, EU open days, October 2012 and October 2013 (Obs. 4; Obs. 9).
226 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 11; Int. 12; Int. 18; Int. 19; Int. 34; Int. 36 Int. 44).
227 Donas and Beyers’s (2013) estimate is based on a broad definition of local and regional authorities involved in regional offices, partial and national associations and multilateral networks. The EU’s official transparency register—as at October 2013—only records 119 entities. However, local and regional governments are not obliged to register and the quality of data on this register has been questioned (see Greenwood & Dreger, 2013).
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

As individual councils, we will be ineffective and overwhelmed by others who act collectively. (West Sussex County Council 2003b)

At the root of this was a perceived ‘capacity’ problem among councils; compared to other interests operating in Brussels, individual local authorities were under-resourced and unable to dedicate the same amount of staff time. As conceded by West Sussex County Council (2006a):

The County Council is response for a whole range of services that actually have a European dimension but unfortunately we neither have the resource or the capacity to engage in every single policy debate that interests us.

5.3.2 Overview of lobbying and influence and benefits sought

The ultimate goal of lobbying action was to raise awareness of local and regional issues at a European level and to make sure these concerns were addressed in EU policy making. For the Isle of Wight Council (2004a), their primary aim was:

promoting the Isle of Wight’s interests within the European Union.

And West Sussex County Council (2007) spoke of the need:

to ensure that potential legislation reflects the needs and concerns of local government and residents.

Local authorities often sought to influence specific policy areas, reflecting their own thematic priorities. Bretagne’s priority was to influence EU maritime policy. Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais, for example, wanted to influence cross-border rail policy to

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228 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 04; Int. 11; Int. 14; Int. 16; Int. 17; Int. 26; Int. 30; Int. 35).
230 Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

improve local rail connections to the Channel Tunnel (Kent County Council 2008; King 2009, pp. 95–96)\(^{231}\).

Both the European Commission and European Parliament were the key institutional targets most frequently cited by councils (Brighton & Hove City Council 2007c, 2008b; Isle of Wight Council 2002c, 2004a, 2004b; West Sussex County Council 2002b, 2003a)\(^{232}\). The Commission, as proposer of EU legislation, was seen as the venue to make local voices heard during the drafting of legislation to ensure proposals considered by the Council and Parliament already reflected local interests. Local government sought to raise awareness among members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and encourage the adoption of local government sanctioned amendments. While the Parliament and Commission were by far the main focus for local government lobbying, the CoR and Council were also cited as targets (Isle of Wight Council 2004a, 2004b)\(^{233}\).

Beyond the EU institutions, local government also used European lobbying to influence businesses\(^{234}\). Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais’s desire to improve rail connections—and specifically to reintroduce services to and from Ashford station—for example, meant it had to influence Eurostar rather than the EU institutions (Kent County Council 2008; King 2009, pp. 95–96)\(^{235}\). Additionally, lobbying was sometimes undertaken to influence national government policy (Brighton & Hove City Council 2007c; East Sussex County Council & Conseil général de Seine-Maritime 1996; Kent County Council 2011; Isle of Wight Council 2004b; West Sussex County Council 2004b)\(^{236}\).


\(^{232}\) Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 12; Int. 17; Int. 19; Int. 21; Int. 23; Int. 26; Int. 33; Int. 34; Int. 36; Int. 44; Int. 45).

\(^{233}\) Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 17).

\(^{234}\) Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 09; Int. 14).

\(^{235}\) Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 04). This was pursued through the European Network of High Speed Regions, and was also a key aim of the bilateral relationship between Kent County Council and the département of Pas-de-Calais (Kent County Council & Conseil général du Pas-de-Calais 2005).
One area of policy which almost all councils sought to influence was European funding allocations (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2003, 2005, 2007b; Conseil régional de Bretagne, 2011; Conseil régional de Haute-Normandie, 2012; East Sussex County Council, 2000, 2001b; Hampshire County Council, 2005a; Isle of Wight Council, 2002c, 2002a, 2004a, 2004b; Kent County Council, 2007c, 2007b, 2008, 2009b, 2009a, 2010a; Southampton City Council, 2005; SEERA, 2004; West Sussex County Council, 2002b, 2004b, 2004a, 2006a). Indeed, during the course of the fieldwork the 2007–2013 cohesion policy programming period was coming to an end and negotiations for the new 2014–2020 round of European structural and investment funds—accounting for approximately one third of the EU budget—were under way. Several local authorities were actively involved in this process. Kent, for example, saw influencing the debate on the future of EU funding as a key priority.

The programmes for which Kent is currently eligible ... end in 2013. The Commission’s Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion of October 2008 signalled the start of the debate on the future of EU regional policy and European Funding for the new programming period 2014 – 2020. Having coordinated a Kent response to the Green Paper a key objective for IAG will be to ensure that Kent continues to be eligible for EU support under any future funding regime. (Kent County Council, 2010a)

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236 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 12; Int. 14; Int. 29; Int. 30; Int. 31).
237 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 04; Int. 06; Int. 08; Int. 11; Int. 12; Int. 17; Int. 19; Int. 29; Int. 34; Int. 44).
238 Interviews with English local officers, May 2012 and July 2012, and English councillor, May 2012 (Int. 04; Int. 05; Int. 14).
239 “IAG” refers to the International Affairs Group, the department within Kent County Council responsible for European and international affairs, including LGTN.
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

5.3.3 The role of LGTN in lobbying and influence

LGTN was seen by local authorities as an important means to achieve their influencing goals; many councils saw lobbying as one of the primary purposes of multilateral networks. For example:

the Arc Manche is essentially a political lobbying group; that’s what it is.\textsuperscript{240}

CPMR and the Islands Commission are primarily political lobbying organisations.\textsuperscript{[Isle of Wight Council 2005]}

This role was also acknowledged by multilateral network staff themselves, with many describing lobbying activity as their ‘raison d’être’\textsuperscript{241}:

Eurocities is a platform . . . for the mayors to Europe’s biggest cities to influence European policy, to influence the European institutions. That’s our purpose.\textsuperscript{242}

of course we try to defend the interests of our member regions. And how do we do that? Lobby action.\textsuperscript{243}

Indeed, this is evident in the strategic documents produced by many multilateral networks. A key strategic objective for the AER\textsuperscript{2013} is:

To promote the role of regional governance at European level and to mainstream regional interests into national and European policy making.
a) Providing information on and promoting regional interests in Europe.

...d) Cooperating with European institutions and representing regions in the European decision-making process.

And for the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning (EARLALL)\textsuperscript{2011} is:

\textsuperscript{240} Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 02).
\textsuperscript{241} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 23; Int. 26; Int. 30; Int. 33; Int. 35).
\textsuperscript{242} Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06).
\textsuperscript{243} Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 35).
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

Seeking to bring regional perspectives to the European debate of Lifelong Learning and trying to influence it.

A graphic by the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) (see Figure 5.2) provides an illustration of how this multilateral network acts as “a representative voice” and takes on the role of a “negotiator” for its local and regional members, not only to the EU but national governments too (CPMR 2013). One member of multilateral network staff noted their local authority members placed great importance on lobbying activity, asking them to give it greater emphasis in their strategic plan.

![Figure 5.2: CPMR graphic illustrating how they represent their members’ interests (taken from CPMR, 2013)](image)

While engagement in LGTN for the purpose of lobbying was often seen in relation to multilateral networks, participants also highlighted the role of transnational projects. Projects often led to research studies, the results of which could then go on to form an evidence base for lobbying action. As argued by one participant, transnational projects offered:

244 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 35).
245 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 08; Int. 24; Int. 47).
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

prestige in terms of trying to influence, I think, policy. For instance, if you’ve
got a project on environmental or climate change and it’s seen at a European
level that it’s good practice, etc., they can actually then influence the European
policy on that.\footnote{246}

For example, the Isle of Wight used several transnational projects with partners in a
similar situation to conduct a number of collaborative studies. These results went on
to provide evidence to support their lobbying activities on environmental and coastal
management policy.\footnote{247} Southampton City Council’s role in a number of port related
transnational projects led to a body of best practice knowledge which then went on to
inform EU maritime policy. As noted in one report:

EU Maritime Commissioner Joe Borg welcomed this network\footnote{248} as a key
interlocutor for the EU, particularly with the publication of the Green Paper
on Maritime Policy on the same day. He congratulated Southampton City
Council on the success of the project in not only sharing best practice between
cities, but providing useful input for EU policy-making on maritime affairs.
\cite{Southampton City Council 2006}

Indeed, one of the outputs of the NEW EPOC project was a position paper in response
to the EU’s consultation on a common maritime policy.\footnote{249} As
highlighted by one member of multilateral network staff:

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{246}{Interview with Interreg staff, September 2012 (Int. 47).}
\item \footnote{247}{Interview with English local officer, May 2012, and former English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08; Int. 29).}
\item \footnote{248}{Referring to the NEW EPOC (reNEWing Economic Prosperity for pOrt Cities) transnational
project. This brought together 11 European cities and sought to jointly assess the impact
of globalization, technological developments, increased competition and climate change on
medium-sized port cities, identifying ways that the economic, social, cultural and environmental
well-being could be maintained for the future.\cite{Southampton City Council n.d.-a}.}
\item \footnote{249}{This is also seen as a key role for many local and regional Brussels offices \cite{Brighton & Hove City Council 2007c, Isle of Wight Council 2002d, Conseil régional de Picardie n.d., Marks et al. 2002, Murphy 2011, Rowe 2011}.}
\end{itemize}
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

We try to focus on lobbying in Brussels, looking at what’s coming up, what new policies are emerging.\(^\text{250}\)

Having access to this information at an early stage was seen as a necessary component in effective lobbying; information was needed in advance in order to mobilize support and influence change before any policy was adopted:

Early information on new proposals is . . . beneficial to assess the likely impact on local services and, where possible, to influence changes before they are enacted. (Isle of Wight Council, 2005)\(^\text{251}\)

To this end multilateral networks usually provided their members with regular briefings and communications outlining Commission consultations or other emerging policy developments.\(^\text{251}\)

Secondly, LGTN helped mitigate against the competitive context surrounding EU lobbying. As already noted, individual councils felt they could be drowned out, so it was felt necessary to combine forces and form larger groupings in order to compete in this environment. For example:

[If we] promote this idea on our own, it will not be enough, so we have to build coalitions and we try to work with other regions of Europe.\(^\text{252}\)

Working together on . . . European issues offers us a greater ability to influence and react to the issues facing us than we can achieve individually. (Isle of Wight Council, 2004a)\(^\text{252}\)

LGTN was therefore a way for individual councils to pool their limited resources in order to compete with other interests present and to ensure a sufficient ‘critical mass’ to be heard by the EU institutions. As one participant explained:

you wouldn’t be able to orchestrate it all yourself. It would take oodles and oodles of time, so you go to this facilitator, this broker, this clearing house that is a policy network that can bring together and buy in bulk.\(^\text{253}\)

\(^{250}\) Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26).
\(^{251}\) Horizon scanning is also used to give local authorities advance warning of legislation they will be required to implement. This motivation is explored in more detail in Section 5.5.3.
\(^{252}\) Interview with French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 19).
\(^{253}\) Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).
Thirdly, LGTN was seen as advantageous because lobbying positions developed by networks of local authorities were considered much more representative of a wider body of European local government than those of individual councils. This was not lost on local government, who recognized that large multilateral networks—such as the AER and CPMR—were extremely representative of local and regional government as a whole, making them influential:

the CPMR is held in some regard by Brussels as a body representing 149 regions from 27 states, it carries a degree of authority and weight. (Isle of Wight Council 2004c)

the CPMR is quite well respected and thought of by the European Commission and I do think they take note of what CPMR says because the CPMR represents almost every coastal region round the European sea board, so it is an influential network.

Multilateral networks themselves were aware of this, with one member of staff noting that a key benefit for their members was:

the force of being able to say ‘we are within a network that represents 150-odd regions across the EU’. That gives added gravitas quite clearly to the kind of force that you have have with respects to the messages you are looking to push.

It was felt this representative characteristic of LGTN was particularly welcomed by the EU institutions. Indeed, as highlighted by McAleavey and Mitchell (1994, p. 238), the Commission has long preferred to deal with groups who could claim they were representative of a wider body of actors, rather than be seen to listen to—and thereby favour—single actors. As identified by Heinelt and Niederhafner (2008) the Commission relies on this representative characteristic of networks to legitimize policy proposals. Again this was recognized by local government:

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254 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 11; Int. 17; Int. 29; Int. 35; Int. 36; Int. 44).
255 Interview with former English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 29).
256 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 17).
CPMR is a strong and quite an important network. There’s about 160 members, which are other regions, so when you have a common position in this kind of network, I think it’s something quite important at the EU level, even in front of the Commission and other EU institutions, because you are not representing only yourself, but you have been discussing and finding a common position for quite a broad territory in Europe that the network is representing.

I think that the European Commission, for example, has to see that the network is not only an office in Brussels, it has to see that there is something behind and you’re not showing off, and that you represent all the local authorities.

Some participants viewed this in more simplistic terms around convenience; the Commission did not have the time or resources to consult every local authority individually so representative multilateral networks provided an opportunity to interact with the subnational level more efficiently:

the Commission likes to only have one person to talk to in a very specific field, they like to have one association representing all the local authorities and it’s easier to talk to them in that case. They don’t want all the regions to come up to discuss with them, they want only one actor to come up and say ‘I represent all the local authorities in Europe’.

if you’re a guy like Barroso who’s only got 360 days in his year like you and I have, he’s got to think well my time is precious, . . . he’s not going to have time to go to every county in England or département in France. He’s got to find an assembly.

Fourthly, local authorities felt multilateral networks specializing in specific sectoral policy fields were held in high regard by the EU institutions because of their policy knowledge, and that this led to enhanced opportunities to access the policy process. As already noted, this also applied to transnational projects delivering research in specific policy fields. Networks which shared policy knowledge and best practice among their members were often regarded as ‘experts’ by the EU. This meant they were often

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257 Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).
258 Interview with French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 44).
259 Interview with French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 44).
260 Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 01).
261 The sharing of best practice and policy transfer is discussed in Section 5.4.
invited to feed their expertise into policy development. For example:

there are other networks in Brussels representing cities and regions, but I think it’s fair to say very few, if any of them, have the same knowledge and expertise as POLIS on transport matters, because we are focused on transport . . . we’re really going into detail, into the heart of the matter, so we’re often consulted by the Commission on policy initiatives, we often invited to stakeholder consultations which are related to transport . . . we are considered by the European Commission as being one of the key stakeholders.

In particular the Islands Commission is from time to time invited to collaborate with the European institutions on matters requiring expertise in island issues. (Isle of Wight Council 2005)

Local authorities were very much aware that multilateral networks and their expertise were seen as a resource to EU policy makers:

I say to people you mustn’t always see yourself as supplicant, you’re always begging, you must see yourself as a resource that the people on the inside of the institutions need you as much as you need them.

Indeed multilateral network staff pointed to their involvement in Commission expert groups and other advisory committees. Participation in such groups was seen as an opportunity to promote networks’—and thus their members’—interests. As noted by one participant:

we’re part of committees and what’s really important for us is, I mentioned one committee which is ERTRAC, there are other committees similar to that which come up with recommendations for research priorities and this really provides us with an opportunity to influence the work programmes for projects that are going to be published later on, to make sure they respond to the needs of our members.

The scale and diversity of interests represented in Brussels posed important questions from the Commission’s perspective, namely: “who speaks for whom, on what,
and how representative are they” (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 45). Thus the representativeness and expertise offered by multilateral networks all added to the ‘credibility’ of local government lobbying efforts, something participants regularly cited as a key determinant of success. As a result of this credibility, many multilateral networks were offered a unique position and direct access to the EU policy process, as recognized by one participant:

They do a hell of a lot of good some of them. They provide the first rough drafting of something that eventually becomes a directive many years ahead.

5.3.4 Perceived limits to lobbying and influence through LGTN

While local authorities engaged in LGTN hoping to influence the EU policy process, they also highlighted the potential limits to this activity. The largest was a perception that the benefits of lobbying were often seen as intangible and hard to quantify. Indeed, as the Audit Commission (1991, p. 34) recognizes, “lobbying in Brussels usually requires the greatest expenditure for the least discernible effect”. This led to some local authorities—and English participants in particular—questioning the value of trying to lobby the EU policy process. As stated by one participant:

the more broader lobbying and policy type work within Europe, thinking about these sort of groupings like Eurocities or SELP, those sorts of things which are a bit broader and woollier in terms of what they’re doing, they’re more about lobbying and trying to influence Commission policy and feed into those sorts of things. I think there’s a bit of a political reluctance to engage with those . . . where do you see the value, where do you see the return in something like that, the political niceties of influencing some Commission DG or whatever is seen as something that is you know ‘what’s it actually doing, what’s it delivering in terms of an output?’

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267 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 06; Int. 17; Int. 23; Int. 29; Int. 35; Int. 44).
268 Interview with English councillor, July 2012 (Int. 25).
269 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 04; Int. 08; Int. 14).
270 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08).
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

Given the preference of councillors to reap financial benefits and secure budgetary contributions, one English local officer was wary that lobbying activity:

 won’t appear on my own budget sheet bottom line.\(^{271}\)

Indeed the impact of lobbying is not as easily quantifiable as funding. As a result committee reports had to present lobbying successes in the form of qualitative case studies (for example Figure 5.3). This information was harder to interpret than the quantitative outlines of funding achieved (as illustrated in Figure 5.1).

Local actors also recognized that lobbying strategies were also not always successful. For example Hampshire County Council attempted to influence the boundaries of Interreg programmes so they would be eligible for funding under the Atlantic IVb programme. Despite their membership of the high profile CPMR and Atlantic Arc

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**Case Study on the added value of Territorial Co-operation – A European Network of High Speed Regions**

In recent years, the EU budget has invested heavily in Trans-European Transport infrastructure, both via the TENs budget and via the Structural Funds. In the case of the trans-European transport network, such investment is supposed to result in wider benefits of economic and social cohesion.

However, these wider EU policy aims can be undermined when sectoral policies or operational decisions are not coherent with each other. In 2006, for example, Eurostar announced that it would cut services at Calais and Ashford, two intermediate stations on the EU’s first truly international high-speed rail network: the Paris Brussels Köln Amsterdam London (PBKAL) network. Despite widespread criticism by passengers and local stakeholders, Eurostar maintained its position.

In response, the local and regional authorities of Kent and Nord Pas de Calais put forward to the European Commission a common position of the territorial implications for Europe should such situations recur elsewhere. Recognising the issues at hand, the European Commission’s Regional Policy Director-General took the lead in organising an international stakeholder dialogue in July 2007 so that passenger groups, local authorities from northern France and rail operators and infrastructure managers from the UK, France and Belgium could try to find a way forward.

This timely intervention of DG Regio and the strong, territorial approach taken by the local and regional authorities were important factors in helping to resolve the dispute: from February 2009 and December 2009 respectively, Ashford and Calais will see direct rail services to Brussels.

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Figure 5.3: Example of lobbying displayed as qualitative case studies (Kent County Council, 2009a)

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\(^{271}\) Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 14).
Commission networks they were unsuccessful\textsuperscript{272}. Similarly the Isle of Wight’s attempt to obtain Objective 1 status was also unsuccessful, despite membership of the CPMR and Islands Commission\textsuperscript{273}. Indeed, in the case of lobbying for EU funding the Audit Commission\textsuperscript{1991} p. 44) cautions it is usually determined:

on the basis of objective criteria and indicative allocations set for 3–5 years, and so only affected at the margins by lobbying.

This supports research by other scholars (for example Bomberg & Peterson, 1998; McAleavey & Mitchell, 1994) who suggest that there are limits to local government’s ability to effectively lobby the EU institutions.

5.4 LGTN for policy transfer

The third main motivation for participation in LGTN emerging from this study was policy transfer. In both documentation and interviews this was often discussed using the language of “best practice” or “innovation”. As with other motivations discussed so far, policy transfer was cited regularly in European and international strategies (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2007c; Kent County Council, 2007c; Medway Council, 1999; Southampton City Council, 2007b; West Sussex County Council, 2002b, 2006a\textsuperscript{274}). This was also confirmed as a main motivation by local authority participants\textsuperscript{275}. The frequency at which policy transfer appeared in both documents and interviews demonstrated that it was regarded as at least as important as funding and lobbying. Indeed some participants felt it was the most important motivating factor driving participation in LGTN:

\textsuperscript{272} Interview with English local officer, September 2012 (Int. 45).
\textsuperscript{273} Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08).
\textsuperscript{274} It was also discussed in a variety of other council documentation (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2006; Hampshire County Council, 2005a; Kent County Council, 2008; 2010a; 2011; West Sussex County Council, 2003a).
\textsuperscript{275} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 02; Int. 04; Int. 05; Int. 12; Int. 14; Int. 18; Int. 21; Int. 24; Int. 25; Int. 29; Int. 32; Int. 34; Int. 36; Int. 38; Int. 40; Int. 43; Int. 45; Int. 46; Int. 48; Int. 52; Int. 53; Int. 58; Int. 59; Int. 60; Int. 67).
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

I think it’s better than money to exchange best practices with our colleagues from French local authorities, but also from our colleagues of Europe.\footnote{276} Well the most important benefit is best practice.\footnote{277}

Staff working for multilateral networks also highlighted policy transfer as a key motivation for local authorities to engage in LGTN\footnote{278}. This section now explores this motivation in detail.

5.4.1 Identified contextual factors

Local authorities highlighted two main contextual factors surrounding their policy transfer activities: public finance pressures and the need to respond to a constantly evolving policy environment. As discussed in Section\footnote{5.2.1} local authorities are acutely aware of the financial pressures facing them and sought to offset a reduction in central government grants by accessing EU funding. However, achieving efficiencies in existing policy delivery is also seen as a way to mitigate against this situation. Indeed, participants recognized the potential savings and efficiencies that could be made by applying innovative policies found elsewhere.\footnote{279}

Secondly, as already demonstrated in Section\footnote{5.3.1} local authorities regard themselves as implementers of a wide range of European policy. While councils seek to influence EU policy there would nevertheless come a point where they would have to implement it in whatever form it takes. Participants felt that responding to EU policy was often difficult for local authorities, either because the policy expectations and targets set were extremely challenging\footnote{280} or because policy developed at a rate where local authorities found it difficult to keep up. In this context councils recognized that they could not know everything in a given policy area\footnote{281}. As noted by one participant:

\footnote{276}{Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 46).}
\footnote{277}{Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 18).}
\footnote{278}{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 10; Int. 17; Int. 23; Int. 30; Int. 33).}
\footnote{279}{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 02; Int. 26; Int. 45; Int. 59).}
\footnote{280}{Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26).}
\footnote{281}{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 05; Int. 11; Int. 38).}
you can’t possibly know everything and in a fast changing world things are always changing.\footnote{\textit{Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).}}

This perception of a challenging and constantly evolving policy environment applied not only to EU policy but national and sometimes local policies too.\footnote{\textit{Brighton & Hove City Council} \textit{2008a}.} As highlighted by one participant:

> The issues on the coast are of course of common interest to Belgian, English and French people . . . of course the regional level or the national level is not always the best area to deal with some problems or issues. It’s often easier to use the functional areas where the problems are really based, and I think that is the idea of having a strong European policy and being involved in Interreg projects and programmes.\footnote{\textit{Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 61).}}

Finally, there was a feeling that only so much could be learnt from local or national colleagues as they were all operating in largely the same legislative environment and within the same bureaucratic culture. As \textit{Rose} \textit{(2005, p. 4)} argues, “looking outwards offers policymakers fresh thoughts, whereas looking within your organization is likely to tell you what you already know”. Political leaders in particular felt opportunities to learn from national counterparts were limited. This was particularly the case for Brighton and Hove, England’s only Green Party led council. As noted by one councillor:

> there are lots of forward thinking places where Greens are in power of some sorts and I think that’s especially relevant to the only Green administration in the UK, where unlike other administrations in the UK we don’t have other Green administrations in the UK to look to, whereas if you’re a Labour
administration or a Tory administration, or even a Lib Dem administration in the UK, there will be at least one other that you can work with and see what they’ve managed to achieve and how they’ve managed to achieve it, where as here we can’t. So it’s especially important to us to look to European Greens, or even just European administration who maybe aren’t Green but have similar stances on some things.

5.4.2 Overview of policy transfer and benefits sought

Overall the benefit sought from policy transfer was to identify ‘new’ ideas or practices which could be applied locally. Sharing best practice assisted councils in improving existing service delivery [Brighton & Hove City Council, 2005; Kent County Council, 2010a]. As two participants argued:

> It all links into improving our offer of services, would be the overall heading I’d go for, or just improving our services generally.

exchanging ideas and learning about what other regions are doing and you can take that back into your own day to day service delivery, so it has a direct benefit there in terms of being able to improve the offering of services that you’re charged to do.

As with lobbying, councils often focused their policy transfer activities in certain thematic policy areas, often reflecting their own strategic priorities. As already noted, Brighton and Hove sought policy transfer with other Green-led authorities. Southampton wanted to learn how to make best use of its port facilities (Southampton City Council, n.d.-a, 2003, 2006). Bretagne’s interest in maritime policy meant they sought policy transfer opportunities in this field.

Policy transfer was also seen as a two-way process, with opportunities for local government to impart their own policy knowledge or expertise to others in Europe.

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285 Interview with English councillor, September 2012 (Int. 60).
286 Interview with English local officer, September 2012 (Int. 45).
287 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).
288 Interview with English councillor, September 2012 (Int. 60).
289 Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).
290 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 07; Int. 12; Int. 14; Int. 17; Int. 26; Int. 29; Int. 30; Int. 36; Int. 38; Int. 41; Int. 43; Int. 44; Int. 59; Int. 67).
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

As highlighted by one participant:

it’s not one-way, we have a great deal to offer them as well.\footnote{291}

This was often seen as a way for local authorities to promote their own strengths, innovations and examples of best practice among their European peers. Kent County Council (2011), for example, speaks of:

opportunities to showcase local initiative and market expertise.

One French regional officer felt that policy transfer allowed their authority:

to show that on certain topics we are maybe more adept and maybe have best practices to share, to disseminate in Europe.\footnote{292}

Some councils also made reference to more altruistic motives, whereby they were able to impart their policy knowledge and experience to help other local authorities across Europe\footnote{293} One participant claimed their authority was:

networking and exchanging ideas and information and disseminating what we were doing for the benefit of others. That’s a rather more philanthropic things, but equally we felt that if we could exchange ideas with places facing similar problems then that could be a benefit to everyone.\footnote{294}

This altruism and showcasing of best practice and policy expertise all sought to enhance a local authority’s profile among their European colleagues.\footnote{295} Indeed as one participant stated:

we’re often looking to be working with what we may see as best in class. So identifying who are the players who really have something to offer us or who we can offer something to.\footnote{296}
This was also recognized by multilateral network staff:

they want to showcase what they do and continue to be at the forefront of what they do. So a city like Barcelona or Amsterdam or London will be participating for a number of reasons, one of which is because they want to be seen as a leading practice in a certain policy field.\(^{297}\)

### 5.4.3 The role of LGTN in policy transfer

Because of the limitations of finding best practice nationally (see Rose 2005), there was a perception that going abroad and working in partnership provided more opportunities for learning something new.\(^{298}\) As noted by Kent County Council (2007c):

> Best practice sharing and benchmarking, an integral component in the development of successful services, is greatly enhanced by strong international partnerships.

Participants perceived that certain European colleagues were experts in solving particular policy problems; one participant, for example, saw Dutch local government as leaders in traffic management.\(^{299}\) This meant that transnational policy transfer was particularly useful for local officers charged with implementing and administering local government policies. Participants also recognized that administrative structures, bureaucratic rules and legislation were also different in other countries, and that this also increased chances of finding fresh policy ideas. As noted by two:

> Obviously we could work with other UK partners, but the fact that those EU partners work in different legal frameworks and contexts, that sometimes gives us another, different perspective on things.\(^{300}\)

For example, if you have a group of people working in the field of physical disability and you go and see another service in Rotterdam that works in a

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\(^{297}\) Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06).

\(^{298}\) Interview with English local officer, July 2012, and LGA representative, May 2012 (Int. 11; Int. 31).

\(^{299}\) Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26).

\(^{300}\) Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 58).
different way with the different, you know, the context of the arrangement is different there and the funding is different, the way staff are organized is different and I feel there is real benefit to be gained from seeing how things work in different places, almost going out of your normal comfort zone. I think it can provide opportunities for innovation.

The role of networks in facilitating policy transfer and learning has long been recognized (see Benz & Fürst, 2002; May, 1992), and LGTN is no different. As Lee and van de Meene (2012, p. 203) argue, policy transfer:

is inherently relational; it is dependent on the interactions among different actors. Transmunicipal networks provide a site for potential policy learning which can be transferred to individual cities.

This was not lost on the local authorities studied, which placed great emphasis on the role LGTN played in policy transfer and the benefits it could bring to local service delivery. Indeed many local authorities saw participation in multilateral networks as a way to facilitate this. As noted by Southampton City Council (2005):

Southampton City Council also values working in partnership with other European cities and regions and is a member of several networks including Eurocities, POLIS, the Maritime Cities Network, and Energie-cities. These act as a channel for . . . sharing expertise and peer review/learning opportunities which help the City Council to develop the expertise and knowledge of its staff and to improve its services.

This was not lost on multilateral networks themselves, with one member of staff claiming their organization’s main function is:

really about facilitating networking, so that means providing the means for our members to exchange experience, to transfer knowledge.

Policy transfer was also a component of many bilateral networks and featured heavily in co-operation accords between councils. For example, Kent’s agreement with the Hungarian county of Bács-Kiskun had an action to:

301 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 24).
302 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23).
develop joint projects and best practice exchanges to mutual benefit in fields such as tourism, e-government, innovation, education and culture. (Kent County Council & Bács-Kiskun County General Assembly, 2004)

LGTN was seen to help policy transfer in a number of ways. Firstly, as already shown, networking put authorities in contact with other like-minded councils with which they could exchange policy ideas. Multilateral networks in particular saw this as one of their primary roles. This was further enhanced with multilateral networks dedicated to specific policy areas; the Promoting Operational Links through Integrated Systems (POLIS) network, for example, was able to bring together councils interested in sharing information about transport policy, while the Network of European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism (NECSTouR) brought together councils wanting to exchange tourism policy ideas. The larger and multi purpose networks—such as the AER or Eurocities—organized themselves into a number of policy specific forums or sub-groups to facilitate policy exchange in thematic areas.

Secondly, LGTN was able to put local officers and councillors from different local authorities directly in touch with each other. Such direct contacts allowed for the details of policy to be discussed. Local officers and councillors were often brought together through large conferences—usually organized by multilateral networks—or smaller but more thematically focused workshops, either organized by multilateral networks or as part of transnational projects. Local officers and councillors felt these gatherings were valuable opportunities to share policy ideas, and the prospect of being able to


304 Interviews with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06; Int. 09; Int. 10; Int. 23; Int. 30; Int. 33; Int. 35).

305 Interviews with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23; Int. 33).

306 For example, the AER has three policy-focused committees: Economy and Regional Development, Social Policy and Public Health, and Culture, Education, Youth and International Co-operation (AER, 2013). Eurocities operates six thematic forums: culture, economy, environment, knowledge society, mobility, social affairs (Eurocities, 2013).

307 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 09; Int. 23; Int. 30).

308 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 09; Int. 29; Int. 59).
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

participate in such events was emphasized in local government committee reports. For example, as justified in a report on Brighton and Hove’s application to join Eurocities:

Membership of Eurocities will give opportunities for staff and Councillors to attend forums, be involved in policy development and exchange of ideas. (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2008b)

Multilateral network staff also recognized the value of these gatherings to their members. As highlighted by one:

It’s at the working group meetings where you really have the in depth discussions on the topics you have on the agenda and you can see straight away those that are really enthusiastic and those really learning from it. [309]

These conferences and workshops also provided a venue for local authorities to showcase their own best practice or policy experience among European peers. As highlighted by one participant:

We try and ensure as well that we don’t just go as a participant, but where possible we offer up a presentation or a case study so we’re profiling Brighton and Hove as a city. So for example at the most recent culture forum in Utrecht last month a council officer presented Brighton Fuse, a local creative industries project to the Eurocities culture members and we got a lot of interesting inquiries from that, so that’s profiled at a EU level. [310]

Thirdly, LGTN supported study visits, where representatives from one local authority would visit another to see how policy was implemented on the ground. Such study visits also allowed for staff exchanges and peer review activities to take place, both regarded as important tools for policy transfer (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2007c, 2007b; Kent County Council, 2007b, 2008, 2009a; West Sussex County Council, 2003a). Local authorities recognized the role multilateral networks played in sponsoring or brokering these exchanges. As noted by one participant:

309 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23).
310 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 12).
311 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 18; Int. 21; Int. 27; Int. 40; Int. 45). Transnational staff exchanges also played a role in staff professional development, another benefit sought from LGTN. This is discussed in Section 5.5.4.
the opportunity to peer review what they do and learn lessons from other regions is also very valuable. There’s the example of promoting youth employment project that children’s services recently did with the AER, where they peer reviewed the approach to youth employment with other regions from Croatian and Portugal.  

Study visits, staff exchanges and peer review activities were also a strong feature of bilateral networks. For example, Hampshire and Basse-Normandie engaged in an annual study visit to exchange best practice examples as part of their bilateral accord (Hampshire County Council & Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie 1989).

Fourthly, LGTN allowed local authorities to pool their limited resources—including budgets, knowledge and expertise—in order to solve mutual policy problems more effectively. This pooling of resources to enable policy transfer was at the heart of several transnational projects. For example many projects sought to pool knowledge resources by building joint databases, benchmarking tools or ‘toolkits’ to help inform local policy development (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2011; Kent County Council, 2009b, 2011; SEERA, 2007; Southampton City Council, 2003, 2005). One example of this was the EMDI project which built a cross-Channel atlas (see Buléon & Shurmer-Smith, 2008; Turbout, 2013) compiling data from the project partners to provide evidence to assist councils along the English Channel to develop policy. Pooling resources in transnational projects also allowed for joint policy research to be undertaken at a reduced cost to the individual partners. Multilateral networks also undertook policy research for their members, again reducing the costs to councils. LGTN therefore meant ‘economies of scales’ could be realized when developing local policy. As emphasized by one participant who had experience of working in several

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312 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 21).
313 Interviews with English local officers, July 2012 and September 2012 (Int. 21; Int. 45).
314 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 20; Int. 26; Int. 27; Int. 30; Int. 36; Int. 40; Int. 49; Int. 52; Int. 59; Int. 61; Int. 67; Int. 70).
315 The EMDI (Espace Manche Development Initiative) project involved all the northern French regions along with the Isle of Wight, Kent and West Sussex and a number of universities. This co-operation continued until 2013 as part of the Channel Arc Manche Integrated Strategy (CAMIS) project, where much of the atlas data is kept up to date through an online Cross Channel Atlas, available at: [http://atlas-transmanche.certic.unicaen.fr/](http://atlas-transmanche.certic.unicaen.fr/).
316 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09; Int. 10).
projects, one of the main reasons for taking part was:

research, where you can find things out you wouldn’t normally do or you couldn’t afford. We’ve got a new project where a council in Scotland says ‘I’m on my own, I cannot afford to procure electric vehicles for logistics, but if we can actually do this together with London and some places in Holland and in Germany and in Luxembourg and get a big package of procurement we might actually save costs there’. \[317\]

Finally, LGTN provided a way to share information on and solve transnational policy problems. Numerous transnational projects operated on this basis. One example is the CAMIS project which aimed to develop a common strategy for the English Channel. One of many outputs was the Fécamp declaration \[CAMIS 2013\] which sought to provide a uniform and co-ordinated local response to the risks of shipping incidents and maritime pollution, something which affected local authorities in both England and France, but which could not be addressed through the efforts of individual councils. The CAMIS project worked around this by exchanging policy ideas between local authorities in working groups and cross-Channel forums. \[318\]

### 5.4.4 Perceived limits to policy transfer through LGTN

Again, while clear benefits were sought from policy transfer through LGTN, local authorities were aware of a number of limitations. As with lobbying, participants felt the benefits were hard to measure and quantify. \[319\] As a result, the impact of policy exchange was sometimes intangible. As highlighted by one participant, policy transfer led to:

lots of those sorts of things that you can’t particularly put your finger on everything without trolling through loads of papers. \[320\]

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317 Interview with former English regional officer, June 2012 (Int. 27).
318 Participant observation, cross-Channel forums, September 2012 and March 2013 (Obs. 3; Obs. 6).
319 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 04; Int. 24; Int. 63).
320 Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 02).
Like lobbying, the results of policy transfer could only be reported as qualitative case studies (see Figure 5.4) which, as already discussed, do not have the same impact as quantitative results used to report funding successes.

Local authorities also recognized that while the scope for policy transfer was large and that going abroad opened up numerous opportunities to see best practice in action, applying those lessons locally was difficult. As emphasized by one participant:

\begin{quote}
I think for me what’s important is always to link that transnational level to the local level, so yes a lot of knowledge, ideas are generated through the exchanges, but we always need to bring that down to the local level to see how you can actually transfer any of that knowledge.\textsuperscript{321}
\end{quote}

Councils felt they were often constrained by their own willingness to learn and engage in policy transfer activities, sometimes because they were not used to working with others\textsuperscript{322}. As one participant admitted:

\begin{quote}
We are not used to as staff in French local government, we’re usually not used to think to build projects together, to learn from other areas in Europe.\textsuperscript{323}
\end{quote}

While observing how policy was implemented in a different context was seen as advantageous because it increased chances of finding innovative policy solutions, it was also recognized that the differences in legislative frameworks, bureaucratic culture and staff working practices could be so great that it simply was not possible to apply a policy locally in the same way it was done abroad\textsuperscript{324}. This raises questions about the fungibility of ideas learned through policy transfer. As de Groot and Dibley (2008, p. 32) point out:

\begin{quote}
The limitations of spreading English experience of ‘what works’ in local government improvement have to to be acknowledged. It is not possible to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{321} Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 58).
\textsuperscript{322} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 25; Int. 26; Int. 37; Int. 38). This is further supported by Phelps et al. (2002, p. 221) who note “it appears that the concept of . . . partnerships has yet to take root in the French setting in quite the same way as, for example, in Britain”.
\textsuperscript{323} Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 37).
\textsuperscript{324} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 25; Int. 26; Int. 37; Int. 38)
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

Case Study: A Cross-Border Observatory to Optimise Public Service Delivery

Project Objectives:
To improve customer satisfaction with public services, and improve efficiency of services by understanding citizens needs better. Implementing research, service planning and marketing techniques previously not used by the Public Sector.

Main Actions
Partners (KCC and 12 Districts/Boroughs and Medway Council with the Conseil Général du Pas de Calais and other French organisations) will work together to understand communities and localities through the use of software tools such as customer profiling and segmentation mapping and access to public facilities. A centre of excellence will be established within the KCC Research and Intelligence team which could then be used by other KCC Directorates and public authorities.

Expected outputs and results
Partners will be able to identify where and how services should be delivered. This will provide evidence of customer needs which can be used to plan both future capital and revenue spending and asset realisation. KCC will become a public sector leader in this area of expertise.

Projects currently being developed by Kent partners include:

- **Gateway service and partner planning**
  Gateway has used these tools in Tenterden, Tonbridge and Dover to ensure that services are matched to the specific needs of these communities. Work is currently ongoing to make this analysis more comprehensive for the next Gateway in Sheerness.

- **Council Tax Recovery Actions In Swale**
  MOSAIC segmentation software allows analysis and identification of groups of people who are not paying council tax but can afford to pay. By targeting resources on these groups collection rates can be increased.

- **KCC Libraries and Archives**
  To increase library usage of under-represented groups by focusing on lapsed members from affluent groups, poorer families with children and younger people not in education, employment or training.

- **Council Tax Text Alert Service**
  Identifying customers who would prefer to receive a reminder text rather than a letter for council tax bills. There is potential to save each district significant amounts in letter and court summons production.

- **Service Delivery Point Kiosk Location Optimisation – Dover**
  Ensuring that access points are within a five minute drive of more people (from 52% to 85%) in Dover District by seeing where customers live, what their needs are and the location of current access points.

Figure 5.4: Example of policy transfer activities displayed as qualitative case studies (Kent County Council, 2009a)
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

simply transfer domestic approaches and techniques into different cultures, regimes, governance and politics.\textsuperscript{\texttt{325}}

As noted by two participants:

I used to argue that we could learn from best practice, exchanging ideas about how you run things ... problem was they’re all working in completely different legislative frameworks, it’s very hard to learn from each other.\textsuperscript{\texttt{326}}

You also have the inter-cultural approach to contend with, because sometimes it is not very easy. We have different cultural approaches, especially between France and the United Kingdom. So the way people work is very different.\textsuperscript{\texttt{327}}

These limitations identified by local authorities give weight to Benz and Fürst’s (2002, p. 24) claim that while networks facilitate policy transfer and learning, they can also impede it. Consequently, some local authorities held back from stating policy transfer was their primary objective for LGTN. Local officers and councillors from Kent County Council, for example, noted that policy transfer was only a minor part of their transnational activity and was only actively pursued if it could bring real tangible benefits to the organization.\textsuperscript{\texttt{328}}

5.5 Other motivations for LGTN

While obtaining funding, lobbying and influence and policy transfer were the most frequently stated motivations given by local authorities, a number of other aims were also emphasized. These were promoting economic development (Section 5.5.1), enhancing a local authority’s profile (Section 5.5.2), horizon scanning (Section 5.5.3), aiding professional development (Section 5.5.4) and improving

\textsuperscript{\texttt{325}} This echoes a similar argument made by Nelles (2012, p. 8) who argues that “the quest for best practices is futile ... it is unreasonable to expect that success in one jurisdiction can be translated directly to success in another. Because contexts differ so greatly, no one solution will fit every regional situation”.

\textsuperscript{\texttt{326}} Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).

\textsuperscript{\texttt{327}} Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 61).

\textsuperscript{\texttt{328}} Interviews with English councillor, May 2012, and English local officers, May 2012 and July 2012 (Int. 04; Int. 05; Int. 14).
organizational development (Section 5.5.5). These are now briefly discussed in turn to illustrate the diversity of additional benefits sought from LGTN.

5.5.1 Promoting economic development

Several local authorities engaged in LGTN in order to promote their localities’ economic development and this featured in a number of local government European strategies (Kent County Council, 2007c; Medway Council, 1999; Southampton City Council, 2007b). This was also stated by several participants from both English and French local authorities.

Most efforts centred around supporting locally-based businesses—particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs)—by helping them to take advantage of European and international opportunities. As noted in one Kent County Council (2010b) report, there was a need to develop:

![Image]

a county-wide programme of support to help Kent’s SMEs to ‘internationalise’ their business and trade activities.

The ‘internationalization’ of local businesses was seen as important for their economic well-being. As recognized by another Kent County Council (2010a) report:

![Image]

businesses that engage in international activities have a tendency to show better rates of productivity, growth and profitability.

To this end Kent participated in a number of transnational projects—such as Two Seas Trade—which aimed to identify markets and other opportunities for local businesses.

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330 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 05; Int. 08; Int. 13; Int. 14; Int. 15; Int. 24; Int. 25; Int. 32; Int. 37; Int. 38; Int. 39; Int. 46; Int. 48; Int. 53; Int. 68).

331 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 08; Int. 14; Int. 25; Int. 41; Int. 53).

332 The Two Seas Trade project, funded under the Interreg IVa Two Seas programme, supported SMEs in Kent, Flanders and the south-west of Holland to trade within these regions, and developed an online ‘toolkit’ to aid local businesses to trade internationally. See: [www.2seastrade.eu](http://www.2seastrade.eu).
Local authorities also sought to secure inward investment, often by attracting large multinational companies to their locality, Medway Council (2002), for example, sought to be:

A Prime Location for European Business.

Kent, Nord-Pas de Calais and Portsmouth also highlighted the importance of attracting big business to their areas. Local authorities felt that by supporting local business to internationalize and attracting international business to the local area, job creation could be supported. Promoting tourism was another aspect of local economic development that local authorities sought to achieve through LGTN, again because it had the potential to lead to local employment. This also led to participation in a number of transnational projects—such as the Liberation Route Europe project involving Hampshire and Basse-Normandie (Hampshire County Council 2011)—and multilateral networks with a tourism focus, such as NECSTouR.

Often, local government sought to capitalize on their local infrastructural assets. East Sussex, Portsmouth and Southampton, for example, highlighted the importance of their ports for promoting international links and wider economic growth. As emphasized by one English councillor:

the other reason I think is important is the commercial port, that anything we can do through our links to improve the viability of the commercial port are of great value to the city.

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333 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 04).
334 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 61; Int. 68).
335 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 05; Int. 14; Int. 37; Int. 48).
336 The Liberation Route Europe project aims to connect sites of importance to the liberation of Europe during World War Two across northern Europe. In doing this it seeks to increase tourism and visitor numbers to the sites involved (Hampshire County Council 2011). See: www.liberationroute.com.
337 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 33).
338 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 13; Int. 15; Int. 24; Int. 68).
339 Interview with English councillor, December 2012 (Int. 68).
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This led to local involvement in a number of port-related transnational projects (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2011; Southampton City Council, 2006). Participants from Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais stressed the need to capitalize on their transport links—as well as their geographic proximity to international borders—in order to promote economic development.

As with previous motivations discussed, local authorities were aware of the difficult economic context they operated in. In this context there was a need for councils to support local businesses and employment to ensure the wider economic well-being of the local area. As justified by Kent County Council (2009b):

The current economic downturn makes it vital to . . . focus international work on activities which support business and job creation.

Local authorities also linked to European-wide economic recovery plans, hoping to capitalize on these opportunities:

The last year has been dominated by the global economic recession which was reflected at the launch at the end of 2008 of the Commission’s European Economic Recovery Plan. The Plan set out a range of financial, legislative and other policy measures aimed at supporting businesses, accelerating procurement procedures and simplifying the implementation of EU Structural Fund programmes. (Kent County Council, 2008)

Against this backdrop, however, it was felt that local businesses and SMEs lacked the capacity to engage internationally—even where infrastructure and geography might be favourable—and were thus failing to make the most of opportunities for economic development. As highlighted in one Kent County Council (2010a) report:

There is a perception that the business community in Kent has, in general, not engaged in international activity despite the County’s ‘gateway’ location.

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340 Interviews with English local officers, May 2012 (Int. 13; Int. 24).
341 Interviews with English local officer, May 2012, and French regional officers, September 2012 (Int. 04; Int. 61; Int. 62).
A recent figure from a BSK\textsuperscript{342} report suggests, for example, that only 8% of Kent companies are involved in exporting.

Councils, then, felt they had to support local companies to internationalize and often saw themselves as ‘facilitators’ for local businesses\textsuperscript{343}. This is further supported by local government’s statutory duty to ensure the economic health of their local area. As recognized by Medway Council (2002):

Section 2 (1) (a) of the Local Government Act 2000 gives the Council the power to undertake actions which it considers are likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of its area.

French participants also noted they were empowered to promote their local economic development\textsuperscript{344}. Indeed, local authorities regularly used this legal mandate to justify participation in LGTN.

LGTN was able to assist local economic development in a number of ways. Primarily local authorities used transnational projects to support their economic development activities; these projects not only provided finance to support infrastructural development and wider job creation—demonstrating a link between obtaining funding and promoting economic development—but they also provided opportunities for local businesses and other organizations to engage beyond their locality, thus contributing to their ‘internationalization’. As already noted in Section \textsuperscript{5.2.3} multilateral networks also provided a ‘ready-made’ network of potential project partners willing to take part in economic development related transnational projects.

Through bilateral and multilateral networking—and the use of contacts made through this—councils were able to support local businesses by undertaking ‘trade missions’ to other localities\textsuperscript{345}.

\textsuperscript{342} Referring to Business Support Kent. This is a social enterprise supported by Kent County Council which provides support and funding to local businesses in the Kent area. See: http://www.bsk-cic.co.uk.

\textsuperscript{343} Interview with former English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 38).

\textsuperscript{344} Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 37).

\textsuperscript{345} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 03; Int. 04; Int. 31).
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

5.5.2 Enhancing a local authority’s profile

Increasing the profile of a local authority was another motivation behind LGTN, as was stated in a number of local authority documents (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2005, 2007c, 2008b; Hampshire County Council, 2002, 2005a; Isle of Wight Council, 2004a; Kent County Council, 2007c, 2008, 2010a; Medway Council, 2002, 2003; Southampton City Council, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007a, 2007b). This was also confirmed by participants. Local authorities felt there was a degree of prestige to be had when engaged in LGTN, particularly in high profile multilateral networks. In the words of one participant:

I would say a certain amount of . . . kudos for the council. It’s getting your name out there and being seen as an active and good council.

The CPMR was one such network which could offer councils this ‘kudos’. The same applied to participation in transnational projects, particularly if a council had an important role such as lead partner. As observed by one participant:

I would say there are a lot of . . . organizations that want to be a lead partner because it gives them some kind of weight . . . It also gives the organization prestige where they can go out and they can see they’re getting involved in international European conferences, part of the European network, etc.

Central to this profile raising was a desire to be visible and to promote the local authority on a European level. As noted by one French regional officer:

We can also talk and present what we have been doing in Brittany to other regions, it’s also a way to make the promotion of our territory, of our stakeholders, of our policies maybe. I think this can be a benefit.

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346 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 05; Int. 06; Int. 12; Int. 17; Int. 24; Int. 30; Int. 33; Int. 36; Int. 37; Int. 38; Int. 43; Int. 44; Int. 45; Int. 47; Int. 54; Int. 58; Int. 60; Int. 67).
347 Interview with English local officer, September 2012 (Int. 45).
348 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 17).
349 Interview with Interreg staff, September 2012 (Int. 47).
350 Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).
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This promotion of localities at a European level regularly took place at showcasing events in Brussels, where representatives from other European localities, multilateral networks and EU institutions were invited. One example of this was an event jointly hosted by the French régions in Brussels.\footnote{Participant observation, French regions networking event, July 2012 (Obs. 1).}

Local authorities felt that increasing their profile had a number of knock-on benefits, often linking to other motivations behind LGTN. It was believed, for example, that it would lead to greater economic development. As justified by Brighton and Hove City Council (2005):

Such partnership working could help promote the profile of Brighton and Hove at the international level, helping to maximise the economic benefits by encouraging tourism and inward investment.

Raising a council’s profile was also seen to increase lobbying success as it led to being invited to take part in the EU policy process.\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 05; Int. 06; Int. 44).} Hampshire, for example, was invited to contribute to a number of expert groups and attributed this to their profile raised through membership to multilateral networks such as the AER and CPMR (Hampshire County Council, 2005a). A European profile additionally helped obtaining funding as it often led to being invited to participate in transnational projects and a number of associated activities.\footnote{Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 43).}

LGTN was also seen to aid the profile of local politicians. As highlighted by two members of multilateral network staff:

engaging in international work in a network like this . . . means that you can build the international profile both of your city and of course yourself personally if you are the mayor of that city participating.\footnote{Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06).}

from a politician point of view they want to play in the major league and some of them want to give themselves an international background in their CV\footnote{Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).}
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5.5.3 Horizon scanning

As discussed in Section 5.3.3, LGTN played a role in so-called ‘horizon scanning’, a form of intelligence gathering to help local authorities target their lobbying activities. However, horizon scanning went beyond this and was also important to ensure local authorities were adequately prepared to implement EU policy and highlight potential funding opportunities.

In order for councils to successfully adapt and to implement the large amount of EU policy, they felt it was necessary to maintain a watch on potential legislative developments in Europe. As highlighted by one participant:

> it’s not just about funding and the policy. There’s also the legislation that you need to be aware of, so at an early stage in the process being aware of new waste legislation or procurement, the impacts it could have.

This early awareness gave local authorities time to adapt to EU policy and make sure processes were in place before any legislative deadlines. Indeed for Kent County Council (2007c) early awareness meant that:

> Officers and Members can better understand emerging trends and new issues likely to affect the County, and ensure Kent can adapt and be proactive in its response.

The importance of these horizon scanning activities in preparing local government for EU policy is illustrated by the number of documents in which it is highlighted as a motive (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2007c, 2007b; East Sussex County Council, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Hampshire County Council, 2002, 2007; Isle of Wight Council, 2002d, 2004a, 2005; Kent County Council, 2007c; Southampton City Council, 2005; West Sussex County Council, 2001, 2002b, 2003a).

Local authorities also saw horizon scanning as important for identifying and taking advantage of forthcoming funding opportunities. This was seen as particularly

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356 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 12).
5. Local motivations for transnational networking

important as many funding schemes were competitive in nature and tight deadlines; having early information thus gave councils more time to prepare bids and find suitable partners and this increased their chances of success. As noted by Medway Council (2003):

Advance notice of new EU funding programmes giving more time to Medway Council to be able to consider and prepare bids if appropriate . . . This service provides Medway Council with a head start over potential competitors for funds by providing information in advance of formal publications in the Official Journal documentation of the European Union. This gives Medway Council more time to prepare good quality bids and gather appropriate partners.

5.5.4 Professional development

Some local authorities sought to enhance the professional development of their officers and councillors. Councils saw LGTN as a cheap, but effective, way to achieve this. Indeed, one of the the benefits sought by Southampton’s engagement in LGTN was:

low cost staff development and training. (Southampton City Council 2007b)

Similarly, Brighton and Hove City Council (2007c) believed LGTN would:

provide staff, elected members and stakeholders with low cost development and training.357

Participants too felt engagement provided professional development opportunities.358

In particular, participation in transnational projects was seen as a way to increase staff skills. Where such skills already existed, participation could add an international dimension to them. As noted by one participant:

357 Other documents referring to professional development as a motivation for LGTN include Brighton & Hove City Council (2006, 2008b); Hampshire County Council (2002, 2005a); Kent County Council (2009b, 2007c); Southampton City Council (2006) and West Sussex County Council (2003a).

358 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 09; Int. 26; Int. 38; Int. 40; Int. 43; Int. 47; Int. 54; Int. 56; Int. 59; Int. 69).
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I just saw a member of staff who’s been put onto a European project, so it’s giving her loads more skills, and different skills. But in the field where she’s already an expert, she does that, but this is adding an extra dimension for her.\footnote{359}

One of the main skills developed by participating in transnational projects was project management. Again, where project management skills might already be in place, participating in transnational projects offered opportunities to enhance the international dimension of this.\footnote{360}

Staff exchanges with local authorities abroad—often instigated as part of policy transfer activities—provided another opportunity for professional development. As highlighted by one participant:

we can exchange staff. It means we send one of our staff into another organization, they’re going to open their minds to other practices, they’re going to learn other practices and they’re going to see as well . . . that it can be done in a different way.\footnote{361}

While there is a clear link with the policy transfer motivation here (see Section 5.4)—staff exchanges provide a way for policy knowledge to be identified and brought back to the organization—such exchanges also motivate local government staff often confronted with having to work with difficult and challenging policies. As noted by one participant:

it’s a boost to staff morale because it’s a bridge to go and discuss problems you are finding it difficult to tackle with people elsewhere.\footnote{362}

This was further elaborated on by a member of multilateral network staff:

I think, to me, the personal development aspect . . . both for politicians and officers is very good. You sit there doing your day job as a planner or whatever it happens to be, tied up in the regulations and the protocols, and it’s

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{359}{Interview with English local officer, July 2013 (Int. 43).}
\item \footnote{360}{Interviews with English local officer, August 2012, and Interreg staff, September 2012 (Int. 54; Int. 56).}
\item \footnote{361}{Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 40).}
\item \footnote{362}{Interview with former English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 38).}
\end{itemize}}
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sometimes very enlightening to lift your head up from your desk and actually talk to someone else who is facing the same problems, same situations and just say ‘well how are you handling this, what are you doing about the framework directive, we really don’t know what to do about it, have you decided about how you’re going to manage it over the next three or four years?’ And that, again you may not agree, you may not pick up the ideas, but it helps you often to get around problems which are very difficult, very complex to deal with. So I think personal development, and I’ve seen perhaps people who are perhaps not very motivated, have been in the same job for a long time suddenly become very very engaged in the idea of working with others on a common problem.

This increased motivation of staff gained through international staff exchanges meant that LGTN had a positive impact on staff retention. As highlighted by Kent County Council (2007c):

An example of the types of benefit we can gain can be seen in the operation of international staff exchanges. These allow us not only to share valuable best practice, but also aid staff retention by increasing motivation and professional development.

The same report goes on to say:

Sharing lessons from around the globe develops our collective expertise. Our international profile can enhance Kent’s reputation as an exciting choice for the best staff in their field. (Kent County Council, 2007c)

5.5.5 Organizational development

Building on professional development, participants also felt LGTN could bring wider organizational benefits. One of the main benefits to be gained was greater inter-departmental co-operation and the removal of internal ‘silos’; this was often an outcome of working on transnational projects as they required input from several internal council departments. As noted by two participants, both with former local officer experience:

We talk about increased co-operation between internal services, so all the services within an organization need to work together to deliver the project.

363 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26).
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because of the rules, the different procedures, bit also the different tasks within the organization.

I think the other advantage . . . is with every organization such as a county council where you’ve got, just like the Commission has, little boxes with different departments, the European stuff which I’ve done has often brought those departments together because it has to be integrated . . . It actually gets department A talking to department B . . . so it gets them to talk to other people within their own organization quite often.

Indeed local officers interviewed saw one of their main roles as communicating European issues to departments across the whole organization and helping their colleagues to overcome departmental barriers.

5.6 General findings

The empirical data presented above has identified three main benefits local authorities sought from their participation in LGTN: obtaining funding, lobbying and influence and policy transfer. A number of other motivations were also identified. In seeking these benefits, local authorities regularly referred to a range of contextual factors they were trying to address, such as the adverse economic climate, restricted local budgets and a competitive policy arena. In this way LGTN presents an ‘opportunity structure’ which local authorities have used to manage the impact of this context and improve their overall position. While a range of benefits were sought from LGTN, local authorities also recognized that there were limits to what it could provide. As will be shown in Section 5.7, these findings have important implications for how the process of local level Europeanization is interpreted. Namely, that Europeanization through LGTN simultaneously encompasses top–down, bottom–up and horizontal directional dynamics (RQ2a), and that it is rationally driven (RQ2b).

364 Interview with Interreg staff, September 2012 (Int. 47).
365 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26).
366 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 12; Int. 15; Int. 19; Int. 40). As will be shown in Section 5.3.1, the presence of intra-council ‘silos’ and a lack of co-ordination across departments can also negatively affect local authorities’ participation in LGTN.
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In addition to this, a number of more general conclusions can be drawn. Namely: local authorities sought several simultaneous benefits, the motivations for engaging in LGTN varied between councils, and motivations changed over time. These are now briefly discussed.

Firstly, the presence of several motivations shows that councils sought a number of simultaneous benefits from their engagement in LGTN as opposed to a single overriding one. The diversity of motivations present in any one council is illustrated when examining the stated aims of European activity in strategic documents. Brighton and Hove’s aims, for example, are to:

- develop, and exchange, good practice with international partners and networks with the aim of enhancing policy development and improving service delivery.
- attract European and international funding to deliver local priorities.
- influence EU policy and legislation that may impact on the city.
- raise the profile of Brighton & Hove internationally.
- increase global awareness, particularly amongst our young people.
- share information on international activities and opportunities with officers, elected members, local stakeholders and regional partners.
- provide staff, elected members and stakeholders with low cost development and training. ([Brighton & Hove City Council] 2007c)

Similarly, [Hampshire County Council] (2005a) sought all of the following benefits:

- profile.
- influence.
- sharing experience.
- learning.
- leadership.
- partnership working.

This supports Betsill and Bulkeley’s (2004, p. 490) conclusion that LGTN needs to offer multiple benefits to make participation worthwhile for local government.\(^{367}\) This

\(^{367}\) Betsill and Bulkeley (2004, p. 484) argue that while the primary benefit of the CCP network was to exchange information, this alone was not enough to warrant engagement, and that the additional benefits of financial resources and political ‘kudos’ helped ensure participation by network members.
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diversity of motivations also reinforces criticisms made by some scholars (for example John, 2000, p. 881; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 310) that existing literature is too heavily focused on the link between LGTN—and indeed other forms of European engagement by local authorities—and EU regional policy; such a narrow focus overlooks other motivations for participation.

Secondly, not all of the councils studied participated in LGTN for the same reasons. While the three main motivations—obtaining funding, lobbying and influence and policy transfer—were the stated aims of almost all the local authorities investigated, variation occurred among the other aims. This variation in motivations was also highlighted by a number of multilateral network staff, Interreg staff and LGA representatives; participants who were often in a position to observe the motivations of several councils at once. This conclusion is supported elsewhere in the literature (for example Happaerts, 2008; Happaerts et al, 2010, 2011; Payre, 2010; van der Heiden, 2010). As will be argued in Section 5.7.2, this variation in motivations suggests a strategic approach to LGTN, where local authorities seek benefits according to their individual pre-determined strategies. This variation further reinforces the differentiation of engagement in LGTN, as identified in Chapter 4.

Finally, motivations for participating in LGTN often changed over time. Sometimes this change occurred as a result of exposure to LGTN itself; the longer a local authority was involved in a network the more chance it had to be exposed to benefits beyond its original motivations to join. As one member of multilateral network staff observed:

\[
\text{their motivation can change over time, maybe when we have a new member that might just be interested in the projects, but then once they start to see the useful knowledge sharing within the network they become more active in that area.}
\]

More often, however, this occurred because of a shift in the strategic priorities of a

\[368\] Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 03; Int. 06; Int. 17; Int. 23; Int. 54; Int. 55).
\[369\] Interviews with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23; Int. 33).
\[370\] Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23).
council. Again, as argued below, this suggests a strategic and rationalist approach to LGTN.

5.7 LGTN and local level Europeanization

While the findings presented in this chapter make an empirical contribution to knowledge by revealing the local authorities’ motivations for engaging in LGTN, they also inform the debate on local level Europeanization. Two supplementary questions serve to deepen the analysis here:

• RQ2a: What do local authorities’ motivations for engaging in LGTN reveal about the directionality of local level Europeanization?

• RQ2b: What is the underlying logic driving participation in LGTN?

These are now addressed in turn.

5.7.1 The directionality of local level Europeanization

The first supplementary question (RQ2a) seeks to identify the directionality of local level Europeanization. As noted in Section 2.1.2, Europeanization is an inherently top–down conceptualization of the relationship between the EU and its member states. However, such a view is too simplistic, and scholars point to the ‘uploading’ function undertaken by member states, leading to bottom–up and circular flows of policies and practices (Börzel 2005 p. 62). In addition, horizontal Europeanization dynamics have been observed (Graziano & Vink 2013 p. 47; Bulmer & Lequesne 2013 p. 20). These three directional dynamics—top-down, bottom-up and horizontal—can also extend to local level Europeanization (Kern 2010, Van Bever et al. 2011a). The three main motivations for participation in LGTN identified in this chapter shed light on the directionality of local level Europeanization, and highlights the need to move beyond a simplistic top–down conceptualization of this process. Specifically the
motivations identified show that LGTN displays top–down, bottom–up and horizontal Europeanization directional dynamics simultaneously.

LGTN is traditionally perceived as a case of horizontal Europeanization (Kern, 2010; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Van Bever et al., 2011a). Networks themselves are horizontal by nature; they are formed of links between local authorities, and while the EU may act as a reference point for co-operation is is not directly involved. The policy transfer motivation illustrates this. Local authorities use LGTN to share policy knowledge and best practices with each other directly; there is no direct vertical flow of information or policy norms to or from the EU. The role of LGTN in lobbying and influencing the EU confirms the case of bottom–up Europeanization. LGTN is used by local authorities as a platform to access the European policy making process and to feed their preferences into it. It is similarly used by the EU to access local policy expertise and legitimize legislative proposals. In line with Kern’s (2010) distinction, LGTN can therefore characterized as a case of ‘co-operative’ Europeanization. LGTN as top–down Europeanization is illustrated with the case of obtaining funding. Here transnational networks are often established as a requirement of EU rules and network membership reflects funding eligibility criteria; Europeanization is ‘hierarchical’ (Kern, 2010).

Consequently, LGTN encompasses both vertical and horizontal relationships simultaneously (Kern, 2014, p. 115). The presence of all three directional dynamics highlights the complexity of the relationship local government has with the EU.

5.7.2 The logic of local level Europeanization

The second supplementary question (RQ2a) seeks to understand the underlying logic driving the process of local level Europeanization and engagement in LGTN. As discussed in Section 2.1.2 a new institutionalist approach to Europeanization can illuminate this logic, and explain why local government becomes ‘Europeanized’.
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Following this approach Europeanization can be characterized as ‘rational’ or ‘sociological’ (Börzel & Risse, 2003). Save for one exception (Dąbrowski, 2012, 2013), existing literature on LGTN—and local level Europeanization more broadly—has yet to apply this analytical tool. The following analysis therefore offers a contribution to existing literature which deepens the understanding of the motivations behind LGTN, and the process of local level Europeanization.

To briefly recap, under rational Europeanization actors follow the ‘logic of consequentialism’. They are goal-oriented, seeking to improve their position. Europeanization is thus a reaction to potential opportunities or constraints, and engagement in it is the result of a cost–benefit analysis, where the cost of becoming Europeanized is more than outweighed by the benefits it brings (Börzel & Risse, 2003, pp. 63–65; Hamedinger & Wolffhardt, 2010, pp. 15–16). Under sociological Europeanization, actors follow the ‘logic of appropriateness’. Their behaviour is determined by EU rules, norms and preferences which become internalized through learning and socialization processes (Börzel & Risse, 2003 pp. 65–67; Hamedinger & Wolffhardt, 2010, p. 16).

The empirical data gathered and presented in this chapter confirm participation in LGTN to be rationally driven. This is for six reasons which are now discussed in turn: participation is goal orientated, local authorities use LGTN to improve their own position and secure competitive advantage, participation is based on an assessment of the context in which local authorities operate, participation is based on a cost–benefit analysis, there is an awareness of the limits to LGTN, and sociological drivers are absent.

A goal orientated approach

The data presented above show that councils were goal-oriented, participating in LGTN to achieve their own strategic aims. This link between a local authority’s aims and the motivations behind their networking activities is confirmed when analysing
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council-produced documents, many of which highlight how specific benefits of LGTN assist in achieving specific strategic objectives (Brighton & Hove City Council 2007c, 2008; East Sussex County Council 2000; Hampshire County Council 2005a, 2008; Kent County Council 2007c, 2009b, 2010b; Medway Council 1999; Southampton City Council 2004, 2005, 2007a, 2007b; West Sussex County Council 2002b, 2003a, 2006a). Brighton and Hove’s European and international strategy, for example:

> aims to contribute to the delivery of the council’s strategic priorities: the emphasis being on complementing existing or planned council activity. (Brighton & Hove City Council 2006)

Participants also stated their authority’s motivations for participating in LGTN were founded in achieving their wider strategic plan.

> Obviously we’re always working towards our main council strategies and the various different strategies for different departments and business plans and so on. (Int. 04; Int. 08; Int. 16; Int. 24; Int. 29; Int. 36; Int. 43; Int. 51; Int. 53; Int. 56; Int. 57; Int. 58; Int. 67).

Further evidence of this strategic approach can be found in committee documentation seeking approval for participation in transnational networks. Figure 5.5, for example, shows an extract from a Southampton City Council (2007b) report; the two right-hand columns directly link transnational projects to specific elements of Southampton’s community strategy and its corporate plan. In seeking approval to participate in the ‘Supporting Young and Unemployed People in Port Cities’ transnational project, a Brighton & Hove City Council (2011) report notes co-operation:

> contributes to the City and Employment Skills Plan’s (CESP) 2011–2014 vision, in particular to ‘priority three’ of the plan which seeks to ensure that local residents are equipped to compete for jobs in the city’s labour market.

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371 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 08; Int. 16; Int. 24; Int. 29; Int. 36; Int. 43; Int. 51; Int. 53; Int. 56; Int. 57; Int. 58; Int. 67).

372 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 24).

373 The Supporting Young and Unemployed People in Port Cities transnational project is part funded by the EU’s Interreg IVa programme. Its partners includes local authorities and colleges from Antwerp, Brighton and Hove, Plymouth, Rotterdam and Southampton (Brighton & Hove City Council 2011).
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It is important to recognize that councils did not change their behaviour, but rather maintained their pre-existing goals, seeing LGTN as an opportunity to achieve them. This mirrors Pfleger’s (2014) findings, which showed French cities strategically engaged in the CIVITAS programme as a means to achieve existing projects which would have been undertaken regardless:

> At the local scale, the French cities have adopted European programmes so that CIVITAS financing will strengthen policies already underway locally, rather than just help to disseminate European Union precepts on the subject”.

(Pfleger 2014, p. 340)

The variation between councils—both in terms of the extent and type of LGTN participated in (observed in Chapter 4) and the motivations behind networking (observed in Section 5.6)—further emphasizes the goal-oriented approach; strategic objectives vary from council to council, so their reasons for participation in LGTN do too. This affects which networks local authorities choose to engage with, as they seek to pursue their own thematic policy interests (van der Heiden 2010, p. 132). As

\[374\] This conclusion is supported by van der Heiden (2010, p. 132), whose analysis of seven cities
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already noted, the Isle of Wight’s participation in the CPMR and Islands Commission was motivated by their interest in coastal erosion issues. Basse-Normandie’s large agricultural sector made participation in the Association of European Regions for Products of Origin (AREPO) and Assembly of the European Regions Producing Fruit, Vegetables and Plants (AREFLH) a priority. The mix of urban and rural areas across south-east England meant involvement in the Peri-Urban Regions Platform Europe (PURPLE) network was a priority for a number of local authorities in the area (SEERA 2004, 2005a).

Evidence of this policy centric approach can also be found with participation in the more general / multi purpose networks which often organized themselves into a number of policy specific working groups, forums and sub-networks. Brighton and Hove, which had corporate priorities in promoting the digital economy and cultural policy, pursued its interests through Eurocities’ knowledge society and culture forums. Hampshire was able to pursue their interests in education and environmental policy through the relevant AER sub-groups.

In cases where there are no pre-existing networks focused on a local authority’s area of strategic interest, councils often established new ones. Bretagne, for example, had a long standing interest in maritime policy and this led to their leading role in establishing—and continued membership of—the CPMR (Wise 2000a, 2000b). As explained by a French regional officer:

there is a very strong link between Brittany and this network, because it’s a maritime network and we are a maritime region.

West Sussex likewise co-established the Airport Regions Conference (ARC) due to the

\[^{375}\] shows that the networks participated in reflect each cities’ specific economic interests.

\[^{376}\] Interviews with English local officer, May 2012, and former English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08; Int. 29).

\[^{377}\] Interview with French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 44).

\[^{378}\] Interview with English local officer, September 2012 (Int. 45).

\[^{379}\] Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).
strategic importance of Gatwick Airport and aviation policy to the county. Van der Heiden (2010, p. 150) notes that:

Establishing new international interurban networks is a costly strategy. The founding city-regions must commit considerable resources to financing the project, provide the secretary for the initial phase of the network, and invest heavily in convincing other city-regions to join it. Because of the fierce competition for members among interurban networks in almost any policy field, this is a challenging task.

Given the effort and resources involved, local authorities are only likely to make this investment and establish new transnational networks if they directly contribute to their overriding strategic objectives.

The goal-orientated approach by local government is further illustrated by cases where motivations for participation changed as a result of a shift in local priorities, usually occurring because there was a change in political leadership. The Isle of Wight provides an example here. Before 2005 the council was heavily involved in lobbying activities—mainly centred around the island’s ‘Objective’ status—and policy transfer, sharing knowledge with other coastal regions on landslide and coastal erosion issues as these were key strategic priorities. From 2005 and the election of a new administration, the council’s strategy shifted away from this and more emphasis was placed on obtaining funding through transnational projects. This ultimately led to the council’s withdrawal from the CPMR and Islands Commission, as the lobbying and policy transfer advantages these networks brought were no longer seen as important.

LGTN as a means to improve positions and competitive advantage

The data show that by engaging in LGTN, local authorities sought to improve their

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380 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).
381 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 08; Int. 09; Int. 15; Int. 18; Int. 24; Int. 34; Int. 38).
382 Interviews with English local officers, May 2012 and August 2012 (Int. 08; Int. 29; Int. 51).
383 This further indicates an important role for local political leaders, as will be discussed in Section 6.3.2.

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own position. Indeed, the motivations outlined above all reflect councils’ desires to secure benefits for their own organization as opposed to contributing to wider European policy goals. This, however, draws attention to an interesting conundrum. The rationalist argument—that local authorities are concerned with improving their own position—seems to conflict with the inherently co-operative nature of LGTN (van der Heiden, 2010, p. 142). While in some cases participants referred to altruistic motives—for example in sharing best practice with other local authorities—this was due to the overriding motivation of improving a councils’ profile by promoting themselves as a policy innovator, or in the words of one participant: “best in class”.

As was shown in Section 5.5.2, it was felt such an improved profile brought with it greater success in influencing EU policy, obtaining funding and opportunities for economic development. This confirms Lefèvre and d’Albergo’s (2007, p. 312) speculation that “even some apparently socially orientated international activities might actually be interpreted as motivated by economic aims” (see also van der Heiden, 2010, p. 150).

While LGTN is an inherently co-operative venture, participants also noted that they were motivated by trying to secure competitive advantage vis-à-vis other local authorities, particularly for limited resources or opportunities such as funding and economic investment. Indeed, the Audit Commission (1991, p. 32) notes that lobbying for EU funds “is co-operative in the early stages, … But in the later stages it is predominately a competitive exercise in maximising an authority’s share of allocated amounts”. Indeed, local authorities viewed other network members as competitors rather than partners. For example, Brighton and Hove (2008b) justify participation in Eurocities by acknowledging the network:

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384 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 26; Int. 29; Int. 38; Int. 41; Int. 45).
385 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 14).
386 This is despite the term ‘partners’ regularly occurring during interviews when describing other network members. This finding is further supported by van der Heiden’s (2010, p. 143) empirical analysis.
contains Belfast, Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Cardiff, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield, Southampton and Sunderland. Whilst these are all potential partners they are all potential rivals economically within the UK so parity of information and influence and visibility on a European and international stage is crucial.

As noted in Section 5.2.1 local authorities were aware of the competitive nature of EU funding programmes. Medway Council (2003), for example, speaks of the need to have:

a head start over potential competitors for funds by providing information in advance.

The requirement to work with other authorities through LGTN to ensure early warning of bids and to have potential partners lined up—and thus to increase the chances of a successful bid—was similarly acknowledged. The need for competitive advantage in lobbying was also recognized, with many participants highlighting the potential to be ‘drowned out’ by other, better resourced, actors in Brussels, including other local authorities.387 As highlighted by one councillor:

We’re trying to make sure that the concerns of Hampshire are not forgotten. I mean I’m not remotely surprised to discover that . . . councillors from Manchester might be popping up somewhere, they’re going to push the interests of Manchester. Or Liverpool, you’ve got Liverpool and Southampton at war with each other over cruise terminals, well don’t be too surprised at a meeting where Liverpool representatives are, they’re going to push the interests of Liverpool . . . we’ve got to be there and fight our own corner.388

LGTN, at the very least, offers a way for local government to ‘level the playing field’ in this competitive environment. Pflieger’s (2014, p. 333) claim that transnational networks “do not soften competition between cities but accentuate it by offering local authorities new means to differentiate themselves” is therefore borne out.

387 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 11; Int. 12; Int. 18; Int. 19; Int. 34; Int. 36; Int. 44).
388 Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 01).
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Assessing the context

It was observed above that local authorities’ participation in LGTN was in reaction to a number of contextual factors which acted as potential constraints or opportunities. For example, local government recognized the restrictive economic climate they were operating in as a constraint to delivering services and local projects, but saw EU funded transnational projects as a way to continue their activities despite reductions in revenue and central government grants. They also recognized the value of making efficiencies through policy transfer. In this way LGTN was an opportunity structure which provided local authorities with a way to address the impact of this context. As highlighted in a Kent County Council (2011) report:

The last year has also, of course, continued to be dominated by heavy pressure on public funding and budgetary reductions within the County Council. Such domestic pressures might have made it more difficult for KCC to maintain an outward-looking focus and international profile. However, the contribution of EU funding to business priorities and the identification of European best-practice and collaborative working to improve performance makes this activity even more important in the current climate.

Similarly, local authorities recognized the large impact EU legislation had on them and the services they deliver, but also realized that the EU was open to local input when developing policy, provided credibility and representativeness requirements could be met.

Cost–benefit analyses and depoliticization

Local authorities engaged in LGTN based on a cost–benefit analysis. This was particularly evident with the funding motivation, where the potential gain of finance through EU grants was seen as far greater than the costs associated with networking. As one English councillor noted:

It’s probably a total cost of £100,000 of our membership of groups and sending people to various delegations . . . but we want to be sure that we’re receiving in
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return, from one way or another, more than that and normally it’s operating at many many times. It’s not unusual for us to be collecting something like £2million a year or so, something like that, in grants from various European projects.\footnote{Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 01).}

Indeed, another councillor remarked that if they stopped investing in LGTN their authority would in fact be losing over £10million a year in the benefits it brought\footnote{Interview with English councillor, May 2012 (Int. 05).}. Committee documentation also rationalized participation in LGTN in cost–benefit terms, as illustrated in the two right-hand columns of Figure\footnote{Interviews with English local officers May 2012 and July 2012 (Int. 08; Int. 11; Int. 13; Int. 21).} 5.6.

![Figure 5.6: Example of funding results represented in cost–benefit terms (Kent County Council, 2007a)](image)

In this way participation in LGTN became depoliticized; some local officers perceived the level of funding to be so great that they felt it overrode councillors’ political views on LGTN, or the EU more generally\footnote{Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08).}. English Conservative councillors, for example, were typically viewed as Eurosceptic and thus unfavourable towards building European links. Nevertheless, they still encouraged participation if funding could be gained, especially in light of pressure on council resources. For example:

The natural tendency for your true-blue Conservative is to be Eurosceptic, but that’s weighed against that they as councillors are trying to stretch their budget and stretch their resources\footnote{Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08).}.
I would generally say overall a Conservative administration . . . would take the view that Europe was something that existed. They didn’t particularly want to deal with it, but if there was money to be had they would have it.\footnote{Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 15).}

Councillors themselves referred to the ‘pragmatic approach’ they took to LGTN, and that party politics was absent from the debate.\footnote{Interviews with English councillors, April 2012, May 2012 and November 2012 (Int. 01; Int. 05; Int. 67). A similar observation has been made by van der Heiden’s (2010, p. 159) study, which observed that “parties from the left and right sides of the political spectrum acknowledge the need to engage in international activities”. This pragmaticism explains why local authorities were able to co-operate despite the sometimes radically different political ideologies held by their respective leaders (Barber, 1997, p. 20; Church & Reid, 1996, p. 1305). Indeed one local officer observed that co-operation was more likely to be hindered by differences in bureaucratic and working cultures, and that party political differences—internal or external to a council—were rarely a barrier.\footnote{Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 21). These barriers are discussed in more detail in Section 6.3.3.}

This cost–benefit calculation also applied to motivations beyond obtaining funding. In lobbying, for example, local authorities recognized the burden of EU legislation they had to implement and sought to lower the costs associated with future proposals. LGTN was thus seen as a low cost method, with the necessary economies of scale for achieving this. This fits with Börzel’s (2002, p. 196) explanation of Europeanization, where uploading local policy preferences—in this case through LGTN—can be regarded as “an effective strategy to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of European policies”. Indeed, there was a feeling among participants that if local government failed to influence the EU, policy would ultimately be detrimental for them, particularly if they disagreed with the policy in the first place.\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 11; Int. 40).}
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If you look at legislation, often it’s gold-plated, so bells and whistles get added onto things. If you don’t want those bells and whistles on there, if you don’t even want the piece of legislation in the first place, then you have to make your voice heard and explain why that is.\[397\]

Furthermore, in undertaking policy transfer councils recognized the potential savings and efficiencies that could be found by applying lessons from abroad.\[398\] In the words of one councillor:

you could suddenly wake up to all sorts of potential ideas and cost savings, which is very important these days.\[399\]

Applying best practice in waste and recycling was one example area where engaging in low cost LGTN was seen as advantageous. A member of multilateral network staff noted that:

You’ve got the government pressurizing you to save money to reduce your landfill otherwise you get fined, what can you do within your budget constraints that would enable you to meet targets? Actually looking at better practice in Europe is a better way of doing it.\[400\]

Indeed, locally applying lessons in waste policy learned through LGTN led to savings, with one participant claiming that as a result:

we’re saving a hell of a lot of money on landfill tax.\[401\]

Again, this emphasizes that local authorities are making a cost–benefit analysis when deciding to engage in LGTN; the cost of participation is outweighed by the efficiencies gained by applying techniques learnt through policy transfer.

Awareness of limitations to LGTN

As illustrated throughout the above empirical analysis, in undertaking their

\[397\] Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).
\[398\] Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 02; Int. 26; Int. 45; Int. 59).
\[399\] Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 02).
\[400\] Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26).
\[401\] Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 01).
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cost–benefit analysis, councils were well aware of the limitations to LGTN. For each of the potential benefits sought participants provided words of caution. In seeking to obtain funding, for example, local authorities were aware of the significant upfront investment required to put together a bid and the onerous nature of applying for and managing EU grants (East Sussex County Council, 2000; Kent County Council, 2007b; 2010a). Councils would only pursue it if the likely benefits—financial or otherwise—would make the effort of administration and meeting eligibility criteria worth undertaking. While councils were motivated to participate in LGTN because of the lobbying and policy transfer benefits, they were equally aware of how such benefits were hard to quantify and that success in these areas was not guaranteed. Again this supports the rationalist account; local authorities were willing to engage in LGTN, but also recognized the limits and would only participate if the benefits made the effort and risk worthwhile.

Absence of sociological drivers

The empirical data presented provides limited evidence of sociological drivers motivating participation in LGTN. Like Dąbrowski’s (2012, 2013) research, there was some evidence to suggest that actors’ behaviour gradually changed as they spent time participating in networks; local authorities seeking to obtain funding might discover other benefits such as policy transfer, for example. Nevertheless, evidence from local actors suggests any internalization of norms was limited, and once engaged in LGTN, future participation was not guaranteed. This is confirmed by the fact that when LGTN no longer met—or even threatened—local authorities’ interests, they withdrew

402 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 13; Int. 18; Int. 32; Int. 43; Int. 45; Int. 48; Int. 60).
403 This mirrors Dąbrowski’s (2012, p. 738) finding, where Polish authorities were also aware of the limitations to pursuing EU funding.
404 Multiple interviews with councillors, officers and Interreg staff (Int. 01; Int. 02; Int. 04; Int. 08; Int. 14; Int. 24; Int. 63).
405 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02 Int. 08; Int. 10; Int. 34; Int. 45; Int. 48; Int. 59; Int. 61).
406 Interviews with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23; Int. 33).
or altered their activity accordingly.

A number of examples illustrate this. West Sussex, for example, left the AER as it felt the network was not adequately representing its voice in Europe (West Sussex County Council, 2000). Hampshire left the CPMR in 2012 as it found out a number of other authorities in the network had not paid their membership fees but were still benefiting from membership. In this case Hampshire felt it was being disadvantaged by participating in the CPMR, so left. Hampshire and Basse-Normandie began working on different policy areas and consequently had divergent priorities. This meant their bilateral link stagnated, as opportunities for policy transfer became limited.

Additionally, motivations which went beyond local authority self-interest were rarely present in the data. For example, only two participants referred to LGTN as a contribution to the wider European integration process. The role of LGTN as a way to secure peace in Europe was only mentioned by one participant. Similarly, only one participant explicitly referred to the role of LGTN in making their local authority become more ‘European’. While many local authorities used LGTN to enhance their profile and to promote themselves as ‘European’ or ‘international’ actors, the data presented in Section 5.5.2 showed this was a strategy to secure other benefits, such as economic investment, influence or funding. Consequently there is limited evidence to suggest local authorities followed the logic of appropriateness—or “me-tooism” (Duchacek, 1984, p. 18)—when participating in LGTN.

The rationalist argument presented here finds support elsewhere in the literature. Ercole et al. (1997, p. 220), for example, argue that networking:

is taking place not only because it is either encouraged by the European Union

\[\text{\footnotesize \ref{fn:407} Interview with English councillor, July 2012 (Int. 25).} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize \ref{fn:408} Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 37).} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize \ref{fn:409} Interview with English councillor, April 2012, and multilateral network staff, December 2012 (Int. 02; Int. 70).} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize \ref{fn:410} Interview with LGA representative, April 2012 (Int. 03).} \]
\[\text{\footnotesize \ref{fn:411} Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).} \]
or indeed because it is a requirement for funding, but also because many local governments believe such co-operation to be mutually beneficial.

Similarly Lefèvre and d’Albergo (2007, p. 317) argue that “the political internationalisation of intercity relationships occurs as a result of deliberate activities carried out by actors operating within a city’s political and governance system”; rather than being “mere leaves in the wind of internationalisation”. Local authorities assess their context and respond to it according to their strategy (Lefèvre & d’Albergo, 2007, p. 317).

5.8 Summary

The previous chapter established that LGTN remains a prevalent phenomenon. This, however, reinforced the empirical puzzle this thesis set out to explore: why do local authorities engage and invest in LGTN when they lack the formal competence to do so, and face limits to their capacity to deliver services in the context of austerity and public finance pressures? This puzzle warranted a focus on the local level motivations for engagement in LGTN in order to tackle the second research question of this thesis:

- RQ2: What benefits do local authorities seek from their involvement in LGTN?

By focusing on the motivations of local actors, this chapter has been able to provide an empirical contribution to the existing literature, which tends to focus on transnational networks themselves, rather than the perceptions of those within them (for example Bouteligier, 2013; Heinelt & Niederhainzer, 2008; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Ward & Williams, 1997). This focus on the perceptions of the actors within transnational networks and their agency therefore allows this chapter to make a contribution to knowledge.

Three main motivations were identified which were common to almost all local authorities studied: obtaining funding, lobbying and influence, and policy transfer.
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Regarding obtaining funding, local authorities saw LGTN as an opportunity to find out about funding opportunities available to them and access support to bid for them. Transnational networks were also able to offer ‘ready-made’ transnational partnerships—which were usually a requirement for EU funding programmes—thus reducing the burden of having to find suitable partners and limiting risks associated with working with unknown partners. Regarding lobbying and influence, local authorities acknowledged the burden of EU legislation they were required to implement. While they recognized the EU was receptive to local government’s input when developing policy, they were also aware of the competitive lobbying environment present at the European level. LGTN here provided a means to access the EU policy process, by pooling resources and aggregating local government interests, and presenting local authorities as ‘credible’ stakeholders in the eyes of EU policy makers. Regarding policy transfer, local authorities sought to identify and apply best practice or new policy lessons. LGTN provided a platform for this exchange of policy knowledge to take place and enabled local authorities to access best practice from abroad. Transnational networks also provided a way for innovative local authorities to ‘showcase’ their own best practices. A range of other motivations—such as promoting economic development, enhancing a local authority’s profile and professional and organizational development—were also identified, although not all local authorities subscribed to them. It was shown that local authorities often hold several simultaneous motivations for participation in LGTN, but that these motivations vary between councils. This further reinforces the message of differentiation identified in the previous chapter: each local authority engages in LGTN to a different extent, in different ways and for different reasons.

Two supplementary questions (RQ2a and RQ2b) allowed these empirical findings to inform the debate on local level Europeanization. Firstly, regarding the directionality of Europeanization processes (RQ2a), LGTN was seen to encompass top–down, bottom–up and horizontal dynamics simultaneously. Secondly, applying a new
institutionalist framework to Europeanization (RQ2b), participation in LGTN was seen to be rationally driven, with councils adopting a goal orientated approach, seeking to improve their own positions and only engaging following an assessment of the context and after a cost–benefit calculation.

This strategic and rationalist approach to LGTN undertaken by local authorities raises the question of ‘effectiveness’. Indeed, following the rationalist logic, local authorities’ continued engagement in LGTN will depend on the perceived effectiveness of this activity. This question is taken up and addressed in the next chapter.
Chapter 6

Factors determining effective engagement in transnational networking

Having established that local authorities do indeed actively participate in local government transnational networking (LGTN) (Chapter 4) and explored the motivations behind and rationalist logic driving this activity (Chapter 5), this thesis now turns its attention to the issue of perceived ‘effectiveness’.

This follows on from the rationalist approach adopted by councils, as identified in Chapter 5; how local authorities perceive the effectiveness of LGTN will inform their continued participation. This focus is further motivated by the observation in Chapter 4, that participation in LGTN varies across local authorities; it seeks to understand the factors account for this differential engagement. Furthermore—as will be shown in Section 6.2—this question has been overlooked from the perspective of local authorities, and the local level factors determining effective engagement in LGTN remain largely unexplored. This chapter thus offers an empirical contribution to knowledge in order to address this gap in the literature. In short, this chapter addresses the third research aim of this thesis:
• RA₃: Identify the factors which determine effective participation in LGTN.

And answers the third research question:

• RQ₃: What factors determine effective engagement in LGTN?

In addition to this empirical analysis, this chapter makes three contributions. Firstly, it advances an analytical framework for the analysis of factors determining effective engagement in LGTN. This accounts for barriers at both the ‘local’ and ‘external’ levels. Secondly, it shows that most factors affecting successful engagement in LGTN are situated at the local level, and, therefore, fall for the most part within local government’s control. Thirdly, by borrowing the concept of ‘mediating factors’ from the Europeanization literature, an account can be provided for the differential engagement in LGTN witnessed in Chapter 4.

This chapter begins by advocating the need to assess effective engagement in LGTN from the perspective of local authorities (Section 6.1). Not only does this reflect the rationalist logic driving participation in LGTN (as argued in Chapter 5), it is also warranted by empirical reality. The chapter then establishes an analytical framework to address RQ₃ (Section 6.2). This is based on a review of existing practitioner and academic literature, and draws attention to several factors affecting how successfully local authorities engage in and secure benefits from LGTN. The chapter then uses the empirical data gathered in this study to assess these factors with reference to the 14 councils studied (Section 6.3). The empirical analysis is then linked to the Europeanization literature by considering how determinants of effective engagement in LGTN act as ‘mediating factors’ (Section 6.4).
6.1 Conceptualizing ‘effective’ engagement in LGTN

The topic of the ‘effectiveness’ of LGTN has largely been overlooked, save for studies which touch on this as part of broader analyses of networks (see Section 6.2.2 for a review of this literature). Indeed, as recognized by Bulkeley et al. (2003, p. 248), “to date, there has been no formal evaluation of the effectiveness of networks”. This presents a challenge for how the effectiveness of LGTN is to be conceptualized and assessed.

Studies on the effectiveness of policy networks have been a feature of the public administration literature since the 1990s and owe themselves to Provan and Milward’s research (Milward & Provan 1998; Provan & Kenis 1995; Provan & Milward 1995, 2001; Provan & Sebastian 1998). The model of network effectiveness developed by Provan and Milward (1995)—and later refined by Provan and Sebastian (1998)—stresses the role of two main variables: network structure and the context in which networks operate in (see Figure 6.1). In terms of structure, networks are most likely to be effective when integrated through a centralized “core agency” (Provan & Milward 1995 p. 25), when direct, non-fragmented control is asserted (Provan &

Figure 6.1: Provan and Milward’s (1995, p. 24) model of network effectiveness, as refined by Provan and Sebastian (1998)

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Milward, 1995, p. 25) and when sub-groups and actors within the network are integrated (Provan & Sebastian, 1998). In terms of context, the need for a stable and resource-rich environment is emphasized (Provan & Milward, 1995 pp. 26–27).

As highlighted by Turrini et al. (2010), Provan and Milward’s model has served as the basis for subsequent public administration scholarship on policy network effectiveness. Nevertheless, building on this subsequent research, Turrini et al. (2010, p. 546) further refine the model to include a third variable: network functioning characteristics (see Figure 6.2). It is under this heading that network management and steering play a role, both directly and indirectly by impacting on the network’s structure (Turrini et al. 2010, p. 546).

Figure 6.2: Turrini et al.’s (2010, p. 546) model of network effectiveness

The public administration literature therefore focuses attention on a range of factors which may act to facilitate or hinder effective engagement in networks. Parallels can be drawn with the Europeanization literature here. As discussed in Section 2.1.2 this points to the role of mediating factors in accounting for Europeanization’s differential impact (Risse et al., 2001). At the local level these mediating factors affect how local authorities engage in LGTN (Baldersheim et al., 2002), and with the European Union (EU) more generally (de Rooij, 2002). An examination of the factors which determine effective engagement in LGTN therefore also illuminates the reasons why engagement in LGTN differs between councils (see Section 6.4).

There remain two weaknesses with the model advanced by the public administration
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

literature, however. Firstly, the predominant focus is on the networks themselves and their context, rather than the individual actors operating within them. Secondly, emphasis is placed on structural factors, rather than the agency of individual actors.

While Turrini et al. (2010) provide some scope to account for agency through the role of network management and steering, this is primarily concerned with its impact on wider structural factors and, nevertheless, remains situated at the network level.

One approach to overcome this is to investigate the perceptions of the individual actors involved. For example Rowe (2011, p. 12), in a study of subnational Brussels offices, conceptualizes ‘effectiveness’ as follows:

Fundamentally, effectiveness is where actors achieve the results they set out to achieve. Which is to say, they meet their targets and deliver results that merit continued investment.

This approach addresses two of the limitations of the public administration model. Firstly it focuses on the actors participating within the network, rather than treating networks as whole, single entities. Secondly, by focusing on the local authorities involved, it provides scope to investigate the agency of these actors, in addition to structural factors.

This approach offers two additional advantages for this thesis. Firstly, it conforms to the rationalist argument presented in Section 5.7.2; continued participation in LGTN is based on an assessment by local authorities of the benefits they are receiving. Secondly, it accounts for the varied engagement in LGTN (observed in Chapter 4) and fact that different authorities have different goals (observed in Chapter 5). This differentiation in engagement and motivations means local authorities perceive effective participation in different ways; what is effective for one authority, might not be deemed so for another. As argued by Phelps et al. (2002, p. 222): “the gains from involvement in inter-authority networking vary according to the differing expectations of members”.

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413 Literature on policy learning in networks has a similar predominant focus on structural factors (for example Benz & Fürst, 2002).

414 This framework is also limited in that it was developed to assess policy networks, whereas LGTN cannot be characterized in this way (Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 240; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 313).
Thus—in line with Rowe (2011, p. 12)—the effectiveness of LGTN is here founded on the perceptions of the local authorities participating. As argued in Section 5.7.2, councils engage in LGTN based on an assessment of the potential benefits to be gained. Following this rationalist argument, such benefits will be monitored and the effectiveness of engagement will be assessed. This is confirmed by empirical evidence. The councils studied regularly undertook assessments of how successful participation in LGTN was and if it brought benefits to the organization. Participants highlighted that there was regular scrutiny of LGTN activities by local authorities to make sure the benefits being sought were in fact being secured\textsuperscript{415}. As noted by one:

\begin{quote}
we always have a critical eye to what do these sorts of non-statutory functions bring to the authority. So we are continually held to account, we report back through the committee structure in the county council in terms of activities, and we show where those activities link into corporate plans ... we have to show that the work that we’re doing is hitting targets, whether in terms of bringing direct finance back into the authority or whether it’s hitting objectives which are stated in those policies and plans.\textsuperscript{416}
\end{quote}

Indeed scrutiny committees within councils regularly undertook reviews into LGTN (for example East Sussex County Council 2001a, Hampshire County Council 2002, 2003a, 2003b, Medway Council 2003, Portsmouth City Council 2009c, West Sussex County Council 2002a, 2003a, 2004a) and requested regular reports outlining the benefits achieved (Isle of Wight Council 2003, 2004b, Kent County Council 2007a, 2008, 2009b, 2010b, 2011). Again, these monitoring activities further support the argument advanced in Section 5.7.2 that local authorities adopt a rationalist approach to their participation in LGTN. The regular assessments of effectiveness undertaken by councils demonstrate their desire to secure and measure the return from their investment in this activity.

\textsuperscript{415} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 06; Int. 12; Int. 14).
\textsuperscript{416} Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 14).
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

6.1.1 The difficulties of assessing LGTN outcomes

While local government assesses its engagement in LGTN, it is important to recognize that there are inherent difficulties to the measurement of benefits received (Casson & Dardanelli 2012, p. 609). As Duchacek (1984, p. 14) states:

There is, for example, no yardstick by which we could accurately estimate the amount of dollars in foreign investment that would result from ‘x’ number of dollars spent by the state representatives in Frankfurt or Brussels. How also could one measure the personal interest and political clout of a governor . . . in conducting a personal micro-diplomacy?

Participants in this study acknowledged that benefits derived from LGTN were not always tangible, nor easily measurable. As shown in Chapter 5, while the return from obtaining funding was easily quantifiable, the impacts of lobbying, policy transfer and other benefits were not. One participant admitted:

Sometimes it is hard to be sure that we get something back. We spend a lot of time, a lot of money also, to be involved in these networks and sometimes we have a hard time to evaluate if we get back enough things in return.

Indeed one councillor noted that:

it would be hard to say that because we are members of the Assembly of European Regions we therefore get, as we did get, £15million from the European life fund, so the direct correlation would be very hard to prove. . . . a lot of it is, as I say, it’s not specific. You ask yourself, and we actually do an analysis every time we make a visit and we spend public money, and we have to say ‘what have you achieved?’ Sometimes it’s difficult to write down precisely what’s been achieved at a particular meeting, but it’s only after a number of times of establishing those contacts and easy lines of communication that suddenly the penny drops into place.

In this context there was a risk of local authorities assessing their participation in LGTN based on the financial returns, when, as demonstrated in Chapter 5, many of

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417 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 04; Int. 08; Int. 17; Int. 44; Int. 47; Int. 63).
418 Interview with French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 44).
419 Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 01).
the benefits being sought were non-pecuniary in nature.\footnote{420}

A delay between initial participation in LGTN and receiving the benefits from engagement also made it difficult to readily assess outcomes.\footnote{421} As one participant explained:

there’s also a time lag between beginning a set of activities in a certain area and the benefits that you see coming back into the authority. So for examples coming back to project development, there’s definitely a lag between an inception meeting where people get together and say they’d like to work together, between submitting a bid and actually seeing the finance back in . . . it could be a couple of years before you see the first results of some of those initiatives.\footnote{422}

Therefore, while assessing the effectiveness of LGTN is important to ensure local authorities were achieving the benefits they sought, this was inherently difficult.

\section*{6.2 Literature review and analytical framework}

Having established that the effectiveness of LGTN is to be assessed from the perspective of the local authorities involved, this chapter now reviews the existing literature on this topic. As noted above, the public administration literature provides a useful starting point by focusing attention on the factors which determine effective participation in networks. The themes identified here will be used to inform an analytical framework through which the empirical data is examined.\footnote{423}

\footnote{420} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 06; Int. 15; Int. 21; Int. 38; Int. 43; Int. 44; Int. 47; Int. 54; Int. 57; Int. 58; Int. 69). Happaerts (2008, p. 17) and Happaerts et al. (2011, pp. 334–335) also identified this in their study of Flanders’ engagement in the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD), which came under threat when they felt they were no longer receiving tangible outputs from their membership.

\footnote{421} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 14; Int. 22; Int. 44; Int. 46; Int. 53).

\footnote{422} Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 14).

\footnote{423} In line with the provisional coding method adopted during the data analysis, the factors identified in the practitioner and academic literatures here formed the basis of a preliminary coding scheme which was used to analyse the empirical data gathered.
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6.2.1 Themes in the practitioner literature

A body of practitioner literature and best practice guidance has drawn attention to the effectiveness of LGTN. This literature primarily outlines how local authorities should engage with transnational networks and which factors determine successful engagement. This literature includes early guidance published by the Audit Commission (1991) on how local authorities should respond to and engage with the EU, alongside more recent publications by the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) and the Council of Europe (CoE) (2006) on building cross-border co-operation, by the Local Government International Bureau (LGIB) on developing bilateral networking (Handley, 2006), and various contributions in a pamphlet on international engagement published by Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) (Aitken, 2008b) (see also Bogdanor, 1992; Clifton, 2008; Iacopini & Klemm, 2009; LGA, 2010). Given this literature is targeted at a local government practitioner audience, it provides a useful summary of the perceptions of these actors. It is now reviewed to identify the main factors local authorities feel determine effective engagement in LGTN.

6.2.1.1 Local factors: structures

Much of the practitioner literature draws attention to the structures councils should put in place to ensure successful engagement in LGTN.

The presence of a European strategy

One frequently highlighted factor is the need to have a strategic document which outlines the objectives for participation in LGTN and European and international activities more generally (Aitken, 2008a; Audit Commission, 1991; Handley, 2006; Russell & Walsh, 2008). The purpose of this is to make sure the reasons for engagement are clearly understood and communicated. As the LGIB guidance on developing
bilateral networks states: “before entering into a partnership, both sides should have a clear idea about why they are doing so” (Handley 2006, p. 9). For the Audit Commission (1991, p. 19) this “is an unavoidable starting point”.

To this end councils are recommended to adopt a European or international strategy; a document which sets out the aims and objectives for participation in LGTN, among other European and international activities. Indeed the Audit Commission (1991, p. 18) suggests local authorities should “develop a ‘strategy’ based on a review/audit of its needs”. Likewise the LGIB stresses the need for “a strategy document [which] should provide clear parameters and inform everyone of what the partners want to achieve and how they plan to achieve it” (Handley 2006, p. 10). To confirm the importance of having such a strategic document in place, Aitken (2008a, p. 7) argues that the councils which successfully engage internationally are those which “develop international strategies which are able to target resources and ensure that outcomes are achieved”.

As indicated, European and international strategies should not just outline the objectives to be sought from participation in LGTN—and other European and international activities—but should also offer a ‘methodology’ for how councils should achieve the goals they seek (Handley 2006, p. 10). In the words of the Audit Commission (1991, p. 22), dedicated European strategies should:

- generate a set of priorities and time-tabling, telling the authority how much to invest, and when and where to focus its effort, enabling it to divide its labour efficiently and effectively.

In other words, a strategy for LGTN should outline the objectives local authorities seek from participation, which networks are to be targeted, which policy areas are to be focused on and what resources—human and financial—are to be invested.

European and international strategies should be based on an assessment of local authorities’ contexts and requirements (Audit Commission 1991, p. 20). When developing a strategy for LGTN, it “should not be seen as something additional or
over and above the work of local authorities, but as an integral part of providing the best possible public services” (Handley 2006, p. 15). Councils should therefore link their European strategies to their broader aims to ensure LGTN complements wider local government activity and its relevance is understood. As noted by the LGIB:

Linking the partnership’s activities to the authority’s corporate plan and the community’s priorities should enable the rest of the authority to understand the relevance of the international activities. (Handley 2006, p. 9)

Consequently the strategic document itself, and the process of developing it, will provide councils with ‘confidence’ and ‘focus’ in their networking activities (Audit Commission 1991, p. 42).

Selection of appropriate partners and networks

With a strategy in place local authorities then need to select their partners and the networks they participate in strategically. As emphasized by the LGIB:

There are many elements to consider before getting involved in an international partnership. Top of the list is choosing the right partner. (Handley 2006, p. 9)

Again this will be linked to authorities’ aims. For bilateral networking, the LGIB states councils need to decide whether they should engage with partners who are similar to them, or work with those who have different characteristics (Handley 2006, p. 9).

A similar principle applies to targeting funding programmes for financial support. Local authorities need to carefully select the correct programmes and work with the appropriate partners to ensure success. The Audit Commission (1991, pp. 16–17) notes that councils are often in danger of pursuing the main EU funding programmes, despite not being eligible or only having a limited chance of success.

Resourcing and investment in LGTN

Having to invest extra resources in LGTN is inevitable. There are several aspects to resourcing. As noted by the LGIB:
Funding is an important element of international partnerships. However, it’s not just the budget for visits and activities that requires proper consideration, but also the human resources needed to manage the links efficiently and effectively. (Handley 2006, p. 15)

When budgeting for LGTN, councils not only have to account for membership fees, but also have to give consideration to costs arising from practical elements such as travel and accommodation costs, meals and subsistence and gifts (Handley 2006, pp. 19–21).

Staffing is one of the key areas of expenditure on LGTN (Handley 2006). The LGIB notes that “if partnerships are to be managed well, it is important to make a commitment to the staffing levels” (Handley 2006, p. 15). As already discussed in Section 5.2, while staffing constitutes an investment, it can lead to a net return when external funding is sought. In this way the LGIB advises that “staff should not be seen as a cost, but as an important asset” (Handley 2006, p. 15).

While there is very little to legally prevent councils from spending their resources on LGTN, it is nevertheless vital that investment is accountable:

If public money is involved, all expenditure has to stand up to the scrutiny of local government financial regulations, and all activities have to demonstrate a clear benefit to the community. (Handley 2006, p. 15)

Many councils face a difficulty with adequately resourcing LGTN, however. As highlighted by the MOT and CoE (2006, p. 54):

The main difficulty lies in the fact that having the legal capacity to initiate a transfrontier activity or make a transfrontier investment does not necessarily mean local communities and authorities have the financial capacity to undertake the activity or investment in question. Many authorities have limited human, financial and material resources for co-operation.

Councils are therefore at risk of operating LGTN activities within a limited budget or without adequate investment.

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424 The Audit Commission (1991, p. 40) in the early 1990s estimated the average annual cost of participation in a transnational network—including officer and councillor time—to be around £10,000.
Internal co-ordination of LGTN

The practitioner guidance recommends the co-ordination of LGTN within authorities through the appointment of dedicated European officers or departments (Audit Commission 1991). In the words of the Audit Commission (1991, p. 22):

One officer/department should be nominated to take this policy lead and to oversee the implementation of the authority’s plan for Europe.

The purpose of such officers and departments is “to ensure the widest and highest possible levels of awareness and co-ordination”; such appointments should not “ghettoize” LGTN within specific departments, but facilitate and co-ordinate involvement across the whole council (Audit Commission 1991 p. 22). One of the key co-ordination roles is the dissemination of information throughout the organization. In particular, information about LGTN “will need to be actively ‘distributed’ rather than simply available” (Audit Commission 1991 p. 26). The number of European officers or the size of a European department should be based on the authority’s strategy and their activities, ensuring there is adequate capacity (Audit Commission 1991 p. 24).

6.2.1.2 Local factors: agency

The factors already identified in the practitioner guidance all relate to the structures councils should put in place to ensure successful engagement in LGTN. However, this literature also draws attention to the agency of individual actors within local authorities. Indeed, as Aitken (2008a, p. 7) argues:

let’s not underestimate the level of political and officer effort and will that is required to make international development projects work effectively. Building sustainable partnerships takes time, and a great deal of personal investment.

Leadership and support for LGTN

The LGIB states that “it is vital that partnership activities are supported as widely as possible” (Handley 2006 p. 13). A recurring theme among the wider practitioner
literature is the leadership role played by local politicians and senior council officers (Aitken 2008a; Bogdanor 1992; Handley 2006; LGA 2010; MOT & CoE 2006). As Aitken (2008a, p. 7) identifies, councils which effectively engage in international activities, including LGTN:

exhibit strong, innovative political leadership. They also have officers who believe in the impact local government can have and who continue to champion the work inside the council.

As further highlighted by the MOT and CoE (2006, p. 60) guidance, “transfrontier co-operation calls for political support from elected representatives and communities”.

For councillors this support is linked to their wider community leadership role:

Councillors have been elected to serve the community and decide on the way in which a local authority operates. They therefore have a vital role in guiding and supporting international work. (Handley 2006, p. 13)

To ensure this political leadership is present, the Local Government Association (LGA) recommends that all councils appoint or designate a councillor responsible for international affairs (Handley 2006, p. 13). Such political support should be present among senior politicians, such as council leaders or those in executive positions (Clifton 2008, p. 18). Political leadership should remain present regardless of the party affiliation of councillors. As the LGIB notes: “although the balance of political power may change with elections, international partnerships should remain above party politics” (Handley 2006, p. 13). Political leadership should therefore be consistent and continuous through the electoral cycles of local government. To maintain political support, the MOT and CoE (2006, p. 60) suggest that “elected representatives and deliberative assemblies should be kept regularly informed and be involved in transfrontier arrangements”.

The duty to local communities is also reflected in the leadership role played by officers:

Local government practitioners have a commitment, above all, to their citizens and communities, and this is served through engagement with the wider world. (Davis 2008, p. 21)
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As already noted, senior officers have an important leadership and supporting role to play in addition to that of politicians:

It is also important to enlist the support of chief officers, ensure that the vision is communicated to all areas of the local authority and that it is spread to members of staff at different levels. (Handley, 2006, p. 13)

**Personal relationships**

While the leadership qualities of local politicians was one factor, so too are the personal relationships they build with their transnational colleagues. The MOT and CoE (2006, p. 28) state that successful co-operation:

calls, firstly, for elected representatives to know one another well and to enjoy a relationship of trust so that they can affirm a political commitment to establishing co-operation.

The LGIB likewise agrees, noting that “the leaders of overseas communities will almost certainly expect to meet their counterparts” (Handley, 2006, p. 13). In this way LGTN is often built on the back of the personal relationships and alliances between local leaders. In addition to building personal relationships with each other, the LGA (2010, p. 18) advises local councillors to seek links with other key European politicians, such as Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

**Staff and politicians’ skills and knowledge**

Local politicians not only need to display leadership, they also need to be actively involved in LGTN, making their skills and knowledge an important factor. Furthermore, the Audit Commission (1991) identifies the importance of the skills and knowledge held by staff working on international activities and LGTN. Indeed, while investing in staff and appointing European officers and departments provides a structure to co-ordinate networking activities, it has to be recognized that such roles require specialist skills (Audit Commission, 1991, p. 22). Awareness of the EU’s decision-making processes
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

and knowing how to lobby effectively are some of the key recommendations contained in the Audit Commission (1991) report. This, along with a more broader appreciation of informal ‘Brussels politics’, is also recommended by Bogdanor (1992). The LGIB asks councils to consider the language skills of their staff and councillors, and whether additional training is required (Handley 2006, p. 15).

6.2.1.3 External factors

The structural and agency factors identified so far are all present at the local level, and thus to a large extent fall within local authorities’ control. However, the practitioner literature also identifies a range of structural factors beyond the level of local authorities.

Organization of transnational networks

While local authorities should adopt their own strategies, similar documents should be adopted by transnational networks to formalize co-operation. With bilateral networking this should take the form of a co-operation agreement or strategic plan (Handley 2006, p. 10). Such co-operation agreements are not only necessary for the management of the network, but are also often required when seeking to obtain funding or to develop transnational projects from the network. As noted by the LGIB: “almost all institutional donors require clear evidence of strategic planning” (Handley 2006, p. 10). As with internal European and international strategies, this document should outline objectives, timescales and resources. However, the MOT and CoE (2006, p. 30) caution against committing to formalized agreements, especially in the early stages of networking, “since such an agreement is likely to turnout to be overly restrictive or incomplete”. Nevertheless a ‘technical’ agreement outlining governance rules for networks does provide clear direction (MOT & CoE 2006 p. 30). In this way, the LGIB recommends that:
The strategy should be regarded as an optional plan to guide daily work programmes and should remain flexible, as it will inevitably have to respond to any unforeseen and individual circumstances. (Handley, 2006, p. 10)

While co-operation agreements provide one method of organizing transnational networks, secretariats provide another, especially for multilateral networks. Indeed the MOT and CoE (2006) guidance on cross-border co-operation states that a ‘joint technical team’ should be established to manage the day-to-day activities of the network. It recommends:

a standing organization ... with stable resources from the partners’ budgets. These resources can be used to fund a secretariat and, if possible, a team of professionals. (MOT & CoE, 2006, p. 61)

The ‘frontier effect’ and national barriers

The ‘frontier effect’ refers to the inherent differences found between local authorities and their contexts when interacting across national borders. LGTN, by its very nature, involves co-operating with partners operating in different contexts, exposing councils to a range of cultural and administrative differences. As noted by the MOT and CoE (2006, p. 28):

local communities and authorities consequently have to contend with a genuine frontier effect (legislative differences and differentials in labour costs, land and property prices and so on), which generates both momentum and tensions in transfrontier relations.

Participating in transnational networks therefore requires councils “to marry different legal systems, different modi operandi, different practices and cultures and, in some cases, different working languages” (MOT & CoE, 2006, p. 60). Working with other local authorities will inevitably lead to conflict when goals and objective differ between partners. Indeed the MOT and CoE (2006, p. 32) caution that building consensus between transnational partners and defining common objectives for transnational networks “may be a difficult exercise”.

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Reconciling or working around such differences is thus an important prerequisite for effective LGTN. Yet the difficulty here for local government is that “co-operation arrangements cannot release local communities and authorities from the legal framework to which they are subject” (MOT & CoE 2006, p. 16). In other words, the ability of councils to work around these transnational barriers is inherently restricted by structural constraints present at the national level.

Media and public support
Reporting of LGTN and local authorities’ other international engagement activities in the local media is a potential barrier highlighted by the practitioner literature. As highlighted by the LGIB:

international links are easy prey for journalists looking for negative news stories. At the same time good communication with the media, partners and with the local community are important to make an international partnership a success. (Handley 2006, p. 22)

Councils need to therefore proactively manage the media profile of their LGTN activities to ensure the benefits are communicated (Handley 2006, p. 22). Indeed, negative coverage can impact the support offered by councillors, with Aitken (2008a, p. 6) noting that “politicians are sometimes nervous of the negative publicity that surrounds involvement in international work”. As highlighted above, such political support is necessary for successful engagement in LGTN.

6.2.1.4 Summary of practitioner literature
The practitioner literature discussed above has identified a range of factors which contribute to successful engagement in LGTN. As this literature is aimed at local authorities it offers a useful initial insight into local government perceptions on the effectiveness of LGTN.

Given the wide variety of local government in Europe—and indeed within individual
and the fact each local authority is unique, there cannot be a ‘one size fits all’ approach to LGTN. As highlighted by the MOT and CoE (2006, p. 59), it is:

very difficult to identify a model that is universally and uniformly applicable, particularly given that this form of co-operation is still in its infancy, gradually finding its niche as it adapts to a wide range of geographical and legal contexts.

Nevertheless, the practitioner literature drew attention to a number of common structural and agency factors present at the local level which can determine effective engagement (see Table 6.1). This literature also identified a number of structural factors external to local authorities, such as the organization of transnational networks, the so-called frontier effect and the role of the media. Nevertheless, the bulk of factors identified fall into the local level structure–agency categorization outlined above. Indeed, the presence of these factors at the local level suggests much of the success of LGTN is within local authorities’ control.

While the practitioner guidance offers best practice advice and highlights a number of factors which can affect successful engagement, there are limitations to using this literature as a basis for assessing local authorities’ participation in LGTN. Firstly, while this guidance draws attention to the factors local authorities feel affect successful engagement, it lacks detail. Secondly, it does not offer an assessment of how well—or

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<th>Structural factors</th>
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<td>A strategic document outlining objectives sought from LGTN.</td>
<td>Leadership and support by both politicians and officers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The selection of appropriate transnational partners and networks to engage with.</td>
<td>The development of personal relationships, especially between local leaders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adequate resourcing for and investment in LGTN.</td>
<td>The skills and knowledge of staff working on LGTN.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal co-ordination of LGTN by designated European officers or European departments.</td>
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otherwise—councils have applied this advice or the extent to which these factors are present. These limitations provide the rationale for further, more detailed, research into both the factors affecting successful engagement in LGTN and the extent to which the best practice guidance has been followed. The empirical data analysis presented further below addresses these limitations.

6.2.2 Themes in the academic literature

While there are currently few academic studies dedicated to assessing how effectively councils engage in LGTN, a number of themes identified by the practitioner literature are nevertheless recognized by scholars. These themes are now explored to further elaborate those identified in the practitioner literature. As will be shown, most existing studies focus on factors present above the local level, with limited attention given to the structures employed by local authorities or the agency of local actors. There consequently remains a gap in the literature, where local level factors for successful engagement in LGTN have been overlooked.

6.2.2.1 Local level factors

The role of local level factors in the effectiveness of LGTN is acknowledged in the existing literature (Karvounis 2011, p. 231; Payre 2010, p. 222), but as yet only received limited attention compared with network level and other external factors (see Section 6.2.2.2). Indeed, as Bouteligier (2013, p. 159) admits, “local specificities remain far more important than is commonly assumed”. Despite this, some local level factors—both structural and agency—are identified by scholars.

The presence of a European strategy

The need to have a clearly stated strategic vision for transnational networking and all

\[425\] The exception to this is the Audit Commission (1991) report which based its guidance on the findings of a survey of United Kingdom (UK) local authorities. These results are, however, very dated.
European and international engagement activities is echoed in the academic literature. Briggs (2010, p. 19) cautions that without a clear strategic vision, engagement in LGTN may have negative effects overall:

local transnational links among cities and regions can facilitate targeted investment and cultural exchange but sometimes distract attention from the needs of poorer communities.

While most urban areas studied by Lefèvre and d’Albergo (2007, p. 320) had written strategies in place, not all did. Furthermore, in those areas with strategies, the involvement of multiple actors across different policy sectors meant there were several, often competing, strategies in place simultaneously, rather than a single authority-wide approach (Lefèvre & d’Albergo 2007, p. 320). In van der Heiden’s (2010) study, only two out of seven cities are identified as having a clear strategy in place: Lausanne and Stuttgart. In Lausanne’s case this strategy clearly links to the city’s pre-existing corporate objective (van der Heiden 2010, p. 68).

The overall importance given to LGTN and European and international engagement more generally also varies. For example, van der Heiden’s (2010, p. 163) findings indicate “that local policy-making still prevails over international contacts”.

**Internal co-ordination of LGTN**

Internal co-ordination is a theme identified by Betsill and Bulkeley (2004). They identified how the limited involvement of a small set of individuals within councils meant the wider benefits of LGTN were not felt throughout the organization (Betsill & Bulkeley 2004, p. 489). Van der Heiden (2010, p. 162) likewise confirms that “the international activities on the city-region’s scale are organised in a closed circle of only a small number of policy-makers”, while in Vienna “EU-related activities are concentrated on a relatively small branch of units within the political–administrative system” (Hamedinger 2011, p. 112). This draws attention to the importance of internal co-ordination and communication of LGTN activities to ensure effective participation,
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and the need to make sure it is not dependent on, or isolated to, individuals. This is supported by Karvounis (2011, p. 231) who argued that poor internal communication within local authorities meant that many local officers and politicians only had a vague knowledge of the transnational networks their own organization was participating in; this affected their ability to engage with networks and had a detrimental effect on how local politicians perceive the value of LGTN.

Studies show that the presence of internal co-ordination structures vary. Van der Heiden’s (2010) study showed that some cities had dedicated departments to co-ordinate LGTN (Geneva, Lausanne, Luzern, Lyon and Stuttgart), while others did not (Bern and Zurich). Even where there was central co-ordination, however, individual departments often pursued their own engagement activities independently. Lyon, for example had a well established dedicated department for international engagement, but there remained no systemic overview or co-ordination of all LGTN activities across departments (van der Heiden 2010, p. 106). This often meant authorities had incoherent approaches with multiple departments pursuing different aims, often conflicting with the prevailing strategy of the authority, with the individual departments themselves fearing a centralization of their LGTN activities (van der Heiden 2010, p. 158). Balme and Le Galès’s (1997, p. 158) study of French cities noted many had set up specific structures to deal with European engagement, “but except in a few cases, they are generally unaware of what to do with them”.

While the importance of co-ordination has been highlighted, many smaller local authorities often lack the resources to put dedicated departments or officers in place. German Kreise, for example cannot actively participate due to limits on staff capacity (van der Heiden 2010, p. 125). Consequently, the literature suggests active participation in LGTN favours larger cities over smaller localities (Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 244).

Pflieger’s (2014, p. 339) study of four French cities showed all had put in place structures to co-ordinate participation in EU funded transnational projects.
Leadership and support for LGTN

The need for local political and officer support has also been confirmed in a number of studies (Baldersheim et al., 2002; Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004; Casson & Dardanelli, 2012; Happaerts, 2008; Happaerts et al., 2010; Keating, 2000; Lefèvre & d’Albergo, 2007; Payre, 2010; van der Heiden, 2010). Indeed, Briggs (2010, p. 6) notes “the importance of personal political leadership should not be underestimated”. Happaerts (2008, p. 17) argues participation in LGTN “is considered rather useless if no support is given at the political level”, with Happaerts et al. (2010) pp. 142–143 concluding that effective engagement “is correlated with the level of political engagement”, a conclusion also supported by Lefèvre and d’Albergo (2007, p. 324). To this end effective networking requires the presence of “individual political champions” within local authorities (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004, p. 481). Baldersheim et al. (2002, p. 134) find the education and political style of local political leads are important.

Nevertheless, the literature identifies varying levels of political support between councils. For example, Happaerts et al.’s (2010, pp. 136–137) study of Flanders observed that it was officers who gave more attention to transnational networks, while politicians only had a limited interest. This was sometimes to the frustration of other network members who felt the network was being held back by the lack of universal political interest among all members (Happaerts et al., 2010, p. 139). In other cases political support was strong, as was the situation in Lyon and Stuttgart (Payre, 2010; van der Heiden, 2010). Political leaders in Lyon, for example, not only supported the city’s engagement in LGTN but sought to “build a career for the city” within networks such as Eurocities by actively engaging and seeking senior positions within executive committees (Payre, 2010, p. 275).

While the practitioner guidance recommends continuous political support regardless of electoral change (Handley, 2006, p. 13), cases examined by scholars suggests this is not always the case. Indeed the impact of ‘political turnover’ or changes in
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administration are highlighted (Happaerts et al., 2010; Payre, 2010; van der Heiden, 2010). For example, in Geneva mayors only serve one year terms, which van der Heiden (2010, p. 55) argues:

\[\text{does not help to establish a coherent strategy on the international level. Hence several engagements in networks are only followed irregularly.} \]

Changes in administration also affect network engagement. This explains North-Rhine Westphalia’s withdrawal of the Network of Regional Government for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD) (Happaerts et al., 2010, p. 140). The opposite effect was observed in Lyon and Stuttgart, where new administrations—and in particular new mayors—were more actively supportive of LGTN and were able to engage more aggressively (Payre, 2010, pp. 273–275; van der Heiden, 2010, p. 156).

In addition to the role of political leaders, the broader support of councillors is discussed. For the most part, van der Heiden (2010) reveals that outside of the executive leadership, political involvement was limited. Indeed he concludes that “the mayor is the key player in international activities” (van der Heiden, 2010, p. 153). One exception was Luzern, whose councillors maintained an active role in scrutinizing LGTN activities (van der Heiden, 2010, pp. 78–80). While the political leadership in Zurich was supportive of LGTN, there were many opponents among the rest of the city’s councillors (van der Heiden, 2010, pp. 91–94). Generally, however, the absence of non-executive councillor involvement is highlighted (Hamedinger, 2011, p. 112).

Betsill and Bulkeley (2004) and van der Heiden (2010) not only stress the role of political support, but also officers’ enthusiasm and the role of local bureaucrats. Where enthusiastic officers who were engaged in LGTN departed, for example, organizational involvement effectively ceased as the benefits from networking brought by those individuals stopped. This was the case with participation in the CCP network, for example (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004, p. 481, pp. 483–484). In Dübendorf, participation

\[\text{That said, the lack of coherent political leadership in Geneva has not stopped the city pursuing LGTN (van der Heiden, 2010, p. 155).} \]
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in the Climate Alliance died down when the responsible officer left and was not replaced \cite{van_der_Heiden:2010} p. 95. These examples highlight the impact of staff turnover on engagement in LGTN.

6.2.2.2 External factors

Much of the academic literature focuses on individual networks as the level of analysis and as such identifies factors external to local authorities.

Organization of transnational networks

Studies have explored how transnational networks are governed and what techniques they use to manage their members and activities \cite{Bouteligier:2013, Bulkeley:2003, Heinelt:2008, Kern:2009, Payre:2010}. Indeed, Bouteligier \citeyear{Bouteligier:2013} p. 155 identifies that “even the most horizontal networks need strategic management, coordination and steering”. A number of themes are present in this literature, two of which in particular reflect on transnational networks’ role in lobbying and influencing the EU policy process.

Firstly, how decisions are taken within networks affects their external credibility, and thus effectiveness in achieving their aims. Heinelt and Niederhafner \citeyear{Heinelt:2008} compare the operation of Eurocities and Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and how this impacts on their ability to access EU policy making. Eurocities is a case of ‘co-ordination’, whereby the network relies upon a membership which shares common interests and values. By contrast the CEMR operates as a form of ‘co-operation’, where actors agree joint positions, some of which may be against the interests of some network members. There are limits to both. Networks adopting the co-ordination model suffer from being too much of a close-knit community. While this makes it easier for the network to adopt and articulate positions, it also makes it more exclusive. This threatens claims to broader representativeness, and thus legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of EU policy makers. While networks adopting the co-operation
model avoid this problem—as they are usually more representative—they often find it difficult to reach consensus and adopt positions reflecting all of their members’ competing interests. As Bouteligier’s (2013, p. 124) study of Metropolis showed, “it is not easy to come to a shared vision when you have 118 cities on board, all with their own backgrounds”. This often leads to lowest common denominator positions lacking substance, or seemingly contradictory positions being adopted simultaneously in an effort to appease all members (Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008).

Secondly, the size and thematic focus of a network is important. Bulkeley et al. (2003, p. 247) observe a difference between transnational networks adopting growth strategies—to obtain as many members as possible—and stabilization strategies, focusing on maintaining a small number of members. Kern and Bulkeley (2009, p. 316) and Ward and Williams (1997) observe a wider shift from larger generic networks to smaller ones which focus on niche policy areas. A similar dilemma to that recognized by Heinelt and Niederhafner (2008) applies; the larger networks offer representativeness but are too generic in their scope, whereas the smaller niche ones offer concrete substance in specific policy areas, but lack a broad representativeness. Another danger with smaller networks is that there are more of them, and so from the EU’s perspective it becomes harder to manage a wider range of actors leading to duplication and overload; something networking is supposed to avoid. This ‘size and scope’ dilemma is a recurring theme in the literature (for example Hooghe, 1995, p. 190; Keating, 1999, p. 8; Payre, 2010, p. 265).

More broadly, the identity and role of transnational networks can also be

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428 Payre (2010, p. 265) notes that Eurocities faced this very dilemma when it was established. While the founding members wanted to keep the network small so it would be easier to manage and produce more tangible benefits, they also recognized the need to bring in other members to boost the network’s representative profile.

429 For van der Heiden (2010, p. 134) there is a clear incentive for networks to compete with each other and secure more members as increased membership leads to greater revenue from subscriptions and greater legitimacy through representativeness.

430 A solution to this dilemma which Ward and Williams (1997) observe is the creation of a two-tier approach; the larger, more generic networks provide overall co-ordination and develop a holistic ‘local’ perspective. Operating alongside are the smaller niche networks which offer input on thematic policy areas (Ward & Williams, 1997).
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problematic. Bulkeley et al. (2003, p. 241) note that networks regularly perform multiple functions; they act as non-governmental lobbyists, but their membership reflects that of a quasi-governmental agency. Moreover many act as commercially driven businesses in so far as they need to seek funding to maintain their existence. These multiple roles, it is argued, can conflict (Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 241).

From the perspective of members, the openness and accountability of transnational networks “is crucial” (Bulkeley et al., 2003, p. 244). Multilateral networks often require a membership fee to join, or require prospective members to meet certain conditions. In some cases small local authorities might face access barriers or financial constraints limiting their ability to participate.

How networks operate on a daily basis and interact with their membership also affects their perceived effectiveness. Payre (2010, pp. 270–271) discussed how Eurocities ‘structured’ exchanges between its members to ensure effective policy transfer during meetings and conferences; its Brussels secretariat performs a similar function outside of these events. However, while such co-ordinating effects may facilitate the exchange of policy knowledge—along with enhancing the other benefits of LGTN—there is a risk that such management of the network can become “coercive” (Payre, 2010, p. 272). Indeed Payre (2010, pp. 272–273) shows how in the case of Eurocities where disagreements emerged between the Brussels secretariat and its members. This is particularly the case with certification and recognition schemes offered for adopting best practice, which may end up alienating a network’s membership if they are unable to meet standards (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 332).

The operating languages of transnational networks is another factor (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 317; Lawrence, 2000, p. 68; Phelps et al., 2002, p. 221). Both Kern and Bulkeley (2009, p. 317) and van der Heiden (2010, p. 133) draw attention the Climate Alliance, whose working language is German. This placed limits on the engagement of non-German speaking councils in the network. Lee and van de Meene (2012, p. 214) likewise find this to be important in the C40 transnational network,
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with policy transfer more likely to take place between those who speak the same language.

The ‘frontier effect’ and national barriers

Elements of the ‘frontier effect’ are also recognized in the academic literature, with studies acknowledging that fundamental differences and a lack of commonalities between authorities participating in networks can cause problems. Phelps et al.’s (2002, pp. 218–219) study of the Edge Cities network showed that socio-economic differences between members led to difficulties. Indeed, different local and regional administrations have different competences and powers, so this might make co-operation difficult to achieve (Sodupe, 1999, p. 78). As Keating (2000) argues:

It is desirable that regions should have similar structures, competences and powers. In many cases cooperation have been frustrated because one unit has extensive legislative, administrative and financial powers, as with the units of a federation, while another only had municipal status.

Structural factors present at the national level is another theme explored by scholars. As recognized by Bulkeley et al. (2003, p. 246), transnational networks:

cross the borders of nation-states. This does not mean, however, that the national context is insignificant and, indeed, it may be . . . crucial for the achievements of [LGTN].

To this end Keating (1999, pp. 11–12; 2000) suggests national constitutional factors affect the ability of local government to engage internationally. Belgian regions, for example, enjoy formal constitutional rights to engage in international affairs on policy issues where they have authority.431 However, in France, the doctrine of national unity means only the whole state—not parts of it—can be externally represented. Subnational authorities are supposed to gain permission for European involvement from the secretariat général des affaires européennes, part of the prime minister’s office (Cole.

431 Known as the ‘in foro interno, in foro externo’ principle (Happaerts et al., 2011, p. 331).
and the central government set up the Délégué aux relations extérieures des collectivités locales in an attempt “to try to set up some rules and standards for action” (Balme & Le Galès, 1997, p. 167). In England, despite centralization, the lack of a codified constitution means local government has felt free to engage internationally (Keating, 1999, pp. 11–12). While there is no statutory duty for local authorities to engage abroad, the UK government has not stopped them (Casson & Dardanelli, 2012, p. 602). Blatter et al. (2008, p. 466), however, show that constitutional competences and constraints have little impact on whether or not local authorities can engage internationally. This is supported by van der Heiden (2010, p. 172) who argues “the state’s structure (i.e. federalism or centralism) does not necessarily influence the intensity or orientation of city-region’s transnational activities”.

Regardless of constitutional barriers potentially restricting or permitting engagement in LGTN, broader intergovernmental relations between the local and national levels also have an impact (Lefèvre & d’Albergo, 2007, p. 324). Indeed, the willingness of national governments is one factor (Keating, 2000). As argued by Sodupe (1999, p. 79), “the attitude of member states is vital for . . . inter-regional co-operation”. Indeed Bache’s (1998, 1999, 2004a) research on EU regional policy argues that national governments play a ‘gatekeeper’ role when it comes to subnational involvement in EU politics. While EU regional policy is supposed to benefit local and regional areas, analyses have shown how it is often used by member state national governments as a redistributive mechanism to offset some of the costs of EU membership to national treasuries (for example Bache, 1999; Bachtler et al., 2013).

**Media and public support**

The potentially negative attitude of local media and the difficulty in securing broader public support have also been identified (Briggs, 2010, p. 12; Casson & Dardanelli, 2012, p. 609; van der Heiden, 2010, p. 160). Even though the benefits of LGTN might be tangible and readily apparent, securing citizen support is seen as difficult. For example
Briggs (2010, p. 12) notes that even when trying to secure funding:

Local areas also feel under pressure to show how their international work relates to the interests of citizens at home which can make the considerable preparation and groundwork needed for these kinds of bids difficult to justify publicly.

Because of the perceived negative attitude of local citizens, most local authorities avoid including them in their transnational networking activities, preferring instead “to organise their international activities behind closed doors” (van der Heiden, 2010, p. 162). The media is often managed by “keeping a low profile, withholding information, and communications management, only presenting positive stories” (Casson & Dardanelli, 2012, p. 609). Hamedinger (2011, p. 112) notes that this has led to “a deficit concerning a general or public awareness for the European dimension of urban policies”.

6.2.3 Summary and analytical framework

This section reviewed both the practitioner and academic literature on the effectiveness of LGTN, and has identified a number of factors which affect successful engagement. These factors exist both at the level of local authorities and above them. Factors at the local level fall largely within the control of councils.

Section 6.2.1 showed that many of the factors councils felt determine successful engagement in LGTN exist at the local level. Section 6.2.2 has shown the existing academic literature is predominantly focused on factors external to local government, such as the structure and organization of transnational networks (for example Bouteligier, 2013; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009), or barriers present at the national level. Furthermore the academic literature has largely investigated the question of effectiveness from the level of networks themselves (for example Bouteligier, 2013). Two gaps therefore remain present in the literature. Firstly, factors and barriers affecting effective engagement in LGTN present at the local level
have been largely overlooked. Secondly, the perceptions of local actors are similarly neglected. The empirical data analysis below is able to address both of these shortcomings.

The factors identified in the above literature review allow an analytical framework to be advanced, through which the empirical data can be examined (see Figure 6.3). This framework moves beyond the model of effectiveness advanced in the public administration literature (Provan & Milward, 1995; Provan & Sebastian, 1998; Turrini et al., 2010) (see Section 6.1). While it builds on the tradition of this literature by recognizing structural factors present at the network level—and more generally factors external of local authorities—it also accounts for factors present at the level of individual councils participating in LGTN which affect successful engagement. As has been shown, these local level factors can be further categorized into the structures local authorities put in place and the agency of local actors. It is at this local level where councils have the most control over the effectiveness of their engagement. While there is inevitably overlap, this heuristic classification provides a useful framework through which to structure the empirical data analysis.

Figure 6.3: Analytical framework for investigating factors affecting effective engagement in LGTN

432 Van der Heiden’s (2010) study is a notable exception, although it has an exclusive focus on cities.
433 As will be shown, for example, language has both local agency and external structural aspects to it.
6.3 Local perceptions on effective engagement in LGTN

As argued, the perceptions of local actors is important in how local government assesses the effectiveness of engagement in LGTN and ultimately if participation is to continue. The qualitative empirical approach and data collection methods adopted by this thesis—specifically semi-structured qualitative interviews with local government actors—provides a way to access these local level perspectives (Robson 2002, p. 271).

As part of the data collection, participants were asked what barriers they faced in achieving their aims through LGTN. They were further asked to outline ways these hindrances could be overcome and to identify examples of best practice when it came to participating in LGTN (see Appendix G). The 68 semi-structured interviews undertaken thus provide a rich source of data, detailing—from a local government perspective—how successfully councils feel they engage in LGTN and the factors which affect this. This forms the bulk of the empirical analysis below. The interview data is supplemented with an analysis of scrutiny committee reports (East Sussex County Council 2001a; Hampshire County Council 2002; 2003a; 2003b; Medway Council 2003; Portsmouth City Council 2009c; West Sussex County Council 2002a; 2003a; 2004a). These documents review and assess local authority engagement in LGTN, so provide an additional useful source of local government perceptions on the effectiveness of this activity and barriers councils face.

6.3.1 Local factors: structures

The presence of a European strategy

The need to have clear objectives for LGTN was recognized by participants, who felt it was important to clearly define, articulate and understand the benefits sought. As
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

noted by one:

it’s quite important to be very clear about your aims and objectives.\footnote{436}

This was further underlined by multilateral network staff. For example:

a member region coming to us, or even a sub-regional member coming to us, has to be quite clear in its own mind about what its expectations are from us in terms of how it justifies to itself what it feels are the returns from membership of an organization such as ours.\footnote{436}

Participants therefore felt that in order to be successful, local authorities had to set out their goals and what returns they wanted to see before participating in LGTN. Yet, there was a perception among some participants that many councils did not have this clear vision, and this affected their ability to successfully engage. As noted by one:

Understanding what you want to get out of it and why is key to this… and too often that’s overlooked, I would suggest, in the local authority context, or being paid lip service to but it actually doesn’t have any deep roots into the organization, and that’s where the problems arise.\footnote{437}

Indeed, one member of multilateral network staff onserved that:

Sometimes, some members don’t have a very clear strategic vision themselves. They are members because they think it’s good. Their strategic vision is blurred into other issues.\footnote{438}

Indeed, scrutiny reviews conducted by some councils drew attention to a perceived lack of clarity of objectives and the need to have a strategic vision in place (Hampshire County Council 2002, 2003a; Portsmouth City Council 2009c; West Sussex County Council 2003a).

The need to link such a strategic vision to the wider corporate aims of local authorities was also recognized. This was regularly referred to as “main-streaming” by participants. As one report explains:

\footnote{435 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 24).}
\footnote{436 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 17).}
\footnote{437 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).}
\footnote{438 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).}
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whereby the Council’s European work is not seen as something separate and distinct from the Council’s other work, but rather exists to support and enhance the achievement of the Council’s overall priorities. (East Sussex County Council 2001a)

However, some participants felt LGTN was seen as an optional ‘bolt on’ rather than a strategic tool to address council-wide priorities. As one participant observed:

some people view European work, international work, as an add on to what they’re doing, but I think it’s all about bringing in and supporting the delivery of your core priorities ... it’s about making sure, you know, it contributes to your existing work place, aspirations and needs.

While the practitioner literature recommends adopting a European or international strategy to ensure the goals of LGTN are clearly outlined, the experience of one officer was that most councils engaging in this activity did not have such documents in place:

many of the organizations will not have a European strategy, so you’re operating then under a sort of ‘well do you want to do things on the European front? Where’s your strategy?’ And if you haven’t got a European strategy, is Europe incorporated into the strategic documents that are held within corporately, organizationally? And if they’re not even at that level then what about departments, is Europe actually within the environmental department’s business plan? Because if it’s not in any of that then someone comes to you and says ‘we want to get some European funding’, well rather than just saying we want the funding it has to sit within a broader framework of what you want to achieve. Where’s your strategy? Where do you want to get to? Because if you don’t really have that it’s difficult.

Indeed, the adoption of dedicated European and international strategies was varied across the councils studied, as illustrated in Table 6.2. In England, Kent, Brighton and Hove and Southampton had up-to-date strategies in place; as noted in Section 5.2.2 Southampton’s and Brighton and Hove’s were timed to coincide with the EU’s regional policy programming period (2007–2013). Medway, East Sussex and West Sussex all had strategies in the past, but these had not been updated and were considered lapsed.

439 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 11; Int. 12; Int. 23 Int. 30; Int. 40; Int. 41; Int. 46; Int. 47).
440 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 12).
441 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>Status of European / international strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>Dedicated strategy in place (Kent County Council, 2007c).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medway</td>
<td>Dedicated strategy not up-to-date / lapsed (Medway Council, 1999). New strategy planned but not currently under development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex</td>
<td>Dedicated strategy not up-to-date / lapsed (East Sussex County Council, 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton and Hove</td>
<td>Dedicated strategy in place (Brighton &amp; Hove City Council, 2007c).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sussex</td>
<td>Dedicated strategy not up-to-date / lapsed (West Sussex County Council, 2001, 2002b, 2006a).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>No dedicated strategy in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
<td>No dedicated strategy in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>Dedicated strategy in place (Southampton City Council, 2007b).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isle of Wight</td>
<td>No dedicated strategy in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nord-Pas de Calais</td>
<td>No dedicated strategy in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picardie</td>
<td>Dedicated strategy currently under development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haute-Normandie</td>
<td>No dedicated strategy in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basse-Normandie</td>
<td>Dedicated strategy currently under development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bretagne</td>
<td>Targets for transnational networking set in departmental budget plan (Conseil régional de Bretagne, 2011). Dedicated strategy currently under development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: Status of dedicated European / international strategies adopted by the councils studied (as of 2012, based on documents and interviews)

Hampshire, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight had no strategies in place at all. In France, none of the authorities studied had a dedicated European or international strategy, although Bretagne had a budget plan which outlined key targets for the European and international department (Conseil régional de Bretagne, 2011).

While some councils did not have an up-to-date strategy document in place, there was nevertheless a recognition of the importance of having one. To this end participants from Medway, Picardie, Basse-Normandie and Bretagne noted that such
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

strategies were either planned or currently under development\textsuperscript{442}. In other councils without dedicated European and international strategies, goals of LGTN were often articulated in other corporate or departmental plans. For example, Nord-Pas de Calais had a number of so-called schémas or policy specific strategies, and LGTN featured heavily in these\textsuperscript{443}. LGTN also featured as part of the Isle of Wight’s green energy and tourism strategies, for example\textsuperscript{444}.

Selection of appropriate partners and networks

Again participants recognized the need for local authorities to think carefully about selecting partners and networks, so not to waste time and resources on ineffective partnerships. As one participant said:

finding the right partner is a bit of a lottery. So you can spend and waste time, and therefore money, in discovering that the partner actually is not going to be very good\textsuperscript{445}.

As shown in the previous chapter, local authorities regularly pursued specific networks to achieve specific strategic aims.

In terms of bilateral networking, local authorities felt it was more effective to engage with localities which shared common characteristics with their own\textsuperscript{446}. For example, in the case of Picardie:

[co-operation] was quite effective with Thüringen because there are some similarities between our two areas. I would say that they have a problem of old industry decline and are looking for new industry, new innovative industry with green technology for example, and it’s also quite a rural area, so the importance of agriculture and agro-economics. There are others, but these are two major aspects of the common link between our two regions\textsuperscript{447}.

\textsuperscript{442} Interviews with English local officer, July 2012, and French regional officers, July 2012 and August 2012 (Int. 19; Int. 36; Int. 37; Int. 40).
\textsuperscript{443} Interviews with French regional officers, September 2012 (Int. 61; Int. 62).
\textsuperscript{444} Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 51).
\textsuperscript{445} Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 48).
\textsuperscript{446} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 11; Int. 34; Int. 37; Int. 38; Int. 65; Int. 68).
\textsuperscript{447} Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 65).
To this end, councils were conscious that they should only develop links with regions who shared similar socio-economic and geographical characteristics. As noted by one participant from Portsmouth:

Every year I get two or three people wanting, ‘wouldn’t it be nice to twin with us’? Well for what purpose? Some of them are really bizarre. There was a woman who came to us with this scheme to twin with Rabat or Medina . . . There’ve been other people who are currently suggesting we should have links with somewhere in north-eastern Netherlands. Well if we’re going to do twin links at all it has got to be with one of the parts of Rotterdam because that’s the type of place we should link with.[448]

This equally applied to East Sussex who stressed the need to avoid links with urban areas and instead focus on more rural regions:

we were actually twinned with a Paris suburb which was historical, it was absolute nonsense because it had nothing in common with East Sussex. Whereas Seine-Maritime and the Somme, who were our Interreg partners, were much more like us economically and geographically[449]

These geographical and socio-economic similarities had to be complemented with similar competences between the two organizations involved:

It’s not enough to have geographical similarities or positions, or geographical distance to the capital, it’s not enough. You need to have similar ways to work and similar fields to work in[450]

For example, while Basse-Normandie and Hampshire were geographically and economically similar, the differences in the competences between the two councils involved placed limits on their ability to co-operate effectively. Indeed this was one of the reasons given for why this bilateral link had become less active in recent years[451].

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[448] Interview with English councillor, December 2012 (Int. 68). In this case it was felt that a partnership with Rotterdam would be more effective because they shared with Portsmouth similarities in urban development and its port city status.
[449] Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).
[450] Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 37).
[451] Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 37).
Despite recognizing that bilateral networks should be chosen based on socio-economic, geographical and administrative similarities, there was a perception among some participants that this was not always happening. One felt:

> it’s more scattergun, they could be more strategic about saying these regions or these cities we want to work with because they’ve got similar problems with us. So they don’t actually do this appraisal exercise in quite the thorough way than perhaps they might do.

Indeed several participants noted that some local authorities had initially chosen unsuitable bilateral partners who had little in common with them, and that this led to what were perceived as ineffective partnerships. As discussed earlier, East Sussex—again largely rural—had developed a link with a Paris suburb which was later abandoned. Southampton’s link with Rems-Murr Kreis in Germany—another largely rural area—was also criticized as there was little similarity between the two:

> it was a totally ridiculous twinning link . . . it was just outside Stuttgart and there was a group of smallish towns who got together in a Kreis and we tried to get the exchanges going, but in the end you could just see it was just going to become a bit social and jolly and all the rest of it, and we didn’t really have much time for that. So in the end that one fizzled out.

The same principles applied to participation in multilateral networks and transnational projects; local authorities had to think carefully about which networks to participate in, and only engage in those which fit their strategic objectives. Again, there was a perception that not all councils were adopting this strategic approach. Indeed one member of multilateral network staff felt councils were at risk of determining network participation based on cost, rather than what they sought to achieve:

> they have not so much budget to go in these networks, so they try to select the more effective ones, but sometimes the decision is not so good, because sometimes they say ‘yes we choose this one, it’s not so expensive’. But it’s not the best criteria.

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452 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).
453 Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).
454 Interview with former English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 38).
455 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 35).
By not giving due consideration to targeting their networking activities strategically, local authorities were often unnecessarily duplicating many of their transnational links and wasting limited resources. As noted by one participant:

> I sometimes wonder why if you’re a member of Eurocities and you pay €15,000 a year, why do you need to have an individual representative office as well?  

Engaging in appropriate transnational projects was made difficult by the perception that Interreg and other EU funding programmes which often facilitated this activity were not particularly well designed. Indeed it was felt they rarely met the needs of local communities as priorities for these programmes were often determined at national and European levels, and councils found it difficult to marry their objectives with those of the programmes. As one participant highlighted:

> The number of times that you try to align what you want to do with what the European Commission wants to do, and it doesn’t quite knit.

It was also felt the eligible areas for Interreg programmes were inappropriate. For example, the Interreg IVa programmes were supposed to foster close cross-border co-operation, but the effectiveness of this had been reduced as the eligible area was progressively increased to cover the whole English Channel and a large part of the North Sea coast (see Figure 4.4). As one participant noted:

> I think for a council, especially a council that is so closely geographically linked to northern France, I think the opportunities or the understanding of what can be achieved has now been some way diluted by the fact that the range of the co-operation is not just cross-Channel any more, it’s broader EU wide. And I’m sure that has its merits, but equally we run from Essex right round to . . . [Cornwall] . . . It’s so wide and diverse that you actually wonder was it ever designed to foster better cross-border relationships.

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456 Interview with multilateral network, July 2012, (Int. 06).
457 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 25; Int. 41; Int. 43).
458 Interview with English councillor, July 2012 (Int. 25).
459 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 32; Int. 57).
460 Interview with English councillor, June 2012 (Int. 32).
The variety of EU funding programmes and overlapping eligible areas also led to confusion among councils over which schemes they should be participating in.

**Resourcing and investment in LGTN**

As discussed in Section 5.2.4, local authorities recognized that securing benefits from LGTN often required an initial investment; this was particularly the case for obtaining funding, but applied to all benefits sought. In this way participants felt that adequate investment in LGTN was necessary, and that the greater the investment, the greater the return. As two explained:

> if you look at the Olympics and the hunt for gold medals, there is a direct correlation between how much you put into resources and training as to how much you then get delivered in terms of the medal table at the end. . . . It’s no different in our world. . . . local authorities need to be in there at the table, and their resources will determine to what extent that’s going to happen.

The more you put in the more you get out, and if there are genuine resource constraints as to how much you can put in, you get less out.

As one report acknowledged, increased investment, particularly in staff:

> will enable an immediate improvement in the quality, range and scale of the service.

However, while the need for investment was acknowledged, the reality was that—in comparison to other areas of local authority activity—involvement in LGTN only accounted for a very small proportion of overall council budgets. As admitted by one participant:

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461 Interview with English local officer, September 2012, and French départemental officer, August 2012 (Int. 45; Int. 57).

462 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 09; Int. 11; Int. 18; Int. 22; Int. 23; Int. 45; Int. 60; Int. 64; Int. 67).

463 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).

464 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06).

465 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 02; Int. 03; Int. 21; Int. 57).
We operate any of these European and foreign activities on an extremely small budget.\footnote{466}{Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 02).}

While in some cases this was not seen as a hindrance\footnote{467}{One English councillor noted that their council’s investment of £50,000—a small proportion of its £1.7billion annual budget—in LGTN had achieved an “enormous amount” (Interview with English councillor, April 2012 [Int. 02]).}, in most it was felt the small investment placed limits on how active a council could be. For example, one French participant noted that the limited investment made by their authority meant they could only be involved as ‘partners’ in transnational networks, rather than ‘leaders’.\footnote{468}{Interview with French d´epartemental officer, August 2012 (Int. 57).}

Indeed, Interreg and multilateral network staff observed limited investment tended to be one of the main barriers hindering active engagement in LGTN.\footnote{469}{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 09; Int. 22; Int. 23; Int. 64).}

In line with the practitioner guidance, councils recognized that, when investing in LGTN, they not only had to budget for staff costs and—in the case of multilateral networking—membership fees, but also the cost of staff training and travel for officers and politicians to participate in meetings.\footnote{470}{Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).} However, there was a perception among multilateral network staff that most local authorities simply budgeted for the membership fee, without allocating resources for further engagement. As a result local authorities were not making full use of their transnational links largely because they lacked the capacity to fully engage.\footnote{471}{Interviews with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06; Int. 09; Int. 10; Int. 23; Int. 26).}

As one participant explained:

our membership fee is very low, it’s €6,000, so it’s quite low. ... But it implies the members are active. So if they pay the membership fee, they cannot necessarily pay the transport to come to meetings. If you don’t come to the meetings, then it’s not necessarily useful.\footnote{472}{Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).}

Indeed multilateral network staff noted their organizations could only provide benefits if their members were actively engaged by participating in meetings and communicating with the secretariat, something that a limited investment by councils hindered.\footnote{473}{Interviews with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09; Int. 23).}
This limited investment in LGTN also made it difficult to recruit and retain good quality staff with the necessary skills to co-ordinate participation within councils. As one participant noted:

I couldn’t keep my staff because I wasn’t allowed to reward them, there’s very tight pay structures. I’d already got them on the highest pay they could get on their grades and there was no way I could keep them. The fact that they were now four years better at what they were doing, they’d done a lot of training, they’d learnt a lot, they were very good at what they were doing, I couldn’t keep them. They’d got a better salary elsewhere.\textsuperscript{474}

As already discussed in Section 5.2.4 participation in transnational projects—particularly those part-funded by the EU—often required local authorities to commit to a level of match funding. However, in the context of limited investment in LGTN, councils often found it difficult to mobilize the necessary level of funding\textsuperscript{475}.

The limited investment in LGTN had recently been exacerbated by the financial crisis, which had led to budget cuts affecting all councils studied\textsuperscript{476}. For example, Kent faced a budget reduction of 25 per cent\textsuperscript{477} while Portsmouth faced a 33 per cent reduction\textsuperscript{478}. French authorities too were affected, although not to the same extent; Nord-Pas de Calais, for example, faced a budget reduction of five to ten per cent\textsuperscript{479}. Multilateral network staff identified this as a trend affecting all European local authorities\textsuperscript{480}.

This situation had a direct impact on the investment councils could make. Portsmouth’s budget for this activity, for example, was reduced by half\textsuperscript{481}.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{474} Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).
\textsuperscript{475} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 13; Int. 16; Int. 18; Int. 20; Int. 21; Int. 22; Int. 24; Int. 33; Int. 34 Int. 39; Int. 43; Int. 46; Int. 48; Int. 56; Int. 69).
\textsuperscript{476} See Bailey et al. (2015) for the impact of this in England and Pflieger (2014) for the impact in France. CEMR and Dexia Crédit Local (2012) and Davey (2012) provide a general European picture.
\textsuperscript{477} Interviews with Interreg staff, May 2012 and French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 22; Int. 61).
\textsuperscript{478} Interview with English councillor, December 2012 (Int. 68).
\textsuperscript{479} Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 61).
\textsuperscript{480} Interviews with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 10; Int. 23; Int. 30; Int. 33; Int. 35). See CEMR and Dexia Crédit Local (2012) for a European-wide perspective on local authority budget pressures following the financial crisis.
\textsuperscript{481} Interview with English councillor, December 2012 (Int. 68).
\end{flushright}
similar situation was observed in all councils studied, as well as local authorities across Europe\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 10; Int. 11; Int. 13; Int. 22; Int. 23; Int. 27; Int. 30; Int. 31; Int. 33; Int. 34; Int. 35; Int. 39; Int. 49; Int. 50; Int. 52; Int. 61; Int. 64; Int. 68).}. One indicator of this was the withdrawal of local authorities from multilateral networks, as they could no longer afford the membership fees\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 09; Int. 35; Int. 37).}. As recognized by one member of multilateral network staff:

regions are nowadays faced with a strict, they have to save money, they have real cuts, cuts in personnel, cuts in everything. So the involvement in such a regional network is always under very strong pressure ... they’re cutting regional networks\footnote{Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 30).}.

Another noted that in the current financial climate:

\begin{quote}
I know it’s almost a holy miracle when I receive a membership fee paid by some of my members\footnote{Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).}.
\end{quote}

Indeed achieving efficiency savings was the main factor behind the Isle of Wight’s decision to leave the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), for example \cite{Isle of Wight Council 2005}. In this way ceasing participation in LGTN provided a short term method for overcoming budgetary pressures, but this was often at the expense of the long-term gains it offers.

In both English and French authorities participants drew attention to the fact that this activity was not a mandatory service which they had to provide. In England there was no direct statutory requirement to engage beyond their borders\footnote{Interview with English local officers, May 2012 and July 2012, and former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 04; Int. 14; Int. 34). Although in England there is no legislation prohibiting local authorities from international engagement either, something Keating (1999, pp. 11–12) argues has given local government scope to act. Indeed in some cases local authorities would interpret their statutory duties to permit international engagement, as was observed with promoting economic development (see Section 5.5.1) \cite{Medway Council 2002}.}, while in France it was a case of ‘la libre administration’, where it the decision of the local political leadership to participate or not and to what extent\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 50).}. Indeed, as noted above,
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even where there was a strategic commitment to participate in LGTN, this was not always ‘mainstreamed’ into councils’ core areas of activities, reinforcing its status as an optional area of activity.\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 11; Int. 12; Int. 23 Int. 30; Int. 40; Int. 41; Int. 46; Int. 47).} This made LGTN an easy target for spending cuts, despite the benefits it brought. As explained by one participant:

\begin{quote}
the main objective was to cut spending, and what local government does then, it only spends the money it must spend, and the European work, although it brings in money, it’s not mandatory, there’s no duty to do it, there’s no power to do it.\footnote{Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).}
\end{quote}

Indeed another participant noted that investment in staff focusing on LGTN and other EU engagement activities was regularly questioned at a political level, particularly when there were discussions over budget reductions:

\begin{quote}
There are in the cabinet those who would actually cut, and in fact there were those who recommended cutting a couple of years ago the money we put into twinning entirely, so that we’d abandon that whole area. And there are those who feel that having an EU officer is a luxury, in that that person mat being in money but in the current stage can we afford things which are EU funded?\footnote{Interview with English councillor, December 2012 (Int. 68).}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
In the context of austerity, therefore, councils tended to purely focus on local issues and the core, statutory services which they were legally obliged to deliver.\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 11; Int. 16; Int. 18; Int. 31; Int. 36; Int. 47; Int. 62; Int. 65; Int. 69).}
\end{quote}

As highlighted by one participant:

\begin{quote}
it’s very difficult to explain if there’s money going to a European budget or a European officer, that is then taken away from adult services or children’s services. How are you going to explain that to the voter?\footnote{Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 18).}
\end{quote}

Even without the context of tightening budgets, core services were still regarded as more important than LGTN by staff and politicians. As two participants noted:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[488] Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 11; Int. 12; Int. 23 Int. 30; Int. 40; Int. 41; Int. 46; Int. 47).
\item[489] Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).
\item[490] Interview with English councillor, December 2012 (Int. 68).
\item[491] Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 11; Int. 16; Int. 18; Int. 31; Int. 36; Int. 47; Int. 62; Int. 65; Int. 69).
\item[492] Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 18).
\end{footnotes}
It is probably difficult to say that all the departments of the region see that European co-operation is a major thing and the major policy internally. I don’t think so because we are a regional authority, we have a priority for local and regional issues, so I think the different internal departments have these priorities in mind first of all.

The whole purpose of a council is to deliver services to its local people, and then we question why the hell do we need to talk beyond our borders?

This approach of focusing on basic services was not always successful. As discussed in Section 5.2, LGTN offered the opportunity to secure funding, and councils recognized that in adverse financial climates this could be used to mitigate against budgetary pressures. Yet, it required significant up front investment in order to realize a return. Local authorities therefore faced a choice: to make the up front investment to receive long term benefits, or to gain the short term savings by not participating in LGTN altogether, but then not being able to benefit in the long run. As one report noted:

it is an option to stop all international links. It is not a statutory service, so the Council could decide to stop. This would save money, release resources for other priorities, and would be a radical outcome . . . However, this would mean the Council loses access to funding opportunities and to influencing policy. (Hampshire County Council 2002)

Internal co-ordination of LGTN

The need to co-ordinate LGTN activities within councils and across departments to ensure maximum benefit was achieved was similarly recognized by participants. As one member of multilateral network staff argued:

It helps when a region or sub-regional organization is well organized in terms of being able to exploit what we are able to provide, and it doesn’t get blocked by one person, but it is being fed down to those people who can make the best use of that information or the opportunities.

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493 Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).
494 Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 02).
495 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 17; Int. 19; Int. 23; Int. 34; Int. 38; Int. 43; Int. 47; Int. 48; Int. 54; Int. 56; Int. 57; Int. 68; Int. 69).
496 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 17).
Yet, there was a perception among participants that local government was prone to so-called ‘silo working’, where individual departments worked in isolation rather than with each other. In the words of one:

To some extent the different departments in local government are very independent of each other.497

In some cases this meant individual departments were participating in transnational networks independently, which the rest of the council might be unaware of. Indeed, when asked to provide an overview of the LGTN activity engaged in by their organization one participant responded:

To be honest I do think there is work going on which I don’t know a lot about in the environmental sustainability team here. I think they’ve been involved in the Interreg type projects, but I don’t know a lot of the detail.498

This made it difficult for LGTN to be adequately co-ordinated across the council as staff were unaware of all that was taking place. As noted by one participant:

with a big organization like this, trying to keep tabs on all the activity that’s going on, that’s part of my role, part of the policy officer’s role, just to know what we’re doing, what we’re accessing, and you can imagine it’s really hard . . . so you don’t always know everything that’s going on499

This meant there could be a lack of a co-ordinated, organization wide approach to LGTN, with individual departments and even staff and councillors seeking separate benefits.500 This was often despite the organizational development benefits LGTN could bring (as shown in Chapter 5).

The presence of this silo working and poor co-ordination meant the benefits of LGTN were not being fully capitalized upon and were often confined to single departments, rather than being felt across the whole organization. For example, horizon

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497 Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).
498 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 24).
499 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 43).
500 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 21).
scanning information provided by multilateral networks was often not circulated across the council where it might also be valuable. As noted by a member of multilateral network staff:

I think within a local authority as well sometimes the information is not diffused. I mean the information we send out, we send out a lot of information, which is not disseminated internally as well as it could be.  

This was recognized in one scrutiny review, which recommended better co-ordination between council departments (East Sussex County Council [2001a]).

As discussed above, the practitioner literature recommends using centralized European officers or dedicated European departments to co-ordinate participation and councils recognized the value of this. Indeed local authorities have traditionally employed such officers or departments and this has been a feature of both English and French local government since the 1990s (Audit Commission [1991], Goldsmith & Sperling [1997], pp. 99–100; John [2001], p. 77). Such staff and teams often had corporate oversight of LGTN and had a strategic position within the authority’s hierarchy. Their importance was recognized in both scrutiny reports and by participants (East Sussex County Council [2001a], Portsmouth City Council [2009c]); as emphasized by one member of Interreg staff:

You need someone who deals with these kinds of things, you need a department dealing with international partnerships or EU funding co-operation projects, for sure, or at least one person who can have an overview.  

Participants, however, felt that the presence of European officers and departments varied across councils. One noted:

there’s massive disparity between staffing levels. If you compare Brighton and Kent to us, for example, there’s me on 0.4 of a day doing economic development funding, which is domestic funding and European funding, and we have a policy officer who will be going a bit of European funding . . . and then you

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501 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23).
502 Interview with Interreg staff, September 2012 (Int. 54).
have the Brightons and Kents and Suffolks who have teams of people purely doing European stuff.\textsuperscript{503}

One councillor admitted that:

Portsmouth has not been very good at this, but some of the major big cities, the Manchesters, Leeds, Bradfords of this world, have international offices of some sorts.\textsuperscript{504}

Table 6.3 summarizes the current situation in the councils studied, and draws attention to this variation. All of the French councils studied had European departments present, but the picture among English councils was more mixed. Kent and Brighton and Hove were the only two to have European departments, while Hampshire has long invested in a single dedicated European officer. East Sussex, West Sussex and Southampton previous had European departments, but had all closed by 2012. Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight have never had European departments, nor had dedicated European officers.

This variation is partly explained by recent austerity measures made by councils. Indeed the closure of previously well staffed European departments in East Sussex, West Sussex and Southampton is a direct result of budget cuts in these councils.\textsuperscript{505}

While the French authorities studied still had European departments, they too had been affected; Nord-Pas de Calais, for instance, reduced the number working on LGTN in its European team from 15 to one.\textsuperscript{506} It was noted that in the current context and across Europe:

European officers are few and far between, often seen as a bit of a luxury, and when they leave the organization they’re typically not replaced.\textsuperscript{507}

\textsuperscript{503} Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 43).
\textsuperscript{504} Interview with English councillor, December 2012 (Int. 68).
\textsuperscript{505} Interviews with English local officers, May 2012 and July 2012, and former English local officers, June 2012 (Int. 13; Int. 15; Int. 18; Int. 24; Int. 34; Int. 39; Int. 52).
\textsuperscript{506} Interviews with French regional officers, September 2012 (Int. 61; Int. 62). Some of the staff who had been working on transnational networking had been transferred to other departments within the council.
\textsuperscript{507} Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>Status of European officers / departments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>Corporate European department present. Approx. six staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medway</td>
<td>No corporate European department. Transnational networking managed by a ‘European Funding Officer’ in the Economic Development and Social Regeneration department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex</td>
<td>Corporate European department closed. Transnational networking now managed by an ‘External Funding Manager’ in the Community Services department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton and Hove</td>
<td>Corporate European department present. Approx. five staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sussex</td>
<td>Corporate European department closed. Transnational networking now managed by a ‘External Funding Accountant’ in the Finance department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>No corporate European department. Transnational networking managed by a ‘European Policy Officer’ in the Chief Executive’s department and an ‘Economic Development Project Officer’ in the Economy, Transport and Environment department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
<td>No corporate European department. Transnational networking managed by a ‘European Funding Officer’ in the City Development and Cultural Services department and a part-time ‘Local Democracy Assistant’ in the Democratic Services department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>Corporate European department closed. Transnational networking now managed by a ‘Project Manager’ and a ‘Regeneration Officer’ in the Skills, Economy and Housing Renewal department. Some responsibilities devolved to other departments in the council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isle of Wight</td>
<td>No corporate European department. Transnational networking managed by a ‘Economic Project Development Officer’ in the Economy and Environment department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nord-Pas de Calais</td>
<td>Corporate European department present, but recently reduced to one member of staff. Some responsibilities devolved to other departments in the council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picardie</td>
<td>Corporate European department present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haute-Normandie</td>
<td>Corporate European department present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basse-Normandie</td>
<td>Corporate European department present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bretagne</td>
<td>Corporate European department present.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3: Status of European officers / departments in the councils studied (as of 2012, based on document and interview analysis)
These budget cuts and the resulting closure of European departments and reduction in dedicated staff had a number of knock on effects for how well councils engaged in LGTN. As one report acknowledged:

The resulting reduction in staffing levels has involved a reconfiguration of the European workload so that activities continue to match available resources. Budget review has meant that progressing a lot of the recommendations [for transnational networking as advised by the scrutiny committee] has been more difficult than would otherwise be the case as people cut their budget to the bare essentials. (West Sussex County Council 2004a)

Local authorities often struggled to effectively reallocate responsibility for LGTN. As one participant observed:

sometimes organizations can’t identify a member of staff that would be the right person to do this 508

Typically, where local authorities wished to continue participating in LGTN, but without dedicated staff support, the role of managing engagement was passed to other existing staff, usually those with an economic development or external funding role. This was the case with East Sussex, West Sussex and Southampton, for example. This situation was not only confined to the councils studied, but was more representative of English local government in general 509. Consequently, there has been a trend of devolving LGTN from centralized corporate European departments to single members of staff within departments throughout the organization 510. This meant many staff now working on LGTN were often doing this in addition to their existing workloads 511. In the words of one participant:

We’re doing the same work, if not more, but with a lot less people 512.

508 Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 58).
509 Interview with Interreg staff, December 2012 (Int. 69).
510 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 24).
511 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 11; Int. 21; Int. 22; Int. 26; Int. 39; Int. 43; Int. 49; Int. 54; Int. 56; Int. 61).
512 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 39).
Because staff were undertaking multiple workloads, less time was being dedicated to LGTN. As explained by one participant:

I started my current role . . . in January 2012, and that is a role that covers both UK policy and European policy. Previously that was done by two separate people, but I’m covering EU and UK policy. My involvement is less than what my predecessor would have covered.

This often had a detrimental impact on the effectiveness of networking as an insufficient amount of time had been dedicated to working on it. As observed by one participant with experience of working on transnational projects:

What I see from my experience is a lot of my partners . . . put a lot of time for officers to participate in projects, but actually this is additional work to the current workload of officers . . . As a result partners don’t spend the time they should spend on projects, especially because their usual activity is a priority.

Even where European departments had not been disbanded, a reduction in staff meant councils found it difficult to dedicate enough time to all of their transnational links. As noted by one participant:

It was a whole service with 15 officers and now with different cuts . . . I’m the only one in charge of European co-operation issues . . . it is very difficult to manage at the same time the relationship with Kent, with Wallonia, Flanders, etc. It’s not so easy, so maybe sometimes you have a lack of time or you have to make some priorities. For example, now I’m very involved in the co-operation with Kent . . . and it’s very long, very hard to put in place and to elaborate. While you’re organizing or trying to organize some meetings, technical or political meetings, with Kent, you lose time on the others.

The consequence of this, as observed by multilateral network staff, was that local authorities lacked the capacity to take full advantage of LGTN and were therefore often not receiving the full benefit from their participation. One officer admitted:

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513 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 21).
514 Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 49).
515 Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 61).
516 Interviews with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09; Int. 17; Int. 23).
we probably don’t use them as much as we should do. I know other local authorities use them a lot more than we do, but then they’re set up completely differently.\textsuperscript{517}

The limited number of officers working on LGTN also made it susceptible to staff turnover. As noted by a member of multilateral network staff:

when they step off because they win the lottery, they retire, they get promoted or whatever, then the commitment within the network of the region might decrease.\textsuperscript{518}

Additionally, staff who had been allocated the task of managing and co-ordinating LGTN often lacked sufficient status within organizations. One participant felt that:

often Europe is delegated down to a relatively low level within an organization and that person simply doesn’t have the clout or power to go round and actually get buy in from people higher up, the decision makers within the departments, to enable these things to go forward. And that’s where some of the problems arise.\textsuperscript{519}

This lack of status meant staff working on LGTN following the disbandment of European departments and officers could not provide the corporate co-ordination recommended in the practitioner guidance.

6.3.2 Local factors: agency

Leadership and support for LGTN: politicians

The need for political support and leadership was recognized by participants\textsuperscript{520} Two noted that:

Political support is absolutely paramount.\textsuperscript{521}

\textsuperscript{517} Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 39).
\textsuperscript{518} Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).
\textsuperscript{519} Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 11).
\textsuperscript{520} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 45; Int. 51; Int. 52; Int. 67).
\textsuperscript{521} Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 51).
There’s not much point in a local authority getting involved if there’s no political leadership. Its importance was further recognized in scrutiny reviews (Hampshire County Council, 2003a; Portsmouth City Council, 2009c; West Sussex County Council, 2004b). Political backing and involvement was crucial because it gave officers working on LGTN a sense of direction in what they should be working to achieve, and confidence that they would have the support to achieve it. In this way, political support enabled officers to undertake their roles without impediment. As two explained:

If you have the support at elected member level, it’s easier to get everything through. [political support] makes a real difference to me feeling able to have the time to put into the project.

While participants agreed about the importance of political leadership and support, the empirical data presents a mixed picture as to whether such support exists in councils studied. Among local and regional officers, some felt there was strong political support for LGTN. Others, however, gave more conditioned responses or noted political support was limited.

As noted above, the LGA advises designating a councillor responsible for European and international affairs (Handley, 2006, p. 13). This advice was explicitly recognized in one Brighton & Hove City Council (2007c) report, and by local authorities in general. Indeed, all but three of the councils studied—West Sussex, Southampton and the Isle of Wight—had a designated councillor in place at the time of fieldwork; all of these councillors sat on the council’s cabinet or had executive responsibility (see Table 6.4). West Sussex did have a councillor responsible for LGTN—the cabinet

522 Interview with English councillor, November 2012 (Int. 67).
523 Interview with English local officer, September 2012 (Int. 45).
524 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 52).
525 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 12; Int. 13; Int. 14; Int. 21; Int. 43; Int. 45 Int. 48; Int. 58; Int. 61; Int. 62).
526 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 08; Int. 15; Int. 19; Int. 24; Int. 39; Int. 40; Int. 51; Int. 52).
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority</th>
<th>Councillor / local politician responsible for transnational networking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>Deputy council leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medway</td>
<td>Portfolio holder for strategic development and economic growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex</td>
<td>Deputy council leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton and Hove</td>
<td>Lead councillor for European and international affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sussex</td>
<td>No designated councillor appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>Deputy council leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
<td>Deputy council leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>No designated councillor appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isle of Wight</td>
<td>No designated councillor appointed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nord-Pas de Calais</td>
<td>14th vice president for citizenship, decentralized co-operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and international relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picardie</td>
<td>4th vice president for economic development, agriculture, research,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>innovation, higher education, Europe and co-development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haute-Normandie</td>
<td>Deputy president and regional councillor for research and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basse-Normandie</td>
<td>10th vice president for international and inter-regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>co-operation and Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bretagne</td>
<td>7th vice president for international and 8th vice president for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Europe, the sea and the coast.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4: Nominated councillors responsible for LGTN (as at 2012, based on documents and interviews)

member for communications and public relations—but this post was abolished following a reshuffle\textsuperscript{527} In Southampton at the time of fieldwork the council had just held an election which led to a change in administration, and it was unclear how the new political leadership would be structured\textsuperscript{528} It was unclear if the Isle of Wight ever had a designated councillor responsible for LGTN. The absence of designated political leaders for LGTN in these authorities had a negative impact on how well officers in these councils were supported in their work\textsuperscript{529} For example, one participant felt:

\textsuperscript{527} Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 02).
\textsuperscript{528} Interviews with English local officers, May 2012 (Int. 15; Int. 24).
\textsuperscript{529} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 39; Int. 52).
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

There isn’t really . . . any steer from above that we should be doing this. This contrasted with those councils who had nominated politicians responsible for LGTN. Here officers were generally confident in the support they had from councillors and this gave them a clear mandate to work on LGTN and achieve benefits from it.

However, even where political support and leadership was present, it was rarely unanimous. While key politicians might lend their support to LGTN, this did not mean councillors as a whole were supportive. As noted by one officer:

Our president is very active in Brussels, but talking about the other elected members, it’s sometimes quite hard to know if they really want to get involved at the European level. So our difficulty is to everyday feel the political support of the regional council.

Even within governing cabinets opinion often varied. One participant highlighted how the only political supporter of LGTN was the council’s deputy leader, with other cabinet members having an “ambivalent” attitude. Councillors likewise confirmed they were sometimes lone supporters of LGTN in cabinets. For many councillors, participation in any form international engagement activity was seen as politically sensitive. As one participant put it:

there is something about Europe that makes politicians nervous.

Too often, then, political support and leadership for LGTN—where it existed—was confined to and dependent on a small number of enthusiastic councillors who held key positions in the council’s political leadership. One participant noted their authority was only effective because of:

530 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 39).
531 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 04; Int. 19; Int. 40; Int. 68).
532 Interview with French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 19).
533 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 04).
534 Interviews with English councillors, April 2012 and December 2012 (Int. 02; Int. 68).
535 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 04; Int.18; Int. 25; Int. 26; Int. 47; Int. 50; Int. 51; Int. 69).
536 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26).
the very strong support of our elected portfolio holder. Without the portfolio holder we would not be able to do it, because she’s been there since eight years, maybe even longer, and it’s because of her we managed to have stronger links with all the local authorities in France.\footnote{537}

This made LGTN susceptible to high political turnover, which had several negative effects. Firstly, it meant stable, continuous political leadership driving LGTN—as recommended in the best practice guidance—was lacking. As one member of multilateral network staff noted:

it’s nice to have continuity with people, but you never get that. It’s a false hope in local and regional government because they’re always changing.\footnote{538}

Personalities would change, and so too would their goals. This meant that officers working on LGTN were regularly having to adapt to new objectives. This is illustrated in the Isle of Wight case. The change in administration following the 2005 election led to a new political leadership, whose motivations for LGTN were based around obtaining funding. This marked a significant shift from the previous leadership, who were more focused on policy transfer and lobbying\footnote{539}. A similar process was observed in Southampton at the time of the fieldwork. While the structure and policies of the new leadership following the election were unclear, officers were nevertheless preparing for a significant shift in priorities. As one explained:

we have just had a change of political administration, as you’re probably aware, and it’s been substantial. . . . That in itself means the future has got to be unpicked and mapped. Prior to that we had four years of a Conservative administration and the two administrations, setting aside political ideology and policy, are in terms of business affairs fundamentally different, their approaches are often very different.\footnote{540}

Secondly, political turnover meant that politicians who were enthusiastic about LGTN and would actively engage might be replaced by those who were less interested.
As noted by one participant:

with all these things it can very much depend on individual people. So if you’ve got quite a charismatic political individual in one authority who is prepared to engage that will often enable things to happen, that’s the catalyst if you like. That person then might move on or be deselected or whatever, and then you suddenly find you’ve got quite a dreary individual who’s not very interesting . . . you can’t just assume these sorts of things will run forever\textsuperscript{541}

This was the case with West Sussex, where the councillor who provided leadership for LGTN was replaced by another in a cabinet reshuffle who lacked enthusiasm for this activity; this led to West Sussex’s gradual disengagement from a number of networks\textsuperscript{542}. Indeed changes in political administration—for example following an election—were seen as particularly risky for effective engagement in LGTN. This was not necessarily because an incoming political party might be opposed to LGTN\textsuperscript{543}, but because it led to a change in personnel among a council’s leadership who might not share previous individual politicians’ enthusiasm\textsuperscript{544}. This meant officers had to regularly convince incoming politicians of the value of LGTN. As noted by one participant:

Politicians change. So any time there is a new majority the officers need to convince the politicians that what their predecessor did was not bad\textsuperscript{545}

Thirdly, the risk of political turnover meant politicians were focused on securing benefits within a short electoral cycle to ensure any results were visible during their term of office. However, LGTN requires long-term investment. Consequently, there was a mismatch between what some political leaders expected to achieve and what LGTN was able to deliver in short periods\textsuperscript{546}. As explained by one participant:

\textsuperscript{541} Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26).
\textsuperscript{542} Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 02).
\textsuperscript{543} As noted in the previous chapter, engagement in transnational networking was rarely affected by party politics.
\textsuperscript{544} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 08; Int. 09; Int. 10; Int. 15; Int. 24; Int. 38; Int. 51; Int. 69).
\textsuperscript{545} Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).
\textsuperscript{546} Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 and Interreg staff, December 2012 (Int. 46; Int. 69).
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Making co-operation is a long process, to learn together, to know how out neighbour is working and after a while have the final results. So sometimes our politicians want results very quickly, but it’s not always possible.\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 46).}

Councils were therefore at risk of placing unrealistic expectations of what benefits could be delivered from LGTN within a short period.

While the level of political support varied, councils nevertheless attempted to maintain interest in LGTN among their councillors. As discussed above, local authorities regularly produced update reports highlighting what was being achieved (for example \textit{Hampshire County Council} \citeyear{2005a}; \textit{Isle of Wight Council} \citeyear{2003, 2004b}; \textit{Kent County Council} \citeyear{2007a, 2008, 2009b, 2010b, 2011}; \textit{Southampton City Council} \citeyear{2007b}). While these reports provide a justification for continued participation in LGTN, they also serve as an important communication tool to keep councillors informed. While most councils studied lacked the capacity, a small number also produced regular newsletters. Brighton and Hove, for example, produced regular \textit{International Update} newsletters (for example \textit{Brighton & Hove City Council} \citeyear{2013, 2014}).\footnote{Such newsletters also serve to communicate transnational networking activities to officers and the wider local community.}

\textbf{Leadership and support for LGTN: officers}

The need for leadership and support from officers—in addition to politicians—was also recognized and regarded as an important factor by participants.\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 13; Int. 23; Int. 38; Int. 39; Int. 40; Int. 41; Int. 45; Int. 47; Int. 57; Int. 58).} As noted by one member of Interreg staff, councils which effectively engage in LGTN have:

\begin{quote}
\textit{got someone who’s driving it from internally, whether that a top level or even at a lower officer level, there is also a driver within the organization.}\footnote{Interview with Interreg staff, September 2012 (Int. 47).}
\end{quote}

However, as with political support, there were mixed responses among participants as to whether this was present among officers; some noted there was a high level
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

of officer support\textsuperscript{551} while others felt there was little or no support present\textsuperscript{552}. Some felt that support varied among staff within councils, usually between different departments\textsuperscript{553}.

There was a perception that senior management within councils often adopted a risk averse attitude and this placed limits on their willingness to engage in LGTN\textsuperscript{554}. One former participant spoke of a meeting where:

the chief executive wheeled in the county secretary, the lawyer, the county treasurer, the finance guys and me, and they gave all the reasons why we couldn’t do anything. Basically no legal power, no money, too risky. And it was all about avoiding risk\textsuperscript{555}.

Another participant noted that:

it took about a year of reports, albeit informal ones, to management team on a twice-monthly basis to almost try and just culture some interest in EU funding, and there were lots of negatives: ‘it’s never going to happen, we’ll never get any money, we’ll never get the match funding’\textsuperscript{556}.

It was only after officers were permitted by management to take risks that they felt they could successfully engage\textsuperscript{557}.

While the support of senior officers was important, councils recognized that this was also required among all local authority staff. Indeed it was staff at lower levels who were usually the ones working on LGTN on a daily basis. It often required travel and working unsociable hours, a prospect which was often unattractive. As two officers explained:

not everybody wants to do that sort of work, because it does involve a lot of travelling and time out of the office and substantial hours\textsuperscript{558}.

\textsuperscript{551} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 38; Int. 40; Int. 48; Int. 58; Int. 67).
\textsuperscript{552} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 13; Int. 39).
\textsuperscript{553} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 34; Int. 45; Int. 68).
\textsuperscript{554} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 25; Int. 26; Int. 34; Int. 38; Int. 43; Int. 56).
\textsuperscript{555} Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).
\textsuperscript{556} Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 56).
\textsuperscript{557} Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 56).
\textsuperscript{558} Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 58).
you need the director’s support, but you also need to officers’ support. Even though some people think it’s granted, actually it’s not, because European work means out of hours, means additional work that people are not used to doing, it means flexibility and open-mindedness. If the officers are not willing to do that, the partnership won’t work.

Furthermore, some staff were daunted by the prospect of working on LGTN. This was often the case where, following the disbandment of dedicated European departments and officers, staff were given the responsibility for this activity in addition to their existing workload. Referring to a colleague’s experience, one participant felt:

she’s found it quite difficult I think to fit the work in part-time hours when she’s doing other work anyway and that’s really put her off. I think it’s really been quite a scary process for her.

This often meant staff were reluctant to undertake these additional duties and viewed LGTN negatively. In such cases it was seen as a secondary add on and was rarely given priority by staff assigned to work on it.

More broadly there was a perception among some participants that local authority staff within departments often lacked a vision or willingness to engage beyond their departmental remit or adopt an authority-wide approach as was required for effective engagement in LGTN. As noted by one participant:

we have colleagues that are very good at the technical level regarding their own competency, for example spatial planning or research or culture or environment, but they do not have a cross-sectoral way of thinking and at the EU level you do have to think like that . . . Our colleagues are too sectorally orientated.

Staff attitudes, therefore, could exacerbate the structural problems associated with ‘silo working’ discussed above.

559 Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 40).
560 Interview with English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 56).
561 Interview with Interreg staff, September 2012 and December 2012 (Int. 54; Int. 69).
562 Interview with French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 19).
The above discussion on the leadership and support of local politicians and staff confirms the impact of the agency of individual local level actors on effective engagement in LGTN. Indeed, many participants outlined how success often depended upon the enthusiasm and willingness of individuals within authorities.

While politicians and officer support were both factors involved in effective LGTN, both were required simultaneously. This is illustrated in the examples of East Sussex and Picardie. In both councils participants felt they had the support of political leaders, but were unable to effectively engage in LGTN because they were not supported by senior officers.

### Personal relationships

The role of personal relationships was also acknowledged by local authorities. Indeed, it was recognized that councillors often had a number of informal links and personal relationships, which councils seeking benefits from LGTN could capitalize on. This was particularly the case with lobbying and influencing policy. Councillors with links to MEPs, Committee of the Regions (CoR) members and Commission officials were seen as particularly valuable because it offered those involved in LGTN direct links to those involved in the EU policy process. As noted by one participant:

> we certainly encourage as much political input as possible because that is a very important dimension if you are looking at lobbying, trying to get a change of policy at the EU level. Politicians are listened to, they can talk to other politicians in a different way than say the way officers might engage with Commission officials, that sort of thing. So it’s very important to have people who are members of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels or who know their local MEPs and have a personal relationship with them. That is extremely important.

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563 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 12; Int. 20; Int. 21; Int. 34; Int. 47; Int. 56; Int. 57; Int. 58; Int. 68).

564 Interview with English local officer, May 2012, and French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 13; Int. 19).

565 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 06; Int. 16; Int. 19; Int. 26).

566 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26).
French local politicians were regarded as particularly adept at this because they often developed personal links with national government officials; indeed through the tradition of the *cumul des mandats* it was not uncommon for regional councillors and other local politicians to have simultaneous roles in the national government, and thus be in a position of influence, or at least know those who are.

Again, such relationships were susceptible to turnover and could be easily lost when individual councillors and officers left. As one participant acknowledged:

> Personal relationships are important, so when people leave or move on to new jobs this hinders the building of those personal relationships.

**Staff and politicians’ skills and knowledge**

Participants agreed with the practitioner guidance, recognizing that politicians and, in particular, staff responsible for LGTN required a specialized set of skills, including technical knowledge of the EU, its institutions and policy process, an understanding and appreciation of informal ‘Brussels politics’, project management and language skills. Indeed, where good quality staff with the necessary skills and experience were present, engagement in LGTN was perceived as successful. Yet such skills and knowledge were not always present.

A lack of EU knowledge was particularly prevalent among councillors and affected their willingness to engage. As noted by one participant:

> I think that is the root of the problem, the root difficulty, that people don’t understand how Europe works. They see it as complex and rather devious and they’re suspicious therefore of getting involved.

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567 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 34; Int. 36; Int. 61; Int. 62). Although there have been ongoing efforts to limit the *cumul des mandats* and the number of simultaneous positions that can be held (Balme & Le Gales, 1997, p. 150).
568 Interview with English councillor, May 2012 (Int. 05).
569 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 05; Int. 07; Int. 08; Int. 11; Int. 38; Int. 40).
570 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 05; Int. 07; Int. 08; Int. 38; Int. 40; Int. 58).
571 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 26). This participant went on to say this lack of knowledge affected politicians’ willingness to engage because they did not want to appear ill-informed or ignorant among their transnational colleagues.
Participants also identified a lack of knowledge and understanding of the EU among officers, in addition to other skills shortages. A lack of awareness of funding programmes and the opportunities available through LGTN were also cited by participants. This lack of knowledge meant in some cases politicians and officers did not recognize the impact the EU had on local government, and took for granted the potential benefits LGTN could bring local authorities.

Again austerity measures adopted by councils exacerbated this problem. Following the closure of European departments, the staff who were subsequently assigned to work on LGTN often lacked the necessary skills, knowledge and expertise. This often took a long time to develop, but was lost when dedicated European officers left or were made redundant. As one participant experienced:

> the officer in charge moved on and with him went a lot of the expertise, so that whole area retrenched back in terms of where they are.

Indeed, it was identified during fieldwork that those working on LGTN were often not experienced or skilled enough. For example, participants identified a lack of knowledge and understanding of the EU within many councils, among other skills shortages. As noted by one participant:

> it can be an issue of we’ve got someone dealing with Europe and actually it’s Joe in the corner, who’s very young, and just starting off in his career, but actually doesn’t have the understanding of how to push these things through and doesn’t have the credibility to do that, and just becomes a stumbling block.

Some participants openly admitted to their own lack of experience and skills.
I think for my defence I should say that I have only been working in this team for the last year, and I do not have any European background or experience.\footnote{Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 15).}

One of the skills discussed by participants was language\footnote{Language also represents a structural constraint above the level of local authorities. This aspect is discussed in more detail in Section 6.3.3.}. Despite a number of English participants being apologetic for their lack of second language abilities\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 15; Int. 48; Int. 59).}, most felt they were advantaged by the use of English as a \emph{lingua franca} in the EU (discussed further in Section 6.3.3). French authorities, however, admitted they had traditionally struggled to engage in LGTN because of this\footnote{Interviews with French regional officers, August 2012 and September 2012 (Int. 37; Int. 46).}. As identified by one French participant:

\begin{quote}
We, with other departments in the regional council, really identified the language as a big problem, since quite many years actually.
\end{quote}

Nevertheless, participants felt this situation had recently improved. French councils had invested in language training for their officers\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 37).} and a younger generation of staff were generally more competent using English\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 22; Int. 23; Int. 37; Int. 49).}.

There was also a disparity between the language skills of officers and politicians. Indeed, while staff involved in LGTN were usually proficient in language skills, this was not always the case with local politicians\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 23; Int. 37; Int. 49).}. This presented a challenge for achieving benefits from this activity as—although policy transfer activities usually took place between staff—input from politicians was required when seeking influence. As noted by one member of multilateral network staff:

\begin{quote}
Another slight barrier can be the language, especially when it comes to get political involvement, so trying to get the involvement of the elected officials, the councillors, whatever you like to call them. We’re mainly a technical network but we do have a political group and when it comes to talking with the Commission, at high level, we like politicians to be there to present the POLIS viewpoint, and that can be a barrier, the language.
\end{quote}

\footnotetext[579]{Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 15).}
\footnotetext[580]{Language also represents a structural constraint above the level of local authorities. This aspect is discussed in more detail in Section 6.3.3.}
\footnotetext[581]{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 15; Int. 48; Int. 59).}
\footnotetext[582]{Interviews with French regional officers, August 2012 and September 2012 (Int. 37; Int. 46).}
\footnotetext[583]{Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 37).}
\footnotetext[584]{Interviews with French regional officers, August 2012 (Int. 27; Int. 66).}
\footnotetext[585]{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 22; Int. 23; Int. 27; Int. 62).}
\footnotetext[586]{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 23; Int. 37; Int. 49).}
\footnotetext[587]{Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23).}
While participants largely focused on their experience in using English and French—in part due to the case studies chosen—the role of other lesser used European languages was also highlighted. Staff at Nord-Pas de Calais, for example, noted how they faced a barrier in co-operating with their Flemish cross-border colleagues because there was a limited capacity to speak Dutch among both staff and politicians. One participant from Picardie felt that a general lack of language skills across the authority meant there was a heavy focus on working with French speaking Walloon colleagues. Indeed one member of Interreg staff cautioned that relying only on the three main languages spoken in the EU—English, French and German—limited the potential for networking to only those who could speak those languages.

6.3.3 External factors

While participants largely reflected on local level factors, there was also a recognition of external factors which could affect effective engagement in LGTN.

Organization of transnational networks

Local authorities recognized the impact the organization and transnational networks could have. The need to formalize co-operation and establish joint management structures was highlighted. In terms of bilateral networks, Kent’s agreements with Nord-Pas de Calais and the département of Pas-de-Calais and Bretagne’s agreement with Saxony recognize the need to co-ordinate their partnerships, establishing joint committees for councillors and officers to oversee the work of the networks. However, the majority of the bilateral agreements

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588 Interviews with French regional officers, September 2012 (Int. 61; Int. 62).
589 Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 47).
590 Interview with Interreg staff, December 2012 (Int. 69).
591 The bilateral agreement between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais is the most detailed in this regard,
signed by the councils studied do not outline such arrangements (for example Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie & Hordaland Fylkeskommune 2013; Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie & Regione Toscana Consiglio Regionale 2005; Conseil régional de Bretagne & Welsh Assembly Government 2004). In this way, although these documents make a commitment to co-operate in various policy areas—and in some cases this has led to detailed action plans for what the co-operation should aim to achieve (Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie & Regione Toscana Consiglio Regionale 2006; Conseil régional de Bretagne & Welsh Assembly Government 2005; Conseil régional de Bretagne & Województwo Wielkopolskie 2005b)—they do not provide an overall method for co-ordinating the activities of the partnership.

Participants also felt co-ordination was also required within multilateral networks. To this end the majority of the multilateral networks identified in this study had centralized secretariats with specialized staff to organize and manage their activities. Participants felt this was crucial to the effectiveness of these organizations. One participant highlighted the benefits of such structured co-ordination:

if you have a very structured network, like ERRIN for example, I think they’ve got four or five people working there with different working groups on different topics, then it works pretty well. And in that case the members are more active because they see that things are going on and it’s beneficial for them, so then they want to be very active. And at the end these networks can be also very active in lobbying for the European Commission and Parliament, and then they are seen as a credible actor and this is quite important in a network.

In this way, co-ordination through central secretariats not only facilitated the active participation of member councils, but also increased networks’ effectiveness in securing...
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benefits for their members, such as lobbying and influence.

The impact of poor co-ordination and not having a secretariat is illustrated with the example of the Arc Manche. While some participants noted the Arc Manche’s lack of secretariat kept membership costs down others felt the network lacked co-ordination and was too heavily dependent upon its two founding members—West Sussex and Haute-Normandie—for direction. This particularly became a problem when West Sussex left the network in 2011. As explained by one participant:

I think the problem with that network was that it was left to just two regions to manage it really, which was Upper Normandy and West Sussex, and West Sussex have pulled out of European activity completely, so their involvement ended basically, and the Upper Normandy region, it kind of just tailed off with them.

Some participants felt that without adequate centralized co-ordination networks were at risk of becoming talking shops, at which point there would be no benefit to participating. As one participant stated:

the networks risk being talking shops without any concrete action or outcome, and then it is just a jolly for travel.

Another participant’s experience of network meetings was that they merely provided a platform for local politicians to talk and promote themselves, rather than working on tangible outcomes.

The size of networks was also highlighted, and—in line with the existing academic literature (for example Bulkeley et al., 2003; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008; Ward & Williams, 1997)—participants drew attention to the dilemma they faced. On the

595 Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 02).
596 Interview with English local officer, September 2012 (Int. 45).
597 Interviews with English local officer, May 2012, and former English local officers, June 2012 (Int. 13; Int. 18; Int. 34).
598 Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 18).
599 Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34). This is similar to Payre’s (2010, p. 271) observation of the Eurocities network, where annual conference provided local politicians with a platform to promote themselves in a “big speech”, rather than engage in meaningful policy transfer.
one hand it was felt they should join the large multilateral networks. As noted in Section 5.3.3 such networks offered representativeness and credibility in the eyes of the EU. The fear was that by not being members of these big organizations councils would be isolated and marginalized in Brussels. As one participant put it:

Some that are very big, very legitimate, are sort of self-fulfilling prophecies. If you’re not in those big networks, you are nothing.

However, local authorities often viewed these networks as inefficient, lacking flexibility and overly bureaucratic. For example, in leaving the Assembly of European Regions (AER), West Sussex County Council (2000) noted that:

The County Council had originally joined the Assembly of European Regions believing it to be a forum where the County Council’s voice could be heard at a European level and where strength could be found in working with numbers of like-minded authorities. Unfortunately the Assembly of European Regions became increasingly bureaucratic, and a number of other member authorities have left.

To this end, councils felt the smaller, more policy focused networks were more attractive. Indeed, in the same report where the bureaucratic nature of the AER is criticized, smaller networks such as the Airport Regions Conference (ARC) are praised as being “particularly effective” (West Sussex County Council, 2000). Multilateral network staff in those smaller networks put this attractiveness down to the fact they were able to offer a more ‘personal’ and flexible relationship with their in how their members engaged. This encouraged active participation by local government, which led to authorities getting more out of their engagement and in turn a greater perception of receiving benefits. Nevertheless, these smaller networks lacked the broader profile of the larger networks could offer. To this extent one member of multilateral network staff noted networks needed to have sufficient “critical mass” to be effective.

Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 11; Int. 17; Int. 29; Int. 35; Int. 36; Int. 44).

Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 and French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 09; Int. 44).

Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).

Interviews with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09; Int. 33).

Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06).
This dilemma had become more pronounced in the context of the financial crisis. As local authorities sought to reduce their membership of multilateral networks to cut costs, they had to decide between participating in large networks offering credibility in Europe but would potentially be bureaucratic and inefficient, or in smaller networks which through being more focused encouraged active engagement but lacked the presence of the larger networks. One member of multilateral network staff noted that:

[being a small network] has its advantages and it has its drawbacks. It’s advantageous that it can be flexible. The drawback is, one of my members, one of the officers was saying ‘well we’re in five networks, my politicians asked me to withdraw one for financial reasons. I want to stay within the ARC, so there is no question for us. But then there is this network and this network . . . if we withdraw from PURPLE, we are nothing in Brussels afterwards’. . . . We are small so flexible, but the risk is that members decide they don’t need us. In large networks they base membership to be there, but they are not super active.\textsuperscript{605}

The perceived transparency of transnational networks was also a factor. This was recognized by multilateral network staff who noted how their organizations went to great lengths to communicate with their members to ensure they were kept well informed\textsuperscript{606}. These efforts to ensure transparency were not always felt by local authorities, however. Hampshire, for example, left the CPMR because a lack of transparency over the network’s account meant the council felt it was subsidizing the membership of several regions who had not paid their subscriptions\textsuperscript{607}. The transparency and accessibility of joint technical secretariats (JTSs)—who administered the various Interreg programmes—was also called into question\textsuperscript{608}:

The JTS when I’ve been to conferences and stuff, it just feels like they’re elevating themselves over all of this. The JTS are very untouchable. . . . They’re just very much at arm’s length and it’s just them and us. Definitely them and us.\textsuperscript{609}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).
\item Interviews with multilateral network staff (Int. 09; Int. 10; Int. 23).
\item Interview with English councillor, July 2012 (Int. 25).
\item Interviews with English councillor, June 2012 and English local officer, August 2012 (Int. 36; Int. 56).
\item Interview with English local government officer, August 2012 (Int. 56).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

The way networks marketed themselves was also cause for concern among some councils, as it affected their wider reputation. Hampshire acknowledged that while the CPMR was a large and influential network, its name did suggest its members were ‘peripheral’ by definition. As argued by one councillor:

I don’t particularly want Hampshire to be characterized as a peripheral region, I think we’re a core, central region. 

This partly explains why some networks underwent rebranding exercises, as earlier observed in Section 4.4.2.

The ‘frontier effect’

As highlighted by the practitioner guidance, LGTN inevitably means co-operating across different legal, administrative and bureaucratic systems. Participants were acutely aware of these differences, noting it often made co-operating with transnational partners difficult. As two acknowledged:

Externally the difficulty that we have is to find a partner, or partners, with the same kind of objectives and with the same kind of political power. Basically I’m between the UK and Germany. As a French region we do not have enough political power to work on some topics with the German people. And a UK county council does not have enough political power to work with us on other topics, and this non-symmetric situation is not helping us.

even where there is a spirit of partnership you still do get national differences . . . for instance I know that we seem to work pretty well with the French here, but my experience is that French local government is so complicated. Dieppe, for instance, there are four tiers of local government in Dieppe, and here of course we have one because we’re a unitary authority . . . you don’t have like for like administration, which can be a problem.

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610 Interview with English councillor, April 2012 (Int. 01).
611 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 08; Int. 14; Int. 15 Int. 32; Int. 37; Int. 40; Int. 41; Int. 49; Int. 50; Int. 52; Int. 55; Int. 59; Int. 61; Int. 66 Int. 68; Int. 70)
612 Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 50).
613 Interview with English councillor, September 2012 (Int. 59).
Decision making processes was one area of difference. An example of this was the role of local leaders. One participant noted that the tradition in English councils was to involve mayors and council chairmen in LGTN. However these positions in England did not hold executive power, unlike their European counterparts; these politicians only had civic responsibility, so had no power to enact decisions at home\textsuperscript{614}. This was confirmed by one French participant:

I’ve seen it in Britain, the mayor has no power in the city, it’s not the leader of the city council, and the mayor changes every year in England\textsuperscript{615}

As conceded by one English councillor:

They really don’t understand why Mr Mayor can’t make a decision and get on, or the director of whatever has these powers because they’re so different\textsuperscript{616}

Generally speaking, it was recognized that English officers had much more delegated authority compared with France, where local politicians exercised more control and were more actively involved\textsuperscript{617}

The difference in policy competences between authorities was also highlighted as a potential barrier, as it could limit the policy areas councils could co-operate on\textsuperscript{618}. Indeed, it was for this reason that local authorities had to ensure they carefully selected their transnational networks and partners.

Local actors also commented on the difficulties in building consensus with transnational partners, who often had different policy priorities or objectives\textsuperscript{619}. As discussed in Section \textsuperscript{5.7.2}, local authorities co-operate in transnational networks, but do so to pursue their own individual aims and to ensure competitive advantage, and this places limits on common positions. As noted by two:

\textsuperscript{614} Interview with LGA representative, April 2012 (Int. 03).
\textsuperscript{615} Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 61).
\textsuperscript{616} Interview with English councillor, June 2012 (Int. 32).
\textsuperscript{617} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 15; Int. 32; Int. 62; Int. 55; Int. 61).
\textsuperscript{618} Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 37; Int.49; Int.. 55; Int. 70).
\textsuperscript{619} Multiple interview with participants (Int. 18; Int. 36; Int. 41; Int. 44; Int. 45; Int. 52).
one of the main barriers would be that different European counties and indeed regions want different things out of the networks.\footnote{Interview with English local officer, September 2012 (Int. 45).}

there can be some difficulties because in the networks or the European co-operation there are other regions that don’t have necessarily the same strategy, the same interests, the same projects, the same priorities. So you have the benefit if you work with them, but you can also have the constraints of the other regions’ positions if they have another priority or if they want to do something else through the networks or through a specific project. You have to deal with all of this to ensure that co-operation if efficient.\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, August 2012 (Int. 36).}

This was also recognized by multilateral network staff, with one admitting:

it isn’t always easy to find a consensus on issues, the issues we represent our members on, because issues aren’t necessarily viewed the same way across Europe.\footnote{Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 17).}

As a result, some local authorities preferred to work with the smaller networks as this made building consensus easier. In the words of one participant:

it’s easier to work with 22 regions in Brussels than maybe 250, as we mostly all share the same views.\footnote{Interview with French regional officer, July 2012 (Int. 44).}

The difficulties in building consensus were further exacerbated by the risk that not all network members made an equal contribution.\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 09; Int. 11; Int. 45).} One member of multilateral network staff observed that:

I think in all networks, we have 34 members, maybe ten are really active, 14 are sleeping members.\footnote{Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09).}

This was particularly the case with transnational projects which depended on all members participating. There was always the risk that partners may drop out or not pull their weight.\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 08; Int. 15; Int. 56; Int. 69).}
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One practical way in which the frontier effect could affect participation in LGTN was when it came to travel. As discussed above, in order for councils to take full advantage of their engagement in LGTN they had to attend meetings and meet their counterparts abroad. However, the cost of foreign travel was often viewed as prohibitive.\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 09; Int. 23; Int. 25; Int. 33; Int. 40; Int. 45; Int. 56).} This had recently been exacerbated by the financial crisis which had placed pressure on the resources local authorities could spend on engagement in LGTN (see Section \footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 09; Int. 23; Int. 33; Int. 40; Int. 45). One participant noted that some officers were still prohibited from foreign travel even when the network offered to cover the cost (Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 [Int. 23]). An English councillor recognized that “you can jump on a train and go up to Edinburgh and spend three or four times the amount you would if you go to Brussels”, but despite being cheaper foreign travel was still restricted (Interview with English councillor, July 2012 [Int. 25]).} \footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 04; Int. 06; Int. 32; Int. 40; Int. 52; Int. 61).} in some cases councils placed restrictions on foreign travel or banned it altogether.\footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 04; Int. 06; Int. 32; Int. 40; Int. 52; Int. 61).} Besides the cost of travel, distance was another factor. Indeed, lengthy travel times often put officers and councillors off attending meetings\footnote{Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 21).} As one participant noted:

it’s being able to actually attend meetings sometimes and having to take time out from their diaries and to attend meetings in different locations. So I think perhaps some of the networks, in an attempt to be inclusive, have meetings which are in far-flung corners of the EU and sometimes that isn’t particularly helpful in terms of just being able to physically turn up. If it’s a two day trip or if it’s a one day meeting with two days either side that can make it quite difficult.\footnote{Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 21).}

While language was partly a question of staff and politicians’ skills (as discussed in Section \footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 09; Int. 23; Int. 25; Int. 33; Int. 40; Int. 45; Int. 56).} \footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 09; Int. 23; Int. 33; Int. 40; Int. 45). One participant noted that some officers were still prohibited from foreign travel even when the network offered to cover the cost (Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 [Int. 23]). An English councillor recognized that “you can jump on a train and go up to Edinburgh and spend three or four times the amount you would if you go to Brussels”, but despite being cheaper foreign travel was still restricted (Interview with English councillor, July 2012 [Int. 25]).} \footnote{Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 01; Int. 04; Int. 06; Int. 32; Int. 40; Int. 52; Int. 61).} \footnote{Interview with English local officer, July 2012 (Int. 21).} the academic literature highlights the potential for language differences to hinder LGTN (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009 p. 317; Lawrence 2000 p. 68; Phelps et al. 2002 p. 221), the results of this study present a more positive picture. While language differences were highlighted by councils as a potential barrier, it was not regarded as particularly significant. Indeed, several participants noted that differences in language did not appear to be a barrier, and at the very most it just slowed the communication process.
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As put by one:

I wouldn’t say it was a barrier, I would say it just slows things down.

In most cases, speaking English was seen as an advantage. Participants from local authorities observed that the majority of transnational networks—including multilateral networks and transnational projects—predominantly operated in English, and that English had largely established itself as a lingua franca in the EU. This was further confirmed by staff working for multilateral networks and Interreg programmes who noted that English was the de facto standard for communication in their organization. This included major multilateral networks such as Eurocities and the Promoting Operatinal Links through Integrated Systems (POLIS) network. In this context English local authorities were obviously advantaged. As one participant felt:

we’re lucky in the UK, they tend to be often working in English. All the projects I’ve been involved in have been English as a main language.

Participants also noted that the provision of translation and interpretation services at LGTN events was the norm. This was further observed by the researcher. Where resources permitted, multilateral networks also employed multilingual staff to ensure effective communication with their members.

As a result of this, participants felt the language barrier was not particularly significant. Indeed Interreg and multilateral network staff noted that because of the

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631 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 05; Int. 07; Int. 15; Int. 27; Int. 52).
632 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 15).
633 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 07; Int. 24; Int. 25 Int. 48).
634 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 06; Int. 09; Int. 23; Int. 30; Int. 54).
635 Despite this a number of English participants were apologetic over their lack of second language skills (Multiple interviews with participants [Int. 02; Int. 15; Int. 48; Int. 59]).
636 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 24).
637 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 02; Int. 09; Int. 48; Int. 52; Int. 60).
638 Participant observation, cross-Channel forums, September 2012 and March 2013, EU open days, October 2012 and October 2013, and Interreg IVa France–Channel–England conference, November 2012 (Obs. 3; Obs. 4; Obs. 5; Obs. 6; Obs. 9).
639 Interviews with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 09; Int. 23).
translation support offered, any barriers that existed were largely perceived rather than actual. Nevertheless, although English was used as the de facto standard in LGTN, participants referred to difficulties occurring through key points in conversation being ‘lost in translation’. As explained by one:

When you go to these things in Europe, because people are often speaking English and it’s not their native tongue, and so you think that you’ve followed something when actually your interpretation of how they’ve expressed it is different to how they actually wanted to express it.

This often led to misunderstandings, particularly over the commitments of those involved in LGTN.

More significant than the language barrier to many participants, however, was a fundamental difference in working cultures. As one participant explained:

Another obstacle of difficulty to face ... is that we have different cultures, different organizations, different skills, different ways of working and prejudices about the partners. It makes it usually difficult ... We don’t work the same way. This is an obstacle because this requires some time to understand how the partner works and if you are not used to co-operating, you can have some difficulties.

Many of these differences were evident when local actors met their transnational colleagues. One participant noted that:

We can generalize about it, but we know that the British will be very pragmatic and want to make a decision quickly, and the French would like to sit around and talk about things a bit, and sometimes working with the Germans or Scandinavians you can see some of those national stereotypes coming out.

Another participant’s experience was that:

640 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 09; Int. 47; Int. 54).
641 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 25; Int. 49; Int. 54; Int. 56; Int. 60; Int. 69).
642 Interview with English councillor, September 2012 (Int. 60).
643 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 09; Int. 14; Int. 15; Int. 22; Int. 24; Int. 27; Int. 30; Int. 32; Int. 34; Int. 37; Int. 40; Int. 41; Int. 46; Int. 48; Int. 49; Int. 52; Int. 55; Int. 59; Int. 61; Int. 70).
644 Interview with French regional officer, September 2012 (Int. 49).
645 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 27; Int. 41; Int. 52).
646 Interview with UK civil servant, July 2012 (Int. 41).
the French are very bad at workshops. They’re not used to sitting down and speaking their mind and having an open discussion because they’re quite politically, I’d say more politically astute than us probably and it makes it very difficult for them to open up . . . Whereas we Brits are much more free when we’re in a non-formal environment.

To this end participants noted LGTN was most effective when co-operating with those who shared similar working cultures; in England co-operation with Dutch authorities was productive because of similarities in working culture, whereas in France it was felt they shared a similar working culture with Belgian colleagues.

**National barriers**

To a limited extent, barriers at the national level were discussed by participants. In particular, it was recognized that both English and French local authorities were operating in centralized states. One member of multilateral network staff felt that LGTN was more suited to subnational authorities in decentralized and federal states, because those in centralized countries lack the capacity and credibility to engage at the European level. One English participant noted:

> Britain has been centralizing, and if you’ve ever worked in local government you’ll have seen how difficulty it is for the British to do anything outside of what they have to do. It is very difficult to take the initiative, there’s no money and very little legal scope.

French participants also felt greater decentralization and devolution would provide authorities with more scope to become more actively engaged in LGTN.

The attitude of national governments was also a potential barrier highlighted. One English participant felt in some cases the British government were actively...
seeking to undermine local authority efforts to engage internationally. A French councillor similarly noted how the central government in Paris viewed regional councils’ engagement in Europe with suspicion (Tanburn, 2013, p. 36).

Participants discussed the role of regional structures above the local level in England. While the abolition of regional assemblies and regional development agencies was broadly welcomed as they were viewed as top-down structures imposed by central government, there was nevertheless a recognition they had provided support to councils engaged in LGTN, such as technical expertise or match funding to facilitate participation in transnational projects. As one participant highlighted:

it’s been at times a difficult relationship between the local authorities and some of the regional organizations. Having said that though I think there was a pragmatic recognition that where the issue was the right issue, having that regional collective approach was sometimes beneficial . . . It’s not a bad thing it’s gone because localism is welcome, but it may lead some to do things differently or otherwise miss out.

Indeed, following their abolition in 2010, English participants admitted much of the support had disappeared. As one participant observed:

that expertise in some ways was lost when we lost SEEDA. SEEDA had quite a successful team for looking after various aspects of European funding, particularly things like the Interreg and ERDF, and that whole approach and that support network has disappeared and it does mean you’ve got to start from fresh.

To confirm the supporting role played by the regional structures in England, French participants and Interreg staff had also noticed it had become difficult to co-operate with English authorities since the regional tier had been abolished. The regional structures have since been replaced by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). While at

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655 Interview with former English local officer, June 2012 (Int. 34).
656 Participant observation, Europeanising devolution conference, May 2013 (Obs. 7).
657 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 16).
658 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 08; Int. 15; Int. 16; Int. 21; Int. 31; Int. 52).
659 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 08).
660 Interviews with French regional officer, September 2012, and Interreg staff September 2012 (Int. 47; Int. 50; Int. 55).
the time of fieldwork it was unclear what role LEPs would perform, some participants saw these new bodies as a potential new location for these support structures. However, while LEPs have taken on some of the former regions’ competences in terms of developing European investment strategies, they have faced several challenges, including a lack of capacity, poor resourcing and control by central government (see Huggins 2014a).

Media and public support

Several participants—representing both English and French authorities—noted that participation in LGTN often received a negative reaction from their local public and the press. There was a perception that local citizens did not understand what engaging with local authorities abroad could achieve and that—especially in a context of local authority budget reductions—spending money on non-statutory activities such as LGTN was hard to justify to local tax payers. As admitted by one participant:

I mean where is a council’s remit for, you know if these kinds of activities weren’t funded, how do you justify to your council tax paying public why you should go and visit a service in another country?

Consequently, local citizens were seen as largely against participation in LGTN.

Participants felt the root of this problem lay with the local press. The main focus of local press attention were the costs associated with LGTN, and in particular the cost of travel; articles regularly scrutinized and reported how much councils spent on

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661 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 08; Int. 11; Int. 12; Int. 15; Int. 25; Int. 31; Int. 41; Int. 51; Int. 58).
662 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 11; Int. 12; Int. 13; Int. 18; Int. 21; Int. 23; Int. 24; Int. 25; Int. 40; Int. 45; Int. 50; Int. 51; Int. 57; Int. 61). Indeed, one participant was so concerned that the content of the interview might be ‘leaked’ to the press that they sought additional reassurances that the researcher was not in fact working for a local newspaper.
663 Interviews with French regional officers, September 2012 (Int. 50; Int. 61).
664 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 07; Int. 18; Int. 24).
665 Interview with English local officer, May 2012, (Int. 24).
666 Local government transnational networking also attracted the attention of the national press in England. This was more concerned with the implications for the UK’s relationship with the EU.
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

sending officers and councillors abroad (for example KentOnline 2005; 2008a; 2008b; Marzouk 2006; Southern Daily Echo 2009; The Argus 2003). Often this was reported as unnecessary and frivolous spending, as two local news headlines—“Council row over Riviera ‘jolly’” (KentOnline 2002) or “Now’s ‘not the time’ for European jolly Southampton councillors told after trips” (Smith 2009)—illustrate.

The main complaint from participants regarding press reporting of LGTN was that it focused entirely on the cost of participation, rather than the benefits it brought back to their authority. As noted by one participant:

local papers can be quite keen to highlight the costs of participation and not necessarily the benefits.

While in some cases local authorities attempted to manage this by producing press releases which focused on the benefits and funding acquired through LGTN (for example Brighton & Hove City Council 2007d; West Sussex County Council 2003b; 2004b), the potential negative reaction of the press was viewed as a potential barrier:

I think whatever one does now to do with Europe, one has to be ultra careful that you know how it’s going to be interpreted and I think in its own right that probably inhibits people, certainly in England . . . from playing as full part as they might do in events across the Channel.

Multilateral network staff also recognized this situation, feeling it impacted engagement in LGTN. Indeed, politicians and officers were often wary of the ‘jolly’ perception attached to foreign travel, and this played a major role in deciding to attend meetings, regardless of the benefits. As noted by one:

One Daily Mail article (Owen 2011), for example, focuses on the Arc Manche network and a number of transnational Interreg projects in the English Channel region, which it argues are “part of a Europe-wide attempt by Brussels to break down national barriers”, amounting to “trying to wipe England off the map”.

667 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 12; Int. 21; Int. 40; Int. 45).
668 Interview with English local officer, May 2012 (Int. 12).
669 Interview with English councillor, July 2012 (Int. 25).
670 Multiple interviews with participants (Int. 04; Int. 09; Int. 16; Int. 25; Int. 38; Int. 41; Int. 51; Int. 68). Most of these participants pointed out that foreign travel was often time-consuming and rarely entertaining.
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[they] won’t travel because the local press will get wind of it and portray it as another jolly.\textsuperscript{671}

6.4 LGTN and local level Europeanization

The empirical analysis in this chapter has shown that a range of structural and agency factors—predominantly located at the local level—determine effective engagement in LGTN. Applying a Europeanization framework allows this analysis to be deepened by conceptualizing them as ‘mediating factors’. This further explains the differentiated engagement in LGTN witnessed in Chapter 4.

As discussed in Chapter 2, mediating factors represent the final stage in Risse et al.’s\textsuperscript{(2001)} three-step model of the Europeanization process. They identify both structural and agency factors which serve to mediate the effects of Europeanization at the domestic level (Risse et al., 2001, pp. 9–12) (see also Börzel & Risse, 2003). It is the effect of these mediating factors which accounts for the differential impact of Europeanization and the lack of convergence. As Risse et al. (2001, p. 9) argue: “the presence or absence of mediating factors is crucial for the degree to which domestic change adjusting to Europeanization should be expected”.

Caporaso (2007, pp. 30–32) distills mediating factors into two broad categories: ‘formal and informal institutions’ and ‘veto points and veto groups’. The first refers to mediating factors which act as ‘facilitating institutions’, which “provide actors with material and ideational resources to induce structural change” (Risse et al., 2001, p. 9). In other words they provide the resources and capacity necessary for Europeanization processes to take place. Parallels can be drawn here with the local level structural factors identified above (see Section 6.3.1). For example, the presence of a European strategy, adequate investment and dedicated staff to co-ordinate participation all ensured councils had the necessary capacity to effectively engage in LGTN. Veto points

\textsuperscript{671} Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 23).
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

and veto groups refer to those who have “a right of power or refusal”, or who have “the capacity to obstruct, slow down, or amend legislation or implementation” (Caporaso, 2007, p. 31). Here the agency of individuals within councils was shown to be crucial (see Section 6.3.2). Where councillors and local officers lacked leadership, willingness or the necessary personal relationships and skills to encourage participation in LGTN, they acted as veto players, effectively stalling engagement. The findings of this chapter therefore support the assertion made by Bauer and Börzel (2010, p. 259): “the capacity of regions to form issue-specific coalitions depends on their ability and willingness to invest organizational and political resources”.

It was shown throughout the analysis that the presence or absence of these mediating factors varied between the local authorities studied. For example, not all councils had European strategies or dedicated staff in place, and the leadership and support of local politicians and officers differed greatly. Taken with the strategic approach local authorities take—identified in Chapter 5—the presence and absence of different mediating factors in each council serves to account for the differential engagement in LGTN observed in Chapter 4. Indeed, the absence of local level structures—or ‘facilitating formal institutions’—explains why some local authorities have a more limited engagement in LGTN, despite acknowledging the benefits available. As Börzel and Risse (2003, p. 65) explain, without these structures in place, local authorities lack the capacity to take advantage of the opportunities offered through LGTN:

The European political opportunity structure may offer domestic actors additional resources. But many are unable to exploit them when they lack the necessary action capacity. Direct relations with European decision-makers provide regions with the opportunity to circumvent their central government in European policy making. But many regions do not have the sufficient resources (manpower, money, expertise) to be permanently present at the European level and to exploit the new opportunities.

Likewise, without the agency of local politicians and officers—who have the potential to act as veto players—participation in LGTN can be stalled.
The identification of these local level factors in this study informs the wider
debate on local level Europeanization. While previous studies have drawn attention
to mediating factors at the national level (for example Kettunen & Kungla, 2005), the
findings in this chapter also emphasize the role of mediating factors at the level of
individual local authorities (see also de Rooij, 2002). In identifying what those factors
are, this chapter informs the sparse literature on how Europeanization processes are
mediated at the local level.

6.5 Summary

The rationalist and strategic approach local authorities take to LGTN (identified in
Chapter 5) led to a question surrounding the ‘effectiveness’ of this activity. Indeed,
according to the rationalist approach, how local authorities perceive the effectiveness
of LGTN will inform their decision to participate or not. In addition, the differential
engagement in LGTN (observed in Chapter 4) led to a question about the factors which
account for this variation. Furthermore, the issue of effectiveness of LGTN represented
a relative lacuna in the existing literature. For these reasons, this issue warranted
investigation and led to the following research question which this chapter sought to
tackle:

• RQ₃: What factors determine effective engagement in LGTN?

By once again focusing on local actors and how they perceive effectiveness, this chapter
has made a contribution to the literature, which has so far focused on the network level
rather than the actors within.

The chapter began by drawing on the public administration literature on networks,
which emphasizes the need to assess a range of factors as determinants of effectiveness.
Coupled with Rowe’s (2011) approach—which stresses the need to survey effectiveness
from the perspective of local actors—an innovative analytical framework was advanced
to identify relevant structural and agency factors, present at both the ‘local' and ‘external' levels.

A review of the practitioner ‘best practice’ guidance drew attention to a number of factors which affect successful participation in LGTN. At the local level these could be divided between structure and agency. The structural factors included the need to put in place a European strategy, the selection of suitable transnational partners and networks, the provision of adequate resourcing and investment and the establishment of internal co-ordination structures such as dedicated staff or European departments. In terms of agency, the leadership and support offered by local politicians and officers, as well as their personal relationships and skills, were shown to be important. External factors, such as how transnational networks are organized, the effects of co-operating across national frontiers, national barriers and media and public support, were also highlighted. Of the factors that were identified, most were located at the local level, and so were within local authorities’ control.

Insight from the data analysis showed councils broadly recognized what constituted ‘best practice’. Yet the empirical evidence showed implementation of these factors was mixed. In terms of the local structures which should be put in place, councils were largely aware of the best practice guidance; themes identified in the practitioner literature—such as having a clearly defined strategic vision, investment and resources and internal co-ordination—were regularly repeated during interviews. However, the extent to which local authorities implemented these structures varied. Not all councils had a European or international strategy in place, nor was LGTN consistently co-ordinated within authorities by dedicated staff and departments. Investment and resourcing in LGTN was often limited. In terms of the agency of local actors, local authorities were equally aware of the importance of politicians and officers, their skills and the personal relationships they built. But again experiences here were mixed. Indeed, the discussion highlighted that while local authorities might put in place adequate structures to ensure effective engagement in LGTN, much of the success
6. Factors determining effective engagement in LGTN

depended on the attitudes of individuals, both at political and officer levels.

The varied presence and absence of these factors among the councils studied has parallels with the differentiated engagement in LGTN observed in Chapter 4. Indeed, by borrowing the concept of ‘mediating factors’ from Risse et al.’s (2001) three-step model of Europeanization, it was shown that the presence or absence of these factors accounted for the heterogeneity of local authorities participation in LGTN. Here the chapter makes a contribution to the literature on local level Europeanization, by emphasizing the presence of and identifying mediating factors at the local in addition to those at wider domestic level.

While most of the factors determining effective engagement in LGTN were at the local level, one wider structural constraint was observed throughout the analysis which hampered local authorities’ efforts here: an adverse financial climate. While local government finance in both England and France has been restricted for many years—partly a symptom of the centralized nature of these systems—the financial crisis has exacerbated the problem. This presents local authorities with a paradox. LGTN offers several benefits which local authorities believe can make them more resilient in this context (see Chapter 5). However, to be effective participation requires an up front investment, particularly in the local level structures and agency of local government staff and politicians. The fact this adverse financial context exists means local authorities are limited in the extent to which they can make the necessary investment in LGTN to ensure participation is effective. In other words local authorities participate in LGTN to better place themselves in this adverse financial context, but their effectiveness in securing benefits and engaging in this activity is hindered by the very context they are trying to address. This theme is picked up in the concluding chapter of this thesis.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the local government transnational networking (LGTN) activities of 14 local authorities in two unitary and centralized European Union (EU) polities. Two things motivated this research focus.

First was a recognition that local authorities are important actors in EU governance. They are responsible for implementing much of the EU’s legislative output. They play a key role in the delivery of EU regional policy, accounting for a third of the EU’s spending. They are actively engaged in the EU’s policy process, either formally through institutional recognition in the Committee of the Regions (CoR) or informally through subnational Brussels offices and LGTN.

Second was an interesting empirical puzzle. Local authorities in unitary and centralized polities have no clearly defined legal authority or competence to engage beyond their territorial limits. At the same time they are facing increasing budgetary pressures as central governments respond to the financial crisis with austerity programmes. Why, then, do councils invest in LGTN when they lack the mandate and when resources to deliver core statutory services are limited?

Despite the importance of local authorities in the EU and the relevance of the puzzle surrounding their engagement in LGTN, the local dimension is often overlooked in EU studies. Local authorities are often regarded as incidental actors in EU governance. This
criticism holds true with many existing studies on LGTN, which focus on transnational networks rather than the local authorities participating. This study of LGTN was therefore relevant, timely and warranted.

Throughout this thesis, the analysis has focused on the perceptions of the local authorities engaged in this activity. In adopting this focus, this study addresses the gaps present in the literature and makes an empirical contribution to knowledge on LGTN and, more broadly, on the role of local government in the EU.

7.1 Summary of empirical findings and contribution to knowledge

This thesis advanced three research questions to address the empirical puzzle set out above and the gaps present in the existing literature:

- **RQ1**: What is the current extent of LGTN in south-east England and northern France?
- **RQ2**: What benefits do local authorities seek from their involvement in LGTN?
- **RQ3**: What factors determine effective engagement in LGTN?

The answers to these questions constitute the core of this thesis’s contribution to knowledge, and are now summarized.

**RQ1**: What is the current extent of LGTN in south-east England and northern France?

RQ1 was addressed in Chapter 4. To aid in its analysis of LGTN, this chapter began by advancing a three-fold categorization, distinguishing between bilateral networks, multilateral networks and transnational projects. The chapter then provided an historical overview of the transnational links developed by local government in
south-east England and northern France from the late 1980s. This showed early cases LGTN emerged in response to a number of contextual factors. These included the building of the Channel Tunnel, but also wider trends in European integration such as the completion of the Single European Market and establishment of EU regional policy programmes such as Interreg. However, it was shown that while a body of scholarship charted the development of LGTN during the 1990s (for example Church & Reid, 1995, 1996, 1999), little was known about the current picture. It was this gap in our understanding of contemporary LGTN activities that RQ1 sought to address.

Drawing on document analysis, interviews and website searches, the empirical analysis in this chapter showed that all 14 of the local authorities studied participate in LGTN. Indeed, a total of 302 links were observed between 2001 and 2011 (see Table 4.3). During the 1990s, when LGTN was still in its infancy, Benington and Harvey (1998) asked whether LGTN was a “passing fashion or new paradigm”. The contemporary empirical analysis highlights the continued prevalence of LGTN, and therefore points towards the ‘new paradigm’ characterization.

Two supplementary questions sought to elaborate this overall finding. RQ1a asked how contemporary engagement in LGTN compared with that undertaken during the 1990s. A number of trends were identified here. Firstly, the level of engagement in LGTN has increased overall. A number of factors explain this increase. The expansion of the eligibility areas for Interreg funding schemes helped foster a greater number of transnational projects. EU enlargement to central and eastern Europe saw local authorities pursue bilateral networking with councils in these countries. An increase in the EU’s policy competences saw a number of policy-specific multilateral networks emerge in response. Secondly, while bilateral networks were the most common form of LGTN during the 1990s, multilateral networking is now the norm. In many cases bilateral networking provided the basis for wider multilateral networks. Thirdly, while the initial emphasis in LGTN during the 1990s was on cross-border co-operation, inter-regional networking is now more prevalent. This has partly been driven by
local authorities’ preferences to now pursue thematically focused over general purpose networks.

RQ_{1b} sought to explore the differential engagement of local authorities in LGTN. This manifested itself in a number of ways. Firstly, the number of transnational links councils participated in differed. Some local authorities—such as Kent, Medway, Nord-Pas de Calais and Bretagne—engaged in several links, while others—such as West Sussex, Portsmouth and Picardie—only engaged in a handful. Secondly, councils vary in the approach they take to LGTN. For example, some councils preferred pursuing bilateral partnerships, while others preferred participation in multilateral networks or transnational projects. Crucially, this variation in both the extent and method of engagement in LGTN occurred within national borders, rather than across them, suggesting that local level factors play more of a role than national level factors in determining participation. These empirical findings confirm the conclusions of earlier studies which suggested variation in local government’s European engagement activities (for example Balme & Le Galès, 1997; Goldsmith & Sperling, 1997). This also challenges Levèvre and d’Albergo’s (2007, p. 318) suggestion that local authorities would become more uniform in their international engagement activities.

**RQ_{2}: What benefits do local authorities seek from their involvement in LGTN?**

The continued prevalence of LGTN observed in Chapter 4 reinforced the need to tackle the empirical puzzle outlined in the thesis’s introduction. This was done by addressing RQ_{2} in Chapter 5. A review of the existing literature confirmed that while previous research has uncovered the function of transnational networks, little remained understood about local authorities’ motivations for engaging in them. This study’s focus on local level actors and its use of document analysis and interviews with local government officers and councillors facilitated access to these motivations, and therefore allowed this chapter to make a contribution to knowledge.
7. Conclusion

The chapter drew attention to three main motivations which almost all local authorities studied held for participating in LGTN. Firstly, LGTN was used to obtain funding. Transnational co-operation was often a requirement of EU funding schemes and participation in LGTN offered councils ready made partnerships while reducing the risks of having to identify and work with unfamiliar partners. Secondly, LGTN was used to seek influence in the EU policy process. Here local authorities recognized the challenges they faced in implementing EU policy, but also saw opportunities to shape it. LGTN provided a means to access EU decision making by pooling resources, aggregating local interests and presenting local authorities as credible stakeholders. Thirdly, local authorities sought policy transfer opportunities through LGTN. Here LGTN provided a platform to access policy knowledge and best practices as well as showcase their own policy innovations. In addition to these three main motivations, it was shown that local authorities also engage in LGTN seeking economic development, an enhanced profile, intelligence on EU policy developments and opportunities for professional and organizational development.

In addition to identifying the main motivations for engagement in LGTN, the chapter also made three general observations. Firstly, local authorities sought a number of different benefits simultaneously. This confirmed Betsill and Bulkeley’s (2004, p. 490) assertion that LGTN needs to offer multiple benefits to make participation worthwhile for councils. It further reinforced criticisms made by some scholars (for example John, 2000, p. 881; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 310) that studies on local government’s role in the EU should look beyond the narrow focus of regional policy. Secondly, motivations varied between councils. This suggested that local authorities take a strategic approach to their LGTN activities, pursuing objectives in line with their broader corporate aims. Thirdly, local authorities’ motivations for participating in LGTN were not static but changed over time. Sometimes this was because exposure to LGTN led councils to recognize they could achieve more than their initial objectives. More often, however, this change reflected a shift in councils’ broader strategic aims.
RQ\textsubscript{3}: What factors determine effective engagement in LGTN?

The question of effective engagement represented a lacuna in the existing literature on LGTN. Yet it warranted investigation. Firstly, local authorities’ strategic approach to LGTN (identified in Chapter 5) meant they assessed the effectiveness of their engagement. Indeed, it was shown that councils regularly conducted investigations into how successful their participation in LGTN was and whether they secured returns from their investment. This assessment went on to inform continued engagement. Secondly, the differential engagement in LGTN (observed in Chapter 4) posed questions about the factors which affect participation. This was addressed by RQ\textsubscript{3} in Chapter 6. It began by conceptualizing effective networking. Drawing on the public administration literature, this was achieved by identifying the various factors which determine effective engagement. However, while this provided a useful starting point, the public administration model restricts itself to the network level, overlooking the actors within networks and their agency. Drawing on Rowe’s (2011) conceptualization of effectiveness—which emphasizes the assessment of it from the perspective of local authorities themselves—addressed this and allowed for the identification of factors present at the local level in addition to those external to councils.

A review of the practitioner ‘best practice’ guidance confirmed that many of the determinants of effective engagement in LGTN are located at the local level. Two gaps, however, were identified in the academic literature. Firstly, local level factors have largely been neglected in favour of those at the national or network levels. Secondly, much of the focus is on transnational networks themselves, rather than the perceptions of local authorities within them. This study’s focus on the perceptions of local actors overcame this and therefore allowed this chapter to make a contribution to knowledge.

Combining the themes in the practitioner best practice guidance and academic literature allowed an analytical framework to be developed. This identified a range of factors present predominantly at the local level, but also external to councils. At
the local level these could be divided between the structures local authorities put in place and the agency of councillors and officers within councils. In terms of structures, it was shown local authorities needed a European strategy which sets out what is to be achieved from LGTN, select appropriate transnational partners and networks to engage with, provide adequate resourcing and investment—both in terms of budget and staff time—and set up internal co-ordination structures such as dedicated staff or European departments to manage participation in LGTN. A number of agency factors drew attention to the important role played by local government politicians and officers. Here their role in providing leadership and support, building personal relationships and their skills and knowledge were all key factors. In terms of external factors, councils had to contend with how transnational networks were organized, the effects of participating across national borders—the so-called ‘frontier effect’—national barriers and media and public support.

### 7.2 Linking to MLG and Europeanization

The findings presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 have allowed this thesis to make an empirical contribution to knowledge on LGTN. Chapter 2 argued LGTN can be characterized as a feature of multi-level governance (MLG) in the EU, brought about through the process of local level Europeanization. These findings therefore additionally link to conceptual debates surrounding EU MLG and local level Europeanization.

Chapter 2 explained how MLG provides a useful characterization of the EU as an already functioning political system, which recognizes the involvement of and interaction between actors at different jurisdictional levels. Scholars recognize that LGTN is a feature of MLG in the EU (Hooghe & Marks 2001a; Kern 2010; Kern & Bulkeley 2009). The continued and increased prevalence of LGTN observed in Chapter 4 therefore reinforced this, and in particular showed that LGTN was a case of Type II MLG: functionally specific governance arrangements which transcend jurisdictional
boundaries and are marked by flexible designs which come and go (Hooghe & Marks, 2003). Indeed, most cases of LGTN identified were functionally specific. It was shown that multilateral networks have become increasingly focused around specialist policy areas. Bilateral links likewise target co-operation in a small number of policy sectors and transnational projects set out to achieve specific deliverables. By its very nature LGTN transcends local and national borders, providing a means for local authorities to co-operate and share policy ideas with councils in other countries and to access EU decision making. It was also shown that transnational networks are not static, permanent features, but fluctuate in terms of how active they are and sometimes disband.

One of the weaknesses of the MLG approach—as identified by Jordan (2001, p. 201)—is that while it recognizes the role subnational government plays in EU politics, its research focus has remained fundamentally top–down; local authorities are assumed to be “inconsequential and passive players” (Jeffery, 2000, p. 8). This has led Jeffery (2000) and de Rooij (2002) to call for an examination of the ‘bottom–up drive’ behind MLG. By adopting a focus on the perceptions of local authorities throughout, this thesis has responded to this call, and therefore made a contribution to the literature here. Furthermore, the thesis’s focus on LGTN addresses concerns held by Blatter et al. (2008, pp. 464–465) and Kern (2014, p. 115) that much MLG research on the EU remains too heavily focused on the vertical relationships between the local, national and EU levels (Type I MLG), rather than ‘horizontal’ links (Type II MLG).

While MLG provided a useful way to describe the presence of LGTN as part of the EU’s functioning political system, it could not offer an explanation for how or why LGTN developed (see Jordan, 2001 p. 201). In line with Kern and Bulkeley (2009) and Kern (2010), Chapter 2 argued that Europeanization “complements the analysis of the European multi-level system by providing a sense of the means by which multi-level governance is accomplished” (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009 p. 312).

Chapter 2 surveyed the Europeanization approach and characterized it as the
7. Conclusion

process of domestic adaptation to European integration. In the case of LGTN, participation was argued to be an adaptive response by local authorities to the reality of the EU. Indeed, scholars noted early LGTN by local authorities in south-east England and northern France emerged as a result of wider events in European politics: namely, the completion of Single European Market and the availability of EU community initiative funding programmes, such as Interreg. \cite{Barber1997, ChurchReid1995, ChurchReid1996, ChurchReid1999, SinclairPage1993, Sparke2000}. The empirical evidence in Chapter 4 confirmed this holds true with contemporary engagement in LGTN. For example, it was shown that participation in policy-specific multilateral networks reflected the EU’s growing policy competence, bilateral links with authorities in central and eastern Europe developed in response to the opportunities created by EU enlargement in 2004, and participation in transnational projects was partly driven by increased availability and eligibility of financial support through Interreg and other EU regional policy programmes.

While the Europeanization approach conceptualizes participation in LGTN as an adaptive response by local authorities to the EU, Chapter 2 also outlined its usefulness as an analytical framework to explore aspects of its directionality, the extent and expected differentiation of engagement in LGTN, and—through new institutionalism—the underlying logic driving participation.

Directionality was tackled in Chapter 5. The Europeanization literature points to three directional dynamics: top–down (or ‘downloading’), bottom–up (or ‘uploading’) and horizontal (or ‘crossloading’). LGTN was shown to encompass all three simultaneously. Top–down Europeanization was observed in the case of engaging in LGTN to obtain funding. Here LGTN was an EU requirement, and the membership of networks—particularly transnational projects—reflected eligibility criteria determined by the EU. Local authorities therefore ‘downloaded’ and adopted these EU rules in order to access financial support, leading to this motivation being characterized as ‘hierarchical Europeanization’ \cite{Kern2010}. A bottom–up dynamic was observed
in the case of seeking to lobby and influence the EU policy process. Here local authorities used LGTN to ‘upload’ their preferences to the European level. The involvement of the local level was shown to be welcomed by the EU, which required local authorities’ expertise to inform policy development and their propinquity to citizens to legitimize proposals. Here Europeanization was shown to be a cyclical process, and characterized as ‘co-operative’ (Kern, 2010). Policy transfer illustrated the case of horizontal Europeanization. Here the EU was not actively involved, but provided a point of reference for local authorities to co-operate and share policy information directly with each other.

The questions of extent and differentiation were addressed in Chapter 4. Firstly it was argued that the increased level of participation in LGTN—relative to the 1990s—has meant local authorities have become increasingly Europeanized. John (2001, pp. 72–73) provides a useful tool for assessing the degree of local level Europeanization by conceptualizing the process as a nine step ladder which local authorities climb. The fact all of the councils studied participate in LGTN places them on the sixth and seventh steps of this ladder: “linking with other local organizations participating in the EU” and “participating in EU international networks and co-operating in joint projects” (John 2001, p. 72). Furthermore the use of LGTN to influence EU policy—observed in Chapter 5—moves local authorities to step eight of nine: “advising the EU on implementation issues” (John 2001, p. 72).

To summarize, this thesis’s findings suggest local authorities participating in LGTN have undergone a high degree of Europeanization. Secondly, it was noted in Chapter 2 that Europeanization does not imply convergence. Indeed differentiation is to be expected (Börzel 2005; Ladrech 2010; Radaelli 2003; Risse et al. 2001). The findings presented in Chapter 4 confirm this expectation. While all local authorities were engaged in LGTN, this was to different extents. Councils also varied in their approach to LGTN; some preferred participation in transnational projects, while others gave priority to multilateral or bilateral networks. This variation occurred predominately
7. Conclusion

within national borders, rather than across them, and thus supports Le Galès’s (2002, p. 110) characterization of a “variable geometry’ Europe”.

The logic driving participation in LGTN was explored in Chapter 5. By applying new institutionalism, local level Europeanization can be conceived as rationalist or sociological. In the case of the former, local authorities adopt the ‘logic of consequentialism’, seeking to improve their own positions. In the case of the latter, the ‘logic of appropriateness’ prevails (Börzel & Risse, 2003; Hamedinger & Wolffhardt, 2010). Existing literature on local level Europeanization has yet to apply this analytical tool (except Dąbrowski, 2012, 2013), and so this thesis offers a contribution here. The motivations held for engaging in LGTN showed councils were rationally driven. There were six reasons for this. Firstly, local authorities were goal oriented. Participation in LGTN was seen as a way to achieve pre-existing corporate aims. Secondly, local authorities saw LGTN as a means to improve their own positions and secure competitive advantage vis-à-vis other actors. Thirdly, participation in LGTN followed an assessment of several contextual factors which acted as potential constraints or opportunities. Fourthly, in deciding to engage in LGTN, local authorities conducted a cost–benefit analysis, and only participated if a clear return on investment could be made. The effect of this was such that it overrode local politicians’ ideological views on LGTN, effectively depoliticizing councils’ involvement. Fifthly, in conducting their cost–benefit analysis, local authorities were well aware of the limitation to LGTN. Finally, there was a notable absence of sociological drivers motivating participation in LGTN. Indeed, none of the motivations identified went beyond local authority self-interest.

This rationalist, strategic approach to LGTN went someway to explain the differentiated engagement identified in Chapter 4. Each local authority pursues its own objectives and so the extent of participation in LGTN and the approach taken will vary according to each council’s individual aims. Differentiation was further accounted for in Chapter 6, which borrowed the concept of ‘mediating factors’ from Risse et al.’s
three-step model of Europeanization. A range of local level structural factors acted as facilitating institutions and provided local authorities with the capacity to engage. The local level agency of councillors and officers within councils highlighted their potential impact as veto players, stalling participation in LGTN if they were unsupportive or lacked the necessary skills or personal relationships. As the presence and absence of these mediating factors varied between local authorities, so too did the level of participation in LGTN and the benefits each council received.

7.3 Limitations and avenues for future research

It is important to recognize three limitations this study. The first relates to case selection. This study focuses on local authorities in unitary and centralized polities, using a cross-national case selection made up of 14 local authorities from south-east England and northern France. As a result local authorities in federal and decentralized states have not been investigated, despite their engagement in LGTN being recognized elsewhere in the literature (for example Benz & Eberlein, 1999; Conzelmann, 1995; Happaerts, 2008; Happaerts et al., 2010, 2011; Keating, 1999). This focus was necessitated by the empirical puzzle the thesis sought to address. This pointed to councils’ limited capacity and questionable competence to engage externally, which are inherent features of local government of in centralized systems, whereas local authorities in federal systems have much more room for manoeuvre. The perceptions of local authorities in federal systems therefore warrants further investigation. This also opens up avenues for large scale comparative research—utilizing the ‘numerosity’ of local government (John, 2006, 2009)—which will be able to assess the impact of the division of state power as an independent variable.

The second limitation relates to the units of analysis adopted. Throughout, this

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672 Research on the role of subnational Brussels offices making use of the regional authority index (see Hooghe et al., 2010) sets an interesting precedent here (for example Donas & Beyers, 2013; Tatham & Thau, 2014).
thesis has sought to address a substantive gap in the literature by focusing on the perceptions of the local authorities involved in LGTN. In doing this, the thesis has necessarily treated councils as single entities. However, it is important to recognize local authorities are not unitary actors and that there are a range of intra-organizational dynamics, competing interests and political contestations at play within them (see Stoker & Wilson 1986). Indeed, the findings of this study highlighted this in places. For example, Chapter 5 illustrated how one of the benefits sought from participation in LGTN was to improve the co-ordination between internal council departments. Chapter 6 showed how a range of factors at the local level affect participation in LGTN. This included a lack of internal co-ordination and departmental ‘silo working’, which were shown to hamper local authorities’ engagement in LGTN. Furthermore, while LGTN was largely depoliticized, the agency of individual councillors and officers was shown to impact effective participation. This points future research on LGTN towards examining these internal dynamics.

The third limitation relates to research design and method. To tackle the empirical puzzle and address the gaps in the existing literature, this thesis adopted an inductive research design and a qualitative empirical approach. This raises two issues in particular. Firstly, by adopting an inductive research design, this study has relied on the perceptions of the local actors engaged in LGTN. Indeed, this was deliberate as it provided the foundation for this thesis’s contribution to knowledge. However it raises questions regarding the reliability of participants—and indeed the documents analysed—to offer truthful accounts and interpretation bias on the researcher’s part. This was mitigated through the practice of triangulation. No single method was used in isolation, and while the data analysis relied heavily on the interviews, a large number of participants (68) were included and drawn from a diverse range of backgrounds (for example officers, councillors, multilateral network staff, and active and retired participants). The presentation of findings in this thesis also drew directly upon the rich data gathered. Nevertheless, this issue leads to a second: that generalizing the
findings from qualitative research in one setting to another is difficult (Firestone 1993). It was made clear in Chapter 3 that this thesis’s intention was never to generalize, but to ensure the transferability of its findings to other cases (see Firestone 1993, Lincoln & Guba 1985). The findings of this study, however, could prove useful for developing a series of testable hypotheses which could be applied to larger scale quantitative comparative research. Again, making use of the ‘numerosity’ of local government offers a promising research avenue (John 2006, 2009).

7.4 Concluding remarks: LGTN and austerity

Throughout, this thesis has emphasized the agency of local authorities engaging in LGTN. In this way assertions by Bulkeley et al. (2003, p. 237) that LGTN “has not been a strategy simply imposed on local government” and by Lefèvre and d’Albergo (2007, p. 317) that “the political internationalisation of intercity relationships occurs as a result of deliberate activities carried out by actors operating within a city’s political and governance system”, rather than being “mere leaves in the wind of internationalisation”, are found to hold true. Indeed, Chapter 4 showed that LGTN was a local authority response to a number of contextual factors, and Chapter 5 showed this response to be rationally driven.

These findings allow the empirical puzzle—outlined in Chapter 1—to be directly addressed. Local authorities use LGTN as a way to tackle what is perceived to be an adverse context, marked by increased austerity and public finance pressures. LGTN therefore constitutes an opportunity structure which allows councils to address this context, or at least mitigate some of its adverse effects. Nevertheless, this context of austerity presents a double-edged sword here. While it has on the one hand encouraged participation in LGTN by prompting local authorities to actively address the adverse financial climate, it also places significant limits on councils’ ability to dedicate the necessary investment and resources required for LGTN to be successful. This was
illustrated throughout Chapter 6. Despite being aware of the factors determining successful engagement in LGTN and recognizing what constituted best practice, as councils’ core budgets have been cut and staff have been lost, engagement in LGTN has suffered.

Looking to the future, then, local authorities’ engagement in LGTN looks set to continue. The benefits to be gained from participation are such that many local authorities would believe it to be against their interests not to. However ensuring successful engagement, and for participation to be more than a mere symbolic gesture, will require a long term strategy and adequate upfront investment in staff and financial resources. Given the adverse context in which local authorities currently operate, this will require the commitment, leadership and support of local councillors and officers within councils. This presents local authorities with an overall choice. As one participant put it:

there’s two ways of responding to the difficulties we face at the moment. One is to hunker down, cut everything back and stick to the knitting as it were and a very lean approach and perhaps don’t take the political risks that are involved in international activity. The other is to acknowledge that successful cities have to be outward looking . . . you’ve got to look outward and international work and connecting to others and learning from that experience and being up there with the best in class across the world and across Europe I think is part of that and it reflects the ambition of the place that you’re leading.

673 Interview with multilateral network staff, July 2012 (Int. 06).
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Appendix A: Multilateral networks identified in the literature

The following table lists the transnational multilateral local government networks identified in the literature and illustrates the extent and diversity of this phenomenon. Note: this list includes some organizations which do not conform to this thesis’s definition of a local government transnational network (see Section 1.4). It also includes networks which have a global, rather than a purely European focus.

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<td>Airport Regions Conference</td>
<td>Heeg et al. (2003)</td>
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<td>Alliance in the Alps</td>
<td>Bulkeley et al. (2003); Kern and Bulkeley (2009)</td>
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<td>Alps-Adriatic Working Community</td>
<td>Ercole et al. (1997); Happaerts (2008); Happaerts et al. (2011)</td>
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<td>Arc Manche</td>
<td>Barber (1997); Church and Reid (1996, 1999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN)</td>
<td>Bouteligier (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association de Villes de la Grande Europe pour la Culture</td>
<td>Karvounis (2011)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Association Internationale de Régions Francophone (AIRF)</td>
<td>Happaerts (2008), Happaerts et al. (2011)</td>
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<td>Association Internationale des Maires Francophone (AIMF)</td>
<td>van der Heiden (2010)</td>
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<td>Benington (1994); Ercole et al. (1997); Goldsmith (1993, 2003, 2011); Hooghe (1995); Hooghe and Marks (2001a); John (2000, 2001); Keating (2000); Keating and Hooghe (2006); Lawrence (2000); Le Galès (2002); McAlevey and Mitchell (1994); Sodupe (1999)</td>
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<td>Association of Significant European Cemeteries</td>
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<td>Assembly of European Regions (AER)</td>
<td>Benington (1994); Ercole et al. (1997); Goldsmith (2011); Hamedinger (2011); Happaerts (2008); Happaerts et al. (2010, 2011); Hooghe (1995); Hooghe and Marks (2001a); John (2000); Karvounis (2011); Keating (1999, 2000); Keating and Hooghe (2006); Payre (2010); Sodupe (1999)</td>
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<td>Association of European (Frontier) Border Regions (AEBR)</td>
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<td>Atlantic Arc Commission</td>
<td>Balme and Le Galès (1997); Benington (1994); Ercole et al. (1997); Goldsmith (1993, 2003, 2011); Happaerts (2008); Keating (1999); Le Galès (2002); Poussard (1997); Sodupe (1999); Wise (2000a, 2000b)</td>
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<td>Balkan Cities Network</td>
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<td>Capital Regions Network</td>
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<td>Car Free Cities</td>
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<td>Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI)</td>
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<td>Cities for Climate Protection (CCP)</td>
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<td>Cities for Cyclists</td>
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<td>Cities for Recycling (Association of Cities &amp; Regions for Recycling)</td>
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<td>Cities without Slums</td>
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<td>CIVITAS</td>
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<td>Climate Alliance</td>
<td>Kern (2014); Kern and Bulkeley (2009); van der Heiden (2010)</td>
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<td>Climate Task Force of European Local Government</td>
<td>Kern and Bulkeley (2009)</td>
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<td>Club of Eurométropoles</td>
<td>Ercole et al. (1997); Le Gales (2002); Ward and Williams (1997)</td>
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<td>Coal Communities Campaign</td>
<td>Benington (1994); Bogdanor (1992); Goldsmith (1993); Ercole et al. (1997)</td>
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<td>Communauté des Villes Ariane (CVA)</td>
<td>van der Heiden (2010)</td>
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<td>Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) / Conference of European Regions with Legislative Power (REGLEG)</td>
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<td>Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR)</td>
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<td>Council of Europe: Congress of Local &amp; Regional Authorities</td>
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<td>Council of European Municipalities &amp; Regions (CEMR)</td>
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<td>Environmental Conference of the European Regions (ENCORE)</td>
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## Multilateral network

| European Local Authorities Research & Study Centre (CERLLE) | Goldsmith (1993) |
| European Metropolitan Transport Authorities (EMTA) | van der Heiden (2010) |
| European Network of Cities for Local Integration Policy | Karvounis (2011) |
| European Social Action Network (ESAN) | Benington (1994) |
| European Metropolitan Transport Authorities (EMTA) | van der Heiden (2010) |
| European Network of Cities for Local Integration Policy | Karvounis (2011) |
| European Social Action Network (ESAN) | Benington (1994) |
| European Sustainable Cities & Towns Network (or Campaign) | Bulkeley (2005); Bulkeley et al. (2003); Hamedinger and Wolffhardt (2010); Ward and Williams (1997) |
| European Urban Observatory | Ercole et al. (1997); Ward and Williams (1997) |
| Euretowns | Balme and Le Gales (1997) |
| EUROSYSNET | Benington (1994) |
| EXCHANGE | Goldsmith (1993) |
| FMVJ-UTP | Ward and Williams (1997) |
| Forum of Adriatic & Ionian Cities | Karvounis (2011) |
| Four Motors for Europe | Balme and Le Gales (1997); Bogdanor (1992); Goldsmith (1993); Happaerts (2008); Happaerts et al. (2010, 2011); Hooghe (1995); Hooghe and Marks (2001a); Keating (1999, 2000); Murphy (1993); Sodupe (1999) |
| Glocal Forum | Karvounis (2011) |
| Green Links | Benington (1994); Goldsmith (1993) |
| Healthy Cities Network | Bulkeley et al. (2003); Karvounis (2011) |
| HORIZON | Goldsmith (1993) |
| I Kapodistrias Network | Karvounis (2011) |
| Innovating Regions in Europe (IRE) | Happaerts (2008); Happaerts et al. (2011); van der Heiden (2010) |
| Integration, Endogenous Development & Employment (IDEE) | Benington (1994); Ward and Williams (1997) |
| Intelligent Port System (iPORTS) | Karvounis (2011) |
| Inter-Mediterranean Commission | Happaerts (2008); Sodupe (1999) |
| International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC) | van der Heiden (2010) |
| International Association of Peace Messenger Cities (IAMPC) | van der Heiden (2010) |
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Appendix B: French and English local government structures
French régions and départements
Appendix B

English local government structure
Appendix C: Documents analysed


Appendix C


Conseil régional de Bretagne, & Welsh Assembly Government. (2004). *Protocole


Appendix C

CS/committee/rils/rils260504i5.pdf


Appendix D: Document search terms

- “Transnational network”, “transnational networks”, “transnational networking”.


- “European activity”, “European activities”, “international activity”, “international activities”.

- “European partnership”, “European partnerships”, international partnership”, “international partnerships”, “cross-border partnership”, “cross-border partnerships”, “cross border partnership”, “cross border partnerships”.

- “European link”, “European links”, “international link”, “international links”, “cross-border link”, “cross-border links”, “cross border link”, “cross border links”, “transnational link”, “transnational links”.

- “European affairs”, “international affairs”, “external affairs”.

- “European co-operation”, “European cooperation”, “international co-operation”, “international cooperation”, “cross-border co-operation”, “cross-border cooperation”, “cross border co-operation”, “cross border cooperation”.

- “European relations”, “international relations”, “external relations”.

- “Europe strategy”, “European strategy”, “international strategy”.

- “Europe policy”, “European policy”, “international policy”.

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Appendix E: Additional participant and interview information

Participants
The researcher is grateful to the following participants who freely gave their time to be interviewed as part of this research project.

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Interview requests

| Number of potential participants contacted        | 119                    |
| Participants who agreed to be interviewed         | 68                     |
| Participants who agreed to be interviewed but later withdrew | 2                     |
| Unobtainable contacts                             | 31                     |
| Interviews refused or referred to another colleague | 19                    |
| Interviews not arranged as contact not relevant to study | 2                     |
| **Total positive response rate**                  | **57.14%**             |

Format of interviews

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Interview length

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Appendix F: Interview questions

The following were the core questions posed to participants. Question wording and order changed slightly depending on the participant’s background, for example if they worked for a local authority or for a multilateral network.

- Please briefly outline your experience in transnational networking.
- What transnational networking activity does your authority participate in?
- Do you see transnational networking as an important part of your authority’s strategy?
- Do you think this view is shared by others within your authority, both among officers and politically?
- What benefits does your authority aim to achieve through its participation in transnational networks?
- Are any of these aims more important to you or your authority than others? If so, which and why?
- Do you think any of the transnational networks your authority participates in achieve your aims better than others? If so, which and why?
- Do you think there are any problems—either network-wide or specific to your or another authority—which act as a hindrance to you achieving your aims? If so, can you explain these?
- What do you think could be done to overcome these difficulties?
- Do you have any examples of best practice where your or another authority participates in transnational networking effectively?
- What are the characteristics of an authority which is effective at transnational networking?
- Is there anyone else—in this organization or another—who you think it would be useful to talk to?
Appendix G: Example email invitation

From: christopher.huggins@port.ac.uk
Subject: Local government transnational networking [or similar]

Dear [NAME],

I am a doctoral researcher at the University of Portsmouth currently working towards a PhD. I am conducting research into local government networking and co-operation across national borders. Specifically I am looking at the reasons why local authorities participate in this international activity and how they can gain greater benefits from it. I am particularly interested in the European activity carried out by local government in south-east England and northern France. In order to gain an insight into this activity I am interested to hear the experiences of those involved.

I understand you are [POSITION/INVOLVEMENT IN TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKING] at [ORGANIZATION]. I would therefore be extremely grateful if you would participate in a short interview to discuss your thoughts and experiences in this area. The information you provide will be used to help inform my research project. I am happy to meet at a time and place at your convenience.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely, Christopher Huggins.

Centre for European and International Studies Research
University of Portsmouth
Park Building, King Henry I Street
Portsmouth, PO1 2DZ
United Kingdom

E: christopher.huggins@port.ac.uk
T: +44 (0)2392 846157
W: www.port.ac.uk/cesir
Appendix H: Confirmation letter and information sheet
Dear [NAME],

Many thanks for agreeing to meet with me on [INTERVIEW DATE] at [TIME] to be interviewed about local government involvement in transnational European networks as part of my research project. As agreed, I will meet you at [INTERVIEW LOCATION].

I have enclosed an information sheet which outlines in more detail what my research project is about and what the interview process involves. Please take some time to read through this before the interview and get back to me with any questions or concerns.

I look forward to meeting you on [INTERVIEW DATE].

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Huggins.

Centre for European and International Studies Research
University of Portsmouth
Park Building
King Henry I Street
Portsmouth
PO1 2DZ
United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)23 9284 6157
E: christopher.huggins@port.ac.uk
Participant information sheet

Local government involvement in European transnational networks

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide, I would like you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it would involve for you. This information sheet outlines this. Please feel free to talk to others about the study if you wish. Do not hesitate to contact me if anything is not clear or you have any other questions.

What is the study about?

Many councils engage with local government in other—particularly European—countries. This is often called ‘transnational networking’. This can take a number of forms, including:

- Being a partner in an international, European or cross-border project (for example an EU-funded or INTERREG project).
- Being a member of a networking organization representing local government interests whose membership is drawn from more than one country (examples include the Assembly of European Regions, Eurocities or the Arc Manche).
- Having direct links with local authorities abroad (not including town / city twinning).

The aim of this study is to gain an insight into this activity. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:

- What is the rationale behind local government participation in transnational networking?
- What benefits do councils gain from their involvement in transnational networks?
Appendix H

• What problems hinder transnational networking or the benefits local government get from it?

• Can greater benefits be gained by local government authorities through transnational networking, and if so, how?

This study focuses on the transnational networking activity undertaken by ‘top-tier’ local authorities in south-east England and northern France. It also seeks to understand wider trends in this activity.

It is being undertaken as part of a programme of research towards fulfilment of a PhD award.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited because of your position within your council or your role in local government transnational networking. Councillors, officers and representatives from several other local authorities and relevant organizations are also being invited to participate in this study.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether to participate in the study or not. The study will be described to you and any questions you have will be answered. If you agree to take part, you will then be asked to formally consent at the beginning of the interview.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to participate in an interview. A mutually convenient time and place will be arranged for this. The interview will be audio recorded. This ensures all information is captured and means an accurate record of the interview can be produced. Notes will also be taken during the interview. Before any questions are asked your consent to participate in the study will be sought and recorded.

Following the interview a transcript of the audio recording will be produced. You will be sent a copy—usually by email—within two months and asked to confirm it.

Following this, your interview transcript, along with other participants’ interviews, will be analysed to help inform the research. During this process you may be contacted to clarify certain points in the interview.
The findings of the research will be presented as part of a PhD thesis. The results are also likely to be published elsewhere too, for example in academic journals or at conferences. You, along with the other participants, will also be given an overview report of the findings.

What are the benefits of taking part?

By taking part you will be contributing your own and your organization’s views on this topic to the research. Your and others’ insights into this area will help to gain an understanding into transnational networking by local authorities. As well as an academic benefit, the results of this study will have an applied aspect too. For example, the results could be used to help local authorities gain greater benefits from their participation. You and the other participants will be given an overview report of the results.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

As part of this study hopes to identify best practice within local government transnational networking and ways of improving the effectiveness of this activity, results will not be made confidential. This is so that people can learn from examples where local authorities do well. This will mean the research has potential benefits for practitioners as well as academics. Of course, if any part of your interview is to be quoted verbatim or your name or organization mentioned in any published material your full consent will be sought first.

The only personal data—in other words that which identifies you as an individual—this study collects is your name, organization and position within your organization. No other personal details will be collected from you as this is not required for this study. Any personal data you provide will be kept safe and secure. Your information will be stored on the university’s network which is password protected; only myself and my supervisor will have direct access to it. Your details will only be used in connection with this study and not for any other purpose.

If you have any concerns about confidentiality or would like discuss it further please do not hesitate to get in touch.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The findings of the research will be presented as part of a PhD thesis. The results are also likely to be published elsewhere too, for example in academic journals or conference presentations. You, along with the other participants, will also be given an overview report of the findings.
Can I withdraw from the study?

If you wish, you can withdraw at any point until you have agreed the interview transcript. After this, all interviews will be analysed together. It will become impractical to remove a single participant’s interview once the analysis process has started.

If you do wish to withdraw from the study please get in touch. Anything you have already contributed—including interview recordings and transcripts—will be destroyed. You do not have to give any reasons for your withdrawal.

Who is organizing and funding the research?

This research project is supported and funded by the Centre for European and International Studies Research at the University of Portsmouth as part of a PhD project. Information about the university and research centre can be found at www.port.ac.uk and www.port.ac.uk/ceisr respectively.

Who has reviewed the study?

Research at the University of Portsmouth is looked at by an independent group of people, called a research ethics committee, to protect your interests. This study has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the university.

What if I have any problems or concerns?

If you have any problems, issues or concerns please feel free to contact me to talk through them. If you wish to check my credentials then please feel free to contact the senior secretary at the Centre for European and International Studies Research at the University of Portsmouth. Her contact details are below:

Donna Ferrand
Senior Secretary
Centre for European and International Studies Research
University of Portsmouth
Park Building
King Henry I Street
Portsmouth
PO1 2BZ

Telephone: +44 (0)23 9284 6033
Email: donna.ferrand@port.ac.uk
Web: www.port.ac.uk/ceisr
What if I have further questions?

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions. My contact details are below:

Christopher Huggins
Centre for European and International Studies Research
University of Portsmouth
Park Building
King Henry I Street
Portsmouth
PO1 2DZ

Telephone: +44 (0)23 9284 6157
Email: christopher.huggins@port.ac.uk
Web: www.port.ac.uk/ceisr

Many thanks for taking the time to read through this information sheet and consider participating in this research study.
Appendix I: Interview notes form
## Interview details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview with</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authority / organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date and time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview ID</td>
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</table>

## Interview notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BRIEFLY OUTLINE STUDY AND SEEK CONSENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you confirm you happy to be interviewed as part of this study?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please briefly outline your experience in transnational networking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What transnational networks does your authority participate in?</td>
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<td><em>(If examples already known check this is still valid)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you see transnational networking as an important part of your authority’s strategy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Supplementary:</em> do you think this view is shared by others within your authority, both among officers and politically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What benefits does your authority aim to achieve through its participation in transnational networks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are any of these aims more important to you or your authority than others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Supplementary:</em> if so which and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think any of the transnational networks your authority participates in achieve your aims better than others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supplementary:</strong> If so which networks and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think there are any problems—either network-wide or specific to your or another authority—which act as a hindrance to you achieving your aims?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supplementary:</strong> If so can you explain these?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think could be done to overcome these issues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any examples of best practice where your or another authority participates in transnational networking effectively?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the characteristics of an authority which is effective at transnational networking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anyone else who you think it would be useful to talk to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank for participation and outline what will happen next</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other notes**
Appendix J: Thank you letter
Dear [NAME],

Many thanks for taking time to meet with me on [DATE OF INTERVIEW] to discuss your experiences in local government transnational networking. It was a pleasure to meet you and the interview was extremely useful and insightful.

As discussed I will send you a transcript of the interview within the next two months for your confirmation.

If you have any questions or concerns in the mean time, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Huggins.

Centre for European and International Studies Research
University of Portsmouth
Park Building
King Henry I Street
Portsmouth
PO1 2DZ
United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)23 9284 6157
E: christopher.huggins@port.ac.uk
Appendix K: Ethics report and favourable opinion

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the ethical implications of the research project ‘local government involvement in transnational European networks’.

Aims and research questions

The overall aim of this study is to gain an insight into local government involvement in transnational networks and in so doing have a better understanding of how local government authorities could improve their networking activity so in turn to improve the benefits they receive from it. Specifically, it aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Identify contemporary examples of transnational networking by local government in south-east England and northern France.
- Establish the rationale, from a local government perspective, for participation in transnational networks.
- Examine the effectiveness of local authorities in securing benefits from participation in transnational networking.

These aims have helped to shape, and form the basis of, the study’s main research questions:

- What is the rationale behind local government participation in transnational networking?
- What benefits do participants gain from their involvement in transnational networks?
- What problems hinder transnational networking or the benefits local government get from it?

Beyond this, there is a wider aim in so far as broadening academic debate in this area. Local government transnational networking has largely been overlooked by
political scientists and European integration scholars. While there was an increase in literature during the 1990s, contemporary literature—save for a small number of cases—is scarce. Of the literature that does exist there are a number of issues. For example, there is often a heavy focus on networks’ role in obtaining European funding at the cost of policy areas. This study therefore aims to overcome some of these shortcomings by providing a contemporary analysis of local government transnational networking.

Overview of method

This research project aims to understand the reasons local government authorities take part in transnational networks. In this context it is important to gain an understanding from the point of view of those involved in these networks. Interviews are a useful and appropriate method for studies which focus on phenomena from participants’ perspectives. Therefore by interviewing local government officials who are involved in transnational networks, a better understanding of the rationale for participating in networks can be gained. This is where the bulk of this research project’s data will be collected from. This method is common among studies in this field (for example Benington & Harvey, 1998; Lawrence, 2000; Payre, 2010; Salskov-Iversen, 2006a).

The interviews will be carried out in what Robson (2002, p. 270) defines as a semi-structured way; that is an interview that “has predetermined questions, but the order can be modified based upon the interviewer’s perception of what seems most appropriate. Question wording can be changed and explanations given” (Robson, 2002, p. 270). The flexibility of this approach allows insight to be gained, while also allowing specific issues to be explored in depth should certain issues come up during the interview itself. The interview questions will be drawn from and based on the study’s research questions. Careful consideration needs to be given to this. Kvale (1996, p. 130) notes that the study’s “research questions need to be translated into an easy-going, colloquial form to generate spontaneous and rich descriptions”. In other words, the interviews questions need to be aimed at the participant, not the researcher, so they can adequately provide data which will assist in addressing the research questions.

While it is considered that semi-structured interviews are the most appropriate method in order to address the study’s aims and research questions, the approach has some inherent challenges which will need to be overcome. Firstly, interviews obviously involve gathering data directly from human participants. Consequently, there are ethical considerations to take into account. These are outlined in more detail below. Another challenge is presented in terms of language, particularly when interviewing French participants. This will require the use of translation services. The impact of this and the challenges it presents are discussed further below.

Questions

Before any questions are asked participants will receive an explanation of what the research project entails. Participants’ verbal consent will then be sought. Participants will also be given a brief explanation of what is meant by “transnational networking”,

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along with some examples, to avoid confusion in terminology.

The precise questions participants will be asked during interviews have yet to be finalized, so the following list is a working draft:

- What transnational networks does your authority participate in?
- Do you see transnational networking as an important part of your authority’s strategy? (Is this view shared by others within your authority?)
- What resources does your authority invest into transnational activity?
- What does your authority aim to achieve through its participation in transnational networks?
- Are any of these aims more important to you or your authority than the others? (If so, which and why?)
- Do you think any of the transnational networks your authority participates in achieve your aims better than others? (If so, which networks and why?)
- Do you think there are any problems (either network-wide or specific to your or another authority) which act as a hindrance to your achieving your aims? (If so, can you explain these?)
- What do you think could be done to overcome these issues?
- Do you have any examples of best practice where your or another authority participates in transnational networking effectively?

As noted above, the interviews will be semi-structured so these questions are flexible in wording and the order they are presented in. This will allow each interview to be tailored to the participant or their context. It also allows supplementary questions to be asked in response to interesting answers from participants which may benefit from further exploration.

**Sampling**

This study will utilize a snowball sampling method, defined as using known participants as informants to identify further potential participants. Given that much of networking is about forming relationships with counterparts in other local authorities or organizations, participants can be used as informants, highlighting other potential participants who will be relevant to the study.

**Ethical considerations**

This section outlines some of the ethical considerations the research project needs to acknowledge and address. As this study involves gathering data directly from human participants via interviews, a favourable ethical opinion will need to be sought from the university’s Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.
before data collection starts. It is hoped this will be obtained by the end of August 2011.

This research project will abide by the Economic and Social Research Council’s (2010) *Framework for Research Ethics*. The six key principles of this are as follows:

- “Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, quality and transparency.”
- “Research staff and participants must normally be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved.”
- “The confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and the anonymity of respondents must be respected.”
- “Research participants must take part voluntarily, free from any coercion.”
- “Harm to research participants must be avoided in all instances.”
- “The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit.”

Kvale (1996, pp. 119–120) also sets out a number of ethical issues which researchers planning to interview should consider. These are:

- “What are the beneficial consequences of the study?”
- “How can the informed consent . . . be obtained?”
- “How can confidentiality . . . be protected?”
- “What are the consequences of the study for the participating subjects?”
- “How will the researcher’s role affect the study?”

**Benefit**

As well as making an academic contribution this research project also has an applied dimension by seeking to understand ways in which local government could improve their transnational networking activity in order to improve the benefits they derive from it. In this way the results of the study have the potential to have an impact among the participants themselves. These potential benefits are explained to participants in the information sheet which they will receive before agreeing to participate. All participants will receive a report giving an overview of the results, whether positive or negative. This will ensure the results are disseminated among those it will have an impact with.
Transparency and informed consent

This research project will be carried out in an open and transparent way, while being careful not to compromise participants’ personal details. To this end an information sheet has been created, aimed primarily at participants. This outlines:

- The project’s focus, aims and main research questions.
- Who is organizing, carrying out and funding the research, along with contact details.
- What will happen to participants and what they can expect during the research process.
- How the study has been reviewed.
- Information about withdrawing from the study.
- Issues around confidentiality and storage of data.
- What will happen to the results of the study.
- Who to contact for further information, or if there are any problems.

This information sheet will form the basis of participants’ informed consent to take part, which will be sought before data will be collected from them. All participants will be invited to take part in the research project. An invitation letter on university headed paper will be sent to each potential participant where it will be made clear their participation is entirely voluntary. The information sheet will also be written on university headed paper.

As all interviews will be audio recorded, participants’ consent will be captured on the recording—rather than using a paper consent form—before the actual interview begins.

Confidentiality and anonymity

One of the key aims of this study is to identify ways in which local government might be able to improve their transnational networking activity and thus increase the benefits they gain. To facilitate this, examples of best practice might be identified and experiences shared. Consequently, results will not be made confidential so they can have an impact among practitioners through the use of examples, ensuring the results of the research have an impact beyond academia. This situation will be clearly communicated to participants, both on the information sheet and when consent is being sought. If any part of an interview is to be quoted verbatim, or a participant’s name or organization mentioned in any published material, the participant’s full consent will be sought first. Again, participants will be informed of this.

Participants’ data—including personal details and interview recordings and transcripts—will be kept on the university’s network which is password protected. All
participants will be informed about how their information and the data gathered from them will be kept. At the end of the research project data provided by participants will be held for future research if required. Again, participants would be informed of this and their consent sought before their data is accessed and used for any additional research.

Consequences for participants

Participation in the study is completely voluntary and this is made explicitly clear to potential participants. A participant’s decision to take part in the research or not will be completely respected and they will not be asked to provide a reason for their decision. At no point will any form of pressure be applied to participants to persuade them to take part. Furthermore, this study will strictly uphold the principle of no harm to participants.

Participation will obviously involve some minor consequences for participants. Firstly, participants will be asked to take part in an audio recorded interview, to be arranged at a mutually convenient time and place. Following the interview, participants will be asked to confirm a transcript. During the analysis, participants may be contacted in order to clarify certain points, to seek permission to reproduce parts of the interview verbatim or to seek permission to mention the participant’s name or organization. As noted above, all participants will receive an overview report on the study’s main findings. Participation is completely voluntary and participants are free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason up to the point where data analysis begins. After this point it may become unfeasible to remove an individual’s data from everyone else’s. Again, this whole process will be set out in the information sheet so participants have a clear idea about what to expect from their participation in the project before agreeing to take part.

Researcher’s role

As with the participant’s role, the researcher’s role will also be made clear in the information sheet before any participant agrees to take part in the study. The interests of the researcher and the motives behind data collection will be made clear. Specifically that the research is being carried out as part of a programme of research culminating in a PhD award for the researcher. Further, for the purposes of transparency, clear information will be provided in the information sheet about who is funding the research, in this case the Centre for European and International Studies Research at the University of Portsmouth as part of a PhD bursary.
Dear Chris,

Full Title of Study: Local government involvement in transnational European networks: ethical considerations.

Documents reviewed: Ethical considerations - summary
Participant Information Sheet
Invitation letter

Following the advice I provided en route, your proposal was reviewed by a virtual sub-committee of FHSS Research Ethics Committee.

I am delighted to write to you formally and confirm the Committee’s favourable opinion.

I wish you every success with your research.

David Carpenter
Chair: FHSS REC

Review undertaken by:

David Carpenter
Richard Hitchcock
Jane Winstone
Jill Dealey
Appendix L: Visualizations of transnational networking by local authorities

The following figures show the transnational networking activity undertaken by the 14 councils studied. These visualizations were carried out using social network analysis software. Transnational links engaged in by the councils in the case study areas were entered into this software which then visually mapped them. The purpose here was to visualize the prevalence of local government transnational networking activity rather than to carry out any quantitative social network analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Case study</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Local authority in another country</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Transnational networking organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Transnational project</td>
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</table>
East Sussex County Council
West Sussex County Council
Hampshire County Council
Portsmouth City Council
Southampton City Council
Conseil régional du Nord-Pas de Calais
Conseil régional de Picardie
Conseil régional de Haute-Normandie
Conseil régional de Basse-Normandie
Conseil régional de Bretagne