



Europeanization and multi-level governance: Empirical findings and conceptual challenges

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Abstract

This paper draws on material from a recently-published book that considers the extent to which Europeanization advances multi-level governance within member states and, if so, of what type(s), and through what processes. The empirical focus is on EU cohesion policy and particularly the domestic impact of the requirements of partnership, programming and regionalization. The main case study is Britain, a member state whose political system has been increasingly characterized by multi-level governance in the period of EU membership. The British case is analyzed in relation to developments across the EU. Thus, the main purpose is to establish whether EU cohesion policy has promoted multi-level governance in Britain and other member states and, therefore, to assess whether any identified governance change can be characterized as a process of Europeanization. In developing the comparative analysis, a distinction is drawn between EU effects in 'compound' and 'simple' polities.

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Introduction

This paper draws on material from a recently-published book (Bache 2008) that considers the extent to which Europeanization advances multi-level governance within member states and, if so, of what type(s), and through what processes. Having reviewed the main conceptual themes and empirical findings of the book, the paper reflects on some of the conceptual issues raised.

The empirical focus is on EU cohesion policy¹ and particularly the domestic impact of the requirements of partnership, programming and regionalization; partnership requires that funds be administered through regional partnerships consisting of national, subnational and supranational (European Commission) representatives; programming require regions to develop strategic multi-annual plans to ensure coherence between projects funded; and regionalization requires the existence of appropriate regional-level structures (partnerships and administrative processes) for delivering programmes.

The main case study is Britain, a member state whose political system has been increasingly characterized by multi-level governance in the period of EU membership. The British case is analyzed in relation to developments across the EU. The main purpose of the book is to establish whether EU cohesion policy (independent variable) has promoted multi-level governance in Britain and other member states (dependent variable) and, therefore, to assess whether any identified governance change can be characterized as a process of Europeanization. In developing the comparative analysis, a distinction is drawn between EU effects in “compound” and “simple” polities. In the former, “power, influence and voice are diffused through multiple levels and modes of governance” (e.g., Germany, Italy, Spain), while in the latter, “power, influence and voice are more concentrated in a single level and mode of governance” (e.g., Britain, France, Greece) (Schmidt 2003, 2) (see Table 1). This simple-compound distinction highlights both state structures and policy processes, and places these alongside analysis of the nature of politics. Here, changes in the former relate to changes in the vertical dimension of multi-level governance as new state structures emerge or are strengthened at levels above and below the nation state, while changes to the latter relate to the sideways

¹ Cohesion policy is the EU’s main redistributive policy, aiming to reduce social and economic inequalities across Europe. The main financial instruments of cohesion policy, the structural funds, are aimed largely at promoting the development of disadvantaged regions and localities in the single European market. Cohesion policy covers a substantial part of the EU’s territory, accounts for approximately one third of the EU’s total budget, and remains an important source of funding for both regions and localities in both established and new member states

movement of power to non-state actors that relate to the horizontal dimension of multi-level governance.

Table 1: Key characteristics of compound and simple polities

	<i>Structures</i>	<i>Power</i>	<i>Authorities</i>
Simple polities (Fr, UK)	Unitary	Concentrated	Single
Compound polities (Sp, It)	Regionalized	Partially diffuse	Somewhat multiple
Compound polities (Ger, U.S.)	Federal	Diffuse	Multiple
Highly compound (EU)	Quasi-federal	Highly diffuse	Highly multiple

Source: adapted from Schmidt 2006, 51.

The paper has four substantive sections. Section one considers the conceptual themes of Europeanization, multi-level governance and policy networks; section two summarises the empirical findings across the EU; section three summarises the empirical findings on Britain; and section four considers reflects on some of the key conceptual issues raised by the study.

Conceptual themes

Europeanization

Europeanization has become a leading concept in the field of European studies. Yet its purpose and utility is hotly contested, leading to a number of conceptual approaches and typologies. For some, understanding Europeanization as the domestic effects of engagement with the EU is an overly narrow usage of the term (Wallace 2000). Yet this has become the dominant application for empirical studies of Europeanization. And, while acknowledging the argument that the EU itself may be best understood as both a feature and cause of Europeanization, the term is used here to mean the effects of the EU on domestic politics. Specifically, Europeanization is understood as “the reorientation or reshaping of politics in the domestic arena in ways that reflect policies, practices or preferences advanced through the EU system of governance” (Bache and Jordan 2006, 30). The purpose of adopting this narrower understanding is simple: it places a boundary around what is already a complex task of empirical research—that of tracing EU-member state relations.

While Europeanization research has settled on understanding the relationship between the EU and its member (and accession) states. A consensus has grown around the need to understand this as a two-way relationship, but one that has been modeled primarily in terms of the downward flow of effects. There is consensus also on needing to understand both the force of what is “coming down” in terms of EU requirements (e.g., legal status) and how this “fits” with and is mediated by domestic factors. The effect is then categorized according to the nature and degree of change that takes place. Börzel and Risse (2003, 69–70) provided a threefold categorization of the outcome of domestic change in response to Europeanization pressures that ranges from transformation to absorption. This categorization is adapted to relate more specifically to the definition used here in Table 2.

Table 2: Categorizing domestic responses to the EU

<i>Category</i>	<i>Features</i>	<i>Degree of Domestic Change</i>
Transformation	States fundamentally change existing policies, practices, and/or preferences or replace them with new ones.	High
Accommodation	States adapt existing policies, practices, and/or preferences without changing their essential features.	Modest
Absorption	States incorporate EU policies, practices, and/or preferences without substantially modifying existing policies, practices, and/or preferences.	Low

Source: adapted from Börzel and Risse 2003, 69–70.

New Institutional Refinements

Much of the Europeanization literature is institutionalist by nature (e.g., Knill 2001; Knill and Lehmkuhl 1999; Börzel 1999; Radaelli 2003) and, indeed, Bulmer (2007, 51) has argued that “an awareness of the new institutionalisms is indispensable for understanding how Europeanization is theorized.” Over time, Europeanization research has utilized nuanced and differentiated new institutionalist approaches. In particular, a useful contrast is made between the respective arguments of rational choice, sociological and historical variants of new institutionalism, and particularly on the claims of the logic of consequentiality versus the logic of appropriateness (Börzel and Risse 2003; Hix and Goetz 2000; Vink 2003). While the former emphasizes rational goal-driven action and the latter emphasizes a more complex process of social learning in which actors’ goals and preferences are transformed, as March and

Olsen (1998, 10) have argued, “any particular action probably involves elements of each.”

An appreciation of the new institutionalisms is helpful in understanding the relationship between Europeanization and multi-level governance through EU cohesion policy. Here, Thielemann’s (1999) work is particularly instructive because it sets out two positions on the implications for European governance of the partnership principle of EU cohesion policy and links the rationalist-sociological institutionalist debate with the discussion of policy networks (below). Here, there are two main views: one emphasizes partnership as a mechanism for creating new opportunities for strategic interaction, the other suggests that it provides the potential for a deeper transformation of actor behaviour and preferences. The first position, linked to the Rhodes (1988; 1997) model of policy networks “is informed very much by a consequentialist/rational choice underpinning as it regards networks as an opportunity for strategic interaction” (Thielemann 1999, 185). In this view, power is zero-sum and Europeanization results from a redistribution of power resources between actors in the domestic arena resulting from EU membership. The alternative position on network governance, most closely associated with Beate Kohler-Koch (1996) and her collaborators, is that the EU is producing a transformation in European governance. In this view, the regular interaction promoted by the partnership principle can generate trust through socialization that promotes problem solving rather than bargaining as the decision-making style (Thielemann 1999, 187–88).

Here is a clear contrast between rationalist and sociological strands in parallel debates on new institutionalism and policy networks, which generate contrasting hypotheses in relation to the nature and extent of the transformation of governance that has taken place through EU cohesion policy. A rationalist account would assume power to be zero-sum, expect national actors to continue pursuing established goals (albeit in a changing environment), and ascribe shifts toward multi-level governance to a redistribution of power resources brought by EU policies. By contrast, a sociological perspective would assume power to be positive-sum, expect actors to change their preferences through socialization in a changing environment, and ascribe shifts toward multi-level governance to a learning process (see Table 3).

Table 3: Rationalist and sociological assumptions

Assumptions	<i>Rationalist Accounts</i>	<i>Sociological Accounts</i>
Power	Zero-sum	Positive-sum
Interests	Fixed	Malleable
Mechanism of Europeanization	Redistribution of power resources	Socialization/learning

In both accounts, learning is seen to be a feature of change, but has a different meaning in each. The central distinction is between “thin” (or single loop) and “thick” (or double loop) forms of learning (Radaelli 2003, 52). “Thin learning” refers to the readjustment of actor strategies to allow them to achieve unchanged goals in a new context or “how to get around an obstacle by using a menu of well-known responses in various ingenious ways” (Radaelli 2003, 38). “Thick learning” involves a modification of actors’ values and thus a reshaping of their preferences and goals. The notion of learning provides a further bridge between Europeanization, policy networks, and multi-level governance (below) through the argument that thick learning depends on “the way in which the system of institutional interactions is shaped, on the adequacy of information and communication flows, and on the presence of forums for dialogue among the actors” (Paraskevopoulos 2001, 254); and, more specifically, on the argument that policy networks can play a crucial role in generating social capital – trust and shared norms – among actors. Here, the norm of generalized reciprocity is particularly important, based on “a continuing relationship of exchange involving mutual expectations that a benefit granted now should be repaid in future” (Paraskevopoulos 2001, 260). In this view, social capital is generated through the interaction of actors in dense policy networks, such as those constructed through structural fund partnership processes, and contributes to the socialization of those actors. In this context, social capital facilitates collective action and learning and adaptation to change through Europeanization becomes easier as a result. In his research on Greece, Paraskevopoulos (2001, 276) found evidence that “vindicating the role of social capital and institutional networks as important components of the institutional infrastructure that facilitate the process of social learning”.

So far, this rationalist-reflectivist dichotomy is relatively straightforward, but does not account for historical institutionalism, a key component in Europeanization research (Bulmer and Burch 1998; Bulmer and Radaelli 2005). As an approach, it incorporates both rationalist and sociological elements, but emphasizes the importance of practices embedded over time in explaining

how institutions respond to external pressures for change. As Pierson (2000, 264) put it, “rather than assume relative efficiency as an explanation, we have to go back and look.” Central to this argument is that institutions over time become path dependent and are characterized by “stickiness.” Consequently, historical institutionalism is often most useful in explaining responses approximating inertia or incremental change, although the approach anticipates occasional sudden change through “seismic events that trigger a ‘critical juncture’ or ‘punctuate’ the pre-existing equilibrium” (Bulmer 2007, 50). Thus, the main contribution of historical institutionalism here is not as a counterpoint to rationalist and sociological positions, but as a complement highlighting the potential significance of the temporal dimension in understanding institutional responses to the EU.

A Framework of Analysis

These and other insights are brought into a framework for the analysis of Europeanisation that provides a substantial revision of the three-step approach to understanding Europeanization developed by Risse, Cowles, and Caporaso (2001). There is not space here to detail these revisions, but in short, they highlight the nature, precision, and status of EU requirements and their goodness of fit with member states; emphasise the potential importance of Europeanization as a dynamic or circular process involving repeated interactions between the EU and individual states as well as a top-down process of change, thus requiring analysis the models simultaneously for complex and noncomplex causality; highlight the potential importance of non-EU factors in explaining change; identify additional intervening variables; add categorizations of domestic change; and include a test variable of deep Europeanization (the transference of EU policies, practices, and preferences into domestic policies and practices) to assess whether if in-depth change has occurred in behaviour (see Bache 2008, 15-19)

Multi-level governance

Multi-level governance was developed as a counterview to the state-centrism that dominated the study of the EU from the 1960s to the 1980s, and which found a contemporary voice in the post-SEA period through the work on liberal intergovernmentalism of Andrew Moravcsik (1993, 1994, 1998). Moravcsik (1994, 9) argued that the control of state executives at the agenda-setting stage of EU policy making conferred on them “gatekeeping” power: “the power to veto proposed policies, permits executives to block negotiation or agreement at the international level, thereby imposing a *de facto* domestic veto.” Yet multi-level governance did not reject the central role played by state executives in EU decision making; rather, it acknowledged them as “the most

important pieces of the European puzzle” (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 3). However, it suggested that “when one asserts that the state no longer monopolizes European level policy-making or the aggregation of domestic interests, a very different polity comes into focus” (2001, 3). On this issue, multi-level governance makes three claims:

1. Decision-making competences are shared by actors at different levels rather than monopolized by state executives.
2. Collective decision making among states involves a significant loss of control for individual state executives (notably, through qualified majority voting in the Council).
3. Political arenas are interconnected rather than nested. Subnational actors operate in both national and supranational arenas, creating transnational associations in the process (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 3–4).

In explaining why state sovereignty is transferred or lost, the multi-level governance approach sees an important distinction between institutions and actors—a point of contrast with state-centric models. Thus, while political institutions “specify the structure and allocation of authority in a given territory,” the political actors, individuals, and groups of individuals who operate in the context shaped by these institutions “may also try to change them” (Hooghe and Marks 2001, 70). To understand how institutions change, therefore, it is important to focus on the preferences of actors within institutions who are the actual participants in decision making.

While emerging in the EU context, multi-level governance has subsequently been used to capture developments in a range of international and domestic contexts. It is a concept that directs attention to increasingly complex vertical and horizontal relations between actors and sharpens questions about the mechanisms, strategies, and tactics through which governing takes place in this context. This focus leads us inevitably to the question of what is happening to the role, power, and authority of the state within and beyond national boundaries.

Applications and Criticisms

The arguments of multi-level governance have been examined most regularly on the “home ground” of EU cohesion policy. Hooghe’s (1996) edited volume on the implementation of cohesion policy across the EU found considerable variations in the evidence for multi-level governance across states, with the preexisting balance of territorial relations a key part of the explanation. These findings were confirmed in a Commission-funded study (Kelleher, Batterbury, and Stern 1999). Studies of Britain demonstrated variations both across issues

within structural policy and across different regions within the country (Bache, George, and Rhodes 1996).

On the additionality issue, which had been important to the development of the multi-level governance concept (see Marks 1993), the change in the UK government's approach to implementation that resulted from joint supranational-subnational action appeared to be less significant as time passed. Policy control that the state "gatekeeper" initially seemed to have lost through multi-level pressure was clawed back at a later stage of the policy process (Bache 1999). This suggested that defining the role of gatekeeper in the traditional sense of controlling the flow of connections between nested arenas of international and domestic politics, neglected the more important issue of gatekeeping the outcomes of these interconnections. More specifically, in modeling a two-stage process of policy making, Moravcsik's (1993) liberal intergovernmentalism overlooked the important third stage of the process – policy implementation – where the decisions taken at the EU level are put into effect. This stage involves further political activity, the outcomes from which provide a more complete picture of state power.

A number of other criticisms of multi-level governance emerged, in particular that it focused more on relations between state actors at different levels than on relations across sectors (i.e., multi-level *government* not *governance*), that it was more descriptive than explanatory, and that it overstated the autonomy of subnational actors (for an overview of criticisms and a response, see Jordan 2001 and George 2004). In a subsequent development of the approach, Hooghe and Marks (2003) and Marks and Hooghe (2004) developed a twofold typology of multi-level governance, which clarified aspects of the approach that had been criticized. In particular, they clarified that the empirical concerns of multi-level governance were with both intergovernmental relations (type I) and the less orderly governing arrangements (type II) that did not always nest within these relations.

Two Types of Multi-level governance

Type I multi-level governance has echoes of ideal-type federalism. It describes systemwide governing arrangements in which the dispersion of authority is restricted to a limited number of clearly defined, nonoverlapping jurisdictions at a limited number of territorial levels, each of which has responsibility for a "bundle" of functions. By contrast, type II multi-level governance describes governing arrangements in which the jurisdiction of authority is task-specific, where jurisdictions operate at numerous territorial levels and may be overlapping. In type I, authority is relatively stable, but in type II it is more flexible, to deal with the changing demands of governance (see Table 4).

Table 4: Types of multi-level governance

<i>Type I</i>	<i>Type II</i>
General-purpose jurisdictions	Task-specific jurisdictions
Nonintersecting memberships	Intersecting memberships
Jurisdictions at a limited number of levels	No limit to the number of jurisdictional levels
System-wide architecture	Flexible design

Source: Marks and Hooghe 2004, 17.

These types of multi-level governance are not mutually exclusive, but can and do coexist. Britain is a case in point, where general-purpose jurisdictions exist alongside special-purpose jurisdictions: formal institutions of government operate alongside, and indeed create, special-purpose bodies designed to carry out particular tasks. Their coexistence may lead to tensions, but such tensions (and their resolution) are a characteristic feature of multi-level governance.

Governance or Participation?

The two-fold typology brings clarity to the discussion, but does not address the criticism that multi-level governance fails to distinguish governance from other counterdescriptions of (multi-level) participation (Bache 1999), mobilization (Jeffery 2000), or dialogue (Wilson 2003). These three alternative descriptions essentially amount to the same claim, that there is often an increase in the number of actors involved in policy making but the effects of this extra activity on policy outcomes is unclear. For the sake of brevity and consistency, the term *participation* is used here to represent these three similar ideas.

What has been missing in the debate so far is identification of the empirical indicators that tell researchers whether they have found governance or participation; to paraphrase Radaelli (2003, 38), we need to locate the “fence” that separates the two. The literature does not make a clear distinction between the two terms, but there is an obvious one to be drawn from the debate: *participation* refers to engagement in the decision-making process, while *governance* infers that engagement involves some influence over the outcomes of this process. Thus, to distinguish between the two we need to identify empirically whether participants influence policy outcomes. Finding a more precise answer to this empirical question would also contribute to more informed normative debates around the virtues (or otherwise) of multi-level governance. The policy networks approach can inform this endeavor.

Policy networks

It is perhaps surprising that, given the explicit connections made by Marks, Hooghe, and others between multi-level governance and “transnational” and “territorially overarching” networks, more has not been made of the potential for developing a more coherent relationship between multi-level governance and the policy networks approach. Not only are there similarities in terms of language and metaphor, but also both approaches share a concern with detailed empirical investigation of multiple interactions within policy processes, particularly sector-specific, from policy initiation through to and including policy implementation. In particular, and this is the approach here, more might be made of the policy networks approach for exploring changing dynamics and power relations as a means of assessing shifts to multi-level governance.

The emphasis on policy implementation is particularly pertinent in relation to Europeanization, understood as ‘the reorientation or reshaping of politics in the domestic arena in ways that reflect policies, practices, or preferences advanced through the EU system of governance’. The nature of EU policy-making offers considerable scope for the domestic actors responsible for implementation to shape outcomes at this stage of the process. This point has been long recognized by EU scholars (e.g., Wallace 1977, 57). Despite this, much theorizing continues to focus on EU negotiations and decisions to the exclusion of the effects of this on outcomes on the ground. However, this is not so with the two approaches discussed here. Marks, Hooghe, and Blank (1996, 365) suggested that multi-level governance is “prominent in the implementation stage,” while, from a policy networks perspective, Rhodes has emphasized that policy ‘is actually made in the course of negotiations between the (ostensible) implementers’ (Rhodes 1986, 14).

Peterson (2004, 119) identified three basic assumptions of the policy networks approach: that modern governance is frequently nonhierarchical; that the policy process must be disaggregated to be understood because of the variations between groups and governments in different policy sectors, and that while governments “remain ultimately responsible for governance,” this is not the whole story. Peterson (2004), Jachtenfuchs (2001), and others have argued strongly that the EU is particularly apposite for policy network analysis, highlighting the fluid institutional structure, fragmented (often sector-specific) policy making, the high number of participants engaging through multiple access points, and the absence of a strong center of power.

Indeed, Jachtenfuchs and Kohler-Koch (2004, 100) have suggested that “networking is the most characteristic feature of EU governance.” To the extent that the policy networks approach has been used in conjunction with or in relation to multi-level governance (see contributions to the Hooghe 1996 collection by Anderson; Bache, George, and Rhodes; and Balme and Jouve; and also Adshead 2002 and Warleigh 2006), the point of departure has usually been the “Rhodes model.” This is also true of applications of the policy networks approach to the study of the EU more generally (e.g., Bomberg and Peterson 1998; Peterson and Sharp 1998; Smith 1990; Daugbjerg 1999).

In the Rhodes model, a policy network is a set of resource-dependent organizations. These networks vary along five key dimensions: the constellation of interests, membership, vertical interdependence, horizontal interdependence, and the distribution of resources (Rhodes 1988, 77–78). The model provides a continuum of network types, from highly integrated policy communities (high interdependence, stable relationships, restricted membership, insulation from other networks) to loosely integrated issue networks (limited interdependence, open membership, less stable relationships, less insulated from other networks). In relation to network typologies, a key claim of the Rhodes model is that highly interdependent, stable, and relatively closed policy communities are more able to shape policy outcomes and resist external pressures than are less interdependent, less stable, and relatively open issue networks.

Resource Dependence

Rhodes described resource dependence as the “explanatory motor” for the network-based differentiated polity perspective that he adopted for the study of Britain. In particular, it explains why different levels of government interact (Rhodes 1997, 9). While the typologies of policy networks and their key characteristics are widely discussed and understood, the concept of resource dependence—which is central to the Rhodes model—is relatively underutilized, but is arguably the aspect of the policy networks approach that is of greatest analytical utility in assessing the development of multi-level governance. It states that organizations are bound together within networks by interdependence: each organization is dependent on others for certain resources. These “resource dependencies” are the key variable in shaping policy outcomes. As Peterson and Bomberg (1993, 28) put it, “They set the ‘chessboard’ where private and public interests manoeuvre for advantage” (we might add the voluntary sector here). However, interdependence is generally asymmetrical and in some cases it is possible to talk of “unilateral leadership” within networks (Rhodes 1986, 5). In this study, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of how European integration can redistribute

resources of various types between domestic actors to promote (or constrain) the development of multi-level governance. The key resources identified by Rhodes (1997, 37) are financial, informational, political, organizational, and constitutional-legal.

Criticisms

An important criticism of the policy networks approach that may partly explain its underutilization in connection with multi-level governance is the inadequate treatment it has given to the role of ideas in the policy process, at least in the earlier versions of the Rhodes model. This shortcoming is particularly unfortunate for those applying the approach to the EU in light of the recent constructivist turn in European studies (for a discussion, see Pollack 2005, 365–68), which provides a strong ideas-based counterargument to the interest-based claim that participants in policy making coalesce (within and between networks) because they are bound together by resource dependence. If this counterpossibility is not identified prominently in the research framework, studies adopting the policy networks approach are likely to underplay the significance of ideas in policy making. However, in more recent work, Rhodes has placed a greater emphasis on the role of ideas, arguing that “‘objective’ positions in a structure do not determine the beliefs and actions of individuals” and that “even when an institution maintains similar routines while personnel changes, it does so mainly because the successive personnel pass on similar beliefs and preferences” (Bevir and Rhodes 2003, 41). These arguments dovetail neatly both with the actor-centered approach of multi-level governance and also with the sociological institutionalist dimensions of Europeanization and, as such, enhance the potential of the policy networks approach to provide a conceptual bridge between the two.

A Conceptual Bridge

This section has identified the connections between multi-level governance and the policy networks approach and set out how the latter provides a conceptual bridge connecting Europeanization and emerging multi-level governance in domestic arenas. The tools of the networks approach can guide empirical research in locating the fence that separates multi-level governance from multi-level participation: its framework of power dependence facilitates a nuanced typology for guiding empirical research towards identifying and isolating the decisive resource exchanges. Moreover, in its rationalist form, the policy networks approach provides the hypothesis that a shift toward multi-level governance in member states requires a redistribution of power resources among relevant domestic actors, specifically, in favour of subnational and non-state actors. The counterhypothesis that arises from

criticisms of the rationalist approach to policy networks is that where there is evidence of Europeanization promoting multi-level governance, but no related evidence of a redistribution of domestic power, this development must be explained in terms of dominant actors changing their preferences; that is, through a thick learning process. Of course, any investigation of the potential for Europeanization effects here has to proceed alongside exploration of other (non-EU) sources of change.

Europeanization and multi-level governance across the EU

In relation to the simple or compound polity distinction, the evidence from cohesion policy is broadly in line with Schmidt's (2006, 63) argument that while the EU generally enhances interest-based, consensus politics across its member states, it has "tended to put more of a damper on the more highly polarized, politically charged politics of the majoritarian representation systems of simple polities than on the more consensus-oriented (albeit partisan) politics typical of the proportional systems of more compound polities." The greater misfit with simple polities has meant that, generally speaking, the EU's impact on these states has been greatest. However, there have been effects on both vertical and horizontal relations across Europe (Table 5).

While cohesion policy has mobilized actors and influenced processes below the regional level, the most prominent vertical effect across the EU is the strengthening of the regional tier through the requirement for regional administrative processes. Yet while regional structures have been developed as a condition of funding in even the most centralized states, it is important to recognize the limits to what the EU can achieve in producing transformative domestic change. The EU can create statistical regions and restructure opportunities within the domestic arena, but real shifts toward greater regional autonomy must also have a powerful domestic imperative. Moreover, in smaller member states, promotion of the regional tier has not been a consistent feature of the Commission's approach to cohesion policy (see Bache 2008, chapter 5). In terms of horizontal effects, EU cohesion policy has generally advanced cross-sectoral engagement and interdependence through the requirements of partnership and programming.

Table 5: The effects of EU cohesion policy on domestic governance: comparative analysis of simple-compound polities

	Polity/ Politics before the impact of EU cohesion policy	Vertical Misfit/ Horizontal Misfit with governing principles of EU cohesion policy	Domestic change 3 = transformation 2 = absorption 1 = absorption
Simple			
Ireland	Unitary (polity) Corporatist (politics)	High (vertical) Medium (horizontal)	2+ 2
Greece	Unitary Statist	High High	2 1+
Portugal	Unitary Statist	High High	2 1+
Poland	Unitary Statist	High High	2+ 1
Czech Rep	Unitary Statist	High High	2 1
Hungary	Unitary Statist	High High	2 1
Compound			
Germany	Federal Corporatist	Low Low	1 1+
Spain	Regionalized Statist	Medium High	1+ 1+
Sweden	Unitary Corporatist	High Low	2+ 1+
Finland	Unitary Corporatist	High Low	2 1+

In all cases of change, across both vertical and horizontal dimensions, understanding specific domestic factors beyond the broad simple/compound distinction is the key to understanding the timing, tempo, and nature of change. As Schmidt (2006, 232) acknowledged, the typologies of simple and compound polities are broad and exceptions to the general rules of this distinction should be expected and were found here. Thus, some regions of Germany experienced greater problems accepting the EU's approach to partnership than the broad distinction might suggest, and there was evidence of some horizontal change even in the statist polities such as Greece, Portugal, and Spain. Moreover, there were important variations not only across states, but also within them, depending on different regional circumstances (e.g., the level of formal institutional development, the cohesiveness of policy networks, or the prominence of political entrepreneurship). However, a common thread was that the longer the period of engagement with cohesion policy, the greater the likelihood of thick learning taking place.

Thus, while early research on the EU15 found primarily rational responses, and learning only of the shallow and strategic type, deeper learning was evident later. In relation to the CEECs, learning was primarily strategic: a rational response to conditionality mechanisms. Mutual suspicion between politicians and civil society organizations remains common in the CEE member states and compromise and consensus is not deeply embedded in post-communist societies. These characteristics constrain social learning (see also Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005).

What is also important here is that while the relevant formal requirements for EU cohesion policy have stayed relatively constant over time, the force and nature of the ways in which the Commission has sought to promote them have not remained constant. Particularly notable here was the scale and significance of the 2004 enlargement in shaping the pragmatism with which the Commission appeared to deal with cohesion policy requirements within CEECs as accession moved closer. There was a feeling within the Commission and the governments of the EU15 that the window of opportunity for this type of enlargement might not be open again and that the momentum could not be risked. In this context, Commission preferences for regionalization and partnership were secondary. Moreover, there were precedents for the Commission advocating centralized administration in the EU15 where regional institutions were weak, the East German Länder being a case in point (Bache 2008, 63-65).

The point about centralized administrative structures also relates to the issue of size. There is little doubt that this is a key dimension in mediating the degree of multi-level governance promoted by cohesion policy. In essence, there is less logic in smaller states developing strong regional structures and while there have been instances where the Commission has sought initially to promote some regionalization in smaller states, this has generally receded. Ireland, of course, provides the exceptional case of a small country that sought to regionalize itself to maximize structural-fund receipts (Adshead and Bache 2000), which is a significant if not conventional EU effect.

Two Types of Multi-level governance

The evidence above suggests that both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of multi-level governance have been strengthened by cohesion policy, albeit to different degrees in different circumstances. Generally, it remains the case that in centralized systems, there is evidence that central governments can be effective gatekeepers. Thus the extent to which cohesion policy can promote type I multi-level governance at the regional level, where it is most likely to

have such an effect, is very much dependent on its requirements converging with the preferences of key domestic actors. This is no less true in the CEECs than anywhere else and, in particular in those former communist states where there is fear of re-igniting the flames of long-suppressed regionalist sentiments, as happened in post-communist Russia and Yugoslavia. However, even in the more extreme cases of gatekeeping, regionalization has at least been put on the agenda and some regional structures established, however flimsy. In regionalized or federalized states, cohesion policy has generally served to intensify multi-level interactions and promote interdependence without there being a transformative effect.

In relation to type II multi-level governance, the promotion of task-specific bodies, the changes are generally more marked and in some cases highly significant. Horizontal partnerships at subnational level have become an established part of the landscape in the EU15, whether the domestic traditions have been statist or corporatist. The difference generally is that in statist countries, partnership has been embraced slowly and reluctantly and often exists in name only, with participation a more accurate depiction of the role of most partners than influence. In the statist polities of CEECs the situation is less developed still, with civil society generally remaining weak after the fall of communism and social and political mistrust remaining high. In more corporatist states, horizontal partnership has often been embraced, but there are many variations. In some states, such as Germany, the particular tradition of corporatism did not fit well with the EU's requirements, while both in Germany and other states there were also important variations according to regional rather than national political traditions.

Discovering these variations within the broad categories of "simple polities" and "compound polities" does not discredit the value of this categorization. The categories are inevitably broad and, as Schmidt (2006, 35) recognized, the "micro" patterns of policy making in a specific sector may not always conform to the "macro" patterns of states because of specificities in particular sectors at either or both EU and national levels. What is emphasised here though, is the value in placing these macro categories alongside sectoral-level developments. In the long term, developments in a specific policy sector can shape macro patterns and characteristics and there is evidence here that, in a small way at least, EU cohesion policy has influenced the macro characteristics of some states. This point is reflected on further in the concluding section, in light of developments in Britain. At this stage we turn to the case study of Britain to explore these issues in more detail.

Europeanization and multi-level governance in Britain

The importance of going beyond the broad structural categorizations of simple and compound polities was amply illustrated by the study of Britain (Bache 2008, 87-150). In the period under observation (1989–2006), the British polity experienced profound change to the extent that it was increasingly described as a system of multi-level governance (e.g., Gamble 2000; Pierre and Stoker 2000; Bulmer and Burch 2002; Hay 2002; Wilson 2003). Some of these changes were formal and high profile, such as political devolution to Scotland and Wales (Type I multi-level governance), while others were more informal and lower profile, such as the proliferation of agencies, networks, and partnerships (Type II multi-level governance). While these changes have been widely documented there has been no previous attempt to distinguish between types of multi-level governance emerging in Britain and to relate these developments to the process of European integration generally or to EU cohesion policy specifically. The summary finding is that while the processes of political devolution are driven overwhelmingly by domestic factors, Europeanization through cohesion policy is evident in both vertical and horizontal changes that have promoted type II multi-level governance at the regional level and below.

The main effect of cohesion policy on vertical relations in Britain was its role in the revival of the English regional tier in the period 1989–1997. In this period, the structural funds reinforced the “standard regions” as the official boundaries for the English regional tier, created regional networks, and gave momentum to the creation of the integrated government offices (GOs) that subsequently served to strengthen the regional dimension further. This effect meant that when Labour came to power in 1997 it had much more to build on in developing the English regions than it would have had otherwise. It did not need to have arguments about the definitions of regional boundaries, or to create regional networks, or to generate from nothing the support of regional elite actors for its plans.

In relation to the horizontal dimension, change occurred gradually. Partnership was not new to Britain in 1989 and its development has been driven by a range of factors. However, the EU partnership requirement (alongside programming) had a number of effects. Very directly, it promoted partnership as a mode of governance in Britain through providing financial incentives for domestic actors to collaborate across sectors (and levels). Of particular note, cohesion policy helped to break down barriers within local government to partnership working. The effect of this was that local governments were more inclined to work in partnership in other (domestic)

policy areas, promoting more flexible type II arrangements across local governance. This occurred at the level of the individual local authority, but also increased inter-local cooperation at the subregional level (e.g., South Yorkshire, Merseyside, and Cornwall). In the longer term, the partnership principle helped to generate the norm of including of a wide range of organizations in public decision making. A feature of this inclusiveness of the EU partnership approach was the promotion of the role of the voluntary and community sector in local decision making. This again spilled over into domestic policies, further enhancing type II multi-level governance (see Bache 2008, chapters 7 and 8). The Commission was less successful in securing trade union participation in structural fund partnerships until the election of a Labour government in 1997.

The Diversity of Traditions and Ideas in British Politics

On the surface, there is a high degree of misfit between the compound polity requirements of EU cohesion policy and the simple British polity. However, the detailed study revealed a high level of resonance between aspects of the EU's approach to cohesion policy with past practices and periodically marginalized but nevertheless constantly present ideas within British politics. This relates to both vertical and horizontal dimensions.

In relation to the vertical dimension, it is important to emphasize the influence of the EU on the *revival* of the English regional tier, rather than on its creation. The EU's policies had built on the boundaries (standard regions), ideas (regional planning), and aspirations (inter-regional redistribution) that had precedents in domestic policies in the earlier postwar period. In the language of historical institutionalism, the 1989 reform of the structural funds should be understood as a critical juncture in this revival.

In relation to the horizontal dimension, while the Conservative governments had a clear approach to partnership that did not include trade unions, trade union participation in public decision making had been the norm in the postwar period up to the election of the Conservatives in 1979. Moreover, much of what cohesion policy aimed to do reflected and connected to a social democratic tradition that was strongest in those British regions that it was trying to assist: traditional industrial areas. Thus, despite apparently strong dissimilarities at first blush, the inclusive, cooperative, and redistributive aspirations of EU cohesion policy were actually a good fit with the values of many of the constituencies in Britain that it sought to serve.

Similarly, the EU's approach to bottom-up decision making had precedents in Labour government policies of the 1960s and in traditions of Labour thought. Indeed, even in the encouragement of cooperation at the subregional level, the

EU was far from starting from scratch. In the cases of Merseyside and South Yorkshire referred to above, metropolitan authorities had covered these territories until being abolished by the Thatcher governments in the 1980s, and even in this decade there remained some residual structures (e.g., for emergency services). In relation to Cornwall, the EU's coverage mapped onto a historic county with which there is a strong sense of identity.

In short, EU cohesion policy contributed to a revival of both the regional tier and of a loose neocorporatism, exactly the types of developments the Thatcher governments feared would be brought back into Britain through the "back door" of Brussels. Yet ironically, without the Thatcher governments' exclusion of a broad range of interests from public policy making, its reductions in domestic regional policy expenditure, and its tendency toward political centralization, this revival would have been far less likely. It was the very marginalization of important social democratic constituencies in this period – in local government, the trade unions, and the voluntary and community sector – that intensified domestic receptiveness for what EU cohesion policy sought to achieve. As one former Labour council leader of the 1980s and 1990s later put it, "in the 1980s we turned to Europe because there was nowhere left to turn" (interview by author, 2003).

Moreover, under the leadership of Tony Blair, Labour's shift away from class-based politics (incorporated in the idea of *New Labour*) signaled an attempt to move away from the traditional adversarial style of British politics, and provided greater consonance with EU norms of pluralism and consensualism. In relation to this shift, too, the years of Conservative government played an important role. As Gamble (2003, 228) argued, "One of Thatcher's most enduring achievements was to transform the Labour Party, forcing the party to end the pretence that it was seriously committed to extending socialism through centralized state control."

Thus, part of the understanding of change in this case rests on an appreciation of the diversity of traditions and ideas within British politics and how EU policies connect or "fit" with these. It is equally important to recognize that the influence of these traditions and ideas is not static but informs the position of key actors within institutions differently over time. This is most obvious when the governing party changes.

In summary, Britain is increasingly characterized by multi-level governance: vertical interdependence has increased significantly, since the mid-1990s in particular, and horizontal interdependence has similarly increased,

particularly at the subnational level. Moreover, there is evidence that EU cohesion policy has played a role in promoting these developments. Its effects on type I multi-level governance are less pronounced than on type II, but are nonetheless discernible in both cases. While these Europeanization effects are distinct, they should not be exaggerated either in comparison with domestic explanations, or in terms of their impact on the redistribution of power. Most commentators would argue that while the nature of British governance is changing, the state remains more than first among equals in the context of multi-level governance. This paradox demands clarity in our understanding of the notion of multi-level governance, which leads us into the final section reflecting on some of the outstanding conceptual issues raised in the study.

Conceptual Reflections

Europeanization

The notion of *goodness of fit* provided a useful point of departure in relation to understanding the varying degrees of adaptational pressure on member states from cohesion policy, but as a conceptual tool it is relatively static: over time a state can move from a position of relative misfit to relative fit (or vice versa) in relation to the EU. This fluidity of “fit” is well illustrated by the contrasting developments in Britain and Germany (Bache 2008, 164-165). Moreover, there is also a need to be cautious in treating fit or misfit as something that can be easily measured. Even a cursory examination of debates in British politics would reveal differences in the way in which the idea of “fit/misfit” with the EU is politically constructed in the domestic arena (see Geddes 2004). Finally, there is greater scope for learning than the goodness of fit idea suggests. The notion of “adaptational pressure” arising from misfit implies a degree of coercion that understates the importance of learning in the process of Europeanization, particularly in the later phase of the period considered here.

Modeling for *top-down processes* was valuable in that, while there was evidence of uploading from member states, the cohesion policy framework remained broadly stable from 1989 and the key requirements from this point on were effectively “coming down” from the EU level. However, keeping the analytical framework open to consideration of two-way or circular dynamics was important in identifying the role of member states in uploading specific ideas and practices to the EU level that had a subsequent effect on their reception within the domestic context. This was true not only of specific ideas uploaded to the framework agreed in 1989, such as programming (France), but also about refinements to the conception of partnership that were subsequently developed, such as the emphasis on the voluntary and community sector, which came out of experiments in Britain.

It is a reasonable criticism of research on Europeanization was that those looking for it tend to find it. Consequently, the conceptual framework that was developed modeled explicitly for consideration of *non-EU effects* in explaining the emerging pattern of multi-level governance in Britain and elsewhere. It has been argued here that the EU has shifted its member (and accession) states closer to its own image, but it is also clear that Europeanization is not the only explanation for trends toward multi-level governance across Europe. Increasingly, there is no easy separation to be made between domestic, EU, and international drivers of change, with governance change generally taking place in the “shadow of the market” (Kohler-Koch 1999, 31). In this context there are global trends of neoliberal decentralization and destatization. Thus, while there has been a public reform program in Britain since the early 1980s that has proliferated multi-level governance (Bache 2008, Chapter 6), these domestic policies cannot be understood without reference to global economic changes. Further, the process of European integration itself has a complex relationship with economic globalization. A result of these complex interrelated processes has been a challenge to traditional forms of the state, which are seen as too small to deal adequately with the challenges of a globalizing economy and too big and inflexible to deal with the differing needs of diverse local communities (Benington 2001, 209). In short, we need to acknowledge some important non-EU sources of change that promote multi-level governance and, in doing so, place Europeanization effects in the context of other international and domestic drivers for change.

The incorporation of a *test variable* was useful in distinguishing between the type of multi-level governance through Europeanization that is strategic and procedural – for example, the creation of regional-level partnerships to ensure continued EU funding – and multi-level governance through Europeanization that has been embraced and becomes embedded – for example, the creation of partnerships for domestic policy programs. The other examples of deeper change where there is a distinct EU influence relate primarily to ongoing regionalization and continued experiments with bottom-up approaches to policy making, notwithstanding the arguments above about the domestic antecedents of some of these policies and the other drivers of change.

Multi-level governance

In terms of linking Europeanization to multi-level governance, the key indicator is whether EU policies, practices, and preferences increase the influence of subnational and non-state actors, either by redistributing resources in their favour (rationalist explanation) or by reshaping the

preferences of domestic actors (reflectivist explanation); the effect in both cases is that influence over decision making and its outcomes becomes more diffuse.

To assist in this empirical investigation, the tools of the policy networks approach were included as a conceptual bridge between Europeanization and multi-level governance. In rationalist terms, cohesion policy has strengthened the resources of subnational and non-state actors within the domestic arena – informational, through bringing them into decision-making arenas and giving them access to knowledge; constitutional-legal, through their status as recognized policy actors in EU regulations; political, by acknowledgment of their legitimate role in development policies as actors close to the ground (local authorities and community actors) or through their sectoral expertise and representation (trade unions and nongovernmental organizations); and financial, by giving them access to EU funding. It is, as a result, widely recognized across the British regions and within the EU institutions that control over decision making within regional partnerships has gradually become more dispersed (see Bache 2008, chs. 7 and 8). However, while this has involved some redistribution of power resources, it has also involved a process of learning in which the actors' conceptions of power have changed as the networks have taken on characteristics of policy communities.

In short, neither the rationalist nor the reflectivist perspective alone explains the process of Europeanization. The process is most pronounced where there is a convergence over time of domestic and EU actors' preferences, partly through the interaction of these actors in territorial overarching policy networks. This is true in relation to changes in both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of multi-level governance.

Multi-level governance and the Role of the State

Understanding the changes taking place within domestic politics as emerging multi-level governance, with its emphasis on how informal and disorderly governance relates to and overlays orderly and formal governance, brings into focus a different set of questions about the mechanisms, strategies, and tactics through which decisions are made in contemporary politics, not least those employed by the central state. This presents a paradox when multi-level governance is seen to be emerging in a unitary state such as Britain, but it is important to acknowledge that multi-level governance should not be equated with the argument that the state is in the process of irreversible decline or even that state power is necessarily undermined. Rather, it should be understood as a challenge to the role, authority, and perhaps nature of the state, but a challenge that in some circumstances at least might be met.

That this point is often misunderstood may point to a weakness in the literature on governance generally, the lack of specification in the concept, and,

in particular, how it relates to power. There is no easy solution to this problem, although a starting point may be at least to classify governance not only in relation to types, but also in relation to the degree of interdependence between actors. Referring to the discussion above, the question of governance or participation is one of substance, a question of whether actors are interdependent or simply interconnected. Drawing on the tools of the policy networks approach, one way of understanding this is to place governance and participation on a continuum of power dependence. For the sake of simplicity, participation is here equated with weak governance (see Figure 1).

Strong Governance	Weak Governance (Participation)	Exclusion
High Interdependence	Medium to Low Interdependence	No Interdependence

Figure 1: Governance and Interdependence

From a rationalist perspective, degrees of interdependence explain the extent and nature of interaction between state and non-state actors at different territorial levels. To relate this argument to multi-level governance, it is necessary to distinguish between horizontal and vertical dimensions. Strong multi-level governance has both high vertical and high horizontal interdependence, while weak multi-level governance may be high on one dimension, but should have at least some interdependence along both dimensions (see Table 6).

Table 6: Strong and Weak Multi-level Governance

	Vertical Interdependence	Horizontal Interdependence	
Strong multi-level governance	High	and	High
Weak multi-level governance	Medium-high	and OR	Low-medium
	Low-medium	and	Medium-high

In empirical terms, the way to measure whether interdependence is strong or weak is to identify the influence of different actors on policy outcomes, and in

doing so to focus both on routine decision making and on the critical cases where there is much at stake and where the underlying distribution of power is often most clearly revealed. The history of additionality in Britain is one such critical case that highlighted the successful resistance to change by the government (Bache 2008, chs. 7 and 8). Strong multi-level governance will be characterized by a high degree of dispersal of influence over outcomes. This characterization does not of course account for learning. While learning does not depend on the pre-existence of high levels of vertical and/or horizontal interdependence, it tends to accelerate through interaction. Thus, for this reason, the emergence of weak multi-level governance can be important in generating change in policy outcomes through learning, which does not necessarily result from nor lead to a redistribution of power resources, but may result from a reconceptualization of how power is understood and therefore used. Here the case of regional partnerships in Britain is most instructive, with the case of the changing role played by civil servants in Yorkshire and Humberside particularly so (see Bache 2008, chs. 7 and 8).

Thus, there is evidence of Europeanization both through the redistribution of power resources and through the process of learning. In the case of Britain, there is evidence both that the state has managed to retain control over key power resources in the context of emerging multi-level governance and of a change in some state preferences that suggests validity in the argument that state actors have sought to address “a strategic alternative to zero-sum power struggles, directed towards building new frames for intergovernmental consensus” (Gualini 2003, 619). It is important not to overstate this case: much tension remains between the central state and substate and non-state actors. Over time though, there is evidence in relation to EU cohesion policy of a shift away from a bargaining mentality to one of problem-solving and positive-sum outcomes.

In other words, there is a need to place the view that multi-level governance equals decline of state power alongside the understanding that multi-level governance can lead not only to new state strategies based on rational calculations, but may also reflect the reshaping of state preferences. Viewed in this way, multi-level governance draws attention not only to the distribution of various types of power resources, but also to how power is both conceived and exercised differently by the same actors in different circumstances and by different actors within the same institutions. This understanding offers part of the explanation for why states behave differently in different contexts. On this point, it may be helpful to incorporate Sabatier’s (1987) ideas about the structure of beliefs – deep core, near core, and secondary – to provide a more nuanced understanding of when learning is likely to take place. In this view,

policy-oriented learning is ‘. . . the process of seeking to realize core beliefs until one confronts constraints or opportunities, at which time one attempts to respond to this new situation in a manner that is consistent with the core. Although exogenous events or opponents’ activities may eventually force the re-examination of core beliefs, the pain of doing so means that learning occurs most in secondary aspects of a belief system or governmental action programme’. (Sabatier 1987, 675).

Conclusions

This early sections of this paper explored the relationship between two concepts—Europeanization and multi-level governance—that are concerned with explaining the transformation of governance in Europe. The main empirical purpose was to establish whether EU cohesion policy has promoted multi-level governance in Britain and other member states and, therefore, to assess whether any governance change identified can be characterized as a process of Europeanization. There is evidence that both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of multi-level governance have been strengthened by cohesion policy, albeit to different degrees in different circumstances, which are summarised above.

The closing section reflected on some of the main conceptual issues and challenges and how some of this might be taken forward. Beyond this discussion, there is scope for a more critical interrogation of the concepts of Europeanization and multi-level governance. The latter has been criticised as a ‘rehashed pluralism’ (Stubbs 2005) that conceals more than it reveals about the nature and distribution of power. While this interpretation assumes that multi-level governance infers a cosy consensualism that much of the work in the field contests, there is certainly scope for problematising the notion of power in multi-level governance research and for greater reflection on whose preferences and interests are served by multi-level governance arrangements².

² Some early thoughts on how this research agenda might be carried forward are contained in Bache, I. (forthcoming) *Multi-level governance: taking stock and moving forward*, publication details forthcoming.

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