

'Europeanization' of National Policies ?

Linking the Multi-Level-Governance Approach
with Theories of Policy Learning and Policy Change

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Thank you.

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Abstract:

"Multilevel governance" (MLG) has become an increasingly important concept for describing the institutional development of the European Union and the political processes between its different territorial levels. Yet, while much attention has been paid to the implications of MLG for the constitutional and political order of the European nation state (i.e. questions of *polity* and *politics*), there is still very little discussion regarding the possible transformation of member state's public policies through MLG.

This paper tries to establish a link between the MLG literature and contributions of a policy analytical nature in order to fill this gap. The hypothesis is taken forward that EC policies may trigger domestic policy reforms through several 'transmission belts', namely (1) the mushrooming of transgovernmental networks which provide the arenas within which policy learning may take place, (2) changing preferences of important actors within the national policy networks, and (3) changes in the domestic policy networks themselves, in particular with respect to the upgrading of hitherto underrepresented actors.

To test this explanatory model, the paper takes the EC's regional policies and their impact on the regional policy domain in Germany as an example. It is demonstrated that in some instances a clear effect of EC policies on the development of the corresponding national policy seems to exist, and that the transmission belts identified above provide a useful way of thinking about these changes. Among the important limitations of this effort are the impossibility to demonstrate unambiguous causal links between the presence of the EC's regional policy and transformations in the national policy domain. Furthermore, empirical evidence from other countries and / or other policy domains is needed in order to specify the conditions under which "learning" or "power" is more important.

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1. Introduction: Adaptation in Absence of Force

In a number of influential articles, Giandomenico Majone has argued that we are witnessing the emergence of a "regulatory state" on the supranational level in Europe (Majone 1991, 1993, 1994). In a nutshell, his argument is that apart from pressures exerted by multinationals and non-economic interests (the demand-side of regulatory activities), there is also an increasing supply of regulation by the European Commission. This is explained by budgetal constraints which hinder the Commission to draft new cost-intensive initiatives outside the field of agricultural and structural policies, whereas "the resources needed to produce the regulations are trivial" (Majone 1991: 96). Majones conclusion is that "the only way for the Commission to increase its role is to expand the scope of its regulatory activities" (Majone 1991: 96). An impressive range of scholarly insight draws on this kind of argument and has repeatedly pointed out the important role of the Commission in the politics of regulatory policies, such as environmental (Héritier et al. 1994) and social policies (Eichener 1993, Leibfried / Pierson 1995). It is also in the field of regulatory policies that the pressure for adaptation of national policies to supranational imperatives is felt the most strongly, and where a 'transformation of statehood' ("Veränderung von Staatlichkeit"; cf. Héritier et al. 1994; Knill 1995) through the impacts of European integration can be most convincingly shown to exist.¹

The professional interest in regulatory policies can partly be explained by the fact that European Community regulation, once it is agreed by the Council, has primacy over national legislation. In comparison, the spending activity of the Community seems to be less significant because of its subsidiary character *vis-a-vis* national measures. As pointed out by Bulmer, the regulatory pattern of governance in the Community follows from the "major constraints upon the nature of activity that can be pursued [by the EC, T.C.]. Spending programmes are frequently merely supportive of national measures, such as most structural fund expenditure. Alternatively, as in technology programmes, they normally require co-funding from the private sector. Thus, in EC activities expenditure lacks the measure of autonomy possessed in other multi-tiered or federal systems" (Bulmer 1994: 375).

This paper seeks to challenge the line of argument sketched above to the extent that it carries an implicit notion of EC² powerlessness in influencing -and possibly even coordinating- the spending policies of member states.³ It will be argued that EC activity in the field of regional policies is significant not only in

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- 1 See Jachtenfuchs / Kohler - Koch (1996: 23) for a critique on the loose definition of 'statehood' employed by the scholars mentioned before.
 - 2 The term European Community (EC) is used throughout the paper due to its interest in policies of the 'first pillar'.
 - 3 It should be noted that e.g. Majone does not make this argument explicitly. His treatment of regional policy is centered around the question of whether it can become a part of an efficient

terms of empowerment of regional actors (cf. Marks 1993; Hooghe and Keating 1994), but also in terms of increasingly putting into question the primacy of national governments over the course of national public policy in that area. EC regional policy, although a policy of a purely redistributive character, which is not aiming at policy harmonization and where no significant ECJ activity can be observed,⁴ is another example for patterns identified by Paul Pierson with regard to regulatory measures in European social policy. He argues that the autonomy of national welfare states in the field of social policies and the policy options available to them are increasingly restrained due to the fact that "[m]ember-state social policies are increasingly firmly embedded in a dense set of 'hard' Community requirements and prohibitions, as well as 'soft' incentives and disincentives" (Pierson 1996: 156). The present paper seeks to demonstrate that inroads into member state autonomy through the dual forces of compliance enforcement mechanisms and supranational political activity can be discerned even in policy areas where no legal obligations for the member states to adapt to supranational policies exist and where the powers of the ECJ are far more circumscribed than in the area of regulatory policies.

Naturally, this raises the question which forces are critical for such a transformation of national public policies due to supranational influences in the absence of legal enforcement. Taking the changes enacted in Germany's most important regional policy scheme on the national level, the "*Gemeinschaftsaufgabe Verbesserung der regionalen Wirtschaftsstruktur*" (GRW), as an example, the present paper seeks to give an answer to this question. It argues that both the "multilevel governance" (MLG) approach to the European Union as well as the policy-analytical literature on policy learning and policy change are important to explain adaptation of national policies in absence of force. An explanatory model based on "power" and "learning" models of policy change is developed and its usefulness in explaining regional policy reforms in the context of the emergent system of multilevel governance within the EC discussed. As such, the interest of the paper is empirical as well as theoretical. Its prime aim is to link the concept of multilevel governance to the idea of *policy* change, thereby extending the MLG concept beyond the dimensions of *polity* and *politics* within which both its and its outcomes have hitherto mainly been discussed.⁵

The paper is organized as follows: Sections 2 and 3 will give brief reviews of the multilevel governance literature and the contributions on policy change, while chapter 4 discusses possible ways to link these two

European welfare state (which he denies). He notes, however, the "interesting political perspectives" of links between regional actors and the Commission (1993: 162 f).

⁴ An obvious exemption are the powers of the court concerning the control of national subsidies through the Commission (Art. 92-94 TEC). See the discussion in chapters 4 and 5 below.

⁵ Further extensions are of course possible, such as MLG phenomena in EU policy fields other than structural policy, forms of MLG in organizations such as NAFTA and MERCOSUR, and many others (cf. Hocking / Wallace 1997: 8 ff).

bodies of literature. Section 5 will test the explanatory framework against empirical evidence from recent reforms of the GRW. The concluding chapter discusses results and suggests the notion of 'path dependency' as a useful supplement to the approach developed.

2. What is 'Multi - Level Governance'?

In recent years, the concept of multi-level governance has emerged as a powerful critique both of intergovernmental and supranational accounts of the development of the European Union. Particularly scholars who are interested in day-to-day policy developments of the Union have employed the notion of a multilevel or multitiered political system to point to phenomena of "co-decisionmaking across several nested tiers of government, ill-defined and shifting spheres of competence, ... and an ongoing search for principles of decisional distribution that might be applied to this emerging polity" (Marks 1993: 407). While supranational and intergovernmental accounts do not seem to be terribly well equipped neither to describe nor to explain this 'disorderly' state of affairs, one critic has observed that the idea of a multilevel political system may render a better *description*, but is equally unable to *explain* this constant state of flux in Community decision-making (Pierson 1996: 125). Therefore, the notion of multi-level governance needs to be supplemented by additional theoretical ideas and insights. While such an effort will be undertaken in chapters 3 and 4, the present chapter seeks to outline the essence of the MLG concept as employed in this paper. The work of Gary Marks, which takes on a central position in the debate about multilevel governance in the European Union (Marks 1992, 1993, Marks / Hooghe / Blank 1996)⁶ will serve as a reference point here.

In a nutshell, Marks proceeds along two lines of reasoning: On the one hand, he finds the debate between supranational and intergovernmental accounts of the European Union to be frequently unilluminating, as both approaches mainly focus on the "grand bargains" struck at IGCs and summits of the heads of state and examine the relative influence of supranational institutions vis-a-vis national governments in determining the peculiarities of these 'bargains'. Marks argues that it is not less important to look at the "dimly lit process of institutional formation" within the Community, which lies "[b]eyond and beneath the highly visible politics of member state bargaining" (1993: 392). "[T]reaties shape the process of institutional creation only in rough outlines. A corollary of this is that member states do not know exactly what they are agreeing to when they sign on" (ibid.: 403). Somewhat surprisingly, Marks's second line of reasoning, namely his effort to demonstrate the scope for such unintended consequences of the integration process in the field of the EC's structural policy has received much more attention than the underlying

⁶ This impression is supported by the discussions at two recent ECPR workshops on the topic of

intention to point to the lack of control on the side of member states over the outcomes of the integration process (also see Pierson 1996). For example, Marks's much-cited claim that "structural policy ... can be viewed as the leading edge of a system of *multilevel governance* in which supranational, national, regional and local governments are enmeshed in territorially overarching policy networks" (ibid: p. 401 f.; Marks's emphasis) has been criticized as a problematic extrapolation from the field of structural policy to other policy fields of the Community, where the involvement of subnational actors is likely to be less obvious and less significant (cf. Jeffery 1996: 2 f; Hocking / Wallace 1997: 16).⁷ Although without doubt convincing, I take these criticisms to be directed against Marks's particular application of the MLG concept rather than against the concept as such. To my mind, the notion of MLG should not be seen as a short-cut for the (untenable) claim that regional or local governments are getting more important across all policy areas and across all member states (see Hooghe 1996), but as a useful circumscription for the increasing complexity of and decreasing state control over political processes within the European Community. Seen this way, the higher salience of regional actors within structural policy is a facet of MLG rather than its essence.

This notion is supported by a range of more recent contributions on MLG within the European Union which more or less consistently use the MLG language as a reference point without confining their analysis to the area of EC structural policy (Bulmer 1994; Jachtenfuchs / Kohler-Koch 1996; Kohler-Koch 1996; Marks / Hooghe / Blank 1995 and 1996; Pierson 1996). A common thread of these writings is that they do not take sides in the intergovernmentalist vs. supranationalist debate, but argue that while "*at any given point in time*, the key propositions of intergovernmentalist theory are likely to hold" (Pierson 1996: 126; Pierson's emphasis), a view on European integration as a historical process lets the autonomy of member states appear in a different light. On the one hand, a 'strengthening of the state' may have appeared to the extent that the shared exercise of authority through Community institutions has not hindered member states to pursue their own policy preferences and has to some degree isolated member state governments from demands voiced by interest groups and societal environments (Marks / Hooghe / Blank 1996: 94 ff, Pierson 1996). On the other hand, such arguments tend to overlook that the both the 'position' and the 'width' of the leeway within which the "persistent strength of the state" (Kohler-Koch 1996: 177 ff.) can gain importance are increasingly beyond state control. In rational choice terms, a situation emerges where both the range of policy options available as well as their inherent character is circumscribed by prior decisions on the supranational level. For instance, the range of available policy options is restricted not only by the

⁷ This point was also raised in the 1996 workshop. In addition, many contributors pointed to the need to distinguish between different capacities for sub-national mobilisation across Europe. The institutional and political possibility to conceive of sub-national territories as 'civic spaces' and the extent to which political issues can be defined in territorial terms were identified as crucial in determining the shape and significance of subnational inputs into decision-making processes (cf. Jeffery 1996: 2 f.).

effects of 'globalization', but also by the fact that a large portion of Community activity belongs to the field of 'negative integration', where competences are shifted out of the political sphere altogether and the market is entrusted with allocation functions formerly held by national decision-makers (cf. Scharpf 1994). Within the realm of 'positive' integration, member states are often unable to control the actual functioning of EC policies due to the partial autonomy of Community actors, the omnipresence of feedback loops in multi-actor environments and the limited scope for oversight due to the growing issue density in the Union (Pierson 1996). In a certain sense, the same processes are also at work within member states, where powerful societal actors and the increasing complexity of political decisions has shifted the execution of state authority from command-and-control to network-like forms of governing; a process that is reduplicated and partly enforced by strategies of governing employed by supranational authorities in fields where the Community has gained competence (Kohler-Koch 1996).

In sum, these processes result in a different way of governing across Europe. The realm of legitimate state action has partly been downsized, and where it has not, the increasing complexity of political processes and powerful actors above, beneath and beyond the state have diminished the possibility for the authoritative execution of control. Governing, to use March's and Olsen's felicitous phrase, has become "less a matter of engineering than of gardening" (cited after Kohler-Koch 1996: 194). While the formal institutions of the state may still serve the purpose of financing, legitimizing and enacting political decisions on the national and supranational level, its capabilities to steer these processes according to own preferences are increasingly contested. To describe the resulting state of affairs, Zürn has employed the useful image of a growing gap between "government" in the Weberian sense of formal state structures endowed with legitimate and unchallenged authority over society and "governance" in the sense of the unilateral production of collective goods. While state authority in the former sense has remained largely unchallenged through the integration process, state authority in the latter sense has increasingly been eroded due to supranational and international influences (Zürn 1996: 29 ff).

Zürn's distinction is not only useful for clarifying the lines of conflict between intergovernmentalists and supranationalists and their competing accounts of member state autonomy in the integration process. It can also help to understand more clearly the peculiarities of the emergent system of multi-level governance in the Union. To my reading, the concept of multilevel governance is a challenge to state-centric accounts of the Community less in the sense of growing empowerment of supranational and subnational *governments* and an ensuing division of competences between territorial *levels*, but in the sense of the increasing complexity and uncontrollability of *governance* in policy environments characterized by the interaction of actors across multiple policy *arenas* (which may, but must not necessarily correspond with territorial levels). Such a look at the issue of multilevel governance is able to highlight the research agenda

of unintended consequences of the integration process and shift it away from the somewhat sterile debate on whether or not subnational political activity is a significant feature of the emerging Euro-polity. Also, it opens the view for impacts of the integration process on the development of domestic policies - an effect which may or may not be regarded as an 'unintended consequence' by state policy makers, but which can receive momentum by the dynamics of the European system of Multi-Level Governance.

3. Sources of Policy Change

What is the use of a *multi-level governance* view on the question of policy change (as opposed to a state-centric view)? My answer to this question would be twofold: First (and most important), it allows to avoid the static notion of domestic politics as taking place within a self-contained unit, however responsive this unit may be to outside pressures. The 'second image reversed' debate in International Relations, as sensible as it has been to the determining influence of international factors on domestic politics, has continued to model these factors as external stimuli bearing pressure onto the domestic system. As Gourevitch explains in the conclusion to his seminal 1978 article: "Economic relations and military pressures constrain an entire range of domestic behaviors, from *policy decisions* to political forms. International relations and domestic politics are therefore so interrelated that they should be analyzed simultaneously, as wholes" (1978: 911, my emphasis). The argument I should like to advance is that within MLG there is not only an interrelation, but a melting together of the 'external' (i.e. the supranational) and the 'domestic' (member state) sphere. MLG spans several arenas and levels, which renders the notion of 'external pressures' exerted by the European Community and its organs somewhat artificial. As much as subnational actors are able to act in national and supranational arenas simultaneously, the Commission may become an important actor in national or subnational policy processes. As Marks, Hooghe, and Blank argue, "[p]olitical arenas are interconnected rather than nested. ... The clear separation between domestic and international politics, which is assumed in the state-centric model, is blurred under multi-level governance. States ... share, rather than monopolize, control over many activities that take place in their respective territories" (Marks / Hooghe / Blank 1996: 96).

Secondly, the notion of multi-level governance as developed above has the decided advantage to make the models developed in the huge body of literature on policy change more easily applicable. Because supranational influences are not conceptualized as external input, but as an integral part of the system, research can concentrate on the ways in which the presence of an additional level of governance dynamizes the political process (rather than circumscribing it due to the erection of external constraints) . In

this respect, the notion of policy networks⁸ serves as a useful conceit. Policy networks are understood as institutionalized structures of relationships among a particular set of actors which are tied together by mutual resource dependencies in the development and operation of particular policies (cf. Kenis / Schneider 1991). The question of who belongs to a network by virtue of which resources and to what extent these actors share common orientations with respect to the policy in question should be treated as a strictly empirical question (Pappi 1993). Within the EC context, there may be purely supranational and intergovernmental networks in policy areas like e.g. the CFSP, but the more conventional notion is that of a policy network spanning several levels, like e.g. in the EC's R&D policy or in regional policy. It should be observed that the notion of overarching networks across several levels typical for EC policies does not imply the withering away of domestic policy networks. Rather, a crucial question is the extent to which 'transmission belts' between such multilevel networks responsible for the operation of EC policies and the corresponding national networks develop, which can foster exchange processes and thereby 'dynamize' domestic networks and the kind of policy they 'produce'. The present paper identifies three such transmission belts, namely (1) the mushrooming of transgovernmental networks which provide the arenas for the exchange of ideas among actors, (2) changing preferences of important actors within the national policy networks through supranational impacts, and (3) changes in the structure of domestic policy networks themselves, in particular with respect to the upgrading of hitherto underrepresented actors. The idea behind using the notion of 'transmission belts' between policy networks is to develop a more structured way of thinking about the question of policy change and to avoid any determinism as in the convergence scenarios of the 1960s and 1970s.

It is quite clear that the 'transmission belts' identified above make reference to two different, although compatible approaches to policy change, namely "power"- and "knowledge"-based accounts (Bennett / Howlett 1992; Hecló 1974; Radaelli 1995). Again, it is not my intention to attempt a thorough review of this huge and sophisticated literature here. I will rather focus on the work of three scholars (Bennett 1992; Hall 1993; Rose 1991), who have treated the question of policy change in response to international influences and have combined notions of policy learning and conflict-based policy change simultaneously. The aim is not to discuss their work in any great detail, but to demonstrate different ways in which policy learning and policy change approaches have been applied in circumstances characterized by a high degree of exchange processes across borders. In section 4 these different approaches will be moulded into a four-

⁸ This is not the place to discuss the overboarding body of literature on policy networks in any detail. Useful overview are provided by Atkinson / Coleman 1992, Kenis / Schneider 1991 and van Waarden 1992. With particular respect to 'Europeanization' processes in policy networks also see Conzelmann 1996.

cell matrix and their usefulness for thinking about 'transmission belts' between supranational and national policy networks will be demonstrated.

To start with, scholars like Bennett (1992) and Rose (1991) point to the possibility of transnational policy emulation, a process which is fostered by "a natural tendency to look abroad, to see how other states have responded to similar pressures, to share ideas, to draw lessons and to bring foreign evidence to bear within domestic policy-making processes. In the case of new policy problems requiring a degree of innovation, emulation can have a salutary effect in an insecure and tentative policy-making climate" (Bennett 1992: 220). However, apart from short references to "a number of forms of transnational communication" (ibid: 221) and "regular interaction between policy makers of different states trying to grapple with similar problems" (ibid: 222), Bennett is rather quiet on the issue of how exactly the lessons from abroad are transferred into domestic policy-making arenas. Similarly, Rose argues that when "[c]onfronted with a common problem, policymakers in cities, regional governments and nations can learn from how their counterparts elsewhere respond" (1991: 4). Both scholars seem to share the notion of a technocratic, largely elite-driven political process, where policy-makers are generally concerned about avoiding policy failure and about finding the 'right' solutions to political problems that will satisfy demands, remove difficulties and ensure re-election (cf. Rose 1991: 10). The basic transmission belt between the international and the domestic is the transnational communication between elites. Organized in transnational elite networks, policy makers and a number of professional experts may exchange knowledge about feasible solutions to common problems or may engage in collective learning efforts. Not surprisingly, Rose points to the work done on epistemic communities (Haas 1990) to highlight a peculiar form of transnational elite-networking (1991: 15 ff).

A powerful critique to these approaches to policy change was issued by Peter Hall in an influential article on "Policy Paradigms, Social Learning and the State" (1993). Hall agrees that accounts based on the conflict paradigm cannot give a fully satisfying explanation for policy change while at the same time challenging the notion of policy learning as an exclusively elite-driven process. Drawing on the Kuhnian conceptualization of changes in scientific paradigms, Hall makes a useful distinction between "first", "second" and "third-order change" in order to explain why some changes of policy are simply not conceivable in terms of incremental adaptation of policies by routinized interaction between top-level politicians, civil servants and experts.⁹ While the daily routine of policymaking and minor changes enacted in the process (first-order change) as well as occasional revisions of policy instruments and strategies

⁹ The distinction is missing in Hall's earlier work on the spread of Keynesianism across nations (1986, 1989). Sabatier (1993) presents a very similar argument in his distinction between "deep core", "core" and "secondary" aspects of policies which, Sabatier argues, show a lessening resistance against policy change (1993: 133).

(second-order change) may be well explained by statist approaches, a change in "policy paradigms"¹⁰ is likely to be a politicized affair which entails conflicts between competing factions (or "advocacy coalitions" in Sabatier's word; cf. Sabatier 1988, 1993) of policy makers and experts. The outcome will depend on "positional advantages within a broader institutional framework, on the ancillary resources they [the competing factions, TC] can command in the relevant conflicts, and on exogenous factors affecting the power of one set of actors to impose its paradigm over another" (Hall 1993: 280). Hall concludes that "this contest may well spill beyond the boundaries of the state itself into the broader political arena [and] ... will end only when the supporters of a new paradigm secure positions of authority over policymaking" (p. 280 f).

One reason why Hall's contribution is useful to the present paper is that much as the processes of 'governmental learning' or 'lesson-drawing', the change of policy paradigms described by Hall is open to international influences. The "marketplace of economic ideas" about which Hall talks (1993: 287) is principally comparable to the competition between policy recipes that isolated policy-makers may experience through epistemic communities (cf. *ibid.*: 286). In this light, the difference between the approaches to policy change advocated by Rose and Bennett and that advocated by Hall is not a principle one, but differs only in its extension to paradigmatic policy shifts and the roles of societies therein. A decisive difference, however, lays in the importance the contributions by Hall on the one hand and Rose and Bennett on the other give to the issue of political conflict. While the latter two authors and also Hall in his account of first- and second-order policy change identifies the evaluation of past policy and dissatisfaction which now and then occurs as a result as the prime catalysts of change (thereby pushing notions of "policy learning" to the forefront), third-order change is an affair which is determined by a wide range of social forces and extended political conflict. This also has important consequences for the role of ideas in the explanatory framework. As Hall argues for the case of macroeconomic policy-making in Britain, Margaret Thatcher and her supporters "were genuinely seeking new solutions to Britain's economic problems, but they embraced the monetarist solution in large measures because it also had substantial political appeal" (1993: 286). In this respect, Hall's account mixes somewhat uneasily the notion of ideas

¹⁰ Hall defines them as "a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing. ... [T]his framework is embedded in the very terminology through which policymakers communicate about their work and it is influential precisely because so much of it is taken for granted and unamenable to scrutiny as a whole" (1993: 279). The example Hall employs are Keynesian ideas which during the (pre-Thatcher) period of the 'neoclassical synthesis' "specified what the economic world was like, how it was to be observed, which goals were attainable through policy, and what instruments should be used to attain them. They became the prism through which policymakers saw the economy as well as their own role within it" (*ibid.*).

and learning as determining factors for policy change with the more "realist" notion that the influence of learning and of ideas on the policy process is claimed mainly for opportunistic reasons, i.e. to legitimize actions which are basically rooted in self-interest (see Benz / Risse-Kappen 1995 for a juxtaposition of these two concepts and also Hall's suggestion to integrate both concepts on p. 289 ff). In this respect, Hall's approach to processes of policy change resembles far more the conventional view on the policy process according to which self-interested, rational actors and their relative ability to push through their will determine outcomes of the policy process.

4. Policy Change and Multilevel Governance

The preceding chapter, which is based on a very narrow body of literature, has already left us with a puzzling multitude of approaches towards policy change. What do the different explanations of policy change outlined above tell us about a possible change of national public policies in the European system of multilevel governance? In order to make sense of the messiness of the approaches, the different explanations for policy change can be organized along two dimensions: first, a change of the course of policy may come about due to the dissemination of information across borders, insecurity of decision makers, and, finally, a collaborative effort in "policy learning", but also due to conflictual processes between interested actors. This dimension will be labelled "dominant process leading to policy change". Secondly, one should distinguish between state- and society-centred approaches towards the political process, which are compatible both with "learning" and "conflictual" explanations for policy change; however, as part of a more general theoretical orientation towards the political process, see different groups of actors as decisive in bringing policy change about. Accordingly, this latter dimension will be called "dominant actors in policy change". The resulting four-cell matrix is presented in Table 1.

Both dimensions are kept analytically separate. The notion that a transformation of national public policies is driven by elites within the governmental apparatus should not be confused with a cooperative endeavour on the sides of elites to improve policy performance and to "learn" from past failures, while a society - centred approach should not be equated with conflict as the dominant process leading to policy change. Rather, the two dimensions unfold a variety of ways in which to think about policy change and the possible effects multilevel governance may have on the development of national public policies.

Table 1: Competing theoretical approaches to policy change

| | | Dominant Process of Policy Change | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | Conflict | Learning |
| Dominant Actors in Policy Change | State Actors | Interorganizational Conflict | Lesson-Drawing |
| | Societal Actors | Group Theory | Social Learning |

The following paragraphs will deal with each of the four boxes in turn, starting with the upper lefthand box ("Interorganizational Conflict") and proceeding counter-clockwise to the upper righthand cell ("Lesson Drawing"). In each case, it will be argued that MLG may have a decisive influence upon the transformation of public policies to the extent that MLG is able to exert influence on one the factors which are identified as crucial for policy development by the respective approach.

Interorganizational conflict: In accordance with a theoretical lens on the policy process emphasizing changing interests of rational actors and / or changing power resources of these actors as agents of policy change, one would have to look for ways in which EC policy either may change the interests of actors participating in the development of domestic policies or may change the vesting of particular actors with power resources in the domestic arena. Arguments like these have hitherto mainly been made in connection with the shaping of EC policies. It has been argued that to the extent that e.g. subnational actors have been upgraded through the EC's regional policies, they have developed new preferences with regard to EC policy and have tried to use their newly attained resources to put pressure behind their demands (Hooghe / Keating 1994: 375 ff). The present paper seeks to extend this notion to the domestic arena, arguing that there is no principal reason why as a consequence of EC policies it should not be rational for actors to change preferences with regard to domestic politics or to make use of newly attained resources in the domestic political process. To do so, however, it is necessary to discard the notion of a unified administrative state apparatus acting coherently to safeguard national preferences. For instance, scholars studying the processes of preference formation within national bureaucracies have repeatedly pointed to conflicting aims of different branches of the administrative apparatus (Pag 1987; Peters 1992). Despite a largely co-operative orientation in interadministrative relations multiple sources of conflict remain,

e.g. between different parts of the administrative machinery or, as is the case in Germany, between national and subnational administrators (Wessels 1996: 178 ff). It would be wrong, however, to assume that internal rifts emerge purely or even predominantly out of practical reasons. As is emphasized by the MLG literature, consequences of the integration process are unevenly distributed across different branches of the administrative machinery, and administrators may be concerned about possible repercussions of European policies on their internal position within the administrative apparatus. As different parts of the national administrations are affected in different ways by any particular decision or reallocation of competencies at the European level, their preferences may change e.g. to a more pro-European stance in order to strengthen their position or to avoid a weakening (cf. Marks / Hooghe / Blank 1995; Héritier 1994).

In a similar vein, parts of the national administration may press for a change of national policies in order to take full advantage of new opportunities or to get hold of financial and other resources on offer.¹¹ An even more important source of change may be changed power resources within domestic policy networks which hitherto underprivileged actors may use to exert pressure for policy change. In accordance with the MLG approach, the resources to be considered in this context are not only legal authority, but also information, expertise, organization, finances and legitimacy (cf. Marks / Hooghe / Blank 1996: 96). For instance, in the field of regional policy regional actors can nowadays legitimize their demands for participation with respect to the central position accord to them by the EC approach towards regional development policies. Kohler-Koch argues that "[t]he regional policy of the EC supports a change in governance to the extent that it offers a new concept of governing and provides procedures and resources that *induce* actors at the sub-national level to become part of the new game. The EC does not try to impose a concept. Instead, it opens a 'window of opportunity' for regional actors to use the resources offered" (1996: 194, my emphasis). While these may be understood as "pull factors", i.e. resources that are on offer for those wishing to take them up, there are also some "push factors", most notably the higher complexity introduced into the operation of EC regional policy. The need for pluri-annual strategic programmes instead of single projects and the demand issued by the Commission that regional policy schemes should be tailored to the individual needs of the regions increases the value of informational

¹¹ As is explained in more detail in chapter 6, there is an ongoing struggle between the Federal Ministry of Economy and several other parts of the German national administration (including the Ministries for Environment, Research and Education, Environmental Planning and Urban Development and Transport) over an "opening" of German regional policy towards a more 'integrated' view on regional development instead of the hitherto practiced exclusive support for investments. This change of preferences can be attributed to a desire to make financial support from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) available to other policy areas. The Federal Ministry of Economics resists such a move for practical reasons, but also because it would have to share its influence over how German moneys for regional policies and the corresponding ERDF moneys are spent with other parts of the national administration.

resources held by local and regional actors (cf. Conzelmann 1995: 139 f). All these factors may lead to an upgrading of subnational actors in general and may in the long run give these actors a greater say in shaping domestic policies (also see Anderson 1996: 164 ff).

Group Conflict: The forms of policy change through a change of preferences, of power resources of particular actors or the advent of new actors in the policy network does not necessarily have to be constrained to conflicts within governmental apparatuses. Pretty much the same processes can be at work if one includes societal actors into the analysis. In terms of changed preferences of these societal actors, the influence of multinationals on national policy development cited by Bennett (see above) can give some hints as to the possibilities of the first mechanism. To the extent that these actors in general can be viewed as powerful players in the national policy domain, a change in their preferences will ensue changes in the policies of the national government. More interesting is another process, whereby the composition of policy networks themselves is changed through supranational influences. An example of a change in the relative position of particular actors within policy networks can be found in the field of research and development policy, where the drafting of the Community's information technology initiatives was successful "because a technocratic consensus supported the legitimacy of business and Commission acting together" (Kohler-Koch 1996: 193). In this instance, the argument can again be made that the Commission and other supranational actors through the spread of policies and ideas may be successful in legitimizing particular societal actors over others and giving them a greater say in policy development. As Hall convincingly argues, "[p]olicymaking in virtually all fields takes place within the context of a particular set of ideas that recognize some social interests as more legitimate than others and privilege some lines of policy over others" (Hall 1993: 292). As explained above, such an upgrading of the position of particular societal actors, which takes place in EC policy making in the first instance, may have some repercussions on the national level, as supranational and national policy networks become more and more integrated.

Social Learning: As was argued before, Hall's notion of social learning is to some extent ambiguous, as the relationship between societal forces and state policy makers remains unspecified in the case of 'third-order change'. Furthermore, instances of 'third-order change', i.e. a hitherto dominant national policy paradigm coming under pressure and being supplanted by a paradigm promoted by the EC would hardly be conceivable within a multilevel governance framework. With respect to the processes of interest here, namely the 'dimly lit process of institutional creation and decisional reallocation' (Marks), the concept of social learning certainly is of minor importance. Most specific policies operated by the European Community are of high technical complexity which have little chances to reach the national political agenda to any significant degree (Bach 1993: 288), and much the same is probably true for the policies with which they possibly conflict on the national level. A further reason is that as soon as existing policy paradigms

within nation states processes come under pressure, resources like the authoritative legal powers of the state will gain in importance, whereas those upon which the idea of multilevel governance builds - information, expertise and other forms of 'soft' legitimacy- are unlikely to play a prominent role.

Lesson Drawing: Quite on the contrary, it seems to be highly plausible that the Community with its multiple meetings of policymakers and experts has created a hothouse for processes of 'Lesson-Drawing' as described by Rose. Bach argues that due to the 'bureaucratic intermingling' between supranational and national administrations transnational networks between state policymakers and experts emerge, "which cut through the nationally closed and largely hierarchic bureaucratic structures of state administrations. Through these networks, transnational information and communication channels develop which form an entirely new 'single European market' for policy- and administration-related informations" (Bach 1993: 304, my translation). Bach argues that these processes lead to a "expertocracy" of civil servants and policy specialists who share a 'technocratic consensus' among themselves, are largely detached from their national administrative environments and prefer output- and efficiency-oriented decision-making instead of normative or political debates (ibid.: 305 ff). The question is to what extent the features of a technocratic consensus and efficiency-oriented decision-making carry implications for national policy-discourses. On the one hand, it seems obvious that national policies come under a much higher need for legitimation and acceptance than within the relatively more closed discourse arenas of nation states due to the exuberant exchange of possibly better 'best practices'. As Rose argues, "[t]he Single European Market will create competition between programmes. If programmes in industry, employment, transportation, or other fields appear more effective, then a national government must ask: Could that programme work in our country?" (1991: 19).

While all of the considerations above can claim some plausibility, the more interesting question is of course what factors account for one particular pattern of policy change prevailing over the other in the European system of MLG. In particular, one would like to know (1) whether "learning" or "conflict" resp. "state-" or "society-centred" patterns of policy change are more likely to emerge, and (2) what factors on the national level account for a possible variation. Thirdly, one needs to think about the possibility that no change may occur at all, and that explanations for a non-change in policies need to be given.

To start with this last point, the problem emerges to be less daunting than one might think. To the extent that a non-change of policies may be grounded in the characteristics of the supranational policy itself, the problem can be minimized by the selection of the policy under scrutiny. Regional policy seems to be a case where one would expect a relatively high likelihood of processes of policy change taking place along the lines outlined above. In order to demonstrate some of the transmission belts actually being at work, regional policy is a good case, although the question of generalizability of results of course remains (cf.

Chpt. 5). Having stated the principal plausibility of policy change in this area, one can then turn to questions (1) and (2). Within the scope of this paper, only very few hints can be given. For example, it can be argued that the exchange of ideas and deliberation about which course to pursue in policy development is likely to be constrained to questions of efficiency, whereas questions of distribution are likely to be decided by conflictual processes (Majone 1993a). To the extent that the possible losses or benefits of a particular reorientation of policy remains either unknown or is neglected by decision-makers, "learning" is likely to take place and to lead to policy change. While within the detached Brussels 'expertocracy' (Bach 1993) a situation of ignorance or neglect of benefits and losses at the national level may occur rather frequently, national decision-makers can usually be expected to be quite aware of benefits and losses in case that a supranational policy recipe would be employed within the national policy domain. To the extent that decision-making processes get politicized, more actors will appear on the scene and the chances for survival of the technocratic consensus will diminish. Where questions of values and voters become predominant, conflictual processes are more likely. On the other hand, there is reason to assume that "learning" and policy deliberation are more likely in national environments characterized by mainly horizontal, networked relationships which allow patterns of mutual understanding, trust and shared values to develop and pose high obstacles to conflictual resolution of divergent preferences (Risse-Kappen 1995). In the last resort, such thoughts necessarily remain speculative. One of the interests of the research project the author is currently involved in (Conzelmann 1997) is to put such speculative ideas to an empirical test. Some preliminary evidence is presented in the next two chapters.

5. The Experience of EC Regional Policy

Intergovernmentalists, functionalists as well as scholars employing the MLG concept interpret the significant upgrading of the structural funds in 1988 as a side-payment to the economically weaker member states which were concerned about negative repercussions of the Single Market project (George 1991: 192 ff.; Marks 1992, 1993 and 1996; Pollack 1995; Tsoukalis 1991; see Leonardi 1995: 2 f. for a dissenting voice).¹² While the 'grand bargain' to buy off the resistance of the poor member states to the SEA in exchange for increased financial transfers can easily be explained within an intergovernmentalist framework, the concrete shape of the directives guiding the operation of the structural funds cannot. The SEA made no provisions on the principles to be used in the operation of the revised structural funds, nor did it specify any strategies or instruments. The few accounts on how the framework regulations decided in 1988 were drafted usually agree that "[t]he Commission's internal process of policy generation ... provided

¹² A more sophisticated account is given by Hooghe / Keating (1994: 370 ff), who point out the importance of Commission leadership in arguing a convincing case for the new (and ill-defined) policy rationale of 'cohesion'.

the guiding principles and many of the practical details of the funds" (Smyrl 1995, 5; also see Leonardi 1995, Marks 1996, Tömmel 1994). The original expectation of countries like the UK, France and West Germany seems to have been that the increased regional policy efforts of the EC would have little effect on their ability to further pursue their national policies, as (1) the EC's structural policy was designed to support rather than replace existing member state efforts and (2) the bulk of the funds would be piped to the southern member states and Ireland. These member states, which had little experience of their own in drafting and implementing regional policy schemes welcomed the guidance through the Community's regional policy framework, while the richer member states remained indifferent and let the directives pass with only minor changes (cf. Marks 1993: 401). Unforeseen and unintended consequences of the 1988 reforms of the structural funds nowadays extend to the domain of national public policy-making and have belied the notion of national decision-makers of continuing state dominance over the course of national public policies.

Some of the mechanisms identified as important in providing transmission belts from EC policy into the spheres of national domestic politics are very obviously at work in the field of EC regional policy. First (and most important), supranational and national policies are closely interwoven through the so-called "principle of additionality", which operates for 9/10 of the EC's structural budget and demands that EC monies are used to give additional financial muscle to *national* regional policies. With exception of the so-called 'Community Initiatives' the principle of additionality prevents EC regional policy to become detached from corresponding national policies. Put more precisely, the fact that the operation of the Community's regional policy and its particular principles are channelled through the national regional policy networks leads to closely enmeshed policy networks which

"form the basis for a continuous thematization of policy goals, financial resources, policy criteria and the realization of policy goals among the actors involved, and thereby for the development of organized feedback loops within a 'multilevel policy-arena'. Thus it is possible to permanently introduce policy reactions into the political process, which concern not only implementation problems, but also the material content of the policy itself. A possible outcome are processes of policy learning leading to a transformation of policy content. (Heinelt 1996, 25, my translation).

Although Heinelt's argument relates to the development of the EC's structural policies, there is no principal reason why *national* policies should not be subject to such learning and transformation processes through the operation of 'feedback loops' mentioned by Heinelt. A recent account of the development of EC regional policies argues the case that "[a]s in other policy fields, the EU has been able to set the agenda of debate and *help to shape national policies*, without displacing the nation state as the principal locus of decision-making" (Hooghe / Keating 1994: 388, my emphasis). In addition, the interlinkages between policy networks at both levels are not only likely to trigger evaluation processes and policy learning, but may also

lead to a change of preferences, the upgrading of particular actors within the national policy network or the entry of new and previously isolated actors into the network.

Regarding a change of preferences, the financial resources distributed through the EC's structural funds seem to have some influence on the course of national policies. Although relatively small when compared with national budgets for regional policies in the more pro-active member states, Community money can become important in cases where the national government is in opposition to state interventionism in general or in cases where the support criteria of national regional policy systems prevent some things to happen which could otherwise have been co-financed by the Community. An obvious example for the first category is the UK where the EC's regional structural policies seem to have had the effect to curb a more radical downsizing of regional policies during the Thatcher and Major years. Due to the rule that the member states need to provide matching funds in order to make full use of Brussels money, there is a certain (more political than legal) lower threshold for the scaling down of regional policies. This mechanism seems to have worked in the UK with considerable force, as a further cutback would have had negative consequences for the UK's net revenue from the Community (Lauder / Leaman 1994; Parsons 1988: 199; Sturm 1991: 258). An example for the second process mentioned above can be found in Germany, the example to which we turn in the next section.

As was argued above (p. 13), the EC's regional policy is able to distribute not only financial resources, but also legitimacy and new policy ideas. The argument of the present paper is that due to the intricate enmeshment of supranational and national policies and the (at least partial) overlap of the respective actor networks through which the day-to-day operation of these policies is organized, a upgrading of particular actors in EC policies may have important repercussions on their bargaining position in the domestic policy networks. The meshing together of national policy networks and those organizing supranational policies opens the further possibility that the internal structure of policy networks change through the advent of completely new actors within the network. Being acknowledged by the EC as an indispensable partner in reversing regional decline may give additional (though not uncontroversial) legitimacy to hitherto underprivileged players like regional actor coalitions in the UK (cf. Burch / Holliday 1993, Conzelmann 1995) or the so-called "social partners", which are invited to participate during the preparation and implementation of regional policy schemes (see Conzelmann 1996 for a fuller elaboration of the argument). In the case of regional policy in Germany, the Commission's GD IV (Competition) became formally involved into the discussions on the delineation of areas eligible for *national* aid (Nägele 1996: 286). This episode points to a more encompassing trend, namely the emancipation of the Commission from its national principals and its installation as a regional policy actor in its own right (Voelzkow / Hoppe 1996: 115 f). As

such, the Commission has become an increasingly important player not only on the supranational level, but also in the domestic resp. the emerging multi-level policy networks.¹³

The Commission's power is also enhanced through its control rights over national subsidies (Art. 92-94 TEC). Member states may be forced to refrain from or abolish particular political measures, because national subsidies are subject to approval by the Commission's Competition Directorate (DG IV) and, possibly, to negotiations between DG IV and the member state concerned. Cases in point are the 1977 abolishment of the Regional Employment Premium (REP) in the UK and the constant review of *Bund* and *Länder* spending programmes in Germany. This has led to a situation where a group of officials from the Federal Ministry of Economics complain:

"[T]he approach of the Commission towards regional policies is an increasingly centralistic one: On the one hand, the Commission step by step reduces the scope of action for Bund and Länder in regional policies ... via the instrument of subsidy control. On the other hand, it advances on the [political] vacuum thus created with its own regional policies, thereby increasing its scope of influence on regional development in Germany" (Tetsch / Benterbusch / Letixerant 1996: 42; my translation).

Taken together, the processes mentioned above may in the long run lead to increasing pressure for domestic policy change. There is, however, very little reason to assume any causal mechanisms to be at work here which would make outcomes predictable (e.g. that the Structural Funds would trigger certain policy reforms to be implemented in all member states irrespective of the national framework). In the words of two observers, EC regional policy "is not merely a policy, but a forum for new types of politics ... In such a setting, outcomes are often unpredictable and unstable. Payoffs for regions, member states or the Commission from this interaction are not restricted to the narrow area of EU regional policy. ... Europe and European structural policy act as catalysts for national developments, but have been unable to impose their own logic" (Hooghe / Keating 1994: 388). The reason for the supplementing of the MLG framework with additional explanatory variables offered by theories of policy learning and policy change (i.e. changed preferences, changed resources and learning processes) was precisely to get a clearer analytical grasp of such chaotic and instable processes, which may or may not lead to domestic policy change. To look out for changing preferences of actors, the upgrading of particular actors in domestic policy networks, the entry of new actors in the network and the multiple occasions for the diffusion of new policy ideas and 'best practices' through transnational networks of experts and policymakers may provide a first step to a better understanding of the dynamics infused into the domestic policy networks through the EC's regional policy.

¹³ Since a couple of years, there have been discussions in Germany to formally incorporate DG 16 and DG 4 into the planning framework of the GRW, either as a third party besides the Bund and the Länder, or through a substitution of the Bund by the Commission. This latter scenario would take account of the increasing disjunction between GRW and ERDF, would, however, also entail a serious loss of competence for the Bund (cf. Spiekermann 1992).

One should keep in mind, however, that to the extent that domestic policy change occurs, this is first and foremost a domestic affair. It takes place in a context of a peculiar national institutional order and within national policy domains characterized by certain policy paradigms and a network of relationships between actors that has evolved over relatively long times. As is the case with implementation structures in EC regional policy, outcomes are therefore likely to show a great national variation. The next section seeks to demonstrate such a nationally determined process very briefly. Empirical evidence is taken from a recent reform of Germany's most important regional policy instrument, the so called *Gemeinschaftsaufgabe Verbesserung der regionalen Wirtschaftsstruktur* (GRW).¹⁴

6. The Transformation of Regional Policies in the (West) German Case; 1985 - 1996

Since 1969, regional policy is a shared task (*Gemeinschaftsaufgabe*) of state (*Land*) governments and the federal (*Bund*) government. The basic principle of the GRW is a joint decision of Bund and Länder on a (yearly revised) framework plan, which lays down regional development goals and instruments and stipulates the areas eligible for GRW funding. Decisions in the GRW's planning committee have to be taken by a 3/4 majority, with an equal share of votes between the federal and the Länder governments. This decision rule, which forces the Bund to line up with a majority of the Länder in order to reach its political aims, together with the principle of *Länder* implementation of the jointly agreed measures locks the two levels in a situation of close interdependence or *Politikverflechtung* (Scharpf / Reissert / Schnabel 1976). Historically a product of the limited political, economic and financial capacity of the *Länder* in coping with problems of regional decline, concertation between both levels through the GRW has not ruled out the *Länder's* own initiatives in the field of regional policy (the so-called *Landesförderung*).

While the basic aim of the GRW is to address regional disparities on a nation-wide scale and to coordinate the individual efforts of Bund, Länder and local authorities, the instruments employed are relatively simple. In terms of problem definition, the GRW identifies a lack of investments by the private and the public sector as the main reason for economic backwardness. In terms of defining appropriate measures, the GRW is guided by the so-called "export-basis-theory" which states that self-sustaining growth is most likely to be generated by enterprises able to "export" their goods beyond individual regions. Consequently, the main instrument of the GRW are capital grants to (usually larger) firms which are willing to invest or to expand existing facilities. Furthermore improvements of "economy-related" infrastructures

¹⁴ The following section builds heavily on the work done by Nägele (1996) and Voelzkow / Hoppe (1996). Additional evidence is taken from the accounts of civil servants in the Federal Ministry of Economics (Tetsch / Benterbusch / Letixerant 1996; Lammert 1995).

within these regions are supported from which (potential) enterprises fulfilling these criteria would be able to profit. Vocational training, R & D measures, and measures to improve living conditions, upon which the EC's regional policies lay emphasis, cannot be given support in their own right, but only as supporting measures to the kind of investments mentioned above. While *Bund* officials argue that given the limited amount of funds available, a restriction of goals is the only way to secure that monies are used to an effective end,¹⁵ both the Commission and the Länder have criticized the GRW criteria (and thereby the "implicit theory" the GRW rests on) as being too "restrictive". The policies of the Länder and the ERDF in particular take a much more differentiated view on the reasons for economic backwardness, such as a lack of innovative measures in existing firms, insufficient labour skills, unattractive living conditions within declining regions; in short: a whole range of "soft" location factors which the GRW has difficulty to give assistance to (Jürgens / Krumbein 1991, Jochimsen 1992).

The right of the Länder to devise their own regional policies became more important during the late 1970s and 1980s, as the GRW experienced massive cutbacks on the monies available. The curbing of monies also sharpened conflicts within the highly complicated system of negotiations on eligible areas, which has often been criticized as being guided by principles of regional *Proporz* and policies of fair return rather than by consideration of economic need. A further straitjacket became the GRW instruments, which lay heavy emphasis on infrastructure investments and restrict aid to enterprises which are able to sell their products in markets larger than the individual travel-to-work regions (Tetsch 1994, 172). As a result, especially 'old industrial' regions like North Rhine-Westphalia and the Saarland, which did not suffer from economic backwardness or a lack of infrastructure, but rather from the decline of existing firms and a bad endowment with 'soft' location factors, began to devise their regional policies *outside* the GRW areas and independently from the Bund. During the resulting conflicts, the Bund argued that a split up of the two systems of regional policy in Germany would entail counterproductive effects and a rat race between the Länder to attract new investments, while the Länder were eager to operate a more flexible regional policy outside the GRW framework. The discussion over the extent to which Land policies should be co- or (as some would say) subordinated to the GRW became especially intense as the Länder increasingly tried to tap EC funds in support of their individual efforts to generate growth within the regions (Anderson 1990: 437 f, Conzelmann 1995: 147 f).

In the early 1990s, this led to a situation where large parts of regional policy measures co-funded by the Community were located outside areas eligible for GRW funding.¹⁶ By way of this political separation, in

¹⁵ See, for example, the statements by Tetsch (1994, 172) and Lammert (1995: 20 f).

¹⁶ For West Germany, the numbers are 48 per cent of the areas eligible under Objective 5 b and 17 per cent of the areas eligible under objective 2; cf. Tetsch 1994: 176. Tetsch points to the "absurd"

West Germany GRW and ERDF measures became also separated in organizational terms (Tetsch 1994: 178). This state of affairs was tenable for Bund policymakers due to the relatively small size of ERDF monies available to Germany. Things were to change, however, with unification. In 1990, the whole of the five "new" *Länder* became eligible under the auspices of the GRW and an 'Objective 1' - region of the ERDF. Due to a lack of time and of workable administrative infrastructures, the GRW was applied with little concern for the specific problems of the East German economy. The same was true for ERDF monies, which due to the lack of differentiated development strategies of the *Länder* simply topped the GRW (cf. Voelzkow / Hoppe 1996: 116 ff; Nägele 1996: 198 ff). However, during the implementation of the plan agreed between Bonn and Brussels between 1991 and 1993, *Länder* and local authorities by and large began to develop their own interpretation of the causes for regional decline and of appropriate measures to battle it. Like in West Germany, the GRW instruments were increasingly put into question, while the *Länder* through their own *Landesförderung* programmes began to devise measures according to their own needs and sought assistance from the ERDF.¹⁷

Given that the GRW funds channelled to the East German *Länder* are almost nine times as high as the total of GRW funds in the West (7.1 bio. DM as compared to 0.81 bio. DM in 1994), and topped by a yearly tranche of 1.9 bio DM ERDF aid, both the Bund and the East German *Länder* had a vital interest in avoiding a separation of GRW and ERDF, i.e. to seek "voice" within the GRW system instead of "exit", as some of the West German *Länder* had done before. In March 1994, the GRW planning committee decided that the GRW system as a whole and in particular its criteria for awarding aid should come under review and that decisions should be taken until the end of 1996. Besides the interest to adapt the criteria to changing economic circumstances, one of the main interests was to safeguard that ERDF measures under Objective 1 could in future be administered through the GRW scheme and to reinstitute the coordinating function the GRW had lost during the previous years (Tetsch 1994, 179 f). This need had become especially clear during the negotiations on the 1994-1999 "Community Support Frameworks" (CSFs) and "Operational Programmes" (OPs)¹⁸ for the East German *Länder*. The Bund had originally demanded that ERDF aid for East Germany should be targeted exclusively onto those measures which could be supported by the GRW, namely productive investments of East German firms and improvement of East German infrastructures, while "the Commission put great emphasis on making use of the widest possible range of initiatives which can be given support through the structural funds" (Lammert 1995: 21, also see Nägele

fact that in West Germany the total area coverage of the ERDF thereby has become slightly larger (23 per cent of the population) than that of the GRW (22 per cent).

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18 CSFs and OPs specify which areas and programmes will be given support by ERDF moneys. They are drafted on a national basis, but have to be endorsed by the Commission. For details, see Marks 1996.

1996: 216 ff). Strong support for a disjunction of ERDF and GRW monies was also issued by some of the Länder, most notably the transportation and environment ministries, but also from several federal ministries (including Transportation, Environment, Education and Regional Planning and Urban Development; cf. Nägele 1996: 213 ff, 220 ff). This coalition of interests argued that the 'restrictive' GRW criteria led to an undue concentration of ERDF aid onto investments, and to a loss of ERDF moneys which could possibly be used for schemes not covered by the GRW. Eager to safeguard the quick release of ERDF moneys, the Bund finally gave in to let the East German CSFs and OP make full use of the support the ERDF is able to give for R&D, SMEs, improvements of the environment, employment measures and vocational training. The ERDF moneys thus were dispersed on a wide range of objectives and institutions, thus reducing significantly the leverage of the Federal and the Land Ministries of Economics over the use of ERDF moneys in East Germany (ibid.; also see Nägele 1996: 223 ff; Voelzkow / Hoppe 1996: 119 f).

The growing gap in the use of ERDF and GRW moneys turned out to have a heavy influence on the GRW reform discussions. Within the Bund-Länder planning committee it was agreed that one of the main aims of GRW reform would be to reinstall the compatibility between the ERDF and the GRW moneys.¹⁹ As there was no prospect for Bund and Länder to change EC rules according to the German system, this objective could only be achieved by introducing more flexibility into the *Gemeinschaftsaufgabe*. While this is not the place to give a detailed account of the negotiations between Bund and Länder concerning these issues (see Nägele 1996: 292 ff), the final outcome of the GRW reform has been interpreted as a remarkable, though limited "opening" of the GRW in relation to the ERDF (Voelzkow / Hoppe 1996: 123 ff). Although the conceptual and theoretical cornerstones of the GRW remain untouched (i.e. concentration on investments, export-basis theory), much of the rigour of the pre-1994 GRW has vanished. In particular, environmental improvements, SMEs, reintegration of women into work, youth employment initiatives and urban development measures have lost their secondary character and can now be supported by the GRW even if these do not link directly into infrastructure improvements or "productive" investments.²⁰ In addition, four entirely new categories of support were introduced, namely support for advisory programmes and for programmes aiming at an improvement of 'humane capital' in small and medium-sized enterprises, improvements in the skills of the regional workforce, and certain research and development programmes. More interesting than the material content are provisions concerning procedural terms. First, the programme approach towards regional development, which takes a more 'integrated' view of regional economic processes and tries to avoid isolated projects will operate in the future. Nägele interprets these

¹⁹ 24. Rahmenplan der Gemeinschaftsaufgabe Verbesserung der regionalen Wirtschaftsstruktur für den Zeitraum 1995 bis 1998; BT Drs. 13/1376; 27.4.1995, p. 10

²⁰ 24. Rahmenplan der Gemeinschaftsaufgabe "Verbesserung der regionalen Wirtschaftsstruktur für den Zeitraum 1995 bis 1998; BT-Drs. 13/1376, 27.4.1995, p. 12-14.

changes as a clear sign of EC regional policy principles being taken aboard the GRW (1996: 296, 310; also see Voelzkow / Hoppe 1996: 124). EC influence may also be at work with regard to another change to the GRW framework, namely that "endogenous development potentials" should be stimulated through programmes drafted in cooperation between regional and local authorities and (mainly small and medium-sized) business headquartered in the particular regions. The idea of 'endogenous development' and the drafting of regional policy schemes in regional or local actor networks is another integral part of the EC's policies, but much as the programme approach, is not entirely new to the German system. Regional conferences had been operative before in North Rhine -Westphalia and Niedersachsen, which introduced "regionalized" forms of regional structural policy during the late 1980's (Heinze / Voelzkow 1990; Krafft / Ulrich 1993). Furthermore, it should be noted that these changes have as yet not been passed as a law, but are rather regarded as an 'experiment' which will come under review when the current framework plan is phased out in 1998.²¹ In terms of the future area coverage of European and national funds, the reformed GRW states that ERDF monies should "chiefly" be used in areas which are also assisted by the GRW. This can be interpreted as a success of Commission and Länder and a partial defeat of the *Bund* which originally demanded a full congruence of GRW and ERDF assisted areas (Voelzkow / Hoppe 1996: 123).

7. Interpretation and Discussion

How do these observations link into the explanatory model developed in the previous chapters? First, it should be mentioned that the whole process was entirely driven by bureaucratic negotiations between Bund and Länder and that very little influence by societal actors can be detected (cf. Nägele 1996: 294). An important role was taken by the Commission, who in an outright coalition with the Länder exerted pressure on the Bund to give in with respect to the question of GRW reform (Nägele 1996: 310; Voelzkow / Hoppe 1996:). Some parts of the reform obviously were modelled on the EC's regional policy, most notably the partial introduction of the programme approach and of the additionality principle. On the other hand, the changes introduced into the GRW framework are relatively modest. In particular, the theoretical cornerstones and the ordering of goals and instruments remain intact. In Hall's terms, we can see an clear instance of first-order change, supplemented by some (although) modest second-order change.

The use of the Hall terminology is misleading to the extent that it implies that "learning processes" were the prime force behind the GRW reforms. It is true that some of the Länder, out of dissatisfaction with the operation of the GRW in their territories,²² had long since questioned the GRW framework and demanded

²¹ 24. Rahmenplan der Gemeinschaftsaufgabe "Verbesserung der regionalen Wirtschaftsstruktur für den Zeitraum 1995 bis 1998; BT-Drs. 13/1376, 27.4.1995, p. 15.

²² For critical accounts see Sturm 1991a, Voelzkow / Hoppe 1996: 111 ff.

a change of the rules. However, it was certainly not the case that policy-makers began to shop around in Europe, trying to find new solutions to regional problems. As was argued above, the principle of 'endogenous development' and the 'programme approach' were long known in regional science discussions and in some of the Länder. That they were finally introduced into the GRW to supplement (but not replace) the still predominant instrument of 'exogenous' capital mobilization, was clearly based on pressure exerted by Land policymakers and the Commission and was also motivated by the desire of Land and Bund policymakers to make full use of the resources on offer from Brussels (Nägele 1996: 314). More specifically, it was a coalition of hitherto underrepresented Länder ministries, spearheaded by the transportation and environment ministries and joined by their counterparts at the federal level, that succeeded to win Commission support for their demands to 'open up' the GRW to their individual policy fields. The episode can be explained both by the entrance of new actors with distinctive interests (i.e. the non-economics ministries at the Bund and the Land level mentioned above) into the network and by changing preferences of key players in the 'existing' network (in particular the Federal and State Economics Ministries), which wished to safeguard the cash flow from Brussels and ordered this preference higher than keeping the central position in the network they had enjoyed in the pre-1994 period (Anderson 1996: 186 ff).²³ The price to be paid for the 'opening' necessarily is a lessening coherence of the GRW framework, a fact which is repeatedly pointed out by Bund policymakers (cf. Lammert 1995: 21).

The fact that the Federal and the Länder Economics Ministries obviously tried to save as much of the original GRW contents as possible seems to indicate a relatively low importance of "learning", given the widespread discontent with the GRW criteria in the regional policy domain and given that the principles advanced by the EC to a larger extent than the GRW reflected the changing economic circumstances in Western European economies and advances in the regional science discussion (Ziegler 1995). To a great part, these more 'modern' concepts had been devised as a reaction to a growing heterogeneity of the problems of regional decline. Furthermore, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a decline in mobile capital waiting to parachute into regions or localities which offered the highest support for investments. In the past, critical accounts of the GRW pointed out the need to change its instruments in order to react to these changes (see Voelzkow 1990: 20 ff for an condensed overview of the critique). Seen against this background, the more interesting question is not why the GRW finally changed, but why it changed so late and so little.

While the interest of Land and Bund policymakers in the economics ministries to keep their positions can give some important explanations, one further explanation is connected with the notion of "path

²³ It should be noted, however, that the decisive influence in that case was the impact of unification which introduced a new kind of 'problem logic' into the German regional policy network (cf. Anderson 1996).

dependency" and "policy legacies" advanced by scholars from the new institutionalist camp (Pierson 1993; Weir / Skocpol 1992). Pierson explains that

"many public policies create or extend patterns of complex social interdependence in which microeconomic models of isolated, independent individuals smoothly and efficiently adapting to new conditions do not apply. ... Lock-in-effects are likely to be important when public policies encourage individuals to make significant investments that are not easily reversed, and when actors have strong incentives to coordinate their activities and to adopt prevailing or anticipated standards. Policies that involve high levels of interdependence and where interventions stretches over long periods are particularly likely sites for lock-in-effects" (Pierson 1993: 610).

The "new institutionalist" claim behind that line of reasoning is twofold: on the one hand, actors become entrenched in complex social networks, within which due to the long time horizons and the mutual resource interdependencies shared rules and values and shared interpretations of the problems at hand emerge. Due to shared interpretations, the disruption caused by a policy change is likely to be increased (ibid.: 608 ff). While the idea of shared interpretations of the problem at hand within the network can explain why (with respect to e.g. recent changes in the regional policy domain in other member states) so little change was introduced into the GRW framework, the highly complex and interdependent policy process in the German system of *Politikverflechtung* (of which the GRW is a prime example) can also render a second 'new institutionalist' explanation for the relatively low degree of policy change.

As could be observed during the discussions on the GRW reform, open political conflicts between participants provide an opportunity for the Commission to take part in the tussles and to exert influence on the outcomes. This mechanism could already be observed in the 1980s, when Bund and Länder closed ranks against the Commission with regard to the Commission's control on national subsidies (cf. Anderson 1996: 188), and during the negotiations between Bund and Länder on areas which should be eligible for ERDF funding in the 1994-1999 period (cf. Conzelmann 1995). As was shown above, the limited opening towards some new principles reminiscent of ERDF rules was implemented without a change of the federal law guiding the GRW operation. Political leaders shied away from a formal legislative process, because that, in the words of one participant, would have meant the "opening of Pandora's box", i.e. would have triggered a political discussion on the GRW which it might not have survived (cited after Nägele 1996: 294 f). The result was a process in which, by a limited overhaul of the GA, an effort was made to reinstall the old alliance between Bund and Länder "by coaxing them [the Länder, T.C.] back into the national policy fold" (Anderson 1996: 190), while at the same time limiting the intensity in order not to endanger the GRW's function as a "bulwark" against attempts of the Commission to encroach on Bund and Länder competences in regional policies. "The existence of the GRW has hitherto granted Bund and Länder a certain amount of scope in the shaping of regional policies, which otherwise the Commission would have filled through the material imperatives of EC regional policy as well as through the ... rules for EC subsidy

control" (Nägele 1996: 315, my translation). This is yet another example in which the presence of EC regional policy can exert decisive influence on the shape of regional policies, this time leading to stalemated policy development instead of dynamics.

8. References

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