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The Added Value of Local Government Transnational Networking

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Abstract

The 1990s saw a growth in local government networking across national borders. This was facilitated by a number of contextual factors and the availability of European funding schemes which attached transnational or cross-border co-operation to the eligibility criteria. Conceptually, the notions of policy networks and multi-level governance accounted for the 'horizontal' relationships which characterize this form of transnational co-operation by sub-state actors. Consequently, a body of academic literature focusing on this emerged during the 1990s. Contemporary research in this field, however, is scarce, but interest is now being renewed in the wake of public finance pressures and a rise in localism. Yet, there remain a number of issues with studies in this field. Chief among these is a heavy focus on the role of transnational networking and cross-border co-operation in obtaining funding. Given the extent of EU funding for transnational activity such a pre-occupation is to be expected, but it can lead to other important aspects being overlooked. Based on an analysis of local government documentation and interviews with local officials, this paper seeks to identify the rationale behind local government involvement in transnational networking and cross-border partnerships. It demonstrates that while this activity does indeed secure funding (and this is often the primary stated purpose for participation) there are many other benefits local authorities seek from this form of transnational co-operation. Among these 'added value' benefits are sharing knowledge, best practice and innovation with international counterparts and promoting local identities. By looking beyond funding motives a more detailed picture of local government networking and cross-border co-operation can be gained.

The Added Value of Local Government Transnational Networking

Introduction

Transnational networking has been a feature of local government activity since the 1990s. Under this activity councils would form so-called 'horizontal' relationships with counterparts in other—usually European—countries. Despite a rise in this activity—and thus academic study—during the 1990s, the current extent of this activity is largely unknown thanks to a lack of contemporary literature investigating transnational networking by local government. Traditionally, scholarship has focused on the role of this networking activity to gain access to European funding programmes, many of which attach transnational co-operation to their eligibility criteria. However, closer examination of the motives reveals a broader rationale.

This paper is structured as follows. Firstly it outlines the context and background to this activity highlighting its origins, both in practice and scholarship. Secondly it provides a contemporary overview of transnational networking carried out by local authorities in south-east England, demonstrating that despite a fall in literature, councils are still involved in this activity. Following this the paper challenges the traditional funding focus of many existing studies before highlighting examples of other motivations. In doing this the paper aims to highlight the continued involvement of local government in transnational networking, while arguing 'added value' motivations beyond obtaining European funding—especially lobbying, sharing knowledge and best practice and promoting local identity—provide much impetus for engagement in this activity.

Context and background

Of course literature focusing on transnational networking before the 1990s does exist (for example Hansen, 1984; Koch, 1974), but it was the 1990s that saw a large rise in studies. This is not a coincidence, rather it was facilitated by a number of contextual factors.

The 1990s saw several conceptual developments, mainly in European studies literature. Chief among these were policy networks, particularly when applied to European governance

(Börzel, 1997, 1998), and multi-level governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2001, 2003). These approaches advocated the 'horizontal' relationships among local government and other sub-state actors which characterize this form of transnational networking. It rapidly became recognized that the EU was a "networked polity" (Ansell, 2000), facilitated by its multi-level structure and system of communication between public and private actors at different levels (Börzel & Heard-Lauréote, 2009, p.138; Kohler-Koch, 2002, p.4). Consequently the role of sub-national governments in Europe—and indeed a wider international context—became the focus of much academic interest at this time (for example Goldsmith & Klausen, 1997; Hesse, 1989; Hobbs, 1994; Johns & Keating, 1995; Le Galès & Lequesne, 1998). This led to a focus on the role of 'sub-national mobilization' (Hooghe, 1995; Jeffery, 2000).

While these conceptual developments provided a framework to analyse local government transnational networking, a number of 'real world' contextual factors also played their part in the emergence of this literature and transnational networking itself. Chief among these was the European regional policy which—although in existence since the 1970s—was being reformed extensively between 1988 and 1993 (see Bache, 1998 pp.67–92; McAleavey & Mitchell, 1994). As well as providing extra funding for regions, the reform process provided an opportunity for local government to involve themselves in European policy making (Lawrence, 2000; McAleavey & Mitchell, 1994).

From the 1990s local government started to play an increasing role in economic affairs (Payre, 2010, p.267), with many localities seeking to become competitive areas in order to attract investment (Griffiths, 1995, p.225). The impact of this and the links between economy, society and politics lead Payre (2010, p.260) to argue local authorities were "inevitably pushed towards internationalization".

The adoption of Maastricht and with it the notion of subsidiarity and the establishment of the Committee of the Regions as part of the EU's institutional structure led to further opportunities for local government involvement in Europe (Bogdanor, 1992, pp.5–9; Payre, 2010, p.267). There was a rapid rise in cross-border regions (Perkmann, 2003, p.153). Such regions prompted local authorities to look to international neighbours. EU regional policy helped facilitate transnational networking. The availability of programmes such as Interreg provided the impetus, with transnational co-operation being a condition of eligibility (Perkmann, 2003, p.155). Such co-operation was not only supported by the EU, but other international institutions too (Murphy, 1993, p.111).

Factors within states were also at play. The early 1990s saw a withdrawal of the state which in turn led to reduced resources for local government. This led local authorities to seek

funds from international sources (Payre, 2010, p.267). Additionally, local government in centralized states began to see international activity as a means to counteract centralization (for example Bogdanor, 1992). Indeed, Murphy (1993) argues that transnational networking by local government posed a direct challenge to “the dominance of the state”.

It is in this context that local government transnational networking began to proliferate. Academic literature naturally followed (for example Benington & Harvey, 1994, 1998, 1999; Church & Reid, 1996, 1999; Ercole, Walters & Goldsmith, 1997; Goldsmith, 1993; Lawrence, 2000, McAleavey and Mitchell, 1994; Murphy 1993; Scott, 1989). While literature grew during the 1990s, contemporary research—save for a small number of cases (for example Baldersheim, Haug & Øgård, 2011; Keiner & Kim, 2007; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Payre, 2010; Salskov-Iversen, 2006a; 2006b)—is scarce. This has led Kern and Bulkeley (2009, p.310) to argue that transnational networking by sub-national government “has widely been neglected” by European integration scholars. Indeed, most research in this field appears under the auspices of ‘urban studies’ or ‘spatial planning’, with Payre (2010, p.260) noting that important political questions are often overlooked. With this research gap in mind, this paper moves to investigate the current extent of transnational networking activity by local government in south-east England and examines some of the motivations behind it.

Method

This paper analyses local government transnational networking carried out by the following ‘top-tier’ local authorities in south-east England:

- Kent County Council.
- East Sussex County Council.
- Brighton and Hove City Council.
- West Sussex County Council.
- Hampshire County Council.
- Portsmouth City Council.
- Southampton City Council.
- Isle of Wight Council.

South-east England provides an interesting case study. Its geographical location, particularly

its close proximity to the French border, has provided access to a number of EU funding programmes such as Interreg. This in turn facilitates networking for transnational projects. Local government in this region also faces a number of unique challenges which may move authorities to adopt a more international stance. The region is prosperous with a strong intentional economic outlook, yet there are areas of deep deprivation. The region lacks institutional co-ordination and is geographically divided between urban and rural areas. Local authorities often compete with each other in order to obtain more investment and influence (John, Musson & Tickell, 2002). This analysis can also build on others carried out in this area before (for example Church & Reid, 1996, 1999).

Two main sets of data have been used. Firstly local government committee reports and policy documents relating to transnational networking were gathered unobtrusively from the case councils listed above. Secondly a number semi-structured qualitative interviews were carried out with local government officers, councillors, network secretariat staff and other people who have—or had—an involvement in local government transnational networking. These were conducted over the summer of 2012. These data provide for an insight into the perspectives of those involved in local government transnational networking. This paper follows a preliminary analysis of these data.

Current extent of networking

As noted above, local government transnational networking has, especially since the 1990s, been a key component of local government activity, despite it not being a statutory obligation. Kent County Council, for example, has been actively pursuing international relationships since the late 1980s (Barber, 1997). It covers a variety of activities. These activities generally fall under three broad categories:

- Direct links with local authorities in other countries (sometimes referred to as ‘paradiplomacy’ (see Aldecoa & Keating, 1999))
- Membership to transnational networking organizations.
- Participation in transnational projects with other international partners.

The common feature in each case is that local authorities co-operate with their counterparts in other countries, be it directly or indirectly through an organization or project.

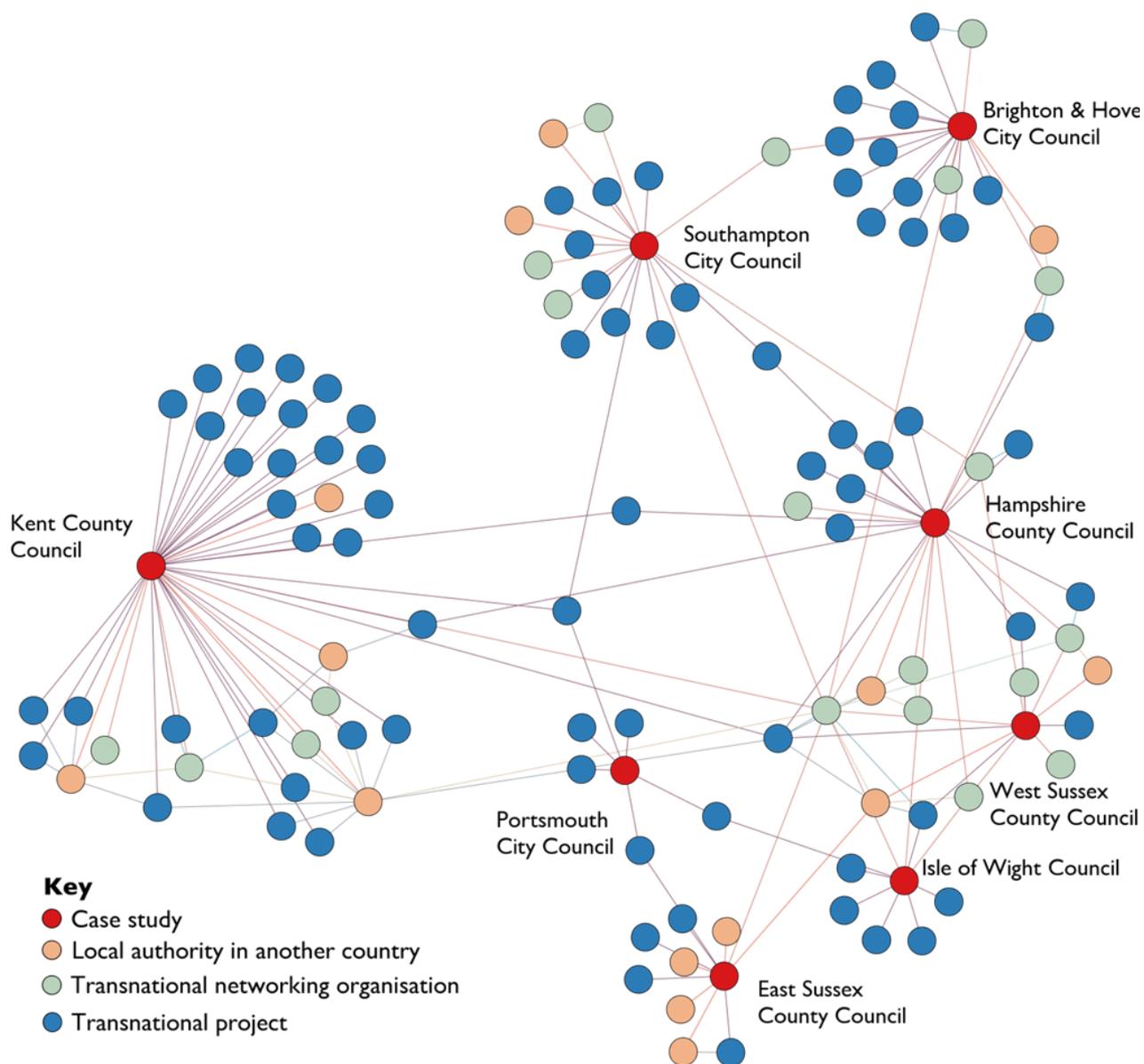


Figure 1: transnational networking by eight local authorities between 2001 and 2011.

Figure 1 visualizes transnational European networking carried out by eight councils in south-east England between 2001 and 2011. Firstly, it shows that local government has been heavily engaged in transnational networking activity over the last ten years. This includes involvement in transnational projects, transnational networking organizations and direct links with local authorities in other countries. Among the relationships are the more obvious cross-border links with French *régions* and *départements*, however links with local authorities further afield are also present, for example between Kent County Council and Bács-Kiskun, Hungary. Many of the networks local government is involved in are based around

transnational projects. While some of these are isolated to the English Channel area, such as the Channel Arc Manche Integrated Strategy (CAMIS), others involve local authorities from across Europe. Membership to networking organizations, such as the Assembly of European Regions or Eurocities, provides links to many other local authorities across Europe who are also members. In many cases such organizations provide a basis for further transnational networking and co-operation through projects.

Figure 1 further illustrates the complexity of this activity, indicating that relationships rarely exist in isolation, but are often part of a bigger picture. In many cases direct links with local authorities abroad are supplemented with participation in several joint projects or membership to common transnational networking organizations. This indicates that forming strategic relationships with European partners can often lead to future co-operation.

Overall, Figure 1 shows that while literature has declined, local government has actively continued its transnational networking activity over the last ten years. Indeed, most interviewees felt transnational networking was a vital tool for achieving overall council strategy. In some cases this was seen as a vital tool and some councils have even adopted European or international strategies to formalize and guide their transnational networking activity (for example Brighton & Hove City Council, 2007; East Sussex County Council, 2000; West Sussex County Council 2002, 2006).

With an overview of the extent of local government transnational networking, this paper now moves to investigate the motives behind it.

Is funding important?

While it is clear local authorities are involved in several networks to pursue varying interests (Church & Reid, 1999, p.653), this rationale is still not fully understood. Much of the existing literature can be criticized for focusing too heavily on the role of local government transnational networking in securing funding and financial benefits for those that participate, overlooking some of the non-pecuniary motives (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p.310). Even studies which focus on areas such as lobbying have a funding focus to them (for example Benington & Harvey, 1998; McAleavey & Mitchell, 1994; Lawrence, 2000). Given the extent of EU funding for transnational activities, this emphasis is to be expected. However, local government transnational networking takes on many other roles that should not be overlooked, especially as much funding has shifted its focus to southern and eastern Europe while networking

continues in the west. Indeed, the few contemporary studies have shown that transnational networking is also important for sharing knowledge, innovation and best practice (for example Payre, 2010; Salskov-Iversen, 2006a, 2006b) and for promoting local identity at a European level (for example Phelps, McNeill & Parsons, 2002).

While this criticism can be levied, it does not discount funding as a motive altogether. Indeed, the role of external funding still plays an important role for many local councils. While many funding schemes exist, both national and international, the Interreg programmes often play a significant role for councils in the south-east, particularly as funding for projects from the national government decreases as a response to economic crisis and austerity measures. This is especially the case for localities with areas of deprivation or in need of regeneration. The funding provided by European programmes here can help to improve local economic conditions by supporting projects to invest in key economic infrastructure, particularly ports and transport links important for local economic growth, or to train local workers to meet the skills requirements of local employers.

Participating in transnational networking to achieve funding is also politically easy to justify. This was noted by interviewees from both administrative and political backgrounds. In some cases achieving funding through transnational networking is seen as a way to claim back money paid to the EU to ensure it is spent in the UK and not other member states. This is perhaps best exemplified through a press release issued by West Sussex County Council (2004) which uses rhetoric around the “fight for a fair share of European funding”. Such a rhetoric is likely to appeal to influential Eurosceptic views in the UK held by politicians and local taxpayers alike.

Many council committee reports seek to justify transnational activity through the inclusion of tables which clearly outline how much in financial terms has been secured as a result (for example figure 2). In this way, participation in transnational networking is presented as a rational decision; the cost of participating is offset against the amount of funding achieved.

**WHERE'S THE MONEY GONE?
EU FUNDING SECURED IN KENT 2007-2013 (at June 2011)**



Introduction:

Organisations in Kent including KCC secured some £100 million in EU funding from "mainstream" Structural Funds programmes in the last EU programming period 2000-06. Successful projects were approved under various programmes including Interreg 3A, Objective 2, Urban Thames Gateway; Leader+, European Social Fund (ESF) and EQUAL.

EU funding is continuing to be sought and secured in Kent under the current EU funding programmes in support of KCC and Kent priorities, including those within 'Bold Steps for Kent' and KCC's Framework for Regeneration 2009-2020. This paper provides details of successful EU projects approved in Kent under the various 2007-13 programmes and includes a 'running total' of EU funding secured.

EU FUNDING INTO KENT 2007-13				
Name of Funding Programme	No. of Projects Approved involving Kent partners	Total Value of Projects (EU + match funding) (0.85 exchange rate)	Total Value of EU Funding Secured for Kent (0.85 exchange rate)	Total Value of EU Funding Secured for KCC (0.85 exchange rate)
Interreg IVA 2 Seas Programme (Annex 1)	24	£62,799,899	£10,185,282	£4,346,343
Interreg IVA Channel Programme (Annex 2)	13	£10,144,672	£2,445,795	£778,848
Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme (Annex 3)	2	£7,192,101	£641,340	£136,015
Interreg IVB North West Europe Programme (Annex 4)	1	£7,152,627	£265,445	
Interreg IVC Programme (Annex 5)	2	£2,077,7510	£194,184	£194,184
South East ERDF Competitiveness Programme (Annex 6)	2	£1,244,976	£622,488	£373,401
Sub Total			£14,354,534	
European Social Fund	(Data not readily available from Co-financing)	£9,828,375 (Estimate for Kent as Data only available at Kent &	£9,828,375 (Estimate for Kent as data only available at Kent &	

Figure 2: example of funding results displayed in a committee report (Kent County Council, 2011)

However, as noted above, there are a number of reasons why funding should not be seen as the sole motivation for participation in transnational networking. Most funding schemes require match funding, and finding this extra resource can be extremely difficult for councils, themselves often poorly funded, to find and commit. This has been exacerbated in light of the recent economic climate and many councils noted that sources for match funding have all but dried up.

All interviewees, including those representing funding programmes, raised the issue of the administrative burden incurred when applying for European funding. Investing time and effort into building a transnational partnership for a project comes with a large degree of risk as—assuming match funding can be found in the first place—there are no guarantees that a project proposal will be successful. Many interviewees felt that as a result of the risks involved and the large administrative burden there was too much effort involved for too little gain, and in many cases it was a lot easier to apply to other national funding schemes which paid more but did not have the heavy bureaucratic application process, the administratively demanding monitoring processes nor any of the risks involved in working with international partners. For these reasons many councils said they were put off from applying for European funding schemes and would only do so if an opportunity arose that clearly aligned with council priorities, match funding was already secured and working with an international partner where existing links were already in place could be guaranteed. As a result of these factors,

studies which place a large emphasis on funding arguably exaggerate its importance to local authorities.

Another reason for not focusing on the funding motive is, as illustrated in figure 1, that local authorities are often part of networks where there are no apparent financial benefits. Networking organizations such as the Assembly of European Regions, the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, Eurocities or POLIS do not fund projects—although some support projects as dissemination partners. Indeed participation in these networks is likely to incur a net financial cost in terms of membership fees and traveling to meetings as opposed to any gain. It is clear, therefore, that local authorities have other motives in participating in transnational networking. Indeed many interviewees referred to the “added value” benefits, which were often non-financial in nature, which were gained through transnational networking. Some of these are discussed in more detail below.

Lobbying

As noted above, transnational networking by local government to lobby European institutions has already been noted (for example Benington & Harvey, 1994, pp.946–947; Hooghe & Marks, 1996; McAleavey & Mitchell, 1994; Sørensen, 1998), but again the focus has been on achieving funding. Yet there is a much wider scope in terms of policy areas for local government to lobby on. Local authorities estimate between 70 per cent and 80 per cent of the legislation they are required to implement originates in Europe and as the EU takes on more and more competencies, the opportunities for lobbying increase. Indeed many networks have emerged as a result of new EU competency in certain policy areas, such as the emergence of the NECSTouR network—a network of regions for competitive and sustainable tourism—following the inclusion of tourism in the Lisbon treaty. Recent rhetoric from the EU on ‘urban policy’ and the role of cities and regions in promoting economic growth have also opened opportunities for the local level to become involved in European policy making (Payre, 2010, pp.267–268). The impact of EU policy and the ability for it to be shaped has not been lost on local government:

Policies agreed internationally and at the European level have a direct impact on local government and the communities that they serve. Increasingly, local authorities are required to implement EU legislation and work with EU policies

across a wide range of service areas: according to the LGA approximately 70% of EU legislation and policy is implemented by local authorities. (Brighton & Hove City Council, 2007)

In many cases lobbying through transnational networks is supplemented with a direct presence in Brussels, for example through regional representations (see Rowe, 2011). Kent County Council has its own Brussels office while other local authorities in the south-east collaborate as part of Southern England Local Partners, which also has a Brussels office.

Lobbying through networks is generally more successful than individual actors because the Commission prefers to deal with groups who can claim to be representative of a wider body of actors. In other words the Commission does not want to be seen to listen to—and thereby favour—single actors (McAleavey & Mitchell, 1994, p.238). Local authorities recognize this, and membership to larger transnational networks such as the Assembly of European Regions or the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions is seen as advantageous because they give their members an element of credibility when lobbying collectively, which in turn increases the chances of success. For example, one report from the Isle of Wight Council (2002) noted:

The [Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions] is seen as an organisation which has credibility in Brussels, both through its geographic commissions and as an umbrella body, and is therefore an effective lobbying mechanism. There is an ongoing commitment to influence the European institutions on matters of common interest, from which activities the Isle of Wight can continue to benefit.

Local authorities are also at a fundamental disadvantage in the EU lobbying arena, whereby they have to compete with a wide range of other actors, often with greater resources at their disposal (McAleavey & Mitchell, 1994, p.238). Again this is readily acknowledged by local government, as noted by West Sussex County Council (2006):

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

Attached to the notion of credibility is that of expertise. Transnational networks which operate around thematic policy areas can often become regarded as collective experts and many are invited to sit on Commission working groups. This direct link to the policy making process and the institutions involved is another attraction to participation in transnational networking for local government. In some cases it can promote a local authority's own individual expertise, and thus credibility, at a European level. For example the Isle of Wight council became regarded as a European leader in coastal protection, in part through its involvement in the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions and participation in several high profile EU funded projects. Indeed, this status has afforded the council special access to European policy making arenas normally reserved for nation states:

since the start of the network, DG ENV has asked for local and regional authority representatives to help develop new policies and legislation on 9 issues including soil protection, biodiversity and coastal erosion. Usually such working groups are restricted to representatives of national government. (Isle of Wight Council, 2003)

Knowledge sharing

Local authorities also use transnational networking for the sharing and accessing of knowledge, experience and best practice. This is something which is only beginning to be acknowledged in studies (for example Keiner & Kim, 2007; Payre, 2010; Salskov-Iversen, 2006a, 2006b). Councils readily acknowledge the potential to learn from international colleagues, for example as noted by Hampshire County Council (2005):

The County Council's active involvement [in transnational networking] has led to an enormous potential for sharing expertise, knowledge and experience, which has influenced the development of policy and practice on issues of priority for the Council.

The key element here is that this activity "has influenced the development of policy and practice". That is to say lessons and experiences learnt through transnational networking are applied to local service delivery. In this way transnational networking acts as a tool for 'policy

learning', something which, Rose (2005) argues, can be greatly enhanced when carried out across national borders. Indeed, many interviewees noted there was an advantage to moving beyond their 'comfort zone' of a national policy context and examining how something operated in another country; for many this highlighted innovative policy solutions in a number of areas which would not have been considered had they been learning from other authorities in the UK. The need to use best practice, innovate and implement imaginative policy solutions was also emphasized by many interviewees, noting that in the context of public finance pressures and reduced central government grants, delivering services as efficiently and effectively as possible was a key council priority.

Specific networking organizations are seen to provide a forum for this knowledge exchange. Southampton City Council (2005), for example:

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

Indeed Brighton and Hove City Council (2008) make it clear that their involvement in the Eurocities network "will provide Brighton & Hove with access to more best practice examples around Europe" and that it "will give opportunities for staff and councillors to attend forums be involved in policy development and exchange of ideas". Furthermore, Southampton City Council (2007) notes that it participates in the same network "in order to benchmark City Council services, learn from good practice and share experience to improve service delivery".

This was further backed up by interviews with staff from network secretariats. Many networks' primary purpose is to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experience and best practices. Several networks operate 'working groups' on specific themes or policy areas where participants can exchange information. Council staff noted that participation in such working groups was very useful and was not just limited to the council's European officer; often staff from across departments and policy areas and councillors with a range of portfolios would take part in working groups which reflected their specific policy area.

The inclusion of the 'best practice' motive in many local government committee reports and its high profile given by many interviewees indicates this activity is valued politically. Indeed Kent County Council's (2008, 2009, 2010) regular update reports to its policy scrutiny

committee outlines several best practice examples—across several policy areas—which have been highlighted through its transnational activity and have had a positive impact on how the council delivers its services.

Transnational networks are used to share knowledge and best practice both inwardly and outwardly; councils both seek out best practice from colleagues abroad and promote their own examples of best practice. This exchange of knowledge taking place horizontally through transnational networking can be considered a form of “upload Europeanization”, where Europeanization is achieved not through the top-down processes of reacting to European policy adopting European legislation—so-called “download Europeanization”—but by a bottom-up process where local authorities contribute to a collective body of expertise shared across Europe (Tadesco, 2010).

Promoting local identities

The role of transnational networking in promoting local identity—in other words promoting a local brand—has been acknowledged by Phelps *et al.* (2002). This can work in two ways. On the one hand transnational networking serves to promote localities within national borders as ‘international’ or ‘European’ cities or areas. On the other hand it serves to promote local areas at a European level (Phelps, *et al.*, 2002).

The role of identity promotion is important for councils in south-east England as noted by several interviewees. This is mainly the case for the unitary authorities of Southampton and Brighton and Hove—which represent urban areas—and Kent County Council. For example, Southampton City Council (2007) note that one of the main motivations to engage in transnational networks is “to promote Southampton’s profile and priorities internationally”. Several transnational networks themselves serve to raise the profile of their participants. Eurocities, for example, is “concerned to foster its self identification as a network of ‘major’ or ‘important’ cities” (Griffiths, 1995, pp.215–216). Local authorities are aware of this. Indeed Brighton and Hove City Council (2008) note that “membership of EUROCITIES will raise Brighton & Hove’s profile internationally”.

Many interviewees noted that seeking an international profile was a means to another end, usually to secure inward investment and promote local economic growth. For example, referring to their involvement in the Arc Manche network, Brighton and Hove City Council (2005) note that:

Such partnership working could help promote the profile of Brighton and Hove at the international level, helping to maximise the economic benefits by encouraging tourism and inward investment.

Southampton City Council's (2007) profile raising activity also has several connected benefits:

To ensure Southampton's reputation as a leading, innovative, international port city is widely recognised and brings economic benefits

- Use international links to communicate Southampton's strengths and opportunities to an international audience
- Prioritise projects and linkages with other port cities
- Seek to promote Southampton's reputation through European networks and partnerships, particularly Eurocities
- Use the South East England Brussels Office to promote Southampton in Europe
- Work with UKTI & SEEDA to maximise inward investment
- Support the Titanic Cities network leading up to 2012

In addition to these 'practical' benefits, many interviewees noted that an increased profile assisted both officer and political careers; an increased identity means increased visibility and recognition beyond the local area.

Beyond south-east England, the promotion of identity through transnational networking has been noted elsewhere, for example by Payre (2010) analysing Lyon's involvement in the Eurocities network or Salskov-Iversen's (2006a) analysis of transnational networking by Danish local government.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that local authorities in south-east England are engaged in a number of transnational networking activities. It has challenged traditional analyses of this activity which have placed emphasis on its role in achieving funding for participants. Instead three other motivations have been highlighted: lobbying, sharing of best practice and expertise and

promoting local identities. In many of these 'added value' motivations the financial benefits not often readily evident, indicating that for the local authorities concerned there is more than a rational motivation informed by a cost-benefit analysis. Activities concerned with securing local interests through lobbying, seeking out European best practice, sharing and contributing to European knowledge and promoting local identities point to local authorities driven by more political factors.

By moving beyond the traditional funding motivations a fuller picture of this activity can be gained. This preliminary analysis has only shed light on the transnational activity of eight councils in south-east England, however it highlights the need for researchers to examine the full range of motivations involved in this activity.

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