

# **UACES 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference**

**Leeds, 2-4 September 2013**

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# **"Thinking European": Self-Identity and Regional Mobilisation in Vienna**

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Paper presented to UACES 43rd Annual Conference, Leeds, 2-4 September 2013

**DRAFT – PLEASE DO NOT CITE**

## **Abstract**

The paper takes a bottom-up approach to the role of sub-national authorities (SNAs) in the European Union by asking the question of why and how SNAs involve themselves in EU policy-making. This is undertaken via an examination of the Vienna city administration city-region's involvement in the highly under-researched trans-European networks – transport (TENT) policy area. In taking such an approach, the paper develops a new institutional understanding of multi-level governance (MLG). By applying the analytical tools of new institutionalism to MLG, the paper proposes a framework for understanding MLG as existing in three distinct types, varying in accordance to its rational choice, historical and sociological institutionalist guises. The institutional types of MLG are clearly identifiable in the experiences of Vienna, presenting different perspectives on the emergence of an MLG form of policy-making in Austria. In particular, a sociological institutionalist approach to MLG emphasises SNAs as proactive political players, stressing their ability to actively involve themselves in the EU policy-making process via the mobilisation of their own political and economic resources. Such an outcome is seen to emerge as a result of SNA perceptions of the importance of the EU. Specifically, the post-Cold war transformation in Vienna's geopolitical environment has resulted in the city administration perceiving itself as a distinct political actor with its own interests at the centre of the 'new Europe'. As such, the paper argues that a European self-identity built in to the administrative culture of a SNA is crucial in facilitating the consistent and dynamic engagement with the EU level required in order to achieve policy influence.

## **Introduction**

The European integration process has radically altered the system and nature of governing in Europe. Particularly since the 'relaunch' of the European project with the 1986 Single European Act, the governing structures of the European Union (EU) have been subject to fundamental change. Whilst state-centric analysis continues to make its voice heard, the EU has also been characterised in a variety of other ways, such as an emerging federal system, a multi-level system of governance and a postmodern international political form (Ruggie, 1998: 173). Nowhere has this

change been witnessed more than at the sub-national level. The EU has experienced a new intensity in the work and role of sub-national authorities (SNAs). No longer are sub-national actors confined to operating within the framework of the nation-state, rather they actively engage in European policy-making via both intra-state and extra-state means. Regional and local authorities have come to play an important role in the governance structure of the EU, facilitating the debate concerning the potential for a future 'Europe of the Regions'. Whilst this debate was at its most lively in the 1990s, its significance certainly persists today as SNAs continue to develop and adapt their EU engagement (Moore, 2008: 535). In these circumstances, any adequate understanding of European governance insists upon an examination of the role of the sub-national level of government.

The purpose of this paper is to critically examine the reasons for why and how SNAs involve themselves in EU policy-making. This is undertaken via an examination of the Vienna city administration city-region's involvement in the highly under-researched trans-European networks – transport (TEN-T) policy area. In order to highlight trends in Vienna's behaviour, the paper develops a new institutional understanding of multi-level governance (MLG). As such, the first section provides a detailed definition of MLG, emphasising its non-hierarchical, interconnected and multi-actor nature. Section two highlights the ability of MLG to encapsulate the reconfiguration of policy-making space as the key strength of MLG in its application to the EU. This paper argues that MLG captures the institution-dependent nature of polycentric governing in the EU and as such is itself underpinned by an institutional focus. In developing this argument, section three of this paper moves on to apply the analytical tools of new institutionalism to MLG. Section four uses a new institutionalist understanding of MLG in order to analyse the results of empirical research undertaken on the experience of the Vienna city-region political administration within the EU's primary transport infrastructure policy - trans-European transport networks (TEN-T).

In doing so, it is shown that a sociological institutionalist approach to MLG in particular emphasises SNAs as proactive political players, stressing their ability to actively involve themselves in the EU policy-making process via the mobilisation of their own political and economic resources. Such an outcome is seen to emerge as a result of SNA perceptions of the importance of the EU. Specifically, the post-Cold war transformation in Vienna's geopolitical environment has resulted in the city administration perceiving itself as a distinct political actor with its own interests at the centre of the 'new Europe'. As such, the paper argues that a European self-identity built in to the administrative culture of a SNA is crucial in facilitating the consistent and dynamic engagement with the EU level required in order to achieve policy influence.

In taking this approach, the paper attempts to take further steps in responding to the charge that MLG literature has paid insufficient attention to the role of institutions. Peters and Pierre argue that most interpretations of MLG provide a misleading image of governing in which institutions are largely irrelevant having been replaced by a focus on context, processes and bargaining (Peters and Pierre, 2004: 75-76). Moreover, Checkel states that the little institutional analysis on offer is firmly based on rational choice grounds, that is, institutions as constraints (Checkel, 2001: 23). By taking a new institutionalist approach to MLG this paper places institutions at the

centre of analysing the process of the dispersal of authority away from the central state.

### **i) What is Multi-Level Governance?**

MLG can be seen as a response to the state-centric, intergovernmentalist theory of the EU which dominated EU studies throughout the so-called 'eurosclerosis' period following the 1966 'Luxembourg Compromise'. MLG challenges the view of the state as being the singularly important and dominating actor within the EU policy-making process. Thus, to a large extent, MLG is essentially a challenge to an understanding of the changing nature and role of the state<sup>1</sup>.

At the heart of the MLG framework is the claim that in an increasing number of policy areas no one actor has complete competence. Marks et al. state that 'the point of departure for the multi-level governance approach is the existence of overlapping competencies among multiple levels of government' (Marks et al, 1998: 41). Decision-making competencies are therefore seen as being shared amongst a variety of actors located at different territorial levels rather than monopolised by national governments (Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 3). Of all actors, and perhaps unsurprisingly, having emerged out of particular research on the EU's Regional Policy, MLG places a special emphasis on the mobilisation of sub-national authorities (SNAs) and their increasing significance within the EU policy-making process (see Marks, 1993; Hooghe, 1996). Furthermore, MLG emphasises the involvement of private actors as well as public authorities (often in public-private networks) within governance mechanisms. This is not to say that states are no longer authoritative actors, rather that states no longer monopolise the European policy process. As Marks et al. continue, 'member state executives, while powerful, are only one set among a variety of actors in the European polity' (Marks et al, 1998: 41).

Within this multi-actor framework, MLG rejects the notion that political arenas are nested. Even though 'national arenas remain important arenas for the formation of national government preferences' (Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 4), SNAs are seen as being able to pursue their interests within the European and global sphere. Thus, the state is not viewed as the exclusive channel through which domestic political actors funnel their interests (Marks et al, 1998: 41). Rather, arenas are interconnected with direct and indirect networks existing between sub-national and supranational levels, bypassing the state. As such, MLG is non-hierarchical whereby the traditional hierarchical command and control role of the state has been relaxed. This has been accompanied by a shift in the nature of exchange away from instruction towards dialogue, negotiation and bargaining (Peter and Pierre, 2001: 133). Peters and Pierre view these transformations as being evidence of institutional mutual dependency (Peters and Pierre, 2004: 83) and a change in the zero-sum nature of intergovernmental relations (Peters and Pierre, 2001: 133). Rather than seeing one institution's gain as another's loss, MLG's emphasis on shared, non-hierarchical

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<sup>1</sup>. This is explicitly acknowledged in the article by Marks et al entitled, 'European Integration from the 1980s: State-Centric v. Multi-Level Governance', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol.34, No.3 (1996).

competencies allows for recognition of the positive-sum, problem-solving capacity of contemporary governance.

The complexity that MLG attempts to depict (Rosamond, 2000: 111) has a concern for the mechanisms of process (Peters and Pierre, 2004: 84). In particular, MLG stresses the importance of analysing the 'day-to-day' political processes which occur in the 'interstitial cracks of the EU', in Commission and Parliamentary committees, advisory groups, functional councils of Ministers and so on (Jordan, 2001: 200). In this way, MLG attempts to shift analytical focus away from the grand, history-making events that so preoccupy intergovernmentalist theory towards the sub-systemic level (Peterson, 1995: 69-93) of political activity. Simultaneously, uniformity as an overriding feature of governing is rejected in favour of an emphasis on the heterogeneity of actor involvement in line with the nature of the policy problem. Diversity in actor engagement ensures that 'the structure of political control is variable, not constant, across policy areas' (Marks et al, 1998: 41). The importance of different political actors varies in accordance with the features of the particular policy problem and the resources each actor possesses. Bache and Flinders view the distinction between 'high' and 'low' political issues, political processes at the implementation and post-decisional stage, and unintended consequences arising from MLG as being of particular significance in determining the nature of institutional control (Bache and Flinders, 2004a: 199-200).

## **ii) Multi-Level Governance and the European Union**

MLG arrived as part of a 'new wave' of thinking about how to approach the study of the EU. Theories of governance attempted to replace the traditional 'supranational versus state' debate concerning the European integration process with an approach which accepted the EU as an existing political system whose constituent parts required examination. As Jordan notes, 'the new Europeanists...arrived armed with the tools to investigate the various *parts* rather than the whole of the EU' (Jordan, 2001: 196). However, making a distinction between analysing the EU either as a process of integration or as a political system does not seem to be as clear-cut as suggested. Surely a reciprocal relationship exists between both forces. In order to fully understand the integration process, analysts must appreciate the variety of mechanisms and procedures at play in the policy-making process which itself guides, promotes and hinders the process of European integration. At the same time, the integration process creates the conditions within which policy-making structures are established and patterns of decision-making formed.

The strength of MLG lies in its ability to 'widen the conceptual lens' (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger, 2006: 38) within political science away from an approach based at either the domestic or international level towards one which is able to encapsulate the interaction and importance of all governmental levels within contemporary forms of governance. MLG is said to stimulate 'a reappraisal of the traditional dichotomy between 'domestic' and 'international' policy' (Bache and Flinders, 2004c: 94). A 'Euromestic' framework allows for an appreciation of complex institutional interdependence within the EU, in which problem-solving at the EU level not only depends on domestically located actors for implementation but also significantly impacts upon relative institutional roles and capacities within the domestic sphere.

Simultaneously, the EU policy process is itself influenced by the involvement of domestic actors and their interaction with supranational institutions.

As such, what springs from MLG is a concern for the reconfiguration of policy-making space. Rather than the traditional process of interests and preferences being agreed within nested political arenas and then uploaded to the immediately superior level, where the process is repeated, MLG throws light on a single policy-making space in an increasing number of policy areas (see Scharpf, 1997) in which direct channels of communication and influence exist between all actors within a complex web of interaction. Thus, the assumed institutional trade-off within a 'zero-sum' political game is replaced by an emphasis on the necessity for shared capacities in order to ensure effective problem-solving. This is not to say that the state no longer attempts to continue its role as gatekeeper for domestic interests and has renounced taking advantage of its long held relative power position, rather that it does so in a radically transformed political environment in which it no longer has monopolistic control over the levers of power.

Within this rearranged policy-making space, MLG is particularly useful in incorporating the variety of political actors involved in the EU policy process within its theoretical framework. As opposed to the 'two-level game' scenario proposed by intergovernmentalism or the narrow focus on supranational institutions within neofunctionalism, and whilst research on MLG has been accused of focusing on sub-national authorities rather than other sub-national actors (Jordan, 2001: 201), MLG allows recognition of the significant role played by domestic and international interest groups, business associations, trade unions, social movements and sub-national authorities (SNAs) within the EU's polycentric structure.

The increasingly important role played by regional government in EU decision-making is at the forefront of MLG's articulation of European governance. Sub-national mobilisation via the establishment of regional offices, inter-regional associations, the Committee of the Regions and the use of Article 146 of the Treaty on European Union (allowing sub-national ministerial access to the Council of Ministers) have been exploited to ensure the interests of regional government are placed on the policy table. Consequently, SNAs have become engaged in policy networks acting alongside institutions at all levels within the EU's governance structure. The state has been forced to accept regional authorities as actors in their own right with specific policy interests and goals. To a large extent, this process has been encouraged by the supranational level as a result of the Commission's need for specialist information from the regional level and the resultant resource-interdependent relationship that has come to be established between supranational and sub-national actors.

The key feature which underlines this reconfiguration of policy-making space is the institution-dependent nature of the MLG form of policy-making in the EU. Institutions are critical to MLG in that it is they who define and coordinate interaction between different levels of government (Peters and Pierre, 2004: 79). MLG does not simply concern the involvement of different levels of government in policy-making. It emphasises the continuous, non-hierarchical and interconnected relationships between these levels of government in the process of policy-making. It is only institutions that can provide a system for these relationships to exist (Peters and Pierre, 2004: 80). The institutions of the EU act as 'honey pot sites' around which the

variety of interested actors cluster. In doing so, institutions provide an arena of interaction in which non-hierarchical and interconnected relationships can form. However, within this arena, the EU's institutions do not simply act as neutral, mediating forces but as political players in their own right with their own interests and goals.

Within this framework of multi-actor interaction, institutions act as stabilising forces. Whilst the involvement of actors in the process of governing in the EU is not uniform, the EU remains a formal decision-making system in which there exists a legally enshrined institutional path through which policy-making progresses. Policy-making in the EU does not occur on an ad hoc basis but is constrained by the established institutional route. As such, institutions structure policy-making and provide stability in a complex political environment.

In essence, the institutions of the EU facilitate the development of informal inter-actor policy relationships which are the focus of MLG. The processes which so mark MLG occur within the fissures of formal institutions, with the nature of informal policy networks being determined by the access points offered by formal institutions (Pollack, 1996: 453). In this way, MLG can be seen as an attempt to manage the multitude of policy-making arrangements necessary to confront complex social, political and economic issues through the means of institutionalisation.

The outline provided above of institutions as being central to a MLG form of policy-making still leaves various questions to be answered, such as what precisely is meant by institutions and through what processes and mechanisms do institutions come to determine MLG. A response to these questions is guided by the literature on new institutionalism and it is to this that the paper now turns in order to develop the idea of MLG as institution-dependent.

### **iii) New Institutionalism and Multi-level Governance**

New institutionalism approaches the study of politics from the view that "institutions matter" because they shape political strategies and exert an independent or intervening influence on political outcomes (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992: 7). Institutions are seen as the key variable in any analysis of policy-making in that they structure the input of social, economic and political forces and thus influence policy results (Bulmer, 1998: 369). Hence, new institutionalism focuses attention on the mediating role of the institutional context in which political processes occur (Hay, 2002: 11). In this sense, new institutionalism brings the 'political' character of politics back in to the frame as opposed to an analysis solely highlighting interaction amongst rational actors (Kerremans, 1996: 218). From the outset an institution-focused approach can be seen as complementing MLG by presenting a scenario of restricted actor influence in policy-making. New institutionalism's view of political actors as being constrained by the institutional framework within which they operate immediately correlates itself with an understanding of MLG as essentially a challenge

to the notion of EU policy-making as being a process controlled by the member states<sup>2</sup>.

However, new institutionalism should not be seen as a coherent, unified theoretical perspective but rather as consisting of differing variants. Whilst agreeing that institutions are important, strands of new institutionalism contain diverse views over the processes and mechanisms through which institutions impact upon political outcomes. In line with the classification of Hall and Taylor, this section will utilise three new institutionalisms: rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism and sociological institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 936-957). The remainder of the paper will analyse each variant of new institutionalism in turn, providing an overview of their main theoretical claims before applying them to MLG.

### Rational Choice Institutionalism

Rational choice institutionalism (RCI) approaches the study of political outcomes with a certain set of assumptions concerning actor behaviour and preference formation. Actors are presumed to be endowed with a fixed and consistent set of preferences that are exogenous to the political system (March and Olsen, 1996: 250). In order to achieve these given preferences actors behave in an entirely instrumental and strategic manner (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 944-945). Thus, institutions are established (and survive) because they ensure the desired gains from cooperation that the rationally acting designers and participating actors value (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 945). Hence, RCI employs a functionalist logic to institutional choice in which institutional creation and design is a consequence of rationally anticipated effects (Pollack, 1996: 433).

The definition of what constitutes an institution goes beyond 'hard' formal organisations to also include the broad range of informal rules and procedures that define interests and structure conduct (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992: 2). Hall and Taylor define institutions as being 'the formal and informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy', be it a 'constitutional order or the standard operating procedures of a bureaucracy [or] the conventions governing trade union behaviour or bank-firm relations' (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 938).

Within the RCI framework the role of institutions is confined to structuring the strategic interactions amongst rational actors. According to RCI, institutions provide a strategic context in which political exchange takes place, influencing outcomes by limiting the range of policy choices available and reducing uncertainty in actor behaviour (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992: 7; Hall and Taylor, 1996: 945). Thus, institutions are viewed as arenas in which self-interested actors are constrained and encouraged to embrace new approaches in order to realise their goals. As Checkel summarises, 'in this thin conception, institutions are a structure that actors run into, go

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<sup>2</sup>. In particular, see P. Pierson, 'The Path To European Integration: A Historical Institutional Analysis', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol.29, No.2 (1996) pp.123-163 which explicitly presents itself as a response to intergovernmentalist analysis of the EU.



'ouch' and then recalculate how, in the presence of the structure, to achieve their interests; they are an intervening variable' (Checkel, 2001: 20).

At first glance, the RCI approach seems to be a natural bedfellow to an intergovernmental account of institutional creation within the EU. Intergovernmentalism views the creation of institutions in terms of the functional benefits they provide to member states in overcoming collective action problems. As Moravcsik states, 'the unique institutional structure of the EC is acceptable to national governments only insofar as it strengthens, rather than weakens, their control over domestic affairs' (Moravcsik, 1993: 507). Institutional creation is seen as an explicit and purposeful choice by rational, self-interest maximising actors.

However, this does not necessarily contradict MLG, for Marks also takes a member state actor-centred approach to the emergence of MLG in the EU (Marks, 2001: 20-38; Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 69-80). Hooghe and Marks accept the significant role of government leaders in national states in the emergence of MLG as they remain decisive actors in determining how authority is organised in Europe (Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 77). In explaining the reasons for the development of MLG, Marks begins with the question of 'why would *those in positions of authority within nation states* agree to shift decision-making from central institutions to sub-national or supranational institutions?' (Marks, 2001: 23 [italics added]). Thus, there is an overlap between the two theoretical approaches in that they agree national governments are the initial driving force behind the establishment of new policy-making forms. At one point Marks explicitly states that his 'point of departure here is to allow for the possibility that those in government actually wish to shift competencies away from central states' (Marks, 2001: 36, footnote 4).

At its core, liberal democracy is seen as containing a distinctive characteristic in that maintaining authoritative leadership does not necessarily demand the centralising of authority. Thus, political leaders may be willing to shift authority away from the central state in order to increase their bargaining leverage in international or domestic negotiations or to relieve themselves from the burden of responsibility for unpopular policy decisions (Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 71-74). Therefore, viewing MLG through the 'conceptual lens' (Allison, 1971) of RCI brings to the fore a vision of polycentric governance emerging as a result of choices explicitly made by national political leaders.

An RCI account of MLG also necessitates a focus on the notion of MLG as being a functionally beneficial form of policy-making. Marks hypothesises that one circumstance in which competencies may be shifted by member states is that the reallocation of authority is viewed as having 'politically salient pareto beneficial consequences' such as 'reduc[ing] transaction costs or increas[ing] the efficiency of policy provision' (Marks, 2001: 28). Marks and Hooghe view MLG as a normatively superior system of policy-making to a state based approach in that it 'is the optimal way of allocating competencies in response to the trade-off between the benefits of scale and the costs of heterogeneity' (Marks and Hooghe, 2000: 796). Kohler-Koch, in her analysis of EU governance, sees some of these forces at work in the progressive uploading of policy areas to the Community. She asserts that,

This was not just because of the persuasive capacity of the Commission...or the pro-integration rulings of the European Court of Justice. Instead, it was the member states themselves that considered joint problem-solving to be more attractive than preserving their national autonomy. As a consequence, governments may accept a further transfer of authority to the Community to increase, at least indirectly, their problem-solving capacity. Shifting policy problems from the national to the European agenda may as well have been motivated by avoiding public pressure or giving in to rent-seeking strategies of private actors (Kohler-Koch, 1996: 362-363).

Thus, MLG can be seen as emerging not only as a result of the explicit choices of national leaders but, further, as a result of rational choices which explicitly had the creation of a joint problem-solving form of policy-making in mind. MLG is purposely established by national political leaders in response to the need to incorporate supranational and sub-national actors in the process of effectively solving complex socio-economic issues.

Much of the early work in the RCI field concerned the impact of institutional procedures within the US Congress on ruling certain policy alternatives 'in' and others 'out'. Congressional committees were seen as being able to influence policy outcomes via use of their agenda-setting power (Pollack, 1996: 430-431). This analysis is equally applicable to MLG's conception of the EU as a result of its emphasis on the importance of supranational institutions, particularly the Commission. The Commission formally enjoys the right of initiative within EC 'pillar 1' legislation and therefore is in a position to set the Community agenda by deciding which issues make it on to the policy table. Beyond this, the Commission also enjoys substantial informal agenda-setting power through its ability to identify policy problems, sell policy proposals and broker compromises among the member states (Pollack, 1996: 449). In this way, the procedures of Community policy-making can be seen to provide the Commission with a 'nondecision-making' (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963: 634) influence, whereby it is able to utilise its privileged position in order to ensure consideration of only those issues which do not undermine its interests.

### Historical Institutionalism

Historical institutionalism (HI) sets out from an approach which shares certain features of RCI. In general, both agree on the broad definition of formal and informal institutions as being of significance (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992: 28-29), whilst the RCI view of institutions as being arenas in which strategies are defined and interests pursued is also a key premise of HI (Ibid: 7). However, HI diverges significantly on the matter of preference formation. As opposed to a view of institutions as essentially modifying the strategies actors adopt to secure rationally pre-formed preferences, HI views institutions as influencing the very formation of goals.

By shaping not just actors' strategies (as in rational choice), but their goals as well, and by mediating their relations of cooperation and conflict, institutions structure political situations and leave their own imprint on political outcomes (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992: 9).

This view of preference formation builds on Lindblom's earlier view of the malleability of political preferences whereby goals are moulded by participation in a policy-making process. Lindblom's 'disjointed incrementalism' viewed involvement in a policy system as an educating force in which actors learn how to formulate policy positions, learn what policy positions are feasible and learn how to tailor policy positions in order to increase their chances of success (Lindblom, 1968: 102). In this sense, preferences are endogenous to the political system, formed through processes of interaction with other actors and the formal and informal institutions themselves. The perception of rational action results from the subjective evaluation of policy alternatives and consequences within a given institutional context (March and Olsen, 1996: 250). Thus, inherent within the HI account is a focus on the reciprocal relationship between the policy-making system and actor preferences in which the system affects the very preferences to which it also responds (Lindblom, 1968: 101).

HI also questions the RCI approach over its functional understanding of institutional creation for it is incapable of explaining the existence of inefficient institutions (Pollack, 1996: 434). What emerges from this critique is an emphasis on unintended consequences and path dependence as fundamental features of institutional analysis. HI sees a 'thickening' of institutions over time. For Pierson (1996: 129-136), institutions are originally established in line with the RCI conception; as a result of the presumed gains they will contribute to actors' desired goals. However, gaps in agent control occur over time leading to unanticipated consequences as a result of short termism and the complexities of poorly understood social processes. Thus, political outcomes are 'path dependent' whereby institutions take on a dynamic of their own, constraining policy choices by locking in certain policy paths which do not necessarily coincide with actors' preferences. In this way, institutions can become difficult to reform. Rather than shifting in accordance with changing preferences, institutions are 'sticky', reflecting past choices as opposed to current social and economic conditions (Pollack, 1996: 438). HI therefore problematises the controlling power of actors over institutions and the very rationality of institutions assumed by RCI, preferring to emphasise the independent nature that institutions adopt over time resulting from early institutional choices.

The third dominant feature of HI concerns the role of power, particularly relative power, both in terms of institutional creation and distribution. Whilst RCI can be criticised for ignoring relative power relations by painting a picture of voluntary quasi-contractual agreement (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 952), HI not only views institutions as structuring power relations between actors, but more importantly, as distributing power unevenly between those actors. The institutional organisation of policy-making is seen as providing certain actors disproportionate access to decision-making, leading to the creation of winners and losers in policy outcomes (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 941). According to Thelen and Steinmo, this mobilisation of bias is well-understood by political actors which creates the accompanying necessity to analyse the role of relative power in institutional creation (Thelen and Steinmo, 1992: 9-10).

The application of a HI analytical framework to MLG paints a picture of the emergence of MLG over time as a result of the EU's structural organisation, procedures and norms. Initial member state choices concerning institutional design

and policies lead to a dispersal of authority to supranational and sub-national arenas not initially envisaged. MLG emerges through a process of path dependency in which initial policy choices structure and restrict subsequent developments. As Hooghe and Marks state, 'multi-level governance, like state building, is largely a by-product. It is the outcome of political pressures that, in most cases, do not have multi-level governance as their objective' (Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 75).

Autonomous supranational institution action is a case in point. Member states seem to be in a 'catch 22' situation when it comes to the creation of supranational agents. Principal-agent literature guides our understanding of this dilemma. In order to ensure the desired gains from cooperation are fulfilled, principals (such as the member states) create new institutions (such as the Commission) to carry out certain functions. However, the necessity for effective decision-making and enforcement requires the supranational agent to be endowed with sufficient resources and authority to undertake its tasks. Thus, the agent is provided with the ability to pursue its own preferences which may not coincide with those of the principals (Pierson, 1996: 132). As Moe argues, this is a well-observed process

A new public agency is literally a new actor on the political scene. It has its own interests, which may diverge from those of its creators, and it typically has resources – expertise, delegated authority – to strike out on its own should the opportunity arise (Moe, 1990: 121).

Marks and Hooghe allude to this process of agent activism by asserting that one reason why MLG may arise is through government leaders losing control of the activities of the supranational and sub-national organisations they have set up (Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 75-77).

The Commission's privileged position as a centre of information, its budgetary and intellectual resources and its formal agenda-setting power are of significance here as it is through these mechanisms that the Commission is able to pursue its interests. A similar process of agent activism can be identified in the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Through its legal rulings, particularly those establishing the principles of supremacy, direct effect and mutual recognition, the ECJ has laid the legal foundations for an integrated European economy and polity (Burley and Mattli, 1993: 42). The extent of judicial activism has been such that it leads Volcansek to label the ECJ 'the principal motor for the integration of Europe' (Volcansek, 1992: 109).

A second result of initial choices is the materialisation of unintended consequences which encourage the emergence of MLG. Pierson (1996: 135-139) emphasises the long-run, unanticipated implications of decisions that are taken by political leaders for short-term, usually electoral, gains. Moreover, he claims that even if policy-makers do focus on long-run effects, unanticipated consequences remain likely due to the complexities of social processes. This is particularly seen as the case in the EU due to the presence of high issue density, which in turn generates problems of overload and spillover.

Hooghe and Marks (2001: 77-78) see these unanticipated consequences in practice through the mobilisation of sub-national actors as a response to the uploading of policy competence from the national to the European level. European integration

encourages sub-national actors to shift their focus to the EU level in order to secure a voice in the new policy-making arena. This occurs through such developments as the establishment of sub-national offices in Brussels, direct communication with the Commission, the creation of pan-EU transregional associations and campaigning for direct representation in the Council of Ministers. Thus, the decision to deepen integration may instigate a 'domino effect' of unforeseen activity as a result of the transformation of the political environment in which actors operate, culminating in the emergence of MLG.

Analysing MLG with the analytical tools of HI also sheds light on the difficulties of modifying the institutional procedures and forms that constitute MLG once in existence. The EU contains clear institutional barriers to reform. Of particular importance is Scharpf's 'joint-decision trap' (Scharpf, 1988: 239-278). The obstacles presented by the requirement for unanimity or qualified majority voting in order to overturn previous decisions means that MLG becomes 'locked-in' as a feature of EU policy-making.

The constraints posed by institutional arrangements 'from above' are compounded by the sunk costs resulting from societal level adaptation to MLG. Pierson highlights a second account of 'lock-in',

When actors adapt to the new rules of the game by making extensive commitments based on the expectation that these rules will continue, previous decisions may lock in member states to policy options that they would not now choose to initiate. Put another way, social adaptation to EC institutions and policies drastically increases the cost of exit from existing arrangements for member states (Pierson, 1996: 144-145).

Thus, societal actors gain a vested interest in MLG and the costs associated with disrupting the situation act as a further barrier to change.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, MLG becomes 'sticky', reflecting past choices as opposed to the current preferences of political leaders.

### Sociological Institutionalism

At the heart of sociological institutionalism (SI) is a concern for the socio-cultural structures in which action occurs. SI broadens the definition of institutions further than RCI and HI to include symbol systems, cognitive scripts and moral templates that provide meaning to action (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 947). By doing so, institutions are viewed as constituting actors and their interests in the sense that they provide actors with identities, conceptions of reality, standards of assessment and behavioural rules (March and Olsen, 1996: 249). Institutions are seen as constructing a reality in which choices are made. As Hall and Taylor state, 'institutions influence behaviour not simply by specifying what one should do but also by specifying what one can

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<sup>3</sup>. Marks recognises institutional lock-in and sunk costs in his actor-centred approach as constraints on the ability of government leaders to reverse the dispersal of authority, G. Marks, 'An Actor-Centred Approach to Multi-Level Governance', in C. Jeffery, ed., *The Regional Dimension of the European Union* (London: Frank Cass, 2001) pp.32-34.

imagine oneself doing in a given context' (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 948). In this sense SI essentially questions the given rationality of the RCI approach, claiming that what actors view as rational action is itself constructed according to the socio-cultural context in which actors exist.

What follows from this perspective is an interpretation of organisational forms and practices as being culturally embedded, reflecting culturally specific practices rather than functional efficiency (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 946). Thus, institutional design and actor behaviour are said to follow the 'logic of appropriateness' whereby choices are made according to what is viewed as socially valuable or suitable rather than a rational 'logic of consequence' (March and Olsen, 1996: 252; Hall and Taylor, 1996: 949).

The application of SI to MLG indicates a process in which participating in EU policy-making provides actors with conceptions of their own identities and of how to act. MLG can be seen to emerge as a result of actor behaviour that is 'learnt' from being identified as a particular actor in the EU. Bulmer is correct in asserting that the institutions of the EU are not value free, but contain embedded values and norms which impact on how their functions are operationalised (Bulmer, 1998: 368). However, it is the identification of an institution as being, for example, supranational (via the provision of particular competencies) that provides it with a certain ethos and behaviour. Thus, the behaviour of the Commission and ECJ is influenced by their self-perceived roles as supranational institutions which encourages them to support further integration and an expansionary interpretation of the treaties (Bulmer, 1994: 363). This enthusiasm comes precisely from a norm of integration which is embedded within the cultures of these institutions. It is plausible that a similar process relates to sub-national actors whereby their self-perception as distinct actors with their own interests encourages demands for greater devolution of policy competencies and involvement in EU decision-making.

Therefore, actors can be seen to behave in a manner they perceive as being socially appropriate in accordance with their roles, leading to the dispersal of authority away from the central state. In this way, MLG does not only emerge, but also becomes self-reinforcing whereby actors learn to function according to the behavioural rules of MLG. If it is assumed that social learning is more likely where actors meet repeatedly and there is a high density of interaction (Checkel, 2001: 26), MLG itself becomes embedded as a form of policy-making.

What emerges from this exercise of applying the analytical tools of new institutionalism to MLG is a conception of MLG as existing in different types. The three conceptual lenses of new institutionalism offering differing accounts of the emergence and existence of MLG (see Table 1). In order to show the utility of such an approach, the paper uses this new institutionalist understanding of MLG to analyse the results of empirical research undertaken on the experience of the city-region political administration of Vienna within the EU's trans-European transport networks (TEN-T) policy area.

**Table 1: New Institutionalism and Types of Multi-Level Governance**

<b>New Institutionalism and Type of MLG</b>	<b>Features</b>
rational choice institutionalism multi-level governance (RCI MLG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· member state actor centred approach to MLG</li> <li>· explicit choice of national political leaders to ensure desired gains: bargaining advantage, divesting responsibility, effective problem solving</li> </ul>
historical institutionalism multi-level governance (HI MLG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· path dependency leads to MLG</li> <li>· autonomous institutional action</li> <li>· unintended consequences: SNA mobilisation</li> <li>· MLG ‘locked-in’: institutional barriers to reform, societal adaptation</li> </ul>
sociological institutionalism multi-level governance (SI MLG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· MLG results from ‘learnt’ behaviour: acting in accordance with the ‘logic of appropriateness’</li> <li>· supranational institutions: support further integration</li> <li>· SNAs: distinct identities and interests</li> </ul>

#### **iv) Types of Multi-Level Governance and TEN-T Policy: Vienna**

The rationale for studying TEN-T policy is the well-documented relationship between transport infrastructure and regional economic development (see Hart, 1993; Vickerman, 1994; Fayman & Metge, 1995; Johnson & Turner, 1997; Vickerman et al, 1999; Peters, 2003; Stevens, 2004). It is precisely this relationship which underpins the enduring link between the EU’s regional and transport infrastructure policy areas. Infrastructure, and particularly transport infrastructure, has always had a prominent place within the EU’s regional policy, accounting for 75% of ERDF expenditure from 1975-89 and an estimated 29% of Structural Funds expenditure in Objective 1 regions 1989-93 (Vickerman, 1995: 238). Thus, there exists a clear regional interest in transport infrastructure leading to the potential mobilisation of sub-national political and economic resources within TEN-T policy. However, at the same time, the process of TEN-T policy-making remains a highly under-researched area.

The increased importance of EU level policy-making to a variety of policy areas of significance to regional authorities has led to the Vienna city administration expanding its European attention away from its traditional focus on EU regional policy. This shift in the importance of the EU to Vienna has been enhanced by the start of the process of diverting structural funds towards the new, ex-communist

member states following the 2004 enlargement; a process which is expected to accelerate in future funding periods. As a result, policies which do not come under the competence of DG Regio have increasingly become the focal point of Vienna's European activities. Of particular importance has been the services of general interest (SGI) proposal which planned to deregulate public services such as local transport, water supply and waste management through the introduction of a mandatory invitation to tender principle. This was viewed by the city administration as a direct threat to the long-held norm of local state controlled delivery of public services, particularly public transport. Such was the fear that compulsory tendering of services would be foisted upon the city that a dedicated office was established within MA 27 in order to coordinate Viennese, Austrian and EU-wide regional lobbying strategies against the SGI proposal. In addition, action has been taken in the fields of environment, employment, social affairs as well as TENT policy.

Vienna's approach towards the TENT policy area was delineated in its 2003 Transport Master Plan, a document prepared under the responsibility of the Municipal Department for Urban Development and Planning (MA 18) which outlines the framework of Vienna's transport concept for the following 20 years. The overriding principle underlying the administration's TENT interests is the competitiveness of Vienna as a business location. The fall of the Iron Curtain, Austria's accession to the EU and the 2004 EU enlargement pushed Vienna from the periphery to the very centre of the 'new Europe'. Consequently, Vienna sees itself as being in a prime location in order to exploit the economic opportunities resulting from its transformed geopolitical environment, in particular the expansion of the single market. In turn, the administration views being a central transport node within the TENT network as an essential prerequisite for the development of Vienna as an attractive business location. The relatively small size of the domestic Austrian market can be compensated for by effectively linking to surrounding high-level markets through being positioned on both north-south and east-west European transport axes. As such, Vienna's key TENT interest is to be located on the network in such a way as to become a central transit and transfer point for passenger travel and an inter-modal goods transport interchange. In essence, it is the perceived economic benefits resulting from enhanced accessibility that is the driving force behind Vienna's deep engagement with TENT policy.

In line with such priorities, thus far Vienna is involved in five TENT priority projects, all of which were added to the priority projects list as part of the 2004 amendment to the Community guidelines in order to take account of EU enlargement. These projects are: railway axis Paris-Strasbourg-Stuttgart-Vienna-Bratislava (priority project 17); Rhine/Meuse-Main-Danube inland waterway axis (pp 18); railway axis Athens-Sofia-Budapest-Vienna-Prague-Nuremberg/Dresden (pp 22); railway axis Gdansk-Warsaw-Brno/Bratislava-Vienna (pp 23); motorway axis Gdansk-Brno/Bratislava-Vienna (pp 25). At the same time, the city administration has invested heavily in surrounding infrastructure at the Vienna point of the networks in order to ensure seamless travel and intermodal exchange, such as a new container terminal at the Freudenu Port of Vienna along the Danube (opened in 2008) and a new Vienna Central Railway Station currently under construction (due to open in 2015) which is part funded by TENT grants.

Rational Choice Institutionalism Multi-Level Governance (RCI MLG)



An RCI account of MLG views a polycentric form of governance emerging as a result of rational choices made by national political leaders with the explicit purpose of establishing a joint problem-solving form of policy-making. From the outset it should be stressed that policy competence for the principal motorways and railways within Austria lies at the federal level. Financing key transport infrastructure projects is the responsibility of the federal government whilst their construction and maintenance is undertaken by state-owned agencies, Austrian Federal Railways (Osterreichische Bundesbahnen (OBB)) and its road equivalent ASFINAG (Autobahnen- und Schnellstraßen- Finanzierungs- Aktiengesellschaft). Thus, formal competence for TENT policy within the Austrian state remains firmly in the hands of the federal government, as represented by the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Innovation und Technologie (BMVIT)). In the case of Vienna, this begs the question of the rationales behind the federal government's eagerness to involve the Vienna city administration in the TENT policy-making process.

Analysing the emergence of MLG in the TENT policy area within Austria through the prism of RCI brings to the fore a process whereby the federal government explicitly elected to shift authority away from the central state in order to ensure desired gains, in particular effective policy outcomes. The fact that Vienna is involved in five out of the six TENT priority projects that affect Austria means that the specialised local knowledge and expertise of the Vienna city administration is required by the federal government as an integral part of the transport infrastructure planning process. As one official within BMVIT stated,

*'although formally the federal government is competent, the lander have a high influence. The government depends on the lander because it wants to succeed in the policy'.*

(Interview with BMVIT official)

On one hand, this local knowledge is provided by the city administration itself in the form of MA 18 (Municipal Department for Urban Development and Planning) within which the transport portfolio is based and consequently contains local transport specialists. However, the transport planning unit of MA 18 is relatively small, simply containing eleven people, only one of whom is responsible for the issue of European transport policy.

As a result, much of the European-related transport infrastructure expertise is provided by the TINA Vienna institute. The TINA institute was established by the City of Vienna in 1997 and served as the mechanism through which the city administration's intensive engagement with TENT policy began in earnest. TINA's initial function was to undertake the European Commission's Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment (TINA) project which involved detailing the routes for the extension of the TENT network into central and eastern Europe in preparation for EU enlargement. The results of this project provided the basis for the expansion of the TENT network as part of the 2004 amendment to the Community Guidelines. The fact that the TINA project was being administered by the TINA institute, essentially an office of the Vienna city administration, provided the city with the direct means through which to ensure a pivotal location and role on the enlarged TENT network.

The successful results of such a strategy can be seen by Vienna's central position on five key east-west TENT priority projects.

Despite moving out of the direct control of the city administration and becoming a subsidiary of Wien Holding in 2003, the fact that Wien Holding is itself 100% owned by the City of Vienna has served to ensure that TINA Vienna continues to work on behalf of the administration, particularly MA 18, in a role approaching that of an internal transport consultant. TINA Vienna provides a variety of transport-related services for the city administration, ranging from research, technical information and analysis to project planning and management. Such links are further deepened by the existence of close personal connections between the two bodies, facilitated somewhat by the exchange of personnel. Furthermore, TINA Vienna's previous and continuing work on behalf of the European Commission<sup>4</sup> provides the city administration with direct channels of communication to key points of contact at the European level, particularly within DG Transport, through which it is able to get its interests heard. In addition, the city administration employs the services of external research institutes in order to provide expert advice and skills on European matters. In particular, the think-tank Europaforum Wien has worked heavily alongside MA 18 and MA 27 (EU Strategy and Economic Development), both as a source of information and in its role managing the CENTROPE cross-border project on behalf of the constituent regions.

As a result, the Vienna city administration as a source of specialised knowledge, expertise and contacts is much sort after by the federal government in order to ensure success in the TENT policy field. This was particularly of use to the federal government not only in its initial strategy to convince the European Commission to include Austria's submitted transport projects on the TENT network but also in its subsequent attempts to access EU funding for these expensive projects. As Austria is one of the richer member states, the Commission required further convincing of the requirement for an EU financial contribution. The information and arguments provided by the city administration played a significant role in achieving a successful financial outcome for the federal government. For example, the information collated and work already undertaken by the city administration on the CENTROPE project was explicitly, and successfully, used by the federal government as an argument in favour of gaining EU funding for the new Vienna Central Railway Station. The project has very much been defined in that cross-border context.

Moreover, ensuring a united Austrian position was viewed as being of crucial importance by the federal government in serving to reinforce the strength of its voice in its negotiations with the Commission, something seen as being of fundamental importance for a small member state. At least the reverse, a divided position, was seen as having the potential to scuttle the federal government's TENT interests. A common domestic position was also viewed by the federal government as necessary in order to gain the support of neighbouring states for the TENT networks that Vienna was part of. Regional-federal consensus from the beginning of the process reduced the risk of future complications and delays emanating from domestic Austrian political fractures, making it easier to gain the agreement of other states and regions

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<sup>4</sup> As well as the initial TINA project, TINA Vienna has also previously acted as the secretariat for Pan-European Transport Corridor IV (now TENT priority project 22), written implementation reports on the TENT Guidelines, conducted the ERAIL project and continues to be the secretariat for TENT priority project 18 (the Danube).

located along the network. In turn, such pan-European agreement encouraged the Commission to look favourably on calls to accept the network as a TENT priority project.

However, it is not only the benefits of an enhanced problem-solving capacity which the federal government sought from transferring authority away from the central state. There were also clear political benefits for the federal government. Obtaining the support of the EU for its transport infrastructure priorities helped to reinforce the government's argument in favour of dedicating substantial resources towards their construction during domestic political discussions. Gaining the stamp of approval as being a 'project of international interest' provided ready-made protection for Austria's TENT projects in the face of any domestic criticism. Similarly, there were also the potential electoral advantages for the federal government stemming from the efficient construction of politically popular transport networks. As an official within BMVIT stated, *'the government also depends on the lander to get more votes at the next election, so it needs the lander from a political point of view'* (interview with BMVIT official).

Therefore, an RCI perspective of the emergence of a multi-level governance form of policy-making in the Austrian state within the TENT policy field throws light on the added-value to the federal government of involving the Vienna city administration in its TENT policy-making process. The Vienna city administration's specialised transport knowledge, expertise and EU contacts helped to ensure effective policy outcomes in line with the federal governments transport infrastructure interests. In turn, this was viewed as having positive political and potentially electoral repercussions for the central government.

#### Historical Institutionalism Multi-Level Governance (HI MLG)

An HI interpretation of MLG views an interconnected and multi-actor form of governance emerging as a result of a path dependent process whereby existing political structures and initial choices 'lock-in' certain policy paths, leading to the dispersal of authority away from the central state. The significance of HI is clearly visible in the experience of Vienna as a result of the norms of the Austrian domestic political system.

Even though, as mentioned above, constitutional policy competence for TENT policy lies firmly in the hands of the federal government, a culture of cooperative federalism is securely 'locked-in' as a feature of Austrian politics in which levels of government closely interact. As a result, cooperative federalism represented a pre-existing pattern of inter-governmental relations within the Austrian state which was naturally applied to Vienna's involvement in TENT policy-making. As an official from BMVIT confirmed,

*'there has to be some communication (between the federal government and the lander) because whenever the interests of the lander are affected there must be a consultation. Even any small project must be agreed with the corresponding land.'*

(Interview with BMVIT official)

As such, the Vienna city administration was involved from the early policy formulation stages of the process, involving project identification and development. Moreover, Vienna's participation in this process was not dependent upon pledges of future contributory funding to these projects. Instead, the process of jointly developing projects was at an advanced stage before co-financing negotiations began. Thus, it is not the formal rules of Austria's constitutional division of policy competences that an HI account of MLG brings to the fore, but rather the historically embedded informal norms of cooperation in the nature of federal-lander relations within the Austrian state. According to an HI account, Vienna's involvement in TENT policy innately took place within this pre-established framework.

This norm of cooperation was certainly reinforced by the federal government's own belief in the importance of Vienna as a key node within the TENT network. The federal government's objectives and priorities were established in its 2002 Transport Master Plan which set out a long term programme for the strategic development of Austria's transport infrastructure. The overriding aim of the federal government in developing Austria's transport infrastructure is to establish Austria's main cities as major economic centres in central Europe. Ensuring the main cities occupy prime locations on the TENT network is the core strand of this objective in order to ensure easy accessibility and efficient access to larger markets. Alongside a further goal of encouraging a greater use of environmentally friendly modes of transport, and as such the prioritisation of rail, this has led to the federal government particularly focusing its attention on Austria's involvement in TENT priority projects 17 (railway axis Paris-Strasbourg-Stuttgart-Vienna-Bratislava) and 22 (railway axis Athens-Sofia-Budapest-Vienna-Prague-Nuremberg/Dresden).

As a result, a clear channel of involvement in TENT policy-making emerged for the Vienna city administration with respect to the projects that ran through the city. However, the means of communicating Vienna's interests to the federal government were not via the formal federal-lander body established to coordinate EU-related policy, the Council for EU Integration Policy, or the inter-lander equivalents, the Integration Conference of the Lander (IKL) and the Conference of Governors of the Lander (LHK). In fact, these channels of communication were of limited use to the Vienna city administration due to the variety of different transport infrastructure concerns held by the various Austrian lander. For example, the Brenner section of TENT priority project 1 (railway axis Berlin-Palermo) in the western land of Tyrol is dominated by trans-Alpine crossing matters with little relevance to Vienna's cross-border interests in the east. The resulting difficulties in coordinating positions and gaining consensus within these formal bodies, and in turn jointly influencing the federal government, led the Vienna city administration to utilise alternative mechanisms of consultation.

Direct contact with the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT) was the preferred course of action for the city administration as the principal means of lobbying the federal government. In particular, Section 1 (International Affairs) of BMVIT and MA 18 of the Vienna city administration were the focal points of inter-governmental communication. In addition, at the same time as inter-departmental consultation was taking place, personal links between the federal government and the Vienna city administration further served to encourage direct channels of communication. High level interaction amongst political elites

within the 'political village' of Vienna is commonplace and as such have been utilised by the city administration as a means of gaining access to the levers of power at the federal level.

This has particularly been of benefit more recently as previously local Viennese politicians have gained positions of authority within the federal government. From 2007-08 the Federal Minister for Transport, and since 2008 the Federal Chancellor, Werner Faymann, is a former Vienna city councillor. As an official within Vienna's MA 18 put it, '*we can remind him of those links*' (interview with Vienna city administration official). In the current Faymann government, the Transport Minister, Doris Bures, also has roots in local Viennese politics as a result of her background as a councillor for the Vienna-Liesing district. Political party links between the two governing bodies have also stimulated this process. Whilst the overall approach to transport infrastructure policy, as set out in the 2002 Austrian Transport Master Plan, did not change as a result of the shift away from an Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) led federal government coalition, the Austrian Social Democratic Party's (SPÖ) return to power in the 2007 federal elections facilitated greater support for Vienna's TENT interests. For example, having the two levels of government ruled by the same party led to the Vienna city administration being able to convince the federal government to concentrate extra resources on the Vienna-Bratislava cross-border section of TENT priority project 17 in order to accelerate construction.

#### Sociological Institutionalism Multi-Level Governance (SI MLG)

SI's understanding of MLG emerging as a result of a 'learnt' process whereby actors behave in accordance with their socially perceived roles accounts for the active mobilisation of the Vienna city administration's political and economic resources within the EU policy sphere. The transformative political events in Europe post-1989 acted as the instigators for a process of self-reflection within the city administration. The fall of the Iron Curtain, Austria's accession to the EU and EU enlargement in central and eastern Europe have led to a revolution in Vienna's geopolitical environment. Rather than finding itself situated besides the 'no-man's land' of Europe's Cold War frontline, Vienna now identifies itself as a city at the heart of the 'new Europe'. The city administration has been at the forefront of this process.

As early as 1992 the City Council, which simultaneously acts as the Land Assembly (Landtag), appointed a Commission on Europe to examine the issues of relevance to Vienna resulting from Austria's upcoming accession to the EU. The result of these consultations has been a series of 'European Declarations' by the Viennese Assembly stating its positions on issues viewed as being of importance to Vienna within the European integration process. The rapid expansion in European matters commented upon by the Assembly between the initial 'European Declaration' in 1994 and its 2003 counterpart is striking and in turn characterises the growth in Vienna's self-identification as a core European actor. The 1994 Declaration concerned itself with the domestic repercussions for Vienna of EU accession, such as opportunities for accessing EU funds, economic development and the impact of community law on Viennese laws (Weninger, 2004: 34-35). However, by 2003 the Declaration acted as a call to arms by the Assembly, expressing an expectation for Vienna to play an active role in shaping the EU and making an impressive list of demands on the European Convention charged with preparing the European Constitution, such as greater rights

for the European Parliament (including electing the President of the European Commission), creation of a European social union and the introduction of elements of direct democracy at the EU level (referenda, petitions) (Pelinka, 2004: 17). The Mayor of Vienna, Michael Haupl, has even gone as far as to call for 'the creation of a United States of Europe', claiming that he is 'wholeheartedly behind it' (Haupl quoted in Pelinka, 2004: 22). The fact that these demands go far beyond the traditional policy competences of regional authorities represents the increased self-confidence of Vienna as an individual player within the European political game.

Vienna's self-perception as a 'Euro-player' has become embedded within the culture of the city administration, which in turn directly stimulates its intense European engagement. On Austria's accession to the EU in 1995, Mayor Haupl instigated a process of administrative reform in order to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the new geopolitical environment Vienna found itself in. Alongside attempts to create an efficient modern service enterprise in line with new public management philosophy, of deeper significance was a cultural shift towards an awareness of the importance of the EU to all aspects of the administration's work. Under the slogan 'Think Europe – Act Local – Develop Vienna', the various municipal departments were encouraged to identify European activity in their policy fields, actively exploit opportunities and engage with European developments as a means of placing a norm of 'thinking European' at the heart of policy-making practices. As Mayor Haupl stated in reference to the 2005 Vienna Urban Development Plan,

'(the Plan) requires one very important thing from the actors involved: that they think and act in a European perspective. Vienna is sustained by its internationality, its integrative role in this new Europe. This must be the basis of our daily work irrespective of whether in the area of politics, administration or business. This is the only way that the best intentions can be turned in to a desirable reality' (City of Vienna, 2005: 8).

It was in this context that an Executive Group for International Relations within the Chief Executive Office and Vienna's representative office in Brussels ('Wien-Haus') were established in order to coordinate and contribute towards Vienna's 'Euro-profiling'. According to the Chief Executive Director of the Vienna city administration at the time, the result of this process of reform has 'permanently changed the self-image within the bureaucracy' (Theimer, 2004: 6) leading to the emergence of a city administration definitively 'linked-in' to the European sphere with a strong self-perception as a European city authority.

The process of 'thinking European' found clear resonance in particular in the field of transport infrastructure policy. Following accession to the EU, Vienna quickly identified itself as being in a prime location to act as a 'gateway to the east' for western Europe and as a 'transport bridge' between east and west. As such, the city administration's primary transport infrastructure interest became to position Vienna as the key central European node on the TENT network. This intention was made clear by the Vienna Assembly's 1997 'European Declaration' which stated that,

'Vienna declares the development of a high-capacity inter-modal transport node (rail, water, air, road) to handle European, trans-national and regional

freight and passenger traffic to be an urgent goal and will in future increasingly direct the focus of its transport policy toward it' (Schwetz, 2004: 96).

This strategy is clearly reflected in the TENT related construction projects currently taking place within Vienna. The new railway station, which will act as the single departure/arrival point for all TENT routes, is being marketed under the slogan 'Vienna Central Station – Centre of Europe' whilst the upgrading of the Freudenu Port is being undertaken with the objective of making it the main intermodal exchange point in central Europe.

At the same time, the Vienna city administration felt it had a legitimate right to actively involve itself in the TENT policy-making process taking place at the EU level as a result of its self-belief as a European political authority. In reference to the transport infrastructure field, an official within MA 18 asserted that,

*'we prefer our role as a land (rather than a city) because nobody would expect a city to discuss such questions. Everybody says that cities should only organise their public transport within the city.'*

(Interview with Vienna city administration official)

Thus, there has been a clear attempt to identify itself as a European political entity beyond simply being a city and as a result to link Vienna to wider Europe. It has been this self-perception which has led the city administration to mobilise its economic and political resources to strive for its goals within TENT policy.

At the European level, this has been undertaken via direct contact with the EU institutions. The Commission's TENT coordination and funding role have meant that it has been the focal point of lobbying efforts. Whilst the city administration is happy to concede the limited policy impact of its individual influence, communication with DG Transport has proved valuable in terms of early access to information, particularly concerning the Commission's future strategies, which has allowed for effective planning.

Vienna's representative office in Brussels, 'Wien-Haus', has been indispensable in this process. A Brussels office has facilitated the establishment and maintenance of personal contacts with the Commission which act as the key mediums through which access and communication take place. As an official within the Chief Executive Office claimed, *'if it was not for 'Vienna House' we could not get ourselves heard'* (interview with Vienna city administration official). 'Wien-Haus' also plays a significant role in information collection, analysis and dissemination so that the city administration is able to react to developments at the EU level.

On the other hand, the European Parliament's limited involvement in the TENT policy field has led to little engagement with MEPs beyond keeping local representatives updated with the administration's opinions. Similarly, the fact that the Committee of the Regions (CoR) only enjoys advisory power means that is not viewed as a significant avenue for influence. The CoR's value to the city administration lies in it acting as a forum for networking, creating personal contacts and information exchange.

As part of the city's 'Euro-profiling', and as a result of a belief in the strength of a collective voice, the city administration has invested heavily in involving itself in transnational regional networks as a means of influencing EU policy-making. Working via regional networks is seen as crucial as a means of adding weight to the opinions of regional authorities such as Vienna, whilst also acting as important settings for knowledge transfer. Eurocities, and in particular its mobility forum, has been a central focus of Vienna's attention. Consisting of medium to large EU cities, and with regular communication with the Commission via its Brussels office, Eurocities is viewed by the Vienna city administration as an effective mechanism through which to influence EU transport policy. As a result, Vienna was at the forefront of establishing a working group on international accessibility within Eurocities so as to create a space in which specifically TENT issues could be discussed.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has presented MLG as fundamentally a challenge to a state based understanding of policy-making in the EU. MLG captures the multi-located nature of contemporary governing in the EU. MLG rejects the conception of conceiving governing processes as existing at either the domestic or international level, emphasising an overlapping, interconnected, non-hierarchical and multi-actor framework of interdependence. As such, the strength of MLG lies in its ability to encapsulate the reconfiguration of policy-making space away from interaction between nested political arenas towards a singular entity characterised by a complex web of interaction amongst the variety of actors involved in EU governance. Underpinning the reordering of policy-making space is the key role played by the EU's institutions in the process of EU policy-making. Institutions are central to MLG in that they provide arenas in which interested actors gather, therefore facilitating the processes that so mark MLG.

In order to develop the idea of MLG being institution dependent, the paper examined MLG using the analytical tools provided by new institutionalism. What materialises from this exercise is a conception of MLG as emerging and existing in different types as opposed to the singular version of MLG traditionally conceived. In a sense, this is a continuation of Hooghe and Marks' 'types of multi-level governance' (Hooghe and Marks, 2003: 233-243) approach but in a different form. Rather than distinguishing types of MLG on the basis of jurisdictional features, this paper presents three types of MLG emerging from differing institutional processes. The three conceptual lenses of new institutionalism offer differing accounts of MLG.

Rational choice institutionalism paints a picture of MLG emerging as a result of the explicit choices of national political leaders as the shifting of authority ensures desired gains, be it the acquisition of bargaining advantages, the divesting of responsibility or as a means of ensuring effective problem-solving. On the other hand, historical institutionalism views MLG as resulting from a path dependent process of initial choices leading to autonomous supranational institution action and unanticipated consequences which disperses authority away from the central state. MLG then becomes 'locked-in' due to the procedural difficulties in the EU of reforming past



decisions and a process of societal adaptation. A sociological institutionalist approach meanwhile emphasises MLG as a 'learnt' process whereby actors behave in accordance with their socially perceived roles.

An analysis of the experience of the Vienna city administration in the TEN-T policy area shows all three of these institutional processes at work in the dispersal of authority away from the Austrian state and draws attention to the key role played by the city administration in the development of a multi-level form of governance (see Table 2). In doing so, this research shows that the reasons for why and how SNAs involve themselves in EU policy-making differ in accordance with the different institutional understandings of MLG.

RCI MLG emphasises the explicit choice made by the federal government to incorporate Vienna in to the TENT policy-making process in order to ensure effective policy outcomes and acquire political and electoral advantages by making use of the city administration's specialised local knowledge and presenting a united Austrian position in international and domestic negotiations. In this way, RCI MLG provides a 'top-down' approach to the role of SNAs in the EU. RCI MLG paints a picture of SNAs as 'receivers' of processes and practices emanating from above. Within this framework, SNAs are viewed as inactive players within the EU until a central government decision is taken which incorporates them in to the policy process. As such, RCI MLG perpetuates a conception of SNAs as reactive political actors, only mobilising their resources in response to requests from higher level bodies and thus operating in a sphere established and maintained by the central state. This raises questions concerning the ability of RCI to capture the essence of a multi-level form of governance. The ability of SNAs to play a part in the dispersal of authority away from the central state is constrained by central state control. National governments can be seen to maintain their gatekeeper roles, providing and blocking SNA access to the supranational level in accordance with their own interests.

On the other hand, HI MLG highlights the emergence of an MLG form of policy-making as resulting from the existence of an informal political culture of cooperative federalism being 'locked-in' as a feature of Austrian intergovernmental relations. Despite formal policy competence for TENT policy-making lying at the federal level, an informal culture of cooperative federalism is 'locked-in' as a feature of Austrian intergovernmental relations, representing a pre-existing pattern of federal-lander relations which was naturally applied to Vienna's involvement in TENT policy-making. As a result, Vienna engaged in intense direct communication with the federal government, particularly utilising the close personal and party links that existed between the two government levels. Thus, HI MLG can be also seen as containing a 'top-down' element. The ability of SNAs to participate in and influence EU policy-making is determined by the political cultural norms of centre-region relations within the domestic sphere in which they exist. Such norms are created largely exogenously from the SNA itself, being determined by a wider set of processes, relationships and actors, of which a single SNA is but one player. Therefore, once again, HI MLG views SNAs as reactive actors whose EU engagement and influence is determined by norms out of its direct control. SNAs operate in a field passed down or across to them which structures their mobilisation at the EU level.

Meanwhile, SI MLG stresses the mobilisation of Vienna's resources from below resulting from the self-perception of the city administration as a distinct political actor with its own European interests. The transformation in Vienna's geopolitical environment has resulted in the city administration perceiving itself as a distinct political actor with its own interests at the centre of the 'new Europe'. Through a process of administrative reform, a norm of 'thinking European' has been placed at the heart of local policy-making practices, culminating in a practice of 'Euro-profiling' via an enthusiastic engagement with EU policies, such as regional policy and INTERREG, the opening of a representation office in Brussels, active membership of transnational regional networks and a leading role in the construction of the cross-border region CENTROPE.

Accordingly, and despite Hall and Taylor's unwillingness to adjudicate between the relative importance of the three new institutionalisms (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 95), this paper can offer a judgement on the analytical validity of each new institutionalism in accounting for the role of SNAs in the emergence and existence of MLG. Whilst RCI MLG and HI MLG can, under the right circumstances, account for the development of multi-level forms of governance, the processes that are brought to the fore in both frameworks point to a 'top-down' process in which SNAs are 'receivers' of MLG, invited to participate in the supranational policy environment by central government request or the particular form of cultural norms which govern their domestic political environment. Thus, it is SI MLG which places emphasises on the dynamics of SNA mobilisation.

The key value in a sociological institutionalist understanding of MLG lies in it enabling a 'bottom-up' approach towards conceptualising the role of SNAs in EU policy-making and in the development of MLG. A SI MLG analytical framework facilitates an understanding of SNAs as 'policy-makers', rather than simply 'policy-takers'. In this way, SI MLG rectifies the gap identified in the existing research approach towards examining the role of the sub-national level of government by placing SNAs at the focal point of analysis. Rather than viewing SNAs as 'receivers' of policies, practices and processes emanating from the EU level ('top-down' Europeanisation) or as passive political actors (traditional MLG), SI MLG emphasises the policy- and polity-shaping ability of SNAs from the 'bottom-up' through the mobilisation of their own resources. According to SI MLG, this results from the construction of a self-identity as a European SNA with distinct European interests. Similarly, as opposed to the state-centrism of 'bottom-up' Europeanisation, SI MLG allows for an appreciation of the capacity of SNAs to structure the institutions of the EU from below.

The importance of such a self-identity can be seen from the case study analyses undertaken. The self-perception of the Vienna city administration as a European SNA instigated a process of mobilising own-resources at the EU level facilitating an influencing role within the EU's TENT policy-making process independent of the Austrian federal government. Such influence has not been dependent upon the partial and ad hoc mobilisation of Vienna's resources but rather a firm commitment to being an actor in the European game. As such, SNA influence at the EU level is seen to result from ensuring a constant and consistent presence in EU level affairs via activities such as developing personal relationships with officials in the EU institutions and other regional authorities, active involvement in inter-regional

networks, sharing best practice as well as involving oneself in an array of non-strategic civic activities, such as holding Brussels-based cultural events and participating in exchange programmes. It is this continuous presence which legitimises a SNA as being a ‘Euro-actor’ and therefore ensures a voice in the policy-making process.

**Table 2: TENT Policy, New Institutionalism and Types of Multi-Level Governance: the case of Vienna**

<b>New Institutionalism and Type of MLG</b>	<b>Features</b>	<b>Vienna and TENT Policy</b>
rational choice institutionalism multi-level governance (RCI MLG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· member state actor centred approach to MLG</li> <li>· explicit choice of national political leaders to ensure desired gains: bargaining advantage, divesting responsibility, effective problem solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· effective policy outcomes: specialised local knowledge and expertise (MA18, TINA Vienna)</li> <li>· united Austrian position in negotiations</li> <li>· political and electoral advantages</li> </ul>
historical institutionalism multi-level governance (HI MLG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· path dependency leads to MLG</li> <li>· autonomous institutional action</li> <li>· unintended consequences: SNA mobilisation</li> <li>· MLG ‘locked-in’: institutional barriers to reform, societal adaptation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· political culture of cooperative federalism ‘locked-in’</li> <li>· preference for direct communication with federal government</li> <li>· personal and party links</li> </ul>
sociological institutionalism multi-level governance (SI MLG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· MLG results from ‘learnt’ behaviour: acting in accordance with the ‘logic of appropriateness’</li> <li>· supranational institutions: support further integration</li> <li>· SNAs: distinct identities and interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· post-1989 transformation in Vienna’s geopolitical environment</li> <li>· self-perception as distinct political actor at centre of ‘new Europe’</li> <li>· administrative reform: ‘thinking European’</li> <li>· self-identity as east-west ‘transport bridge’</li> <li>· mobilisation of own resources</li> </ul>

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