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Networked Governance and European Regionalism in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of the emergent information society (or ‘network society’), intermediated by new information and communications technologies (ICTs), upon the process of European governance, and *vice versa*, within a theoretical framework centred on the concept of policy networks. In order to achieve this, two major transnational policy networks, the Inter-Regional Information Society Initiative (IRISI) and TeleCities, have been chosen as the empirical ground of the analysis. This paper argues that the arrival of the ‘network society’, has created an unprecedented opportunity for both the European Commission and the regional and local public authorities to raise their political profile in European policymaking. First, the European Commission managed to compensate its relatively weaker position *vis-à-vis* the Member States by directly mobilising the policy actors at the subnational government levels. Second, the formation of the transnational policy networks enabled the public authorities at the subnational levels to participate in the European policy process by collective bargaining. These two dimensions, one top-down and another bottom-up, seem to suggest that a new mode of European governance – networked governance or governance by policy networks – is being strengthened echoing the argument of a ‘Europe of the regions’.

KEY WORDS

information society; policy networks; the Inter-Regional Information Society initiative (IRISI); TeleCities; European governance; lobbying

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to examine the impact of the emergent information society upon the process of European governance, and *vice versa*. In order to achieve this, two transnational policy networks involving a large number of subnational public authorities from many parts of Europe have been chosen as the empirical ground of the analysis. The choice of the policy networks perspective, essentially an actor-based approach, serves the purpose of providing a conceptual framework for the understanding about the interaction between the European institutions, primarily the European Commission, and the alliance of regional and local government authorities.

There are basically two opposing schools of thought dominating the stage of academic debate about the issue of who governs the European Union (EU); from a neorealistic perspective, the 'states' are here to stay and they dominate and will continue to dominate the political fate of Europe; whilst from a neofunctionalist point of view, however, the 'dissemination of power' is the focus and supranational institutions will become central actors, transgressing national boundaries by forging influential transnational policy communities (Kohler-Koch, 1996). The emergence of the vast literature on the role of policy communities/policy networks in recent years is associated with the second school.

Although the idea of policy networks has been particularly prominent in the UK (Ansell, Parsons & Darden, 1997), it is becoming an increasingly important approach endorsed by students of the international EU studies community. Some suggest that the so-called policy community/policy network model has already become the dominant model for analysing the policy process in Western Europe (Richardson, 1996). This is because policy network analysis allows us to go beyond specifying EU policy opportunity structures in abstract terms towards actually understanding who benefits from them (Peterson, 1997).

Applying the theories of policy networks to the analysis of the formation and operation of two major transnational alliances, i.e., the Inter-Regional Information Society Initiative (IRISI) and the TeleCities network, this paper seeks to address a number of important questions such as: What role do policy networks play in disseminating policy innovations at the European level? To what extent are EU information society policies influenced by the lobbying of pan-European interest groups and how are organised interests fed into the process of EU governance in terms of policy outcome? Do the arrival of the 'information society provide new political opportunities for both the European institutions, such as the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions, and

European regional and local authorities at the subnational level to improve their policymaking profile? Does the operation of the new information society policy networks suggest in any sense a closure between the European Commission and the subnational policy actors at the expense of the national governments within the EU? Finally, Does the development of the information society policy networks provide new argument in favour of 'Europe of the regions' rather than 'Europe of the states'? It is hoped that the search for answers to these questions will contribute to the understanding about the constantly changing and extremely complicated process of European governance in the context of globalisation facilitated to a great extent by new information and communications technologies (ICTs).

POLICY NETWORKS IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY

In his widely cited volume, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Castells defines a 'network is a set of interconnected nodes';¹ networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation, and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture (1996). In the network society, the 'inclusion/exclusion in networks, and the architecture of relationships between networks, enacted by light-speed operating information technologies, configurate dominant processes and functions in our societies (*Ibid.*, p.470). In other words, Castells believes the presence or absence in the network and the dynamics of each network *vis-à-vis* other networks are critical sources of power and change in the network society.

It is argued that Europe is fast becoming a 'network Europe' – different parts of Europe is linked together with a high-speed or broadband information infrastructure, which constitute the core of a 'common information area' (Federal Trust, 1995). If the power structure of the global network society is essentially characterised by the functioning of 'networks', as Castells argues, how important are the new 'policy networks' to the governance of a 'network Europe'?

It is suggested that a 'policy network' may be defined as 'a (more or less) structured cluster of public and private actors who are stakeholders in a specific sector of policy and possess resources which allow them to affect policy outcomes' (Peterson 1997, p.7). Theoretically, 'the workings of policy networks are critical for promoting the diffusion of policy innovations' (Mintrom & Vergari, 1998, p.128). Proponents of policy network theories argue that there are different types of policy networks operating within the policymaking process. In parallel with 'policy network', other terms are also widely used such as 'policy communities' and 'issue networks'.² Some have suggested that, among the variety of different terms, 'policy network' could be used as a generic term (Richardson, 1996).

Despite the wide range of literature and varied theoretical approaches, there is a consensus that 'EU governance is not based on government-like structures, on a strong authoritative basis' and that 'power is exercised by sharing and pooling resources among

many divergent actors (often through establishing policy networks)' (Tömmel, 1998, p.54). Consequently, '[a] considerable amount of EU decision-making now occurs within policy networks' (Peterson, 1997, p.17). In describing the patterns of multi-level governance in the Europeanisation of regional policies, Benz and Eberlein (1999) argue that EU policymaking is achieved by power-sharing between different levels of government and policy networks are formed for collaboration based on variable combinations of government authorities – European, national and subnational. Within the 'triad' (European-national-subnational) of EU policymaking, the overall pattern 'is not that of three levels of actors engaged in policy-network cooperation, but of constantly shifting alliances within the triad. We see incidents of successful national –subnational alliances, followed by successful EU-subnational alliances, within the same region' (Ansell, Parsons & Darden, 1997, p.350). The empirical research presented in this paper has identified large-scale across-border alliances among subnational public authorities, who then collectively engaged in alliance with the European institutions at the EU level.

Compared to the nature and role of the national government in Western democracies, the European Commission, the Executive of the EU, suffers from a number of weaknesses in terms of the limited power in policymaking. Then why is the Commission still interested in encouraging, financing and opening its door to various policy networks, which are eager to share its already limited power in policymaking? Richardson (1996) offers the following explanation:

'By drawing other policy actors into the policy process, the Commission may be able to build coalition in favour of its own notions of desirable policy change. By assisting the formation of networks of "relevant" state and non-state actors, or by "messaging" the way that these networks operate, the Commission can maintain its position as an "independent" policy-making institution and can increase its leverage with the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. Information and ideas are important building blocks in the process' (p.15).

Meanwhile, the European Commission expects that these policy networks are able to elaborate – on the basis of exchanging experiences – policy proposals and, on the other hand, the creation of the European-wide policy networks mobilises the regions as potential allies of the Commission in that they are stimulated to claim further funding or an extension of European policies to their advantages (Tömmel, 1998). That is to say, there seems to exist a kind of symbiosis relationship between European institutions, in particular the European Commission, and European-wide transnational policy networks – one can not live, at least as well as they do today, without the other.

The interdependence of European institutions and the inter-regional or transnational policy networks reflects a more general trend of Europeanisation of regional/local development and regionalisation of EU policies characterised by the multi-layered decision-making framework of EU governance. The motivation behind this trend is that region level authorities are seeking more autonomy and participation in European policy games (from below) and the European Commission is looking for partners and support for territorial and other issues (Benz & Eberlein, 1999).

REGIONALISATION VERSUS EUROPEANISATION: THE INFORMATION SOCIETY AS AN OPPORTUNITY

The information society is about the rapid development and changes intermediated by the advancement and diffusion of new information and communications technologies, which is transforming many aspects of economic and social life. From an economic and social cohesion point of view, the information society refers to the results of a wide process of structural change, with strong technological, socio-economic and institutional components, which have a pervasive impact across all realms of human activity. As far as its impact on the regional development potential is concerned, the information society has the following potential,³ as recognised by many European regions:

- It makes globalisation of the economy possible;
- It has wide implications in the spatial organisation and territorial distribution of economic activities;
- It has implications in the competitiveness of regions and in the relative role of regions in the global context.

Optimists believe that one of the characteristics of the digital communications networks is that distance is becoming increasingly irrelevant – business and work collaboration, and the exchange of information can just as easily take place across oceans as within the same city (Bangemann, 1997). As a result, it can be predicted that there will be a steady increase in cross-border communications, including telephone conversation, multimedia communication, collaborative working, and electronic trading, etc. (*Ibid.*) The potential of new ICTs to bridge geographical distance has led quite naturally to a focus on the potential of the information society to contribute to the development of and greater integration of, in particular, peripheral and less-favoured regions in Europe (High Level Group of Experts, 1996).

The on-going digital communications revolution is characterised, to a great extent, by ‘convergence’ – the result of converting all types of information into a digital form (using the computer-readable binary code). In other words, because of digitisation, conventionally separated industries, such as computing, telecommunications, broadcasting, consumer electronics and the printing and publishing media, etc., are rapidly becoming a single industrial domain under the broad, generic term ‘ICT’. This has made the previously sector-specific regulatory regimes increasingly obsolete and a new mode of regulation (or deregulation) necessary – most often beyond the nation state level. The second important feature of the digital communications revolution lies in its global or transnational nature. Thanks to the increasingly sophisticated telecommunications networks (e.g. fixed line networks, mobile networks and satellite networks), the rapid introduction of multi-channel digital TV broadcasting and, more importantly, the phenomenal growth of the Internet, there is a growing need for international coordination in coping with the challenges posed by the information society.⁴ Seemingly, the emergent the network society provides a new opportunity and

powerful argument in favour of enhanced regional governance at the supranational level. It is argued that,

‘The European Union has an important role to play, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, where objectives can not be sufficiently achieved by member states because of the scale or effects of changes involved, where states are unable to provide an adequate institutional framework, and because of the implications of information networking for cross-border trade and EU-wide development (Federal Trust, 1995, p.28).’

It is not surprising at all that the European Commission recognises the potential of the network society and is willing to explore the opportunities offered by new ICTs for strengthening its policymaking profile. The publication of the European Commission’s White Paper in December 1993 (or the Delors White Paper), *on Growth, Competitiveness and Employment*, and the Bangemann Report in May 1994, *on Europe and the Global Information Society*, is of great significance in terms of providing a new vision on the way the geography of Europe is shaped in the information age. One of the key proposals presented in the Delors White Paper was the accelerated development of the Trans-European Networks (TENs) including a Trans-European Network of Transport, Trans-European Network of Energy and Trans-European Network of Telecommunications (TEN-Telecom). Among other objectives, the White Paper outlined the need for the creation of a ‘Common Information Area’ in order to complete the Single European Market programme. Although work in the European Commission on the TENs had started before the Maastricht Treaty, it is that Treaty that gave specific legal backing to the concept of Trans-European Networks in Article 129 (b) to (d) and provides therefore a firm legal base for Union action in this field (Federal Trust, 1995, p.v).

It can be said that the TEN-Telecom proposal was to construct a physical or technological network as the fundamental backbone to connect the separated or fragmented national European markets together and this would, as hoped by the EU authorities, constitute the key element of a pan-European information infrastructure. With a fully liberalised telecommunications infrastructure run on a commercial base in place, ‘an IT-rich Europe, united (communicatively, at least), by universal broadband network will be sufficiently endowed in technical and economic terms to compete with the world’s best (Federal Trust, 1995, p.7).’

European integration is not just about a ‘technology’ Community but also a ‘social’ and ‘economic’ (if not yet political in its full sense) community. Therefore, the Bangemann Report has proposed a series of applications, i.e. principal areas of development using new information and communications technologies, in particular the new communications infrastructure.

The launch of the two important policy networks, i.e. IRISI and TeleCities, in Europe happened at a time when ‘[m]ost nations recognise that building an infrastructure for communicating and facilitating the movement of information throughout the society, is a useful tool for governance as well as a vital part of economic and social development’

(Lin, 1997). European cities and regions needed to access the financial resources available at the European level (handled by the European Commission); they also needed to be better informed of European policymaking and learn from the experience of other places in many aspects of local governance in the information age. Although a 'growing area of entrepreneurial policy response at the local level has been try and gain some leverage over ICT developments' (Gibbs & Tanner, 1997, p.34), the resources and capacity of public authorities at the subnational level to individually explore the political and economic opportunities offered by the information society are very limited. Instead, transnational alliances with other policy actors of the same or similar status in other parts of Europe could be more beneficial. On the other hand, '[t]he European Commission also needs these associations not only to obtain technical information, but also in order to use them as an information network for EC problems' (Sidjanski, 1997, p.7). It is believed that regional and local authorities are better situated and understand the local situation and dynamic at regional level and, in the meantime, they are the focal point of any strategy building and they can provide the continuation in the learning and the experience gained in the new environment (The Policy Studies Institute *et al*, 1997).

Regarding the role of the regions in shaping the European information society policy, the IRISI network envisages the following aspects:⁵ 1) the telecoms revolution is both a threat and an opportunity for regions and the challenge for the regions therefore is to manage the process of adjustment and transformation to the information society so that it reflects both the regional and public interest; 2) regions are at the heart of the European information society agenda because they are essential to its successful diffusion – the local agenda is of crucial importance to the development of the information society; 3) regions provide a framework for integrating telematics services and applications and, by adopting a local perspective, regions acquire a sense of the importance of integration; 4) regions offer the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of progress towards the information society; 5) regions are important agents of social change – the impact of social innovation and change is manifested at the local level.

In short, the new information society policy networks were launched by the EU and subnational public authorities to take the advantage of new ICTs, which are intrinsically transnational – in spatial terms, they offer the potential to overcome the constrains of national borders and local isolation. This is perhaps one of strengths of the IRISI and TeleCities networks.

EUROPE OF THE REGIONS: THE REGIONAL INFORMATION SOCIETY INITIATIVE

The European information society policy agenda serves the purpose of achieving, amongst others, economic and social cohesion and the completion of the internal common market. The new Treaty of the European Union (TEU) of 1993 provides a solid legal foundation for European cities and regions to become involved in the process of creating a European information society. Referring to the Trans-European Networks, the TEU⁶ stipulates:

- To help achieve the objectives referred to in Articles 7a and 130a and to enable citizens of the Union, economic operators and regional and local communities to derive full benefit from the setting up of an area without internal frontiers, the Community shall contribute to the establishment and development of trans European networks in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructures.
- Within the framework of a system of open and competitive markets, action by the Community shall aim at promoting the interconnection and interoperability of national networks as well as access to such networks. It shall take account in particular of the need to link island, landlocked and peripheral regions with the central regions of the Community.

In line with the TEU, the Bangemann Report recommended ten important applications necessary for launching the information society in Europe, one of which is the development of City Information Highways. This is to '[s]et up networks providing households with a network access system and the means of using on-line multimedia and entertainment services on a local, regional, and national and international basis.'⁷ A large number of local (city and regional) public authorities throughout Europe have responded positively to the policy initiatives of the European Commission and actively preparing themselves to face the challenges posed by the information society. This has led to the launch of numerous 'digital' or 'virtual' city and 'tele-region' projects.⁸ In the meantime, European cities and regions have also formed consortia to jointly develop information society related projects. On the one hand, these consortia are indicative of the local authorities' desire for being engaged in a process of 'collective learning';⁹ on the other hand, they have become, to a certain extent, the new platforms for the European authorities (particularly the European Commission) to disseminate information society policies and strategies.

In response to the Bangemann Report, and under the auspices of the European Commission, six European regions¹⁰ signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' in November 1994 to jointly launch the Inter-Regional Information Society Initiative (IRISI). The IRISI regional consortium agreed to work together and progress towards the information society. The member regions would share experience with each other in formulating their regional information society strategy. Under a contract with the European Commission, each of the IRISI members has the overall responsibility for the respective region's participation in developing the regional information society strategy. Each IRISI region represents a region-wide partnership of organisations from sectors such as local businesses and industry, local government, education and training bodies, trade unions, co-operative and the voluntary sector, etc. The operation of the IRISI partnership in each region is coordinated by a local IRISI Steering Group, which drives the process of formulating and implementing the regional information society strategy.

The IRISI's priority fields of collaboration were chosen to mirror the ten major applications recommended in the Bangemann Report. Recognising the importance of this inter-regional initiative as a demonstration, especially for less developed regions in Europe, the European Commission was willing to provide the necessary technical

assistance and financial support in its practical organisation and implementation of the cooperation among the members.¹¹

Table 1. The European Regional Information Society Initiative: RISI and IRISI

	Region	Initiative (Partnership)	Country	EU Funding (ECU)	Population (1,000's)
R I S I	Steiermark	TELEKIS	Austria	250,000	1,175
	Liège	FASIL	Belgium	249,990	250
	West Finland Alliance	PARADDIS	Finland	249,800	1,314
	North Karelia	NOKIS	Finland	n.a.	178
	Midi-Pyrenees	TELEPARC	France	n.a.	173
	Limonsin	ACTI-Limousi	France	249,680	723
	Poitou-Charentes	SERISE	France	250,000	1,595
	Bremen	BRISE	Germany	n.a.	684
	Brandenburg	BIS2006	Germany	250,000	2,500
	Schleswig-Holstein	INFOSH	Germany	250,000	2,700
	Attica	ATHINA	Greece	n.a.	3,600
	Epirus	RISE	Greece	250,000	679
	South West of Ireland	STAND	Ireland	n.a.	532
	Shannon	ShIPP	Ireland	250,000	400
	Calabria	ARIANNA	Italy	250,000	2,000
	Murcia	ESSIMUR	Spain	n.a.	1,099
	Extremadura	INFODEX	Spain	250,000	1,094
	Västerbotten	AC-Direkt	Sweden	250,000	260
	Blekinge	IT-Blekinge	Sweden	n.a.	160
	Wales	WIS	UK	n.a.	2,886
North of England	NiSTRAT	UK	250,000	3,100	
Yorkshire & Humberside	CoMPRIS	UK	250,000	4,950	
	Total Population, 1,000's				32,000
I R I S I	Nord Pas-de-Calais		France	n.a.	1,200
	Saxony		Germany	n.a.	4,800
	Central Mecedonia		Greece	n.a.	1,700
	Piemonte		Italy	n.a.	4,400
	Valencia		Spain	n.a.	3,800
	North West England		UK	n.a.	7,000
	Total Population (1,000's)				25,700

Source: Adapted from RISI (<http://www.risi.lu/Internal/EC/gen-inf/reg-list.htm>) and other sources.

Three Directorates-General of the European Commission provide financial support to the European inter-regional information society initiative and they are: DG-XVI (Regional Policy and Cohesion) in charge of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under Article 10 of the TEU; DG-V (Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs) in charge of the European Social Fund (ESF) under Article 6 of the TEU and

DG-XIII (Information Society) in charge of the European Telecommunications Policy budget. Undoubtedly, the inter-regional information society network helps translate the concept of the information society into the process of achieving the goals of the European regional policy, social and employment policy and technology/industrial policy, which are three important policy domains.

At the regional level, each of the six IRISI regions established their own Regional Information Society Steering Group (RISSG) and a Regional Information Society Unit (RISU) with funding from DGXVI. The RISSG and RISU are responsible for forging partnerships, formulating a regional strategy and developing an action plan for the region. The six IRISI regions, with financial and technical support from DGXIII, then established a Network Management Committee (NMC), whose membership consists of representatives from the six RISSGs, DGXIII and DGXVI. The NMC has its Network Bureau in Brussels.¹²

The IRISI network has established a series of thematic inter-regional work groups seeking in-depth discussion and understanding about the key issues related to the information society. These thematic work groups are used for exchanging experience and collective learning between different European regions.

The IRISI network, from the European Commission's point of view, operates as a 'test-bed' for its new vision and new policy initiatives on the information society. Clearly, 'IRISI has been successful in raising the Information Society as an issue in the region.'¹³ As for the regions, participating in the IRISI process is an important means for securing European funding:

'Now that the Information Society is being mainstreamed and resourced by the European Union – resources allocated to it can be expected to rise dramatically as money moves from physical infrastructure to telematics – IRISI is going to become much more important [to the participating regions].'¹⁴

As a matter of fact, five of the six IRISI regions had received further substantial support from the EU structural funds by April 1997, when the initial phase of the network concluded, in order to 'keep the show on the road'.¹⁵

In addition to the financial benefit, the operation of IRISI also helps raise the political and policymaking profile of the regions:

'It [IRISI] will give the regions a significant voice in defining just how the Information Society will be interpreted at the local level. Projects have to meet local need.'¹⁶

On the completion of the pre-pilot phase of the regional information society initiative, i.e. IRISI, in 1997, the European Commission selected 22 European regions for funding under the RISI (Regional Information Society Initiative) scheme. The increased membership has turned the regional information society network into a much more

influential organisation. Similar to its predecessor IRISI, RISI aims at integrating the concept of the information society into regional development strategies in less developed regions of the European Union. The principal objectives of RISI include:

- Developing consensus and partnership among key regional players¹⁷ around a regional information society strategy defining the challenges and opportunities associated with the information society in a regional context;
- Developing a regional action plan for implementing the information society strategy in order to contribute to regional economic development;
- Creating a common platform for the exchange of experience, know-how and projects among the regions.

The most recent development of the regional information society network was the formation of the eris@ (European Regional Information Society Association) incorporating both the IRISI and RISI members. It was also decided that membership of the newly launched eris@ would be open to all European regions and, most significantly, regions from central and east European countries can now join the network. It seems likely that the eris@ has the potential to become a new factor contributing to both the ‘deepening’ and ‘widening’ of European integration in the information age.

EUROPE OF THE CITIES: THE TELECITIES NETWORK

The TeleCities has become one of the most important policy networks related to the information society development in Europe. In October 1993, representatives of 13 European Cities¹⁸ signed the ‘Manchester Declaration’ to launch a collaborative initiative entitled TeleCities. By July 1998, this network had been joined by 121 members with its coordinating office in Brussels.

Table 2. Membership of the TeleCities Network

Type of Membership	Membership (July 1997)	Membership (July 1998)
European local authorities (full members)	81	89
Local authorities from the CEECs	7	9
Provinces (associated members)	3	3
European local authorities (observers)	2	2
Private organisations (observers)	15	18
Total	108	121

Source: Based on the TeleCities Network (1997) and (1998).

It is suggested that, by July 1998, the 89 full members of the TeleCities Network represent 44.5 million inhabitants of the EU (or about 14% of the total EU population) (The TeleCities Network, 1998).

The establishment of the TeleCities coincided with the publication of the Delors White Paper in the same year. The main objective of the TeleCities network is to promote and

develop telematics applications supporting urban regeneration via cross-border collaboration in terms of sharing experience and ideas in formulating information society policies and strategies at the municipality level and promoting joint projects between member cities. More specifically, the TeleCities network has identified four priorities of operation:¹⁹

- Support the development of telematics projects and strategies on a cohesive, trans-European basis;
- Identify projects of common interest where European financial support would give a clear added value element to telematics applications;
- Develop an effective dialogue with relevant European institutions working in the field of new information and communications technologies;
- Participate in the building of the global information society.

The priorities of TeleCities suggest that, first of all, the nature of this network of city governments is 'trans-European' or transnational. In other words, TeleCities has become a new platform, on which European local governments can directly communicate and collaborate with each other. This 'trans-European' or transnational feature has the potential to reduce the level of barriers associated with physical geography and national borders.

Secondly, TeleCities is important to its member cities in terms of attracting EU funding. As European financial support is often allocated to projects involving partners from more than one European country, the TeleCities network offers a convenient solution to the problem of partner seeking for organisations based in the member cities in proposing telematics projects. EU funding can be said one of the magnetic factors holding the TeleCities members together.

Thirdly, the existence of the TeleCities network has increased the collective 'bargaining' power of the local governments *vis-à-vis* the relevant European institutions in charge of policy making in the field of new information and communications technologies. TeleCities simply adds a new channel of dialogue or a new link between the European local authorities and the various European institutions. At almost every major TeleCities events (e.g. conferences and seminars), officials from the European Commission and members of the European Parliament were often among the invited speakers.

Fourthly, most local authorities, like those TeleCities members, have a strong desire to overcome the constraints of locality, rather than becoming isolated in the process of the global digital revolution. In order to achieve this, members of the TeleCities network wish to participate in the building of the global information society, as outlined by the G7 conference of February 1995 in Brussels.

The TeleCities network has established 9 different thematic Working Groups. It is worth noting that each of these Working Groups consists of representatives from different member cities, who have teamed up to discuss issues related to a particular area of the

information society. The Working Group papers and reports are then distributed among all the members of the TeleCities network.

NEW MODE OF REGIONAL GOVERNANCE?

Members of both the TeleCities and the IRISI/RISI networks are either exclusively or mainly subnational public authorities from many parts of Europe. These networks of regional/local authorities, which are policymaking bodies themselves, constitute a new mode of European governance and serve the purpose of strengthening European regionalism in the information age. Compared to conventional types of policy networks, the existence and operation of the information society policy networks depend crucially upon access and affordability to advanced information and communications technologies and infrastructure. It can be said that the IRISI/RISI and the TeleCities are policy networks formed and operating in a 'network society', in which 'network Europe' is a part.

The most important features of the two policy networks discussed in this paper, i.e. RISI and TeleCities, include, among others: disseminating European policies and strategies; transnational cooperation; direct interaction with the public authorities at all levels in order to influence European regional policy outcomes (in terms of policy orientation and funding allocation); reliance upon EU funding.

Disseminating European Policies and Strategies

The regions and cities involved in the cross-border policy networks have a consensus that collaboration at the regional level is fast becoming a favoured policy instrument. Apart from the economies of scale and opportunities for mutual learning transnational collaboration offers, regional policy networks provide policymakers and key actors with useful insights into a range of possible policy alternatives.²⁰ In the meantime, regions and cities could act as laboratories for the development of the information society applications and services: '[w]hat collaboration at the regional level does provide however is an "a la carte" menu of policy options and tools with which regions can experiment locally.'²¹

Regarding the role of the newly launched European Regional Information Society Association (eris@), it was suggested that the formation of the organisation is a vital step in developing a strategic approach to the information society and one of its aims is:

'To provide a forum to discuss policy relevant to regional development and the Information Society. We are co-operating with the EC [European Commission] on the Policy Responses requested at the Regional/National/European [level] as we enter the new structural fund programme period.'²²

Table 3. Information Society Policy Dissemination via New Policy Networks

The Bangemann Report	IRISI/RISI/eris@	TeleCities
<p><i>Ten Applications suggested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teleworking ● Distance learning ● A network for universities and research centres ● Telematic services for SMEs ● Road traffic management ● Air traffic control ● Healthcare networks ● Electronic tendering ● Trans-European public administration networks ● City information highways 	<p><i>Working Groups:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Education & training ● Healthcare ● Public administration ● Rural areas ● SMEs ● Social affairs 	<p><i>Thematic Working Groups:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teledemocracy ● Employment and teleworking ● Economic development and SMEs ● Quality of life for disabled people ● Public administration and city information highways ● Education and training ● City healthcare ● Environment ● Technical standards

It can be said that new policy networks have become an effective conduit for disseminating European policies and strategies on the development of the information society. Table 3 compares the six Working Groups of the IRISI/RISI/eris@ network and the nine Thematic Working Groups of the TeleCities network with the ten major applications recommended by the Bangemann Report, one of the key European Commission policy documents launching the European Information Society Programme. It is evident that both the IRISI/RISI/eris@ and the TeleCities networks have organised their Working Groups or priority areas in a way reflecting the recommendations of the Bangemann Report.

Transnational Cooperation

The new geography of the information society offers potentially significant opportunities for European cities and regions, especially those ‘peripheral’ areas in terms of regeneration. On the one hand, more and more cities and regions are becoming aware of the need for drawing up new strategies in order to adapt the regional economic base to the challenges of the new ICT revolution. This would require new ways of collaboration between the ‘key regional players’ or key stakeholders within the city or region involving both the public sector and private sector organisations. On the other hand, cities and regions are encouraged to cooperate with their counterparts in other parts of Europe. The European Commission’s High Level Group of Experts (HLGE) on the information society sees the inter-regional groups, such as the TeleCities and the IRISI/RISI, as

import vehicles for transnational cooperation and sharing of experience and, therefore, recommends:

‘It should be a central policy aim to encourage the cooperation of regions around Europe so that cooperative learning between cities and regions about the IS [Information Society] can take place. These networks should have some justifiable potential for synergies between them for instance by virtue, for example, of similar industrial histories. ICT networks should be developed to encourage the interchange and building-up of experience. Therefore, a major function of these networks should be to help the transfer of experiences to other regions (HLGE, 1996, pp.46-47)’.

With the increased availability and ever declining cost of new ICTs, such as the Internet, video-conferencing and telecommunications, etc., the TeleCities and IRISI/RISI/eris@ networks are attracting an increasingly larger number of members from all over Europe (both the EU and the CEECs) to join the transnational clubs of collaboration. In the commercial world, ‘[c]ompany HQ, in remote Massachusetts or Osaka, care little for where their workers are located as long as they are joined corporately by satellite and fibre-optic links in order to communicate efficiently and to down-load extensive computerised files from one location to another (Federal Trust, 1995, p.16).’ Similar trend is certainly gathering momentum within the public sector.

The legacy of experimental information society policy networks, such as the IRISI, is highly praised by the European Commission and other European regions are encouraged to join the bandwagon:

‘For regions to develop effectively, they must have access to the networks of the Information Society and undertake actions relating to awareness raising, training and support for new SMEs. Regions need to seize the opportunities associated with the Information Society. The IRISI regions have demonstrated that they can and should play a prime role in the development of the European Information Society.’²³

Impact on European Regional Policy Outcomes: Multilevel and Collective Lobbying

The European Commission, particularly DGXVI, DGXIII and DGV, is closely involved in the establishment and operation of the IRISI/RISI/eris@ and TeleCities networks throughout the process. In the case of IRISI, for example, the European Commission is represented in the Network Management Committee. On the one hand, the European Commission is obliged to make sure that the new policy networks would work – they ought to deliver those promised deliverables to the expectation of the EU funding. But on the other hand the close involvement of the European Commission has provided the convenience for these policy networks to lobby the relevant parts of the Commission for more financial support. As a matter of fact, the information society policy networks are active in lobbying not only the European Commission but also other European

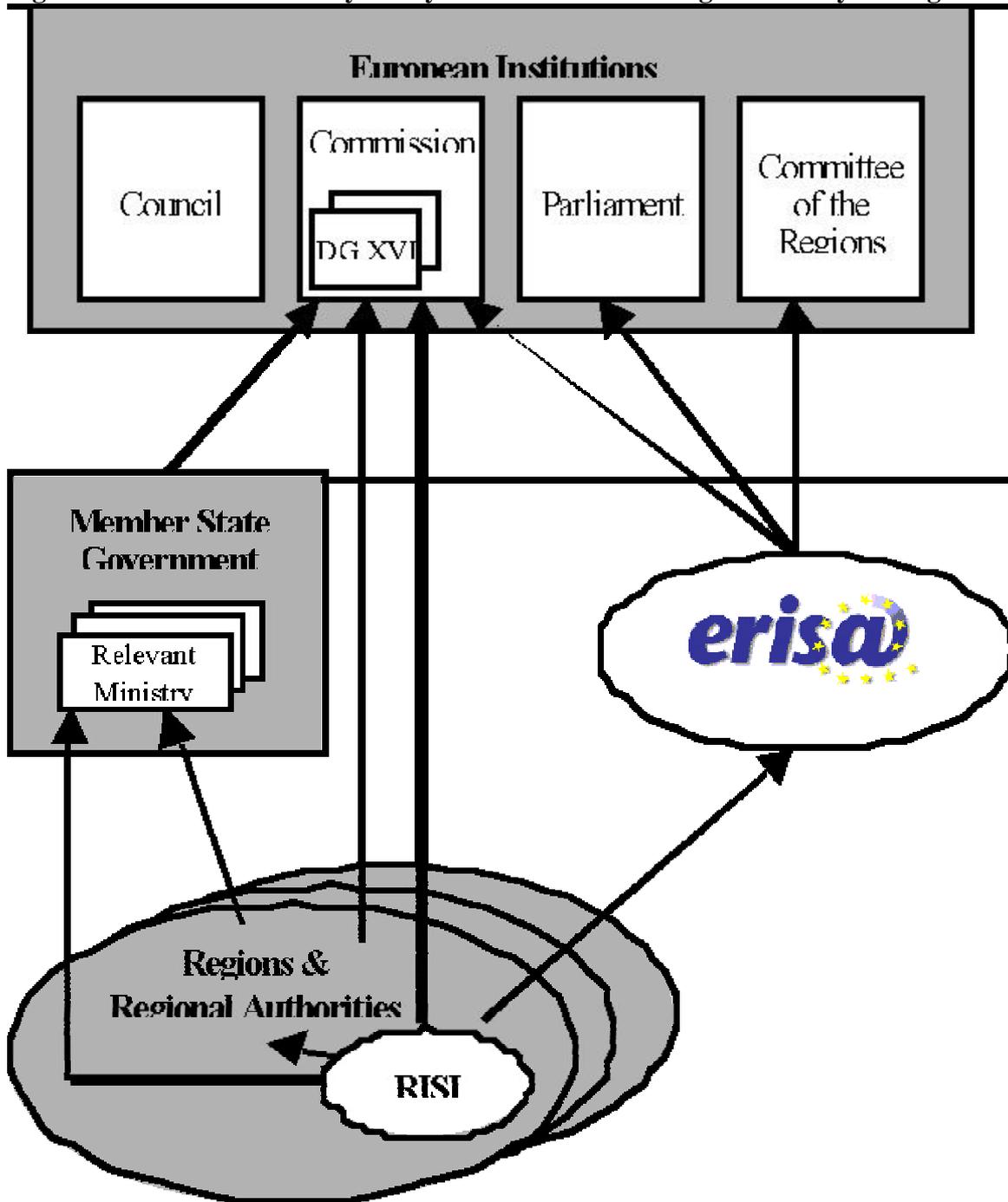
institutions including the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions; they lobby not only the local and regional authorities but also the national governments, which in turn would have influence on all of the European institutions.

Figure 1 is a new model produced by the European Regional Information Society Association (eris@) indicating the main channels of political lobbying used by the RISI members individually and collectively. In order to achieve their objectives, the RISI network exercises its direct lobbying at all levels of policymaking within the entire framework of EU governance: the local and regional level; the national government level and the EU level. During the last round of Structural Funds negotiation, for instance, the RISI network was particularly active. In attempt to achieve ‘a more prominent and coherent place for Information Society developments within the Structural Funds framework’, the eris@ specifically suggested to its members that it would be necessary to do the following:²⁴

- To act very reasonably quickly;
- To be very clear and precise about the changes that are proposed and the arguments and justifications for their adoption;
- To mobilise the support of the regional authority in seeking to influence their national government to bring pressure to bear and to make direct representations to the Commission;
- For RISI projects to make direct approaches themselves to their relevant national ministries and to the Commission;
- RISI projects in the same Member State might consider taking collective action and making joint approaches;
- For RISI Regions to mobilise other non-RISI regions in their country, encouraging them to address the information society in a strategic fashion and to lend their support in efforts to mainstream the information society as a vehicle for regional recovery and development;
- For RISI projects to consider a collective approach through their new Association [i.e. eris@] in making representations to the Commission, the European Parliament and to the Committee of the Regions.

The eris@ also specifically suggested that once Member States have submitted their proposed programmes to the European Commission, RISI projects should enter a dialogue with appropriate desk officers in the relevant Geographical Units of DGV and DGXVI with a view to presenting their information society priorities and the justification for them, thereby seek to persuade desk officers of the importance of including information society measures in the regional Structural Funds programme.²⁵ The RISI network has certainly been successful in winning important friends inside the European Commission. At a recent Annual Conference of the RISI regions in Lübeck, the Director of DGXVI, Graham Meadows, offered himself as the ‘godfather in Brussels’ of the RISI regions.²⁶

Figure 1. Information Society Policy Networks and EU Regional Policymaking



Source: The European Regional Information Society Association (1998), *Newsletter*, Issue No. 4, Special Edition, October-November.

Members of the TeleCities Networks share the view of those of the eris@ and are convinced of the strategic importance of lobbying (or having dialogue with) the European institutions, in particular the European Commission:

‘Cities are the engines of regional economic development. Consequently, they play an important role in the realisation of the Information Society. ... TeleCities also recommends to strengthen the dialogue between cities and the European Commission. This will enable the members of the TeleCities organisation to continue to respond to the needs and aspirations of citizens and enterprises (The TeleCities Network, 1996).’

To be sure, the TeleCities Network has been active in making ‘contribution’ to European policy ever since its inception. For instance, having been consulted in September 1996 by the European Commission in the preparation of the Digital Sites action line of the Telematics Applications Programme, the Network ‘is continuing its lobbying to the European Parliament and others, for this action line to be further developed within 5th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development’ (The TeleCities Network, 1997). In addition to lobbying with respect to the 5th Framework Programme, several TeleCities representatives have been chosen as members of the Strategic Requirements Boards reporting to the European Commission on specific priority areas proposed within this Programme (*Ibid.*).

It is worth noting that each of the Steering Committee members of the TeleCities network shares a specific responsibility for the organisation. In part to ensure the effectiveness of TeleCities’ political lobbying, the responsibility of Lewisham (London), Barcelona and Bologna is to make contacts with the European institutions (e.g. European Parliament, Committee of the Regions) and hold political meetings with the European Commission (DGXIII, III, V, XVI, XXII, etc.) (The TeleCities Network, 1997).

The Role of EU Funding

Article 10 of the ERDF regulation and Article 6 of the ESF regulation provide the necessary legal foundation for innovative actions and experimenting with new policy approaches at regional and European level. Under EU regulation, the ERDF and ESF funding may be used to support innovative actions in regional development through pilot schemes, which encourage the pooling of experience and the development of inter-regional cooperation. One of the priority areas for pilot actions qualified for ERDF and ESF assistance during the 1995-1999 period is the translation of the information society concept into regional development policies, in particular those of the Less Favoured Regions (LFR), in the European Union through stimulating, experimenting, evaluation and diffusion of best practice.

European regions involved in the RISI activities believe that ‘[a]ccess to EU Structural Funds is ... likely to play an important, catalytic role in helping to finance the implementation of RISI strategies.’²⁷ The Chairman of the eris@ Management Committee stated that the objective, from a Regional information Society Initiative (RISI) perspective, ‘is to embed the Information Society into the regional development policies and achieve the best possible outcome in terms of financial assistance for the Information

Society.’²⁸ It is unclear so far to what extent the information society concept has been embedded into the regional development policies. However, the RISI network and its various projects have certainly achieved remarkable, if not ‘the best’, policy outcome in terms of securing EU financial assistance since the mid-1990s. More specifically, the RISI initiative has been allocated ECU20 million and ECU15 million of the ERDF and the ESF funding respectively.²⁹

Table 4. Multi-regional Information Society Projects (RISI 2)

Regional (including lead region)	Project Acronym	Sector	ERDF Funding (ECU)
Madeira , Burgenland, Lappi, Valle d’Aosta, Västerbotten, Hampshire	TOURISM	Tourism	1,744,806
Vorarlberg , Dytikí Elláda, Andalucía, Rhône Alpes, Northern Ireland	RMP	Rural markets	2,125,619
Nordrhein-Westfalen , + Niedersachsen, Wallonie, Vlaanderen, Extremadura, Lorraine, Gelderland, Västernorrland, Northern Ireland	IDAN	Internationalisation of SMEs	1,560,000
Kríti , Epeiros, Islas Baleares, Tampere, Sardegna	TEMeTeN	Health	2,335,069
Galicia , Norte	OUEA	Cooperation between municipalities	1,045,779
Tarn , Andalucía, Haute-Garonne, Etelä-Savo, Dublin and Longford, Scotland	ENTERSKILLSNET	SMEs in rural areas	1,585,840
North West + Galway, West-Vlaanderen, Aalborg, Zeeland, The Wirral	CRISM	SMEs and public services	1,111,000
Total ERDF contribution to the 7 projects (ECU)			11,508,113

Source: Information from Inforegio (1999), http://www.inforegio.org/wbpro/prord/art10/info/info3_en.htm.

In addition to financing the 6 IRISI and 22 RISI initiatives, the European Commission selected 22 RISI projects for financial support following a call for proposals launched in September 1995. Among these projects, 9 were designed for transnational cooperation

between organisations from over 40 EU regions – with 7 projects funded by the ERDF and 2 by the ESF. Table 4 shows that each of the 7 multi-regional information society projects has received substantial ERDF funding. It admitted that, overall, very few information society initiatives would have got off the ground without the substantial input (in terms of leadership, funds and resources) from the public sector.³⁰

Similar to the Regional Information Society Projects, most of the Telecities projects have attracted substantial European finance. Table 5 gives some details about a series of large-scale TeleCities projects partly funded by the EU. The main players within these information society projects are public authorities from European cities. Among other projects, the INFOCITIES project alone has received ECU5 million, which is a substantial amount of public funding.

Table 5. Selected TeleCities Information Society Projects with EU Funding

Partners*	Project Acronym	Starting Date	Duration	Total Budget (ECU)	EU Funding (ECU)
Den Haag , Newcastle, Leeds, Livorno, Roma, Helsinki	EQUALITY	1.1.96	2-year	4,313,500	1,870,000
Antwerp , Nice, Nürnberg, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Amarooussion, Joensuu, Strasbourg, Wien	INFOSOND	1.1.96	2-year	4,984,000	2,000,000
Den Haag , Amarooussion, Antwerp, Barcelona, Institute Municipal d'Informatica, Berlin, Bologna, Lewisham, Salerno, Helsinki, Liège, Manchester, Nice, Ronneby, Stockholm, Vienna, Nord Pas de Calais, Piemonte	INFOCITIES	Dec. 97	2-year	293,000,000	5,000,000
Olivetti ,** Antwerp, Nice, Roma	MAGICA	1.1.96	2-year	3,450,000	1,650,000
Bologna , Antwerp, Barcelona, Lewisham, Augsburg, Thessaloniki	PH-NET	Apr. 96	27-month	1,500,000	750,000
Barcelona , Gothenburg, Cologne, Lewisham, Toulouse, Leipzig, Torino, Las Palmas, Bologna	DALI	1.12.95	18-month	4,418,900	2,000,000
Bologna , Lewisham, Ronneby	DIALOGUE	Jan. 98	1-year	990,000	475,000
University of Newcastle ,** Newcastle, Helsinki, Turin, Thessaloniki, Zeeland	DISTINCT	Feb. 98	2-year	10,800,000	4,000,000
Barcelona , Greenwich, Southwark, Lewisham, Bologna, Göteborg, Cologne	GALA	Jan. 98	2-year	10,800,000	n.a.***

Notes: *The first partner is the coordinator for each project; **Partners other than local or regional authorities in projects are not indicated, unless they are project coordinators; ***EU funding is in the range of 30-40% of the total budget (e.g. EU funding at 35% of the total budget would be ECU3,810,000).

Sources: Information is from the TeleCities Network (1997) and (1998).

Despite the high level of EU funding towards the development of the regional information society initiatives and projects, not all of the regional players were happy about the level of public finance allocated to the RISI network:

‘We cannot progress very far on the very very small amount of funding that currently we have available. We’re talking here about an initiative, a subject matter which is probably the most exciting development of the 1990s and possibly of our lifetime. We’re talking about a method of communication which is going to determine how business is done in the future and yet we are playing with buttons.’³¹

Sharing the view of the RISI Network, members of the TeleCities network were not entirely happy with the current level of EU funding to their information society projects:

‘Although TeleCities appreciate the support given to a number of projects, the cities were anticipating greater support to their initiatives and a higher level of cross-sectoral funding: only a few projects accepted for funding, and even then with dramatically reduced budgets. We believe that additional funds are required from the EC [European Commission] to meet the demand from urban areas.’³²

CONCLUSION

The two cases presented in this paper, the IRISI/RISI/eris@ network and the TeleCities network, suggest that, along with the arrival of the information society, a large number of European regions and cities directly interact with the European institutions (in particular the European Commission) and sometimes bypass their respective national government. The resultant outcome of this process of interaction is two-fold. First, the European Commission managed to compensate its relatively weaker position *vis-à-vis* the governments of the Member States by directly mobilising the policy actors at the subnational government levels, i.e., European regions and cities. It was found in this paper that EU Structural Funds (and information society related funding opportunities) appeared to be the ‘carrots’ used by the European Commission at its discretion. Through acting in this way, ‘the Commission “invented” both new modes of formulating and implementing structural policies and new modes of directing the behaviour of lower-level tiers without itself having far-reaching powers and competence at its disposal (Tömmel, 1998, p.57)’. Whilst representatives of the two major information society policy networks argued that too small a proportion of the European funding had been directed towards the regions and cities, this study found substantial amount of public funding has already been poured into projects under the auspices of these policy networks.

Second, the formation of the inter-regional and transnational policy networks provides new opportunities for the public authorities at the subnational levels (e.g. regional and local) to engage in the mainstream European policymaking process by collective bargaining. The two policy networks have both been actively involved in different ways in lobbying the European institutions (e.g. the European Commission and the European

Parliament) so that the policy outcome would turn out to the advantage of the lobbying bodies. Both the IRISI/RISI/eris@ network and the TeleCities network have devised their strategic and organisational mechanisms to facilitate the process of their political lobbying. Meanwhile, the European institutions provided easy access for the information society policy networks' lobbying efforts.

These above two dimensions, one top-down and another bottom-up, seem to suggest that a new mode of European governance – networked governance or governance by policy networks – is being enhanced, so far as the information society policy process is concerned. This new mode of governance appears to tip the balance of the public debate to the advantage of a 'Europe of the regions'.

Since the early 1990s, when the European Commission set the agenda for developing a 'European information society' or a 'network Europe' (Federal Trust, 1995) or a 'common information area' (European Commission, 1993), other levels of the European public policy actors (e.g. national government level and subnational government levels) have shown, generally speaking, positive responses. The European Commission has, indeed, become the 'star' among all of the policy actors involved in promoting the European information society agenda. The launch of the IRISI/RISI/eris@ network and the TeleCities network are both specific responses at the inter-regional and transnational level by the lower tier public authorities. It can be said that these two policy networks have become the champions of the European information society policy process. This research shows that the arrival of the 'information society has provided a new political opportunity for both the European institutions, principally the European Commission, and the European regional and local authorities at the subnational levels to effectively improve their policymaking profile *vis-à-vis* the national governments.

The theories of policy networks proved to be a useful conceptual tool for this study. Both the IRISI/RISI/eris@ and the TeleCities are new but very complicated policy networks, which should be taken into account by the study of European governance in the information age or 'the network society' (Castells, 1996). There are a number of important features associated with these two networks compared to other types of European policy networks. First of all, the two networks represent a large number of public authorities at the subnational levels. Members of the networks are normally public policy actors, *albeit* at either the local level or regional level. This character differentiates them from many other policy networks. Secondly, the two networks are truly transnational in both its membership and scope of operation. Thirdly, members of the two policy networks are mostly 'policy communities' (regional or municipality information society partnerships). Fourthly, the two policy networks consists of a number of 'issue networks' – the Thematic Working Groups and each of these is inter-regional or transnational in its own right. In short, the study of the IRISI/RISI/eris@ and the TeleCities networks provides very interesting and important cases for furthering our understanding about the policy network theories.

Despite the significance of the IRISI/RISI/eris@ network and the TeleCities to our understanding of European governance in the 'network society', it would be misguided to

suggest that these two are the only policy networks driving forward the European information society process and that policy networks are the only mode of European governance. Rather, there are other forms of transnational collaboration which also, if not equally, contribute to the development of the European information society and different modes of governance that have an impact upon the process of European regional integration in the information age. The latter, however, are beyond the scope of this paper.

In addition, it is worth pointing out that the 'network society' has a strong and growing dimension of development, which is characterised by globalisation. Part of the effect of the process of globalisation is that Europe, including its ICT infrastructure, social institutions and the entire polity, is becoming an integral part of the global information society. That is to say, the consideration about any information society policy network in Europe, such as the IRISI and TeleCities, must be put into an international context. Therefore, any debate about the development of European regional governance in the information age should not be confined exclusively to the geography of the EU.

NOTES

¹ Instead of giving a clear and generic definition, Castells (1996) suggests that '[a] node is the point at which a curve intersects itself. What a node is, concretely speaking, depends on the kind of concrete networks of which we speak. They are stock exchange markets, and their ancillary advanced services centres, in the global financial flows. They are national councils of ministers and European Commissioners in the political network that governs the European Union.' (p.470).

² The term 'policy community' suggests a very close and stable relationship between policy actors – similar to the relationship between the members of a community; whilst an 'issue network' is defined as a shared-knowledge group having to do with some aspect (or some problem) of public policy. For more detailed discussion about different types of policy networks, see Richardson (1996).

³ See <http://www.risi.lu/Internal/EC/gen-inf/concept1.htm> for more details.

⁴ For example, among other international cooperation initiatives, the European Commission recently proposed that an 'International Charter' should be multi-laterally agreed by members of the international community in order to strengthen international cooperation in addressing the issues related to the global information society. See European Commission (1998).

⁵ See report of the *IRISI Conference on Strategies to Build the Information Society in the Regions*, Torino, Italy, 5-7 October 1995. <http://eirs.epri.org/irisi/discussion/torino_report.html>

⁶ The Maastricht Treaty, Article 129b.

⁷ The Bangemann Report. The other nine applications are: Teleworking; Distance Learning; University and Research Networks; Telematic Services for SMEs; Road Traffic Management; Air Traffic control; Health Care Networks; Electronic Tendering; Trans-European Public Administration Network.

⁸ One of the pioneering projects is the Digital City or DDS (*De Digitale Stad*) project, which was launched in 1994 in Amsterdam with financial sponsorship by the Amsterdam City Council and the Dutch Economic Ministry.

⁹ The term 'collective learning' is described as an important feature of policy networks in Lebessis & Paterson (1997).

¹⁰ The six regions are: the Free State of Sachsen (Germany), the Community of Valencia (Spain), the region of Nord-Pas de Calais (France), the region of Central Macedonia (Greece), the region of Piemonte (Italy) and the North West England Region (UK).

¹¹ See http://www_irisi.polito.it/irisi/present.html.

¹² For more information see Hughes, G. (1996), 'Progress Report on the Achievements of the IRISI'. <<http://eris.epri.org/irisi/discussion/paper4.html>>

¹³ The N. W. England IRISI News, 14 April 1997. <<http://www.irisi.org.uk/news.htm>>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Gareth Hughes, IRISI Secretary General, cited in the N. W. England IRISI News, 14 April 1997. It is worth noting that most local and regional authorities have created a designated 'European Office' or, at least a 'European Officer' in charge of European issues including EU funding application. In addition, many some local authorities have also established their own 'Brussels Office', in order to effectively lobby the European Commission on key issues related to the region. For instance, in February 1996 the North West Brussels Office was launched by the North West of England regional authority with Neil Kinnock, the former European Commissioner for transportation, as the principal speaker. The mission of the North West Brussels Office is to lobby and dialogue with the European Commission and other European institutions on important issues such as rail issues, the European Structural Funds, InterReg (the European inter-regional spatial planning programme), the information society (including IRISI) and, overall, the region's European profile. For more details see http://www.u-net.com/northwest/main_top/milest~1/miles0.htm.

¹⁷ The European Commission defines 'key regional players' as 'all major players involved in the regional economy who have a direct involvement or may be directly affected by the development of the information society.' The most important ones, among others, include: the regional and local governments; industrial and employer's associations; trade unions; chambers of commerce; financial institutions; regional development agencies; telecommunication operators and information service providers; media and content providers; education and training institutions; higher education, research and development institutions; relevant users groups and the voluntary sector. <<http://www.risi.lu/Internal/EC/gen-inf/concept2.htm>>

¹⁸ The 13 cities are Amsterdam, Barcelona, Birmingham, Bologna, Den Haag, Hull, Koln, Leeds, Lille, Manchester, Nantes, Nice and Norttingham.

¹⁹ Summarised by Dave Carter, Principal Economic Development Officer at Manchester City Council and former President of TeleCities, in his speech at the *European Digital Cities 1st Conference: The Challenges of the Future*, 8-9 May 1996, Copenhagen.

²⁰ Report of the *IRISI Conference on Strategies to Build the Information Society in the Regions*, Torino, Italy, 5-7 October 1995. <http://eirs.epri.org/irisi/discussion/torino_report.html>

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Speech by Patrick Sullivan, Chairman of the eris@ Management Committee, at the *European Information Society Conference (EISCO)*, 23 October 1998.

²³ Speech by Michael Carpentier, General Director DGXIII, at the *IRISI Conference on Strategies to Build the Information Society in the Regions*, Torino, Italy, 5-7 October 1995.

²⁴ The European Regional Information Society Association (1998), *Newsletter*, Issue No. 4, Special Edition, October-November.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ 'The Godfather in Brussels: We want you to go on.' <<http://www.tsh.de/initiative/english/frandfa.htm>> It is interesting to compare this with the view that '[n]etworks of actors – as opposed to "the Commission" or "the Council" – have become guardians of the policy agenda at the sub-systemic level [or the meso-level] of EU governance, over which political controls are often weak or attenuated' (Peterson, 1997, p.7). So, who is the 'guardian' to whom?

²⁷ The European Regional Information Society Association (1998), *Newsletter*, Issue No. 4, Special Edition, October-November.

²⁸ Introduction to the Special Edition of the European Regional Information Society Association (1998), *op cit.*

²⁹ Note that contribution from EU finance to each RISI project is up to 50% of the total project cost.

³⁰ Speech by the Chairman of the Interim Management Committee of the eris@ (European Regional Information Society Association), at the *European Information Society Conference (EISCO)*, 23 October 1998.

³¹ Speech by Geoffrey Piper, the North West of England Region, at the *IRISI Conference on Strategies to Build the Information Society in the Regions*, Torino, Italy, 5-7 October 1995.

³² The TeleCities Network (1996), *European Cities and the Information Society: Declaration to the European Commission*, Declaration of Antwerp, 27 February.

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