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Regions as Political Actors in the Process
of European Integration.

A Research Design

Beate Kohler-Koch
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Regions as Political Actors in the Process of European Integration

1. Regions in the Context of the European Integration Process

In the present political and scientific discussion about the EC's constitutional development, an important role is ascribed to regions. On the one hand, the strengthening of the sub-national level is seen as a desirable corrective against centralizing tendencies. On the other hand, it is regarded as a "secular trend" which receives additional impulses from the supranational integration process of West European states. Little empirical research has been done, however, to evaluate the political development of regions in the context of the European integration process, the influence they can exert on European policy-making and the factors on which their political influence depend.

At Mannheim we have just started a research project to inquire the relationship between the EC's development since the middle of the 1980s and the seemingly obvious increase in the value of "regions" in European politics. The project has been initiated by me with the support of C. Engel, and is now jointly undertaken by J. Grote, M. Knodt, S. Umberti and me. In the project, the term "regions" refers to the political units below the national level of EC member states, and includes the German Länder, the Spanish Comunidades Autónomas, the Italian regions, and the French régions.

A widespread thesis claims that the extent and the variety with which regions are affected by EC policies stimulates regional willingness to act and that its translation into action is channeled by the prevailing political framework. This project, on the contrary, intends to develop and examine empirically the hypothesis that regions can develop into political actors only to the degree they can offer institutional links for increased communication between public and private interests and to the extent that they can mobilize political as well as administrative resources to protect themselves against undesired consequences of the integration process to profit from European policies. Given the difference in resources available and the different ability to mobilize these resources as well as the inertia of existing institutional structures, a highly unequal political development of regions is to be expected which can neither be corrected in the short term by means of constitutional changes nor be easily transformed according to functional imperatives.

Therefore, the aim of the project is to analyse the structure and density of communicative and interactive links between public and private interests on the regional level, to show the interaction between Europeanization and regionalization of the organization of these interests and to come to an assessment of the relative political weight of regions as political actors in European politics. The selection of regions for the empirical study was guided by the desire to control the variation of certain variables, such as e.g. their constitutional status, their economic strength and their dependency from EC policies or funds. The empirical data will be based primarily on primary sources, expert interviews and questionnaires which will be supplemented by selected case studies in three different policy fields.

2. Between Supranational Integration and Regional Emancipation

The regional dimension of Western European integration has been mainly discussed in terms of economic problems related to the first (Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom) and to a greater extent to the second (Greece) and third (Spain, Portugal) enlargement of the EC. This debate was characterized by fears of an ever-widening gap between center and periphery as a result of the dynamics of the Common Market which should be compensated by an active regional policy of the European Community. The political importance of regions only appeared later, namely after the adoption of the Internal Market program and the Single European Act. However, this development should not be interpreted exclusively as a reaction to increased economic integration but is a result of the coincidence between the increasing importance of regions as political actors on the member state level and their integration into the Community's decision-making process.

2.1. *Growing Importance and Different Regional Impact of Economic Integration and Supranational Regulation*

The completion of the Internal Market and the increase of regulatory policies of the EC have noticeably increased the importance of the EC for its citizens. This development is partly a result of the Internal Market itself, partly a consequence of the communitarization of additional policy fields by the Single European Act and the European Union Treaty (e.g. economic and social cohesion/regional policy, research and technological development policy, environmental policy, economic and monetary union, etc.). The legal harmonization necessary for the functioning of the Community and the uniform application of Community law in the member states are generally accepted in the

interest of fair competition and equal opportunities. In concrete cases, however, demands for a stronger consideration of national and - to an increasing extent - regional and local circumstances and preferences are increasingly voiced. This encourages latent demands for a strengthening of regional and even local political responsibility. In the beginning, it were those regions that were already efficient political actors, such as the German Länder and the Spanish Comunidades Autónomas, which demanded an active representation of their interests.

The reasons for this development can be found primarily in the following considerations:

- Since its beginning, the Internal Market program has been considered as a comprehensive package of Community legislation with a considerably higher degree of regulatory density and regulatory depth as compared to previous EC legislation. The principle of "mutual recognition" of national rules (Commission 1985; Bruha 1986) suggested by the Commission in its White Paper on the completion of the Internal Market, provided for the retention of national/regional preferences in the sense of a "regulatory competition". In the American discussion on federalism, this principle is regarded as an alternative to centralization (Sternberg 1990). Already at an early stage, however, legal scholarship (Joerges 1991) and experience suggested that the completion of the Internal Market would still require a high degree of harmonization (Waelbroek 1988; Majone 1992).
- The expected increase in density and depth of EC regulation intensified the desire of political actors to obtain specific information about their particular fields of interest with regard to planned EC legislation. This desire was even increased by the tight schedule for the completion of the Internal Market and changes in the EC's decision-making procedures (Engel/Borrmann, 1992) which were expected to lead to a considerable acceleration of the EC decision-making process.
- In addition to measures related to the Internal Market, the increase of Community competence after the adoption of the Single European Act has considerably increased the extent of supranational regulation in several policy fields (Majone 1990). The distributive and partly even redistributive consequences of "cohesion policy" (regional policy, measures of the structural funds and of the cohesion fund) and of research and technological development policy are not very impressive at European or even at member state level, but very important at the regional level. Even the regulatory effects of environmental policy, which is formally a Community competence since the Single European Act, have an important impact on the

responsibilities of regional and local authorities in this field (Windhoff-Héritier 1992). In addition, EC environmental policy has strong indirect regional and local consequences as it intervenes particularly in those economic sectors which are characterized by a strong regional concentration (chemical industry). The Maastricht Treaty provides for a further increase of EC regulatory competencies in old and new policy fields and an increase of the financial means of the different funds. Beyond the changes of the legal basis and the actual increase of Community regulation, a change of perception is remarkable: there is broad evidence that political actors at the regional as well as at the local level attribute a considerably higher potential for intervention to the EC. For the regions, this results in attempts to strengthen their own action capacities since the representation of their interests by the national level seems no longer assured.

2.2. *Revaluation of Regions by National Constitutional or Administrative Reforms*

Due to partly differing national reasons, a strengthening of the sub-national level in several EC member states could be observed since the 1970s (Mény 1982) and increasingly since the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. In different forms and to differing degrees, this policy has led to a strengthening or the establishment of a political entity at regional level. One has to mention the establishment of regions in Italy in 1970, in Belgium in 1980¹ and in France in 1982², as well as the politics of autonomy in Spain from 1978 to 1984, which led to the establishment of 17 *Comunidades Autónomas*³. Whereas the *Länder*/regions in Belgium, Germany, Spain and Italy have legislative powers, the regional levels of all other EC member states only carry out administrative tasks under the supervision of the central government. Beyond the classic areas of regional competencies like culture, tourism and agriculture, economic policy competencies are among the important new tasks the regions obtained in the process of

¹. Three "communities" responsible for culture and education exist already since 1970. The three regions do not cover the same territory than these communities. In 1988, another constitutional change was adopted which made the overwhelming part of economic policy a regional competence. Those competencies constitute the major part of their present ones. On the process of regionalization in Belgium and the structure of the Belgian state, see Delpérée, 1989; Uyttendaele, 1991.

². Regions existed already as administrative units but became independent authorities by law No. 213/82 ("loi Deferre"). They were given concrete competencies only in the following years and can be properly called regional authorities only since 1986 when regional councils were elected for the first time. For the French process of decentralization see the standard volume by Turpin, 1987.

³. For a general account of decentralizing tendencies in EC member states, see Voß, 1989; for more recent literature, see Engel, 1992, and Blanke, 1991, for Belgium, Italy and Spain.

decentralization. Regions as new political actors were never merely established or strengthened in order to satisfy demands for cultural autonomy or self-determination but always as institutions for economic guidance and environmental regulation at the intermediary level.

The political and/or administrative strengthening of the sub-state level is explained in the literature as the result of different motives and constraints of action (Larroque 1984: 26 seq.; Parlamento Europeo 1988, Parte B: 56 seq.; Schütz 1983: 162 seq.):

- a) The increasing complexity of economic planning and decision-making and the related increase in scope of public policies and interventions made the regionalization of economic planning more promising. Furthermore regional disparities in economic development which are still existing or even increasing and the accelerated urbanization with its economic and social consequences put greater pressure on politicians to take into account the regional dimension of economic planning.
- b) The increasing overload and incompetence of the political and administrative center could be met by a regionalized system of interest groups, political parties, governments and administrations. As it was closer to the problems at stake, this system could take decisions that were more competent, more rational and better adapted to the respective regional situations and thus increase the efficiency of the state as a whole.
- c) The financial costs for such a "double" system would be more than compensated by an intensified participation and integration of individuals as well as of regional parties and elites.
- d) The demand underlying regionalism in a narrow sense is the protection of the ethnic, cultural and linguistic features of specific regions. Contrary to expectations of a leveling of sub-national factors as a result of modernization, this demand does not vanish but is even revived. It can only be understood, the literature argues, in the context of the planning and decision-making machinery of modern industrialized states which is perceived as anonymous and inhumane. Irrespective of their level of economic development, regions make demands for the recognition of regional identities, regional languages and culture which obviously could be realized best in a system of regional autonomy (Schütz 1983: 183; on regionalism in more detail see Gerdes 1984, 1985, 1987; Hueglin 1986, 1989; Krosigk 1980;

Nohlen 1980, 1985; Rokkan 1982, 1983, 1987; Schultze/Sturm 1983; Voigt 1989; Wehling 1987).

Although there is no model of decentralization valid for all European states, the structural changes all point in one direction insofar as domestic policies of decentralization have led to the strengthening or the establishment of an additional political level in several EC member states.

As a consequence, the EC Commission was increasingly confronted with the Problem of growing economic and industrial policy activities on the regional level which it was unable to control. In particular with regard to the aim of equal competition throughout the EC, this had undesired consequences. As an example, the Commission faced increasing difficulties in controlling state aids because a growing portion of these aids was accorded by the regional level which was beyond the supervision capabilities of the Commission. Though it is true that since the judgment of the European Court of Justice (in the case *Steinike and Weinling versus Federal Republic of Germany* in 1977), state aids by local and regional authorities fall under the scope of art. 92 of the EEC-Treaty and have therefore to be notified to the Commission in the same way as national subsidies, the Commission was overburdened in practice and could not carry out its task of supervision faced with the increasing fragmentation of the practice of state aids.

At the same time, the Commission positively valued the increasing role of the regions as this process created or strengthened institutions which could concentrate and articulate regional interests and could therefore serve as a discussion partner for a realistic organization of EC policy and as an addressee in the implementation process. The Commission has strongly promoted the establishment of the regions as a third political level in the Community because it considered them to be a promising link for its modernization strategy (above all in regional development policy). As they were regarded as being closer to the citizen, regions became an important source of legitimation in order to compensate the loss of legitimacy resulting from the transfer of political regulation from the national to the supranational level.

2.3. Strengthening of the regional component in the constitutional development of the EC

The European Union Treaty and its agreement about a transfer of more political competences to the EC level have caused demands for enhanced democratic control and

more participation. Yet, institutional reforms as foreseen by the Treaty make evident that there is little reason to believe in a rapid transformation of the EC into a democratic system comparable to that of the individual member states. The Community is likely to remain what it has been before - a transnational bargaining system (Scharpf 1993), with the member states and, with increasing importance, the regions as the main legitimating forces of European politics. An integration of regional and, eventually, communal authorities into the EC's decision-making system has been considered, therefore, one of the important subjects for the future.

The range of potentially institutionalized modes of participation for these actors is rather large. It spans from participatory rights and practices of consultation at the national level to the legally guaranteed or merely formally ratified inclusion into one or more consultative committees of the Commission or the Council to, finally, the participation in specially created bodies for joint policy-making at EC level. There has been, in the past, a highly selective representation of regional interests within the Community's institutions. Essentially, this had to do with the fact that decisions concerning the incorporation into existing European policy networks have remained under national prerogative, and were dependent on national constitutional law and the different modes of interaction between subnational and central authorities within the individual member states. It has so far only been the Belgium regions and communities and the German Länder which have sent observers or representatives to the meetings of EC consultative and advisory committees.

The institutionalization of the "Advisory Committee of Local and Regional Authorities of the EC" by the Commission, which represents regional and communal bodies from all member states and consists of 42 members, has been a first step toward a proper representation at EC level. The decision to establish a "Committee of the Regions" largely corresponds to the logic of previous moves towards more integration in that those actors who potentially could threaten a deepening of further EC initiatives, are being formally incorporated into decision-making processes in order to neutralize their opposition, guarantee their "loyalty", and, finally, broaden the legitimacy of the overall system. The Maastricht Treaty, hence, now provides for a formal representation of regions within the institutional system of the Community (Art. 198a-198c). For the time being little can be said with regard to this body's future composition and political role. In addition, the formal incorporation of the subsidiarity principle by the EU Treaty is widely seen as a decisive factor in favour of strengthening the federal elements in the EC's political system.

Less obvious, but nevertheless with far more implications for the entire institutional set-up, are the modifications that have been carried out within individual policy domains. For example, the recent reform of the Community's regional policy in 1988, in insisting on a clear-cut division between design, decision-making, and monitoring of policies and on the obligation to insert individual development projects into an encompassing regional plan, is clearly designed in a way as to support the regions' political and administrative capacity to act. So far, only few authors have made these developments the subject of empirical analysis (Tömmel 1992) - yet, the expectation that similar initiatives may lead to substantial institutional changes in medium term is quite reasonable.

Even if one considers that we have to deal, essentially, with three independent trends, it is likely that their coincidence will result in a mutually reinforcing process. According to functionalist expectations, these trends fit into a logic of development that ultimately would lead to an increased relevance of regional levels of government for the shaping of Europe: the dependence of Europe's internal structure on the external environment, in this view, is aggravated by the deepening of integration; strategies of adaptation are called for, hence, in order to avoid that impacts of this kind turn into "vulnerability". Strategies should be elaborated at the level at which most of the costs are incurring. In other words, actors most concerned at that level are advised to develop a proper international view and, subsequently, a real capacity to act transnationally in order to participate in the collective management and regulation of problems and to avoid negative distributional and other undesired side-effects triggered off by EC policies. One of the implications of such a scenario is that interdependence cannot merely be seen as a result of "multiple channels of contact" (Keohane/Nye 1977), but itself produces such contacts. Where external shocks are exerted on a political actor that possesses, at least to some extent, a proper strategic capacity to act, stimuli of this kind will lead, *ceteris paribus*, to a widening of these capacities. Conceptual models, such as the present one, that make use of the paradigm of interdependence, are less in danger of narrowing the research perspective as has indeed been the case with most studies. They are characterized by:

- a) a narrow focus on the process of EC policy formulation coupled with considerable disconcern about the importance of the latter for the implementation of these policies;
- b) a narrow focus on the representation of regional interests without taking into account internal processes of structural adaptation which, ultimately, enables a more productive and efficient processing of the effects of interdependence.

More than anything else, using the interdependence paradigm should help us avoiding a view that sees the State or, alternatively, only regional authorities as the exclusively relevant political actors. In such a scenario, we would have to recognize the potential effects that both the organizational structure and action strategies of non-public transnational actors (e.g. privately organized interests) could have on the capacity of regions to represent their interests externally. Or, in other words, we would have to recognize that modifications in the organizational format of European-wide private interests possess many implications for the relative importance and organizational format of public interests.

2.4. Modifications in the organizational structure of public and private interests regarding EC policies

The implementation of the internal market program has been accompanied by substantial changes concerning the format of private interest representation in the European Community (Kohler-Koch 1992a, 1992b). Until the late 1980s, this latter has been characterized by a clear dominance of European peak associations. Apart from some few exceptions, most of these peak associations had been structured in form of federations. Their main *raison d'être* had been the mutual exchange of information as well as the consultation and coordination of strategies of affiliated organizations rather than the proper representation of common interests. Caused, essentially, by the prominent position of the Council of Ministers in EC decision-making, interest representation continued to occur, predominantly, at the national level with national governments and national interest associations as the main organizational actors. Contrary to the above, there has been a clear process of pluralization of interest representation at EC level since about the mid-1980s (Schmitter/Streeck 1991). This re-structuring of the European associational map is characterized, on the one hand, by an institutionalization of direct representations by national peak-, branch-, and even professional associations as well as by a growing number of individual enterprises seeking direct access at EC level. On the other hand, some of the larger European peak and branch associations have also changed their internal structure, now allowing for more 'voice' exerted by single firms in co-determining the activities of the organization. Apart from that, some individual national associations and large enterprises have started forming new EC-wide organizations and there is evidence, now, for a multitude of coalitions, some being of an ad-hoc nature, some representing permanent structures, in which interest associations, single firms, and "consultants" are being linked to the governments of EC member states. What once

merely were secondary characteristics, can now be taken as the primary distinction between arrangements of this sort: sectoral differences in the degree of Europeanization of single policy domains and in the internationalization and concentration of individual branches (Greenwood et. al. 1992). In general, there have been obvious increases in the number of interest representatives in Brussels, a new style of lobbying, and a restructuring of interest representation that have all lasting implications for the design of European interest politics also at the national level (van Schendelen 1992).

This process of pluralization of interest representation opens many opportunities and new access points for regions that wish to channel their demands directly into the EC institutions in Brussels by making active use of coalitions with private actors and associations.

One of the best examples for changes that have taken place in regional interest representation are the German *Länder*. While the *Länder*, until the mid-1980s, pursued their interests mainly by way of strong consultation and coordination with the Federal government (see Morawitz 1981 and, for regional structural policies, Neupert 1986), after 1985, they have become the protagonists among European regions, as regards the creation of proper devices for interest representation in Brussels. Meanwhile, about 40 so-called "information offices" have been established by various regional and local bodies. In the majority of cases, these offices are being run by single regions, while it still remains an exception that two or more regions jointly manage an office for the representation of common interests. Meanwhile, several regional authorities have made use of the instrument of establishing own offices for the pursuit of territorial concerns. These are, in particular, the German *Länder* which - apart from Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein that run a joint office - are all endowed with own listening posts in Brussels. To these have to be added the Spanish "Autonomous Communities" (Comunidades Autónomas), and the majority of the French, British, and Belgian regions as well as Danish municipalities. There are some cases, where regions employ professional lobbyists to perform that task. Despite the constitutional limits impeding external activities of regions in Italy, some of this country's regions have recently established a joint-office (the *Ufficio del Mezzogiorno* gathering all of the Southern regions) and other Italian regions are likely to follow soon. The Italian regions have little alternatives to either using informal contacts to their central governments or to establishing a direct

representation in Brussels to make their voice heard, whereas, in the case of the German Länder, there exists a broad range of constitutionally guaranteed ways to influence or even take part in EC-policies of the Federal Government (Schmidt-Meinecke 1988, Fuhrmann-Mittlmeier 1991). The operation of regional political actors in Brussels, hence, is characterized by a strong selectivity. This appears to be even more obvious, if one considers the fact that institutionalized presence is but one of a larger range of possibilities for regional public interests to contact EC institutions (primarily the Commission) and that many less-official and informal contact mechanisms have to be added to this.

Systematic information on the activities of regional offices is still lacking (but see for the German *Länderbüros*: Zumschlinge 1989, Fastenrath 1990). Yet, there is some evidence for the fact that, apart from the defense of common regional competences (e.g. educational policy), most of these offices' activities are concerned with improving access to resources from the EC's structural funds and with influencing other EC policies that may be relevant for the conduct of regional economic policy. In some cases, there are organizational correspondences to the above within the administrative structures at the regional level. For example, since 1990, Baden-Württemberg's ministry for economics is employing a special adviser whose main task consists in "checking all of the European programs for research and technology and of other development initiatives by the Community that might be of interest to local enterprises and institutions" (Mittelstandsbericht 1990). More than in this case, the neat interpenetration of public and private interests operating at the regional level is particularly evident with regards to the offices of some of the Spanish Autonomous Communities: the "Patronat Catalan pro Europa" is a joint creation by the regional government, the catalan business associations, local universities and research institutes.

There is another device, at European level, for the representation of regional interests in Brussels - the Assembly of Regions (VRE). Yet, this peak associations of regions which, in a sense, has copied the organizational structure of private interest federations, is of considerably less relevance if compared to the regional offices. Its functions hardly go beyond the exchange of general information among affiliated regions (not all Community regions form part of this body) and the formulation of general demands to be brought forward versus the EC. More significant are the functions of the irregular conferences

"Europe of the Regions" which,, for example, represented the common interests of regional bodies to the intergovernmental conferences of the Community.

3. The state of the art

It is illuminating that assessments about the future role of regions as potential participants to European policy processes are as ambivalent as are the judgements concerning the desirability or, the opposite view, the dangers of such a development. Essentially, there appear to be three reasons for this indeterminacy:

3.1. *The omission of regions in previous integration theory*

Early debates on European integration since the 1960s have started addressing the problem of what role would have to be accredited to the future nation state in a process of accelerated integration. One suggestion has been, to categorize various integration theories according to the most likely "end state" of integration predicted by them, i.e. a transformation or a strengthening of national statehood. Another question of concern to that debate has been to identify the level that would emerge as the most appropriate one for the political organization of Europe. Already toward the end of the 1960s, it has been underlined by some authors that the regional level would play an increasingly important role in this respect and, by others, a "Europe of the Regions" has been seriously considered as a potential mode of governance (e.g. Feld 1975, Kalk 1971, Rhodes 1974, MacFarquar 1978). Meanwhile, also caused by territorial decentralization in some of the member states and by increasingly relevant demands for more regional autonomy, many scholars discuss the process in terms of a simultaneous occurrence of supranational integration on the one hand and a re-enforcement of regional autonomy and identity on the other. Literature dealing with various aspects of a "Europe of the Regions" has steadily increased since about 1986 (e.g. Risq 1986, Anderson 1990, Auby 1990, Bauer 1991, Engel 1991, Luchaire 1990, Romus 1990, Sérignan 1989, Engel 1992). The question, however, of how this simultaneous occurrence would have to be explained or analyzed continues to be under-researched (except, perhaps, for very recent contributions such as Sharpe 1993). In any case, the regional dimension of the integration process has been made subject to scientific discourse and deliberation only since a couple of years, and a proper empirically-grounded theory is not yet available. A side-effect of this generalized lack of more systematic attempts to explain apparently

contradictory developments is the co-existence of hypotheses that are mutually exclusive. One maintains that the re-enforcement of regional autonomy versus the nation state would have been caused by European integration, the other interprets the present state of affairs in terms of a simultaneous, but not interdependent, dispute about the territorial organization of politics ("territorial politics") in which both the regional and the supranational dimensions would appear intrinsically nested within each other (Keating and Jones 1991).

3.2. *The absence of an empirically-grounded normative theory on transnational bargaining systems*

Although the Maastricht Treaty could be interpreted in terms of an attempt to re-establish, at the supranational level, the action capacity that has been sacrificed at the national level in the course of implementing the internal market program, possible modifications and institutional re-arrangements of the Community's decision-making system - apart, perhaps, from the scenario of a European central bank - continue to be perceived in terms of a "transnational bargaining system" (Scharpf 1993). Even if we do not consider the likely widening of the Community in the medium term - a development that may well block the process of deepening and the concurrent institutional reform of the Community's present governance structure - it would be premature to expect from the forthcoming conference (1996) intended to subject the Treaty to revision, any clear indication for something like European "nation-building" or "Staatswerdung" (Wildenmann 1991) in the sense of an institutional development that would bring the EC close to the hierarchical model of the modern state.

Starting from considerations of this kind, scientific attention is increasingly oriented toward the question of how bargaining systems would have to be evaluated from a political science point of view and which role would have to be accredited to regions in the interest of adding a mechanism of federal checks and balances to the EC system. Making recourse to the Coase-theorem of institutional economics, Scharpf (1993) has demonstrated that cooperative bargaining systems do not necessarily perform worse than strictly hierarchical systems, as far as welfare-maximizing policies are concerned. At the same time, however, there continues to be a lack of empirical studies that would shed more light on the mechanisms for conflict resolution, for problem solving, for the dynamics inherent in bargaining processes, for the exertion of power and of consensual

policies in joint-policy systems operating transnationally. Apart from the lack of empirical studies, present scientific discourse is void of "a normative theory of political responsibility and of democratic participation that would correspond to the complexities of joint-policy systems" (Scharpf 1992). Such a normative theory would also have to consider the height of the present German debate on societal guidance - that is, it could not ignore the question raised by Luhmann (1984, see also the discussion between Scharpf and Luhmann of 1989), how we would have to perceive the external guidance of individual societal subsystems. In other words, the traditional model of the integrative and hierarchically coordinating state that has, in the past, been associated with political responsiveness and democratic participation, can not be taken as an analytic yardstick for the interpretation of new forms of governance currently emerging at different levels of territorial complexity. What has to be achieved, rather, is a convincing response to the question of how one might guarantee a maximum of participation, of distributive justice, of problem-solving capacity and of the capacity to organize consensus in a joint-policy system consisting of three levels - all this under conditions of ever-increasing risk (Willke 1983, 1989; Grote 1993). The present research project has a strong empirical orientation and, also, is subject to a deadline that do not allow for major contributions to theory-building. Yet, theoretical work and considerations of the kind mentioned in precedence shall guide our research and shall be followed throughout the entire project.

3.3. *The missing link between the hypothesis about the functionality of low-level political organization and the process of supranational integration*

There has been, in a majority of Western European countries since about the 1970s, a steady increase in the importance of regional and other local authorities as regards the management of structural, of technology, and of industrial policies (Marcou 1988). Moreover, there seems to be a relatively broad consensus among participants of the academic discussion of these developments (for an overview: Windhoff-Heritier 1992) that the regional or municipal level of government would be better equipped for coordinating activities of public and private actors in the interest of technological and economic development. The role of regional policies and of regional administration, accordingly, is not anymore limited to the mere implementation of central policies but, rather, aims at coordinating, moderating, and networking the activities of the most different categories of actors at that level (Drexler 1989, Sturm 1991). Some individual studies on single regions have provided ample evidence for this new and innovative role (Sabel et.al. 1987, Esser 1989, Bennet and Krebs 1991). There is much reason to

believe, therefore, that a regional political system being endowed with a sufficient number of resources such as, e.g., action capacity, responsiveness, technological know how and other economic and political competences, has become an important factor for economic success - even more so within the environmental conditions of a European Internal Market (Kruse 1990, Scharpf 1990, Junne 1990, Felder 1992).

The hypothesis of a "regionalization of the European space" having been advanced by Fritz Scharpf (1990), even exceeds the above characterization in that it emphasizes the economic and political action capacity of regions as one of the main determinants of competition in the Internal Market. Despite an ever increasing economic integration of national markets, there has continued to be a sustained trend toward protectionism by way of issuing exclusive norms and standards and other types of administrative regulations. The abolishment of these protective measures as a consequence of the implementation of the Internal Market calls for new adaptive strategies which, in order to produce their desired effects, have to be elaborated both with maximal flexibility and maximal speed at the most appropriate territorial level. To pose it in another way: only a fully-fledged common market reveals the advantages that are likely to result from the existence of competent and politically responsible actors at the regional level and this, in turn, also increases the attractiveness of federal types of political organization for most of the big member states of the Community.

Yet, there remain two weak points in such a conception calling for further investigation. None of these points has been systematically addressed by existing research:

- on the one hand, there has been little agreement so far as to how conceptualize the importance of space for a successful organization of economic development. Does the latter merely correspond to and, hence, reinforce already existing arrangements at the most appropriate territorial level (the region), or does it not also contribute to the very creation and setting-up of such structures at that level?
- on the other hand, there continues to be considerable disagreement about the optimal size of regions: the German Länder, for example, are considered by some as being too big and by some others as perfectly corresponding in their size to tackle the tasks of both political and economic guidance and of legitimation and conflict regulation (Scharpf 1990, Esser 1989).

To summarize, it could be said that the relation and simultaneous occurrence between reinforced European integration and a "regionalization of the European space" have only

in part been made subject to scientific research (e.g. by Sharpe 1993 and Keating 1993). Moreover, the much less-demanding question of whether a coordination of private and public interests at the regional level may or may not determine the possibilities for pursuing regional demands in Europe has not been studied systematically. One of the reasons for the above shortcomings, lies in the almost exclusive concern of the neo-corporatist debate for national-level agreements and arrangements.

3.4. Neo-corporatist research and its lacking concern for sub- and supranational policy arrangements at sub- and supranational levels

There has been, during the first phase of the debate on neo-corporatism, an almost exclusive focus on centralized institutions for the concertation of business and labour interests with the state - a fact further being reinforced by interest group research in general which, equally, had emphasized the study of national-level associations. In both of the above traditions, the local base and regional anchoring of organized interests has escaped the attention of most scholars. This has changed since the mid-1980s, when scholars participating in the debate increasingly addressed the problem of interorganizational networks made up of local or regional administration and privately organized interests. Several reasons seem to account for this shift in analytic perspective: scholars started to re-discover the persistence of regionalist attitudes and paid increasing attention to the re-emergence of autonomist movements and ideologies. Apart from that, many Western European countries had embarked on decentralization since the early 1970s. Also, the demise of global concertation and Keynesian macro-economic steering has been accompanied by a paradigm shift of the corporatist debate leading to the analysis of corporatist arrangements at the meso (i.e. sectoral) or the micro (i.e. the enterprise) levels. Despite this shift, however, it has also been observed that most of the literature dealing with territorial or, for that matter, with regional politics, has omitted the role of (business interest) associations operating at that level (Coleman and Jacek 1989) - a fact not having substantially changed until today (for the few exceptions see Anderson 1991, Grote 1992, Mayntz 1990, Trigilia 1989). Most of the work on corporatist arrangements at the meso-level (Cawson 1986) or the micro-level did not explicitly address the role of territorial intermediary agencies such as the regions (Sharpe 1991, 1993) but continued to be concerned with either sectoral or enterprise arrangements. Interest politics at various territorial levels of complexity have been dealt with only in a marginal fashion (Heinze 1981, Cawson 1986). In general, there are only few studies which explicitly address the problem of relations between private and public

actors at lower levels of territorial complexity or, for that matter, would deal with the regional resource base of organized interests.

The only exception to that rule are publications on the chamber system as a particular form of economic interest representation (Adam 1979, Myrzić 1984). Because of their public status, chambers, indeed, do perform the function of interest aggregation at the regional level without, however, representing an appropriate example for the study of interdependence in bargained system in which private interests are intrinsically linked to regional, or otherwise local, public authorities. The wide-spread view that "municipal forms of corporatism" (Thränhardt 1981) and "artificially constructed forms of corporatism at the local and regional level" (Heinze and Voelzkow 1990) would be decisive factors for economic development, is not met by a sufficient extent of empirical work on associational politics or on the interorganizational relations between private and public actors at that level. One of the few exceptions is the edited volume by Coleman and Jacek (1989, but see also Grote 1992) in which both aspects are explicitly addressed: the authors emphasize both the problem of policy and market strategies of organized interests and the question to what extent specific interests or branches would find their main resource base and cultural anchoring in regions. In their final conclusions, Schmitter and Lanzalaco underline that the regional or meso-level would have increasing relevance for the strategies of privately organized actors, since this level would provide for many opportunities of interest aggregation, conflict resolution and transforming pragmatic experiments into practise.

What has been said above with respect to the study of private-public arrangements at the regional level, is equally true for empirical research on the representation of regional interests at the level of the Community. The few exceptions mainly deal with the so-called "information offices" established by the German Länder or by other European regions. Most of these studies are of legal origin which also explains their almost exclusive concern for the problem to what extent the legal status of such offices is, actually, compatible with the monopoly of the state to conduct all kinds of foreign policies (Zumschlinge 1989, Fastenrath 1990, Blanke 1991; for an evaluation of the "Nebenaußenpolitik of the German Länder" see Nass 1986). None of these studies allows for deeper insights into the effective capacity of these offices to act and insert themselves into Community decision processes. Political science has mostly omitted the

existence of these developments. Even where the information offices in Brussels have been mentioned to explain the relations between the Länder-level and the level of EC institutions, systematic research on their activities and the attempt to categorize development trends at EC level and structures for interest intermediation at that level are lacking (but see Kohler-Koch 1992a, 1992b). The same applies to the study of regional offices set up by other European local authorities (Serignan 1989, Carpentier and Engel 1992, for France: Luchaire 1990). In more recent work carried out on European-level associations, scholars have come to recognize that devices for regional representation do form part of EC-lobbyism as much as do private interest organizations (Julien 1990, Anderson and Eliassen 1991, van Schendelen 1992). What remains unclear, is information about the precise tasks and activities of these regional representations, their exact legal and political status, their management structures, their real influence and, in general, about their political relevance.

The research situation appears to be much better where procedures are concerned that lie within single nation states, for example, the possibilities of regions to participate both bottom up (policy formulation) and top down (implementation) in the shaping of EC policies. Although the number of studies published on these matters has steadily increased over the last years, most work deals merely with the formal and institutionalized channels for interest mediation while more informal ways of access remain largely unknown (for Germany: Schmidt-Meinecke 1988, Engel 1992; for Spain: Gonzales Laxe 1989, Perez Gonzales 1989, Umberti 1991).

Something similar could be said with regard to other member states, namely Belgium and Italy (Belgium: Delperee and Lejeune 1988; Italy: Merloni 1985, Pocar 1988, Agostini 1990). One of the few comparative studies on formal participatory mechanisms of the EC for Länder and other European regions is provided by Engel (1992).

4. Research outline

Central hypothesis of the project is that regions will become effective political actors if they

- are able to mobilize political and administrative resources and if they
- can offer institutional links for an intensified communication between public and private interests.

This capacity will depend on

- the different constitutional positions of regions in the respective member-states,
- the degree and way in which they are affected by European regulation and the development of the Common Market,
- the administrative and financial resources,
- the institutional and informal channels of communication between public and private interests on the regional level.

In order to find out the relative weight of those different factors we chose those regions and issue areas which allowed for a controlled variation of at least two of these variables.

4.1. Selecting the regions

The choice of the regions was made according to the following criteria:

- constitutional rights of regions,
- economic strength, choosing a comparatively weak and a comparatively strong region in each country; both regions are supposed to be in a relatively equal position in each of the countries,
- comparable size of the regions and as far as possible comparable voting power.

With reference to the constitutional setting 4 among the 12 member-states of the community were chosen which could be ascribed to a continuum from "federal state" (Federal Republic of Germany), "regionalized state" (Spain and Italy) to "decentralized state" (France). The main differences can be summarized as follows:

- in contrast to the German Länder, the regions of Spain, Italy and France are not represented in the political decision-making process of the central state,
- it is only in the Federal Republic of Germany, in Spain and in Italy that the regions have legislative competences; in France they are restricted to carrying out administrative tasks;
- the scope of competences varies considerably. In the *Federal Republic of Germany* all Länder have an identical status and enjoy the same formal rights and competences, in Spain, Italy and France different "classes" of regions have been established.

In *Spain*, the three "historic" Comunidades Autónomas (with a culture and language of their own) attained the status of autonomy earlier and easier and from the very start they furthermore were able to claim more competences than the other autonomous communities. With the beginning of 1994, these differences will, however, be leveled out. Due to the different constitutional development, the 17 autonomous communities still today differ in terms of political weight, self-confidence and administrative capacity they have developed in the recent past.

table 1: the relative strength of four types of regions.

Economic Position		
Constitutional Position	"Strong"	"Weak"
Federal State	Baden-Württemberg	Lower-Saxony

Regionalised State / Type A	Catalonia	Andalusia
Regionalised State / Type B	Lombardy	Sicily
Decentralised State	Rhône-Alpes	Languedoc-Roussillon

The respective relative position to the country's average is shown in the following diagrams:

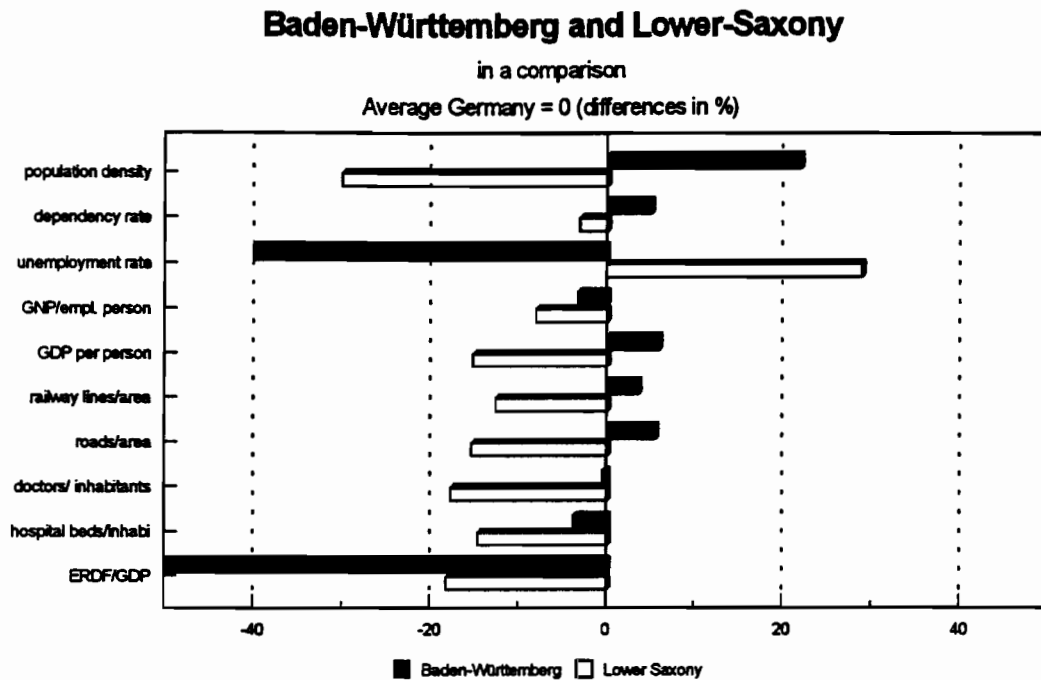
The *Italian* regional system is similar to the Spanish one. From 1946 to 1963 five regions with special statutes were established taking into account the special historic and cultural conditions. These are Sicily, Trentino-South Tyrol, the Aosta Valley, Sardinia and Friuli-Gulia-Venetia. The 15 regions with "normal statute" were only hesitantly established from 1970 on, and until 1977 they were not endowed with any competences promised. Today the main difference between these two classes of regions is that those with special statute have additional legislative competences.

In *France*, 26 regions have been established in the decentralization process which started in 1982, with special rights in the case of Corsica, the overseas departments (Antilles, Réunion, Guyana) and the Ile de France. These additional competences are only of an administrative kind as the French regions in general do not have legislative competences.

In order to evaluate the influence of the economic factor it was decided to include in the comparison in each country one of the economically strong regions with a high share in the secondary and tertiary sector and an economically weak region with a high portion in the primary sector. Criteria for economic strength were the region's share in national GNP, GNP per capita, the unemployment rate as well as selected data on infrastructure (see table 1 above).

Countries and Regions

a) Germany

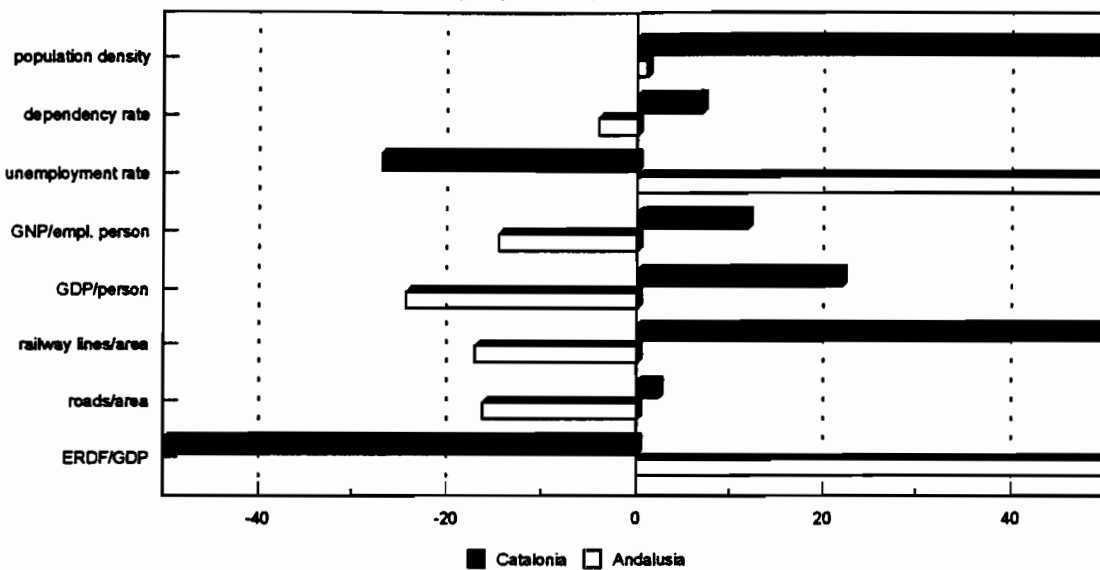


In the German case the first decision was not to include one of the new Länder because of their very special political history, their still weak administrative capacities and severe economic problems. The two Länder considered to be most suitable for a comparison regarding size and divergent economic strength were Baden-Württemberg and Lower-Saxony. In order to take into account different policy-styles - a more corporatist style compared to a more etatist style in policy-making - the number of Länder to be investigated will most probably be enlarged to four: Baden-Württemberg and North Rhine-Westphalia as highly-developed regions but with contrasting policy-styles, Lower-Saxony and Rhineland-Palatinate as less developed regions but, again, with different policy-styles. Since Lower-Saxony has left at the beginning of 1991 the joint information office of Hamburg, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein at the EC ("Hanseoffice Haverkamp") and has established its own interest representation, it is comparable to the other Länder in this point, too.

b) Spain

Catalonia and Andalusia

in a comparison
average Spain = 0 (differences in %)



Catalonia is one of the larger regions of Spain and one of the "historic" autonomous communities. It is economically strong and highly industrialized compared to the country's average. In addition, Catalonia has - according to present knowledge - the densest regional interest organization structure among the autonomous communities. The Catalonian economy is due to historic reasons concentrated on the region. The regionally strong concentration of several branches of the economy on Catalonia even has the effect that some national economic interest groups of Spain - which are present on the EC level- are dominated by the Catalan economy or are used as a guise for the organization of the Catalan economy (Melich 1990; for the textile industry Solé, 1989).

Andalusia was chosen as the contrast region. Andalusia is in the intra-Spanish comparison one of the relatively under-developed regions which is situated at the end of the range (cf. Hildebrand 1985; Liebert 1985), though in former times it belonged to the economically developed parts of the country. In the case of Andalusia, a close relation was found between economic underdevelopment (relative deprivation) and a regionalistic movement of autonomy (Geiselhard 1985; Liebert 1986). Both autonomous communities - Andalusia (with its "Instituto de Formento de Andalusia") and Catalonia (with its "Patronat Catalan Pro Europa") - have established an interest representation in Brussels which means that there is a starting point for the representation of regional economic interests; in addition, both autonomous communities have consultative bodies at the

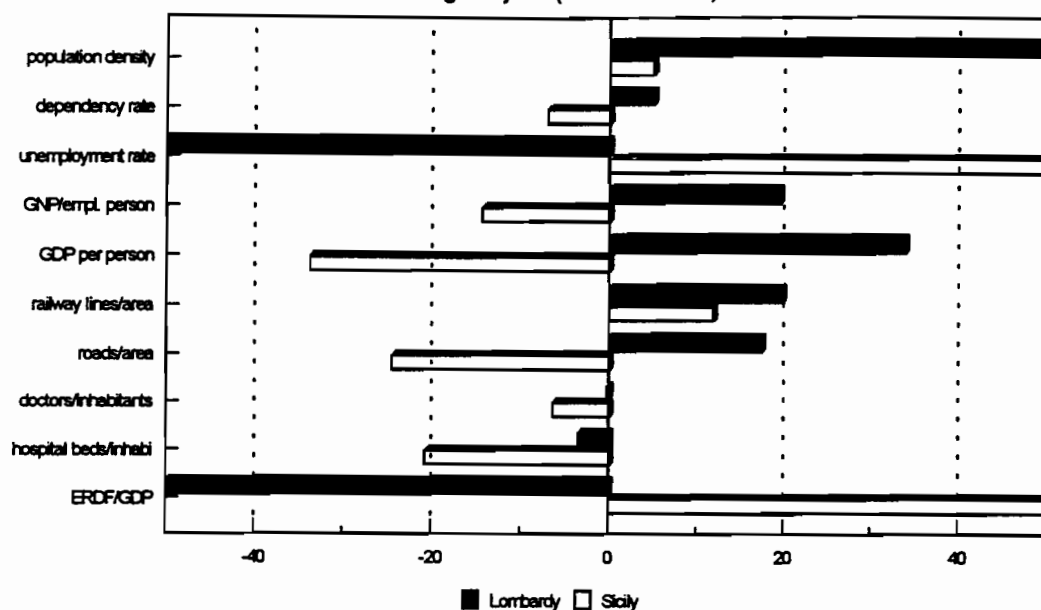
regional level to intermediate between the interests of unions and management in questions concerning employment and social policy (both autonomous communities) and economic policy and planning (only Andalusia; cf Economic and Social Committee of the EC 1989: 269-278 and 294-301). Therefore, cooperation networks and strategies look rather similar.

c) Italy

Lombardy which is considered to be part of the centre of the EC will be examined as an example for a highly-developed region. Milan can be seen as the economic and cultural centre of the region but unlike other Italian regions which are monocentric, Lombardy has a number of important subcentres in both industrial and service sectors - namely Brescia, Varese, Como and Bergamo. 30 % of all employed Italians work in Lombardy, mainly in the food industry, the chemical and pharmaceutical industry, the metal-processing industry and the textile industry. Lombardy ranks first in Italy as regards indicators like the income per capita, foreign trade as well as cultural and educational possibilities. Lombardy has experienced in the last few years a progress in the development of its political infrastructure. A new regional party called Lega Lombarda was successfully founded (in some provinces it obtained up to 40% of the votes) and at the same time new interest organizations were established. It is the new regional actor's main intention to represent the interests of the self-confident region Lombardy on the level of the central state and the EC.

Lombardy and Sicily

in a comparison
average Italy = 0 (differences in %)



Sicily will be examined as an underdeveloped region which is characterized by low average incomes, a high unemployment rate and the insufficient infrastructure. For Sicily as well as for Andalusia a close relation was found between economic underdevelopment and a regionalistic movement of autonomy. Despite problems with the constitutional law, Sicily, together with the other Southern Italian regions, runs an information office in Brussels ("Ufficio del Mezzogiorno"). It also intends for the near future, however, to establish an interest representation in Brussels.

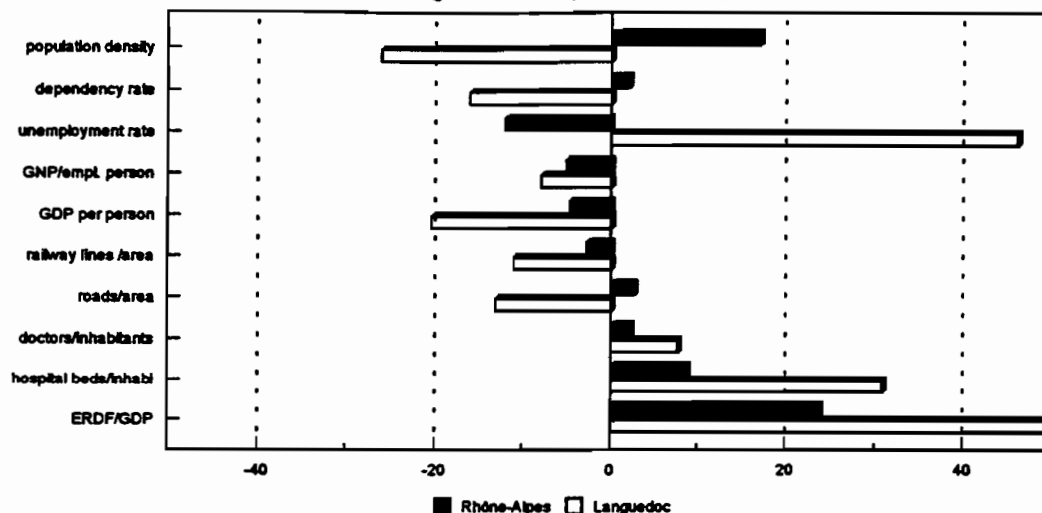
d) France

For France, Rhône-Alpes was chosen as an example of a highly-developed region. This part of France is characterized by a high productivity, a balanced production structure, a high level of education and a fully developed infrastructure. Centres of regional development are Lyon, St. Etienne and Grenoble. Owing to its strong economic position and the resulting modernization, the Rhône-Alpes region developed a pronounced self-confidence which became obvious at the 1. Forum of the European Regions in May 1991 in Lyon. Languedoc-Roussillon was chosen as an example for an underdeveloped region. This region belongs to the backward areas which are economically dependent mainly on agriculture.

Rhône-Alpes and Languedoc

in a comparison

average France = 0 (differences in %)



Characteristic for Languedoc-Roussillon is a low level of income, high unemployment rate and insufficient infrastructure. The recent establishment of representation offices in Brussels showed developments of the political infrastructure of both, Rhône-Alpes and Languedoc-Roussillon. While Rhône-Alpes has an office of its own in Brussels (Bureau de la Région Rhône-Alpes), the representation of Languedoc-Roussillon is effected by the "Bureau d'association des régions du grand Sud", a joint office of Aquitaine, Corsica, Midi-Pyrénées and Provence-Alpes-Côtes d'Azur.

4.2. The selection of issue areas

The selection of issue areas was made according to the following criteria:

- issues with a marked impact on the regional level,
- variation between distributive, redistributive and regulative effects of policies.

According to the relevant literature on EC policies, the following distinctions could be made:

- *distributive*: agricultural policy; certain educational programmes, and research and development policy (in particular aid paid out for R&D);

- *redistributive*: regional policy; agricultural policy; parts of the social policy (e.g. the EC structural funds); in future presumably also the transport and traffic policy (transeuropean traffic networks); environmental policy; the cohesion funds and financial policy in general;
- *regulative*: environmental policy; parts of the social policy; the competition policy and the "Common Market policy".

Taking into account both criteria (i.e. policies possess a marked impact on the regional level and have different effects) the following fields of inquiry were chosen: policy aimed at supporting the endowment of regions with R&D capacities (distributive), regional policy (redistributive) and, finally, competition policy (regulative).

Competition policy

The EC competition policy involving as it does, mainly the control of state subsidies, has become more and more important for the regional level. This can be explained by the EC Commission's successful initiative to extend and tighten the subsidy control in the course of the completion of the Common Market. Whereas in the past subsidies of regional and local authorities escaped the scope of the EC competition rules since the mid-eighties there have been complaints about EC interventions especially among the EC member states. On the other hand it has become obvious in the context of the restructuring of the East German industry, that in negotiations with the Commission rather loose sectorial and regional regulations (as regards the ship-building industry) could be achieved, which means that there are prospects and incentives for the regional authorities to become involved in EC politics. In addition, the regional level becomes more and more effected by the EC competition policy because of the political decentralization process that have taken place in a number of EC countries since the 1980ies. Economic promotion is among the competences often granted to regional bodies. However, it seems that the necessary resources have not always been transferred as well, the French example being a case in point. Furthermore it is well-known that among other things a reason for the decentralization of regional economic policies in some EC member-states was to "avoid" EC subsidy control.

Regional policy

After humble beginnings in the mid-70ies, the regional policy of the EC was reevaluated especially after the entry of Spain and Portugal and the consolidation of the Single European Act and the Treaty of Maastricht. In 1988, the Council decided a gradual doubling of the resources for the funds which will be further increased according to the agreements of the Edinburgh summit. Apart from the regional fund, the social fund and the cohesion fund contribute to the development of problem regions as defined by the EC's regional policy criteria. The reform of the regional policy of the EC in 1988 brought both an increase in resources and a reformulation of the principles and procedures. In both cases the interests of regions were affected immediately:

- the "principle of concentration" increases both the monetary flow to the backward areas and the influence exerted by the supranational level because the subsidy areas are no longer chosen according to the criteria of the states but by the particular target groups of the EC.
- as a consequence of the principles of "programme promotion", "additionality" and "partnership", the access to the resources of the Community depends on the planning and implementation capacity of regions and member-states.

Instead of the formerly practised support of single projects, regions and member-states are now asked to work out medium-term development programs from three to five years, on which the Community can assess the urgency and the social as well as economic soundness of the measure applied for.

The principles of partnership and additionality succeed because of the EC-Commission fixing a "framework of support" for several years after consulting those responsible for the planning. This framework includes the prior measurements and the financial contribution of the different structural funds. After that the regions and member-states have to submit implementation programmes with concrete data on contents and financial aspects of the projects. The implementation itself is accompanied by committees on the national and regional level where representatives of regions, member-states and the

Commission cooperate. The principle of additionality mainly aims at the desired resource distribution, but at the same time increases the intensity of political interconnectedness.

This new procedure literally forces the regions into the Community's policy process. It is mainly conceived of as a strategy to modernize state and sub-state administrative structures; the insufficient administrative capacity of member-states with severely underdeveloped regions was continuously accused of being responsible for previous EC programme failures. In the case of Italy, there are hints that the modernization strategy of the EC seems to be successful at least with regard to the programme planning (Tömmel 1992).

Research and technology policy

Research and development policies have increasingly been broadened since the beginning of the 80ies and have been formally established since the enactment of the Single European Act. It was only the amendment of the European Economic Community Treaty with the articles 130f-130q that created the contractual basis for broad community politics, i.e. reaching beyond the specialized field of EURATOM, though selective initiatives were carried out even before the Single European Act on the basis of Art. 235 of the EEC-Treaty. After enacting the first multi-annual program (1987), a huge number of individual programs have been developed.

There are several reasons for a regional impact of European research and technology policy:

a) the spatial concentration of industry

The EC's research and development (or high tech) programs are not only geared to the high technology sector. On the contrary, the EC put high emphasis on the promotion of new production technologies in the so-called traditional branches of industry. This

broadens the range of sectors and areas which might profite from Community funds. This, however, does not imply that the industries which might benefit from the programs are evenly distributed among countries and regions. Many important traditional industries like coal, steel, chemistry as well as high tech industries such as aviation, are concentrated on few areas of production. This regional concentration of a number of sectors stimulates an even more intense involvement of regional actors in the decision-making process about European research and technology programs.

b) the structure of the decision-making process on EC level

One of the decisive innovations of the Single European Act is that the multi-annual programs have to be accepted unanimously by the Council fixing the financial framework for several years, and that individual programs are decided upon by qualified majority, so that the Commission assumes a crucial role in that latter procedure. There are good reasons to assume that regional political actors will intervene mainly in the course during which individual programs are formulated and projects planned and chosen.

c) the multinational approach of the EC in research and technology policy

The program requirement that partners from several member-states work together, is supposed to strengthen a European wide network of scientific cooperation. Some regions were eager to grasp the opportunity to strengthen the competitive advantage of their industry or public research institutes by opening up channels of contact through trans-regional relations. Among the most prominent agreements on inter-regional coopeartion including research and technology is the one between the so-called "four motors": Lombardy, Catalonia, Rhône-Alpes, and Baden-Württemberg: The spatial closeness between public and private actors at the regional level facilitates close relations and therefore the coordination of joint strategies within regions and across regions in form of bilateral or multilateral regional cooperation networks. The importance of transnational regional cooperation will be examined in a separate study on the cooperation between Baden-Württemberg and Catalonia as an example.

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