

**Meta-governors and their Influence on Network
Functioning**
*A study of meta-governance in the case of the European city
network Eurocities*

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Abstract

This study examines the roles of meta-governors in a European city network and their relation to the network functioning. It builds upon the concepts of governance networks and meta-governance and relates different strategies of meta-governance to factors for network functioning. The case-study of the city network “Eurocities” reveals that meta-governance takes place at different levels in the network. The context in which a meta-governor acts seems to influence the choice of meta-governance strategies.

Moreover, meta-governance is not confined to one actor but several meta-governors can exist at the same time. Internal and external actors may be dominant meta-governors, possibly with differing roles. Meta-governing activities are found to affect the network functioning in relation to factors including relationships, conflicts, trust, creation of common goals, and shared meaning & common action. The study suggests that more than one meta-governance strategy can affect the same factor of functioning simultaneously. This implies that different meta-governance strategies may be combined to influence network functioning.

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1. Introduction

Recent years have seen the rise of network structures in public policy-making. This is a direct outcome of changes in the organization of the public realm, which relate to the descent of the traditional hierarchical state and the corresponding rise of governance structures. Governance networks are collaborative constructs, geared towards the production of effective policy outcome by offering actors an arena for cooperation. Policy processes in networks diverge from those in the hierarchical organization. Hierarchical decision-making is replaced by horizontal and interorganisational diffusion of powers. In contrast to traditional policy-making, networks are flexible and they are venues for a multiplicity of actors. Knowing that interests can only be pursued collectively, actors exchange information, best practices, benchmarks, public management strategies, cooperate in specific projects and jointly try to find solutions to policy issues which they are invariably faced with. To this end, an important point is that policy processes in governance networks do not always function successfully. Moreover, the “(...) development of the capacity to organize and manage these processes is critical to both public policy and management” (Agranoff & McGuire, 1998, p. 69).

In this respect, functioning of networks is an important point. It is perceived as the precondition for meaningful output of governance networks. Moreover, management strategies have been identified, which have the ability to improve functioning. One of the management concepts is meta-governance.

There are no predefined answers as to how meta-governance evolves in networks, which form it takes and how meta-governance influences the functioning of governance networks. This research is therefore concerned with how these activities take shape in practice and how they are related to functioning. To this end, it draws a distinction between cohesion factors and meta-governance strategies for successful network functioning. The concept of meta-governance is applied and four different strategies are identified from the literature.

This research is undertaken in the European city network Eurocities. So far, meta-governance strategies in governance networks on the European level have not been investigated in the literature. This is surprising considering the increasing number of networks which are active in the sphere of EU policy-making. This can be seen as a research gap notably since networks have extended their influence in recent years and are important actors in European policy-making (Benington & Harvey, 1998). In this respect, city networks are a special case in point since they link the local and European level. The underlying rationale is the assertion that clearly, city networks are ‘here to stay’ and assume an active role in shaping

EU policy-making. It is therefore significant to learn about the way in which they function, and which actors assume a role in the meta-governance of governance networks. The special focus lays on which meta-governance strategies are used, by whom, and how this adds to functioning. This can add new insights into the relevance of meta-governance for European city networks and their role for functioning. Gaining knowledge on this can ultimately help to ‘maximize the merits and minimize the problems’ of these types of governance networks.

The following research question will guide the study:

How can meta-governance in the city network Eurocities be characterised and how do meta-governors influence the functioning of the network?

In order to investigate and discuss this problem statement, the main question will be supported by seven sub-questions. Firstly, this study looks at Eurocities as governance network. An important question that needs to be addressed is therefore:

1. What are governance networks?

Secondly, factors facilitating or hindering successful network functioning are an important aspect when studying networks. Consequently, another guiding sub-question for the overall problem statement will be the following:

2. Which conditions are important for the functioning of networks?

Thirdly, as this study deals specifically with strategies of meta-governance, the following sub-question will look at:

3. What is meta-governance?

The fourth sub-question will answer the question:

4. What does the network Eurocities look like?

Furthermore, in order to establish a satisfactory link between the synthesis of the existing literature and the empirical findings of the case study, the fifth, sixth and seventh sub-question addresses the following:

5. Who are the meta-governors in Eurocities?
6. What meta-governance strategies do the meta-governors at Eurocities apply?
7. How do meta-governors at Eurocities influence the functioning of the network?

Finally, the eighth sub-question will put the results of the case into a wider context:

8. Which lessons can be drawn from the case findings?

The research paper is organised as follows. Chapter 2 introduces the definition and concepts of governance and governance networks, focussing on cohesion factors and meta-governance strategies. Chapter 3 introduces the case selected in this study. Chapter 4 presents the research methodology applied in the study. Thereafter, Chapter 5 presents the research findings. Finally, Chapter 6 discusses the findings, and draws conclusions on the overall study. It also presents contributions, recommendations, limitations of this study as well as suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

Chapter 2 introduces the theory underlying this case study. 2.1 introduces the concept of networks. Section 2.2 defines the term “governance” and 2.3 defines the concept of network governance and explains the defining characteristics of such networks. Section 2.4 presents different forms of network governance. Section 2.5. then turns towards the functioning of governance networks. Section 2.6. deals with the concept of meta-governance. It shows the influence of meta-governance on networks, the characteristics of meta-governors and the strategies that meta-governors can apply in a network. Chapter 2 concludes by linking the cohesion factors to meta-governance and by introducing the research model of the study.

2.1. Networks – a conceptualisation

The term 'network' has been used in literature across disciplines, and is a well-established concept in several fields, such as economics, business studies, sociology and natural sciences. In the most general conception, networks do not automatically relate to the field of policy-making and public administration. Instead, the basic understanding of a network is “a set of actors connected by a set of ties” (Borgatti & Foster, 2003, p.992).

The present research study deals with ‘governance networks’¹. Although much more narrow in scope than the term networks as such, there are still very different conceptions and applications of the concept of governance networks. This is reflected in the title of some articles in which some scholars speak of ‘organizing Babylon’ (Börzel, 1998) and of ‘treating networks seriously’ (O’Toole, 1997), in which they demand that “there must be an end to confusion’ (Dowding, 2001) and ask ‘do networks matter?’ (Howlett, 2002). Both Rhodes (2008, p.427) and Börzel (1998, p.255) point to two schools of thought, which stipulate different understandings of governance networks. These are firstly interest intermediation and secondly policy networks as a form of governance. Moreover Rhodes points out to a third perception of networks, namely as interorganisational analysis (Rhodes, 2008, p.428). The following will discuss in more detail the contention of governance networks as related to governance and its structures.

¹ Scholars usually term these constructs networks, governance networks or policy networks. For the framework of this study, the term ‘governance network’ was chosen and will be used throughout the research paper. Since the present study relates the emergence directly to the emergence of governance and also deals with meta-governance, the term is considered to be most appropriate.

2.2. Defining governance

Governance involves “a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule, or the new method by which society is governed” (Rhodes, 1997b, p.xi). The term ‘governance’ as such composes the wider forum in which networks are located. It depicts a situation, in which the power to act is not solely vested within the state. This system is described as fragmented and complex (Klijn & Koppenjan, 1997, Torfing, 2005, p.306).

The rise of governance has been enabled by developments in a number of realms including inter alia the economic sector, culture, as well as politics itself (Pierre, 2000, p. 1). Reasons for this are the liberalization of the financial sector which reduced state power, the growing influence excerpted by regions and cities has contributed to this development and the introduction of ‘managerialist’ New Public Management in the public sector (Pierre, 2000, p.3). Resulting from this is the realization that central government no longer stands as the sole authority by which society is governed: “central government is no longer supreme” (Rhodes, 1996, p.656). In this sense, governance contrasts the traditional organization of the public realm, in which the state assumed political power, policy capacity, institutional capabilities and legitimacy (Pierre, 2000, p.2).

The rise of governance structures does not invariably imply the loss of state power but necessitates a shift in the tasks assumed by the state and to a re-organization of how these activities are implemented (Pierre, 2000, p.3). Jessop (1997, p.575) agrees with this view and sees an opportunity for states to “enhance their capacity to project state power and achieve state objectives by mobilizing knowledge and power resources from influential non-governmental partners or stakeholders”. Stoker (1998) contends a major aspect of governance is a power dependency between actors and institutions due to a collective action problem (Stoker, 1998, p.22). In order to solve the collective action problem, organizations need to define a common goal and exchange resources. As a result, individual actors and institutions need to cooperate because power cannot be used as steering tool. Hence, governance “is about autonomous, self-governing networks of actors” (Stoker, 1998, p.18). This definition is closely related to the definition offered by Rhodes (1996, p.652), who establishes a direct link by referring to governance as “self-organizing, interorganisational networks”. The characteristics of governance networks will be discussed in the following.

2.3. Characteristics of governance networks

Turning to the characteristics of governance networks, the following will answer the first sub-question of this research: What are governance networks?

Governance networks are instruments of public policy-making in which policy-processes take place (Bressers & O'Toole, 1998). The inherent feature of governance networks is the involvement of public actors. They are thus embedded within the wider context of policy-making and policy processes. Policy-making in turn is the result of interaction between various actors from both the public and private realm (Klijn, 1996, p.91). With innumerable definitions towards governance networks at hand, it proves useful to strip the concepts down and to examine these main characteristics, which recur in the academic literature. Despite the "Babylonian variety of policy network concepts and applications" (Börzel, 1998), they all share a common understanding, a minimal common denominator definition. According to Börzel (1998, p.254), they all define networks as

"a set of relatively stable relationships which are of non-hierarchical and interdependent nature linking a variety of actors, who share common interests with regard to a policy and who exchange resources to pursue these shared interests acknowledging that co-operation is the best way to achieve common goals".

Klijn et al. (1995, p.439) define networks

"as more or less stable patterns of social relations between mutually dependent actors which form themselves around policy problems or clusters of resources and which are formed, maintained and changed by a series of games".

Rhodes' (2008, p.426) definition of networks reads

"(...) sets of formal institutional and informal linkages between governmental and other actors structured around shared if endlessly negotiated beliefs and interests in public policy making and implementation".

Torring (2007, p.5) perceives networks as

"a relatively stable, horizontal articulation of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors who interact through negotiations that take place within a relatively institutionalized community which is self-regulating within limits set by external agencies and contributes to the production of public purpose".

Bearing these definitions in mind, the following characteristics of governance networks can be highlighted:

- they are relatively stable;
- horizontal;
- actors are operationally autonomous but mutually dependent;

- formed around a policy problem or clusters of resources;
- they interact in a relatively institutionalized community;
- they are self-regulating within the framework set by external actors;
- and a series of games forms, maintains, and changes relations.

This definition is used throughout this research study. In this regard, it includes the aspect of self-regulation within a framework set by external agencies as stipulated by Torfing. It also incorporates the possibility of managing the patterns of social relations as argued by Klijn et al (1997). The nature of governance networks are seen as very useful in dealing with policy issues: actors are able to identify policy problems early on and can develop flexible solutions to these complex issues (Börzel, 1998, p.261). In order to explain the functioning of network in more detail, the following will look more closely at some aspects of the definition presented above.

Actors are operationally autonomous but mutually dependent

Members of governance networks are resource dependent (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001, p.313). The nature of networks does not permit top-down decision-making as in the traditional forms of steering and government. This is because networks are shaped by the interdependency of actors regarding the exchange of resources. The resources which actors are dependent upon include information, finances, personnel, know-how or time to invest (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001, p.298). As actors depend on each other, no single actor can use a top-down approach in order to influence the policy process (Agranoff & McGuire, 2001, p.313).

Actors are self-regulating

The fact that governance networks are self-regulating is a very important aspect. Self-regulation exists because actors “aim at regulating a particular policy field on the basis of their own ideas, resources and dynamic interaction, and do so within a regulative, normative, cognitive and imaginary framework that is adjusted through negotiations between participating actors” (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007, p.10). According to Torfing (2005), self-regulation is set within the limits of external actors because the institutional environment of a governance network can “both facilitate and constrain their capacity for self-regulation” (p. 308). This means that governance networks are embedded within a wider institutional setting.

Within a self-regulating governance network, neither do actors abide to top-down decision-making as present in a hierarchical structure, nor do they adopt the rules of the market (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007, p.10). This implies that decision-making processes in governance networks cannot be led through traditional forms of steering and control. This would infringe upon the self-regulation capacity of the governance network. As such, it can be argued that self-regulation is a strength but also a potential pitfall of governance networks. It is a strength as it is one of the basic preconditions for the initial formation of a governance network. Through self-regulation, network members interact, exchange resources and negotiate with a view to engaging in policy processes and to producing policies. The potential pitfall is linked to the fact that self-regulation in governance networks is prone to malfunction as it can be jeopardized by conflicts (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007).

A series of games forms, maintains, and changes relations

Upon formation of a governance network, there is no established 'balance of resources', which means that the distribution of power, status, legitimacy, finances but also rules, codes of conduct, or decision-making processes is not yet in place as the governance network is self-regulating and there is no actor introducing pre-existing structures. These are formed over time as interaction takes place in processes in a game-like manner (Klijn et al., 1995, p.439; Sorensen & Torfing, 2009, p.236). In the words of the researchers, "a 'game' is a continuing, consecutive series of actions between different actors, conducting according to and guided by formal and informal rules, and which arises around issues or decisions in which actors have an interest in" (Klijn et al., 1995, p.439). Therefore, interaction leads to an institutionalization of relations over time. This institutionalization then becomes the arena for negotiations and decision-making. According to van Bueren et al., actors engage in games in order to unravel the uncertainties inherent in network cooperation. The success thereof depends to some extent on the way actors interact (van Bueren et al., 2003, p.194).

2.4. Different forms of governance networks

Governance networks can take on very different forms. A number of attributes seem most relevant in this regard. Firstly, governance networks can differ in their degree of formality or informality, which means that the structure of governance networks can either be formalised by rules and procedures or function based on informal interaction (Börzel, 1998, p.256). Moreover, governance networks diverge in their degree of openness or invariably closedness (Börzel, 1998, p.256). Moreover, governance networks can be ad-hoc structures which are

set-up for a relatively short time and for a specific policy issue. By the same token, they can be intended for cooperation in the long run. They can be “tightly knit or loosely coupled” (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.237), which refers to the fluidity and proximity of actors. Governance networks can include actors from both the public and private sector or exclusively to public actors. Moreover, they can take place inter-organisational as well as intra-organisational. Furthermore, membership can include actors from a specific sector or actors from all over society (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.237). Finally, the activities carried out by governance networks can relate to the formulation of policies as well as to the implementation thereof (Torfing & Sørensen, 2009, p.237). Governance networks can also be distinguished on basis of their strategic goals as Agranoff & McGuire show in their case study on networks of local economic administrations in the United States (US). They identify three types of governance networks: those engaged in “(...) policy/strategy-making, which are networks used for formulating and/or implementing economic policy” (1998, p.71), those preoccupied with sharing resources and those which are organized as projects with narrowly defined and rather technical focus (Agranoff & McGuire, 1998, p.72).

2.5. Cohesion factors for the functioning of governance networks

The following turns to the functioning of governance networks, thereby answering sub-question 2: Which conditions are important for the functioning of networks? First and foremost, to clarify the term ‘functioning’, this research paper adopts the definition by Provan & Kenis, (2007) who refer to “a process by which certain network conditions lead to various network-level outcomes” (p.1). This means that these conditions and therefore functioning are not outcomes in themselves. Instead, following Provan & Kenis’ line of thought, they *enable* outcomes to take place. Network outcome then can relate to different aspects. Cooperation for example can be viewed as an outcome, and also policy is regarded as such (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000, p.142; Agranoff, 2001). Coming back to the definition of functioning, there are thus conditions, which underlie and which can facilitate the successful functioning of governance networks. Agranoff (2001, p.297) argues that these factors exert cohesion on governance networks. This means that they could be seen as glue or linking elements, which hold the governance network together, offer stability and enable policy processes to take place. They are thus an important element. This is because they assume a role similar to the legal-rational authority found in hierarchies (Agranoff, 2001, p.297). Also, according to this view, changing the factors can affect the structure of a governance network and the relationships of its actors. Following this logic, this will in turn affect the functioning

of the governance network. Due to the effect of the factors on cohesion, they are referred to as cohesion factors in the framework of this study.

The following part identifies cohesion factors which scholars have related to the functioning of governance networks.

Network size

Kenis & Provan (2007) link the size of the governance network to its ability to co-operate: the higher the number of participants, the less capable a governance network will be to regulate itself. A high number of members involve co-ordination and administrative efforts, which take time and divert attention from the policy issues at stake (p. 10). Kickert & Koppenjan (1997, p.54) on the other hand point out to findings which suggest that a high number of members does not necessarily prevent cooperation. At the same time, however, they do suggest that a high number of members renders management a difficult task.

Rules

The way in which rules in governance network are formulated can either constrain or facilitate functioning (Marsh & Smith, 2000, p.6; van Bueren et al., 2003, p.197). This includes both formal and informal rules. They can for instance either exclude actors or empower them. This will have direct effects on functioning. Moreover, rules initiate trust, which links actors to each other and creates stability (Rhodes, 2008, p.432, Edelenbos et al., 2009, p.15; Mandell, 1999, p.59). Moreover, this condition is directly linked to interaction due to the impact which rules can have on the degree of actors' involvement in policy processes.

Veto power

Some members can dispose of more resources than others. This gives them veto power since the functioning processes depend on their involvement (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000, p.146). Therefore, functioning depends on the extent to which members with veto power make use thereof and on the number of members with veto power in the governance network.

Strength of relationships

As has become clear so far, actors of a governance network are a vital condition. There are a number of points to be made in this context. First of all, the nature of relationships between actors will have repercussions for functioning. Therefore, strong relationships are favourable for cooperation (Provan, 2001, p.416). The strength can be seen as an outcome of interaction,

which takes place in a series of games. Moreover, the degree of dependency plays a role, implying that it is positively correlated to strength. Also, relationships are not necessarily equally strong between all members but the intensity can vary among them (Klijn, 1996, p.98).

Common goals

Members of a governance network are very diverse, stemming from different organizations, and possibly following diverging organizational goals. Therefore, the articulation of a common goal, which all members agree upon is essential. This translates into collective action, in which actors pursue their own goals, as much as a common goal. Common goals structure decision-making processes in the governance network. They also strengthen the relationships between actors. Provan & Kenis (2007) advocate the importance of common goals and relate it to the effectiveness of governance networks (p.3). They point to an intriguing finding, namely that there is a link between the existence of common goals and the commitment and level of cooperation between members of a governance network (p.11).

Shared meaning & concerted action

By the same token, shared meaning can create a link between actors as it decreases the need for competition between members (Agranoff & McGuire, 1999, p.19; Torfing, 2005). Shared meaning refers to having the same values, sharing common ideas and commitment. It differs from common goals to the extent that it is about more fundamental perceptions than common goals, which characterise the goals aimed for in the governance network. Mandell (1999, p.46) captures the same by referring to 'program rationale'. However, Agranoff & McGuire (1999) also point to the lack of knowledge about this condition. They do show in a study of six rural enterprise alliances, however, that shared meaning acted as cohesion factors in combination with trust.

Concerning concerted action, several reasons can account for a lack thereof which will hinder cooperation (Klijn & Koppenjan, pp.143-144). First of all, if actors are not aware that they are dependent on other actors to tackle a policy problem, they will be less likely to engage in the activities of the network (p.143). The same will take place if a policy issues dealt with by a governance network does not rank high on the agenda of a member. This can be the case, for instance, if costs and benefits of involvement seem unfavourable (p.144).

Conflicts

Likewise, conflicts between actors can hamper cooperation (Torfing, 2005, p.310; Mandell, 1999, p.44). Conflicts occur essentially due to tensions between self-interest of actors and common goals. In his research on a watershed network in Ontario, USA, Agranoff (2006) found that conflicts were a key challenge in networks (p.61). According to him, disagreements often evolve around inter alia the investment of resources, competitive behaviour between members and prospects of members leaving the network due to disagreements over investment of resources (p.61). Klijn & Koppenjan (2001, pp.146-148) also consider power, conflict and interest struggles in their network approach. When looking for factors that explain failure or success or when formulating prescriptions for management activities, researchers in this field consider the effects of e.g. unequal distribution of resources, the role of veto players, which can lead to conflicting situations (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2001, pp.146-148).

Trust

The above section has not yet introduced an important aspect of governance networks, namely the role of trust in governance networks. Trust can be defined as “a stable positive expectation of actor A (or prediction) of the intentions and motives of actor B, that is that B refrains from opportunistic behaviour, even if the opportunity arises” (Edelenbos et al., 2009, p.3). Its relative significance for governance networks has been shown before by for instance Edelenbos et al. (2009). Their research on the impact of trust and process management on the perceived outcomes of governance networks in the field of Dutch environmental projects indicates that trust influences perceived outcomes of governance networks. Trust is especially relevant for the case of governance networks which feature highly complex and uncertain structures (Edelenbos, 2009, p.2). Actors choose to rely on trust to minimize risks and in order to gain access to resources (Lyon, 2000, p.664). Actors, seen as rational, will trust each other if this action implies a reduction of transaction costs.² At the same time, as risks cannot be fully minimized, they are in a vulnerable position (Edelenbos et al., 2009, p.3). They rely on other actors not to engage in opportunistic behaviour even if they had the chance to do so (Lyon, 2000, p.664; Edelenbos et al., 2009, p.3). Since this is especially important in situations, in which legal measures are not at hand, trust acts in place of legal control and heavily reduces transaction costs, which would be needed instead (Lyon, 2000, p.664).

² There is at least one more explanation for the reasons out of which actors decide to trust one another: the concept of ‘structural embedded action’ argues that trust emerges as a result of socially embedded structures (see Granovetter, 1985).

Its specific function also relates to reducing complexity and helping to overcome the collective action problem, thereby creating stability and enabling cooperation (Lyon, 2000, p.664; Torfing, 2005, p.313; Edelenbos, 2009). Trust can prompt investment of actors into the governance network because the resulting stability will motivate actors to release more of their resources like inter alia time and know-how (Edelenbos, 2009, p.4). Furthermore – but also related to the last point - trust can trigger the exchange of information and learning in governance networks.

Leadership & Skills

Strong leadership exerts cohesion in governance networks. Due to self-regulation, leadership is to be understood as guidance rather than command (Agranoff, 2001, p.313). Tasks of the leader include the negotiation of common goals, fostering of trust, and supervision of a strategy (p.313). “Weak and ineffective leadership” (Torfing, 2005, p.310) on the other hand can obstruct group efforts. Kenis & Provan (2007) refer to this as network-level competencies, which differ according to the nature of each governance network, tasks assumed and their external environment (p.12). Giving an example, the scholars state that actors will need to be very skilled, especially when there is a need for a high degree of interdependence in the governance network.

Power

The issue of power in networks has not been studied very thoroughly (Agranoff & McGuire, 1999, p.31). Agranoff & McGuire (2006) argue that it could establish a strong link between members which could guarantee network stability. The prevailing literature on network management considers mainly trust or common goals between members to achieve a stable network environment – especially since the one of the main claims of governance networks is mutual dependence and reciprocity between actors (Kickert et al., 1995, Mandell, 1999). The existence of power relationships between members is thus not commonly understood as an integral part of networks (Klijn et al., 1997). However, in a study of ten public management networks, Agranoff (2006) researched the role of power in networks and whether it enabled or impeded relationships between participants. His research found “a complex power structure in each network” (p.61).

In this understanding, power in governance networks exists between participating members. This means that one member is more powerful than another. These differences in weight can occur for example due to knowledge. This leads to this “complex power structure”

since some members have a bigger influence than others. They can therefore influence decision taken by other members or the overall direction of the network (pp. 61-62). The issue of power is also picked up by Rhodes who mentions the power dependency approach as theoretical conception of governance networks. This approach identifies power as linking element in governance networks (Rhodes, 2008, p.432).

2.6. Meta-governance and its relevance for governance networks

Section 2.6 turns to the concept of meta-governance, thereby answering sub-question 3: What is meta-governance?

So far, the discussion highlighted that there are cohesion factors, and that the lack thereof impedes the functioning of governance networks and turns them into “malfunctioning talking-shops” (Torfing, 2005, p.310). However, there are ways to offset this and to support the functioning of the governance networks. One way to do so is the involvement of an external public institution, a politician or another actor as ‘meta-governor’ (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.234).

According to Sørensen & Torfing (2005, p.202), meta-governance is:

“the endeavour to regulate self-regulating policy networks by shaping the conditions under which they operate. It involves the attempts of politicians, administrators or other governance networks to construct, structure and influence the game-like interaction within particular policy networks”.

Using different terms but referring to similar activities, others (Driessen & Vermeulen, 1995) point to the existence of an actor who ‘guides’ network structures and processes. The terms range from “facilitator” (Provan & Kenis, 2007, p.8), to “mediator” (Driessen & Vermeulen, 1995, p. 168). They all share the common perception that an actor “can perform an important function by imposing structures on the process of negotiation among parties with different interests” (Driessen & Vermeulen, 1995, p.168). This research will adopt the definition by Sørensen & Torfing because it sharply captures the process of meta-governance.

Meta-governance is a tool for steering processes in self-regulating governance networks; it is about both facilitating and constraining policy processes. Activities of meta-governance aim at establishing coherence, at giving impetus for resource exchange, and at reducing transaction costs (Peters, 2007, p.7, Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, pp.246-250). It is about activating “(...) knowledge, resources and energies of a host of public and private actors while retaining their ability to influence the scope, process and outcomes of networked policy-making” (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.246). Meta-governance can therefore act as a

means of coordination in governance networks, which function in a governance situation of dispersion and fragmentation (Sørensen, 2006, p.100).

Self-regulation is a key aspect in this context. As already mentioned in part 2.3, governance networks are susceptible to conflicts as interdependent actors attempt to advance their self-interest and they might fail to agree on a common goal (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007, p.171). Hence, the need for meta-governance originates in the fact that governance networks are inherently self-regulating (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007, p.170). With the issue of self-regulation being the 'weak link' in governance networks, this is the point of intervention for meta-governors. By engaging in specific activities, which will be presented below, they can outweigh said malfunctions. At the same time, meta-governors have to be careful not to infringe the dynamics of self-regulation in the governance network.

2.6.1. Characteristics of meta-governors

Having defined meta-governance and having explained the relative importance for functioning in governance networks, the question arises who can assume the role of a meta-governor. Academic literature predominantly but not exclusively looks at public institutions and politicians as meta-governors (Jessop, 2003, Sørensen & Torfing 2007). However, the meta-governor does not necessarily need to be an actor external to the governance network but can also be an actor from within, for example a member of a governance network (O'Toole, 2007, p.220). The relative attention paid to public bodies and politics as meta-governors can be explained by the implications, which the concept meta-governance carries in relation to questions evolving around the democratic legitimacy and political accountability of governance networks (see for example Sørensen & Torfing, 2005). It could be argued that for this reason, several studies have so far focused on the role of public actors as meta-governors. Whether stemming from the inside of a governance network or coming from the outside, the precondition for becoming a meta-governor relate to:

- the existence of resources,
- legitimacy,
- and authority

(Sørensen & Torfing, 2006, p.102).

These are conditions which are more likely to be fulfilled by a state actor. Nevertheless, if a non-state actor or a network of actors from both domains fulfilled these preconditions they could also be able to act as meta-governor.

2.6.2. Meta-governance and the role of public actors

The preceding part highlighted that public actors can act as meta-governors in a governance network. Due to the autonomy and self-regulation of governance networks, this group deserves a closer look to explain how they can act without intruding self-regulation.

Bell & Park (2006) for example assign a specific role to public actors as meta-governors by stating that meta-governance is the “government of governance” (p.63). This refers to the idea that the role assumed by government changes as a result of governance: as hierarchical decision-making ceases, the state nevertheless has a role to play in the form of “supporting and governing new forms of governance via metagovernance” (Bell & Park, 2006, p.64).

Instances of meta-governing state actors thus demonstrate that the state does not necessarily lose its influence but that it takes on a different role. Instead, “the state should play a key role in the oversight, steering and coordination of governance arrangements” (Bell & Park, 2006, p. 66).

It can be argued that meta-governance can be perceived as one of the ‘new’ tasks, which states can assume in a governance system. However, this view is not fully shared among scholars. Rhodes’ perception of governance (1996) and the role of the state therein depart from a different conception. Rhodes stresses the existence of self-regulation in a system of governance, implying that there is no need for state involvement. This contradicts the definition of meta-governance, which assigns an active role to an actor who can stem from the public realm. Subsequently, the question arises whether these two views are mutually exclusive. Bell & Park (2006) view Rhodes’ definition as opposed to the concept of meta-governance. Within this study, it is argued that these two views are not per se opposing. This is due to the considerable weight, which the concept of meta-governance attaches to the preservation of self-regulation within governance networks (see for instance Sørensen & Torfing, 2005 & 2009). Self-regulation is one of the most central concerns of meta-governance. Therefore, it is argued that the two views are not conflictive as long as the actions of meta-governors do not infringe the self-regulative capacities of the governance network.

2.6.3. Strategies of meta-governance

How does meta-governance translate into action? Sørensen & Torfing (2009) identify four main approaches of meta-governance, which meta-governors can adopt vis-à-vis governance networks. These approaches are:

1. Network design
2. Network framing
3. Network participation
4. Network management

The four approaches are different ways for a meta-governor to guide network activities. Sørensen & Torfing (2009, p.247) distinguish between hands-off activities, which take place at distance from the governance network. The first two approaches fall into this category. The last two are carried out hands-on, i.e through close interaction with the governance network (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.247). Sørensen & Torfing's classification will be discussed in the following. In addition, their approaches are informed by further scholarly pieces (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005; Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan, 1997).

Firstly, the meta-governor can engage in *network design*, which targets the structure, scope, composition, and procedures of a governance network. Essentially referring to the same approach, Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan (1997) speak of network constitution (also entitled network structuring) as one strategy of their concept of network management. Four main activities can be singled out under the umbrella of network design.

a) Changing rules, structure, statutes or decision-making procedures in a governance network

This meta-governance activity can be carried out by introducing rules of cooperation and negotiation. This can relate to the statutes of the governance network or its decision-making processes. By doing so, the meta-governor can diminish transaction costs as well possible conflicts since exchange between members increases (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.249). This in turn will affect all actors and the governance network as a whole. The decision to terminate a governance network due to a weak performance is also part of this activity. Moreover, the structure of the network can be changed in order to directly aim at specific actors which the meta-governor has identified as either very valuable for governance network activities or on

the contrary as impeding cooperation in the governance network. This can be done by transferring resources to these actors (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005, p.204).

c) Increasing the political scope

The meta-governor can increase the political scope of a governance network. Through this, a governance network can assume more influence or increase its competences in dealing with a policy issue. Also, the meta-governor can use network design by endowing the governance network with more political weight. Moreover, the meta-governor can increase the scope of a network and this in turn can activate its members (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005, p.204).

d) Defining policy objectives when setting-up a governance network

Another instance of network design is the introduction of clearly defined policy objectives during the initiation stage (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.248). According to the scholars, this helps to find actors which are most suited in achieving the policy objectives. The meta-governor can do so by supporting the implementation of a new governance network dealing with desired policy objectives or by supporting existing ones. In this case, the meta-governor may play a role in determining the composition of the governance network via specific membership rules, which will keep certain actors out and others in. There is a direct way of doing so, namely via laws and rules or indirectly by adapting requirements for funding (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005, p.204).

e) Defining milestones & deadlines

Furthermore, as the governance network is fully functioning, the meta-governor can fix so-called milestones for the completion of specific tasks needed to realize outputs “(...) in terms of reports, conferences, plans, policy proposals and direct interventions” (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.249). This enables timely and sufficient interaction between members as well as decisions taken.

The second meta-governance strategy is *network framing*. This is the “formulation of the political goals and objectives to be pursued by governance networks” (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005, p.4). By promoting political goals, the meta-governor can lead activities into a desired direction. Again, different activities fall within this field.

a) Introducing intermediate policy objectives

Frequently, the main policy objectives of a governance network are broadly formulated and offer considerable leeway to reach these policy objectives. The meta-governor can step in by formulating and introducing measurements for intermediate steps which need to be taken to reach the overall goal. This allows the meta-governor to govern the policy-process because the choice of sub-steps can shed a different light on policy issues. The leeway for the governance network to act can either shift or be reduced (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005, p.204). Sørensen & Torfing state that these intermediate steps can be introduced by using performance indicators or floor targets. Moreover, they argue that in this case, self-regulation will be maintained by the overall policy objective while the meta-governor will seek to guide the implementation process. Actions taken to this end may include the allocation of financial resources to guide network activities. It can also be realized by introducing laws or rules which will either enable or restrict the governance network (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005, p.204).

b) Using discursive framing

Particular policy objectives can be supported by discursive framing. This is also called 'storytelling'. This means that the discussion on a current political issue is shaped (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009 p.249). This enables the meta-governor to guide the direction of discussion on a public policy issue. It is thus about shaping interests, creating a common vision and to point out common strategies. Moreover, discursive framing can be thought of as highlighting specific policy issues. This can be done for instance by developing reports on best practice. The cases presented in these reports and the approach used therein can influence the approach subsequently used by governance network members. Hence, discursive framing is about unfolding and presenting stories in a plain manner (p.249).

c) Strengthening the relationships between actors

Moreover, meta-governors can aim at strengthening the relationships between members to realize an increase in resource exchange. In Sørensen & Torfing's words (2009, p.249): "This can be carried out either by clarifying or shaping the interests, roles and capacities of the participating actors, or by offering to fund activities and policy solutions that all of the network actors can agree upon (...)". A vital action is also the introduction of what could be termed a 'feedback loop', which rewards network members of a successful governance network in terms of financial compensations, political importance, or increased autonomy.

These carrots will act as motivator and improve cooperation (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.249).

The third type of meta-governance singled out by Sørensen & Torfing (2009, p.251) is *network participation*, which aims at participating in governance networks decisions on overall objectives, decision-making, policy processes and goals. This includes the following activity:

a) Participating in policy discussions and policy-processes

According to Sørensen & Torfing (2005), politicians can actively contribute to the network in order to gain access to ongoing policy discussions, decisions and processes. This approach is thus geared towards the policy-content dealt with in a governance network rather than its design. Sørensen & Torfing argue that there is a need for meta-governors to have insights into the governance network, to receive inside information and to learn about policy discussions and projected activities of the governance network (2005, p.205). Meta-governors can participate in a governance network by becoming a regular member and sharing the same responsibilities and rights with the other members (Kickert & Koppenjan, 1997, p.59).

Fourthly, meta-governance can take on the form of *network management*. Network management deals with the structures and interactivities of governance networks and points to actions which can be taken in order to render network processes more successful. Specifically, it is designed at endorsing cooperation through interaction – albeit not through direct participation. Network management is unlike network participation since the former does not include partaking in ongoing discussions. It is unlike network design because it focuses less on changing the network structure (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.250).

Network management is not exclusively considered as a strategy of meta-governance but also as a means to manage networks detached from the concept of meta-governance. It has been dealt with especially by the ‘Rotterdam school’ (see for instance Klijn & Koppenjan, 1997, 2000). There are overlaps between the strategies of meta-governance and those of network management. For example, framing appears under both concepts – in the case of meta-governance it is one of the four mechanisms stipulated by Sørensen & Torfing (2009) and in the case of network management it is seen as one possible strategy thereof by Kickert & Koppenjan (1997). This is not necessarily a contradiction but should rather be seen as an indicator for the relative vicinity in which both concepts exist. Sørensen & Torfing’s approach

will therefore also be informed by scholarly pieces on network management - especially by the work of Kickert & Koppenjan et al³. The following points deserve a closer look:

a) Enhancing interaction

Network management as a mechanism of meta-governance is aimed at increasing interaction and at strengthening relationships between members by decreasing transaction costs through financial and non-financial resources (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.427). This can be done via “agenda control, arbitration, joint fact finding and cross-frame learning” (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.427). Relations and interactions between actors are taken into account, i.e. the ongoing games which actors engage in and which according to the scholars affect the policy outcome of networks. Whilst actors can be dependent on each other and seek solutions on the same policy problem they do not of course necessarily share the same view as to how to deal with the issue at hand. The aim is to create ground for common strategies which all actors agree upon. Moreover, network management can “signal that a flexible adjustment of ends and means is acceptable in order to encourage innovation” (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.427).

b) Using conflict management

Very closely related to the above focus on increasing interaction, the meta-governor can explicitly make use of conflict management. Mediating between members also leads to an improvement of interaction (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000, p.141).

c) Activating actors

Network management can also strengthen specific actors by providing them with veto power or with know-how and resources. This approach of activating and deactivating actors is based on the strategy of ‘selective activation’, which has originally been formulated by Fritz W. Scharpf and subsequently been used by scholars of network management (Klijn et al., 1995, p.444).

d) Sharing information

³ To be precise, Sørensen & Torfing’s definition of network management matches process management (also referred to as game management), which is seen as one strategy of network management by Klijn & Koppenjan (1997, p. 46).

Furthermore, the meta-governor can improve transparency by enabling sharing of documents and information. This helps to share understanding of the policy problem at hand and promote a commonly accepted solution thereof (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000, p.141).

2.7. Linking cohesion factors and meta-governance strategies and introducing the research model

So far, the study has presented the general concepts underlying this study. This part will now bring together these concepts into the research model used for this study. On the one hand, the preceding parts have introduced cohesion factors and have discussed their importance for the functioning of governance networks. The discussion of the cohesion factors showed that various factors are mentioned in the literature as accounting for governance network functioning. The following factors were identified:

- network size
- rules
- veto power
- strength of relationship
- common goals & concerted action
- shared meaning
- conflicts
- trust
- leadership & skills
- power

On the other hand, the preceding part has also introduced the concept of meta-governance and identified four strategies, which meta-governors can engage in:

1. Network design
2. Network framing
3. Network participation
4. Network management

What is the link between these strategies and the cohesion factors? Meta-governance strategies offer the potential to affect the cohesion factors of governance networks, thereby

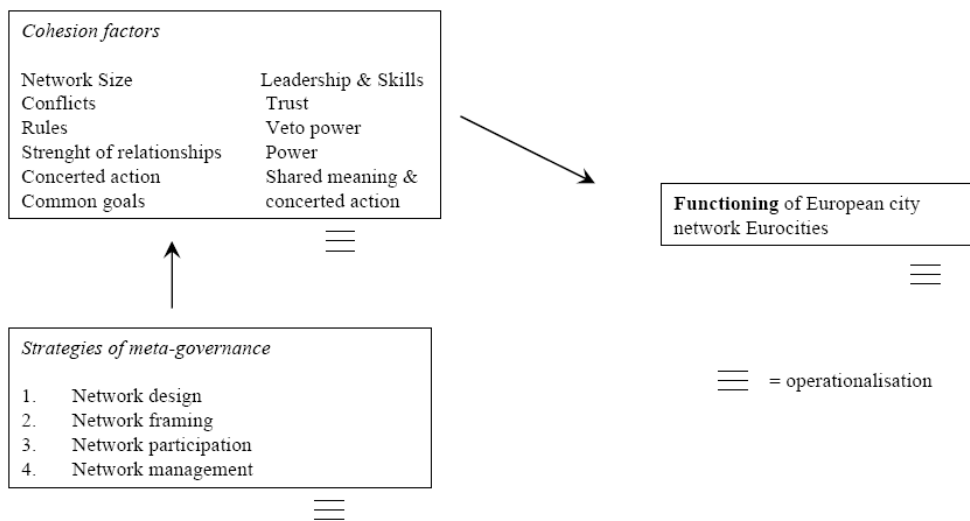
minimizing hindrances to functioning (Rhodes, 1997; Sørensen & Torfing, 2009; Agranoff & McGuire, 1998). Klijn & Edelenbos (2007, p.200) illustrate how this is translated into practice:

“The manager accepts the characteristics of the network (position, rules, historical traditions etc.) as given, and tries to stimulate cooperation between actors in order to reach concrete and acceptable outcomes.”⁴

This means that strategies of meta-governance can affect the cohesion factors. As such, meta-governance strategies also acquire an important role for the functioning of governance networks. In order to further explore this link, the present study will use the framework of the four meta-governance strategies developed by Sørensen & Torfing and link them to the cohesion factors for the functioning of governance networks.

This translates into the following research model:

Table 1: Research Model



The research model is applied in the empirical part of this research addressing the impact of meta-governance strategies on the functioning of the European cities network Eurocities. Following the arguments presented above, the aim is to study which meta-governance strategies are present in the selected case, and how these influence the cohesion factors for the functioning of governance networks.

⁴ Klijn & Edelenbos (2007, p.200) specifically refer to meta-governance as network management; in this context, their statement is deemed suitable in relation to the four strategies of meta-governance by Sørensen & Torfing.

This is in line with the overall research question of this study, which reads:

How can meta-governance in the city network Eurocities be characterised and how do meta-governors influence the functioning of the network?

The framework addressed above with its focus on the use of the four meta-governing strategies in relation to the cohesion factors is deemed appropriate to answer the overall research question of the present study. The application of the four meta-governing strategies in relation to the cohesion factors will allow characterising how meta-governance evolves in the network. Moreover, the subsequent link to functioning will permit to establish how meta-governors influence the functioning of the network. To this end, the research will firstly look at the first part of the research question: How can meta-governance in the city network Eurocities be characterised? This part of the overall research question is supported by the following sub-questions:

- Who are the meta-governors in Eurocities?
- What meta-governance strategies do the meta-governors at Eurocities apply?

Having established which meta-governance strategies are used in the selected case, the second part of the research question will be tackled. This is supported by sub-question six:

- How do meta-governors influence the functioning in the network?

Having introduced the research model of this study, the following part will now turn to the case description in order to gain insight into the specific characteristics of the network chosen for this research.

3. Case introduction

Chapter 3 introduces the case selected for this research. Eurocities is a network of major European cities with 141 members in 34 countries⁵ (Eurocities, 2009c). As such, it is one of the biggest city networks worldwide (Niederhafner, 2008, p.223). With an active involvement of senior local politicians and a Brussels-based secretariat, Eurocities is quite visible in European politics. The following introduces Eurocities in more detail by firstly looking at its foundation and development over the years, secondly, its objectives and activities, thirdly, its structure, fourthly, its membership, fourthly, its finances and, finally, its embeddedness in European politics. In doing so, chapter 3 answers the sub-question “How does the network Eurocities look like?”.

3.1. Foundation and development of Eurocities

Eurocities was founded in 1986 by six cities, namely Barcelona, Birmingham, Frankfurt, Lyon, Milan and Rotterdam (Eurocities, 2009a). Focusing on European urban policy and common territorial interests, its founding cities saw the need to pool European cities’ interests as they found urban issues were underrepresented on the European level. The formation was thus a counterbalance to the emphasis, which the European Community placed on regional as opposed to urban development (Benington & Harvey, 1998, p. 156). Via its common agricultural policy, the EC allocated substantive financial means to rural areas (Benington & Harvey, 1998, p.156). Furthermore, the introduction of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1986 had enabled the creation of an integrated European cohesion and regional policy (DG Regio, 2009, online). This created the precondition for an increased promotion of interests of the European rural areas. The founding cities of Eurocities welcomed this development but also saw the need to initiate a European urban policy. From 1986 until 1991, the number of members increased to 42. In 1992, Eurocities established its secretariat, which has since then been based in Brussels, Belgium (Eurocities, 2009a).

3.2. Eurocities objectives & activities

The *overriding strategic objective* of Eurocities, which was formulated during the 2003 General Annual Meeting is “(...) to work towards a common vision of a sustainable future in which all citizens can enjoy a good quality of life” (Eurocities, 2009d). In this context, Eurocities strives at a strong social, political, economic and cultural environment, which is

⁵ This number refers to full and associated members. Membership will be discussed in detail below.

“inclusive, prosperous, creative, and sustainable, with democratic and effective governance, and where all citizens can be provided with opportunities for participation in all aspects of urban life” (Eurocities, 2009d). The strategic objective is split into *five sub-categories*, along which Eurocities organizes its work: the *social dimension* (“the inclusive city”) aims at reducing poverty and social depletion, at fostering equality and rights related to the information and knowledge society. The *economic dimension* (“the prosperous city”) addresses topics like sustainable economic development, the labour market, services and urban security. The *environmental dimension* (“the sustainable city”) focuses on the whole range of environmental policies from environmental and urban planning to transport and sustainable consumption. The *cultural dimension* (“the creative city”) supports culture in urban life via cultural activities and access hereto. Finally, the *governance dimension* – (“participation and cooperation”) supports public administrations, international city cooperations, and citizens’ participation to enable democracy.

Eurocities engages in *three main activities*. ‘*Networking*’ involves the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and best practices among Eurocities members. The aim is to seek solutions to problems which cities have in common. Moreover, the dialogue on present policy issues is used to compile position papers and policy proposals (Eurocities, 2009e). Exchange takes place within the framework of forums, working groups and projects and will be presented in more detail below. ‘*Lobbying*’ aims at representing the interests of the Eurocities against the European institutions. It aims at contributing to relevant policies, legislation and policy programmes. ‘*Campaigning*’ includes European-wide campaigns, in which Eurocities creates visibility for urban policy issues. The target group of these campaigns can be citizens as well as municipal authorities (Eurocities, 2008b, p.1).

3.3. Structure of Eurocities

Eurocities functions in accordance with democratic decision-making rules, which are laid down in its statutes. Next to the member cities, Eurocities consists of two permanent bodies, firstly, the Executive Committee (ExCom) and, secondly, the Brussels-based secretariat. These two bodies are mainly concerned with the management and content of Eurocities. On a more thematic level, Eurocities runs seven thematically distinct forums, around 40 working groups and numerous projects. At the Annual General Meeting (AGM), the member cities, the secretariat and the ExCom decide upon the overall direction of Eurocities, the budget, work programmes etc. The ExCom, secretariat and forums/working groups will be shortly introduced in the following parts.

3.3.1. Executive Committee

The ExCom is in charge of the management of Eurocities. It consists of a maximum of 12 mayors of member cities and is chaired by a president. First and foremost, the ExCom is the main body of approval for decisions relating to the main managerial and content-related questions. It prepares and supervises the implementation of the work programme of Eurocities and oversees activities of the forums and working groups. The ExCom also represents Eurocities legally and vis-à-vis the European institutions (Eurocities, 2008a, p.3). It is moreover in charge of Eurocities staff. Importantly, Eurocities statutes state that the ExCom can pass on its authority to a member city or to the members of the Eurocities secretariat (Eurocities, 2008b, p.5). This means that the right to take daily management decisions can be conferred upon the secretary general of the Eurocities secretariat (Eurocities, 2008b, p.5).

Apart from the president, the ExCom consists of a vice-president, a secretary, and a treasurer. Both presidency and ExCom are elected by Eurocities members during the AGM. Both serve for a period of three years. While the president can only serve two terms, the members of the ExCom may be re-elected (Eurocities, 2008b, p.3). The AGM, which consists of all Eurocities members, has the right to discharge the ExCom at any time (Eurocities, 2008b, p.3). Furthermore, it has inter alia the right to change the statutes, to dissolve the network, and to decide upon entry and expulsion of members (Eurocities, 2008b, p.6).

3.3.2. Eurocities secretariat

The Eurocities secretariat is another important actor because it acts as hub in the network. It is in contact with all member cities and thereby with both politicians and desk officers. Furthermore, it works closely with the ExCom and maintains relations with the European institutions. In this position, the secretariat also acts as intermediate between EU institutions and members (Griffiths, 1995, p.218). The Eurocities secretariat is also in charge of monitoring compliance with Eurocities statutes and internal rules and of administrative issues such as the election of the ExCom. The secretariat is based in Brussels with more than 30 employees. Internally, there is a secretary general, policy officers responsible for the thematic forums, a project department as well as a campaigning and communications department (Eurocities, 2009).

3.3.3. Forums and working groups

There are six forums addressing the following issues: culture, economic development, environment, knowledge society, mobility, social affairs, participation and cooperation⁶ (Eurocities, 2009f). Each forum is in charge of a number of working groups, which deal with more specific questions within the subject area. Both forums and working groups are supported by policy officers of the Eurocities' secretariat.

Within the framework of the forums, cities deal with policy developments, exchange of information, and best practices. The main output of the forums is the preparation of position papers and policy statements in responding to political activities on EU level, participation in projects and the organization of seminars. As displayed below in table 2 each forum is chaired by the mayor of one member city, who is elected by forum members. Within the thematic forums or working groups, a number of cities can join to cooperate in so-called projects. The nature of these depends on the individual set-up of the project. In some cases, Eurocities will act as coordinator and in other cases as partner. Projects are usually financed by the European Union or other public bodies (Eurocities, 2009h). The following table illustrates the organization of forums and working groups as well as their specific tasks:

Table 2: Eurocities Internal Division of Tasks (Source: own research)

Forums	Culture	Economic Development	Environment	Knowledge Society	Mobility	Social Affairs	Participation and Cooperation
	• Consist of Eurocities members/associates • Chaired by Mayor of Member City • Supported by Policy Officer						
Forum Chairs	Nantes Métropole	The Hague	Vienna	Tallinn	Murcia	Stockholm	Copenhagen
	• Main Tasks: coordinate/develop policy positions • Inform members • Manage/Lead Projects • Elected by Forum Members						
Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Creative Industries •Cultural Access and Entitlement •Culture and Young People •Resources for Young People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Clusters •Cohesion Policy •Economic Migration •Entrepreneurship •Responsible Procurement and Consumption •Services of General Interest •Spatial Planning & the City of the Future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Clean Cities •Climate Change – Air Quality – Energy Efficiency •Environment & Health •Green Areas •Greening the Local Economy •Noise Policy •Sustainable Urban Water Management •Waste Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Broadband •eGov 2.0 •eGovernment •Bench-learning •eInclusion •ICT for Energy Efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Developing a New Mobility Culture •International Accessibility •Road Safety •Transport & Energy Efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Education •Employment •Health & Well-Being •Homelessness •Housing •Migration & Integration •Social Inclusion •Urban Security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Climate Change & Energy •European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) & Enlargement •European Governance & Partnerships
	• Main Tasks: focusing on specific issues • Prepare Position Papers • Work on Projects / Campaigns						

⁶ The seventh forum, 'participation and cooperation', addresses horizontal issues such as urban research, international networking and cooperation between as well as governance (Eurocities,⁶ 2009f, online).

3.4. Membership

The number of members has grown steadily since the foundation of Eurocities to up to 141 full and associated members. There are five different categories of membership for private actors and stakeholders. The five types of membership are:

- full members
- associated members
- associated partners
- associated business partners
- subscribers

(Eurocities, 2008b).

Eurocities has defined eligibility criteria which actors need to fulfil in order to be able to join the network. Full membership may be granted to cities from the EU or from the European Economic Area (EEA). Associated membership applies to cities from countries outside of the EU and the EEA. In order to be eligible for either full or associated membership, cities need to be governed by a democratically elected government. Moreover, for both types of membership – full and associated – Article 6 of the Eurocities statutes stipulates that the following conditions are taken into account:

- “preferably to have a population over 250,000 inhabitants;
- the international and regional importance of the applicant city;
- the urban structure in the country the applicant city comes from”

(Eurocities, 2008b, p.2).

Cities and associations not eligible for either full or associated membership can opt to become associated partners. Moreover, businesses can apply for associated business partnership. Partners may take part in forums or working groups. Stakeholders not fulfilling eligibility criteria for full membership can subscribe to receive information from Eurocities (Eurocities, 2008a, p.2).

Rights endowed to full and associated members include participation and chairing of a forum and/or working group (Eurocities, 2008a, p.9). However, functions in the ExCom can only be assumed by EU member cities (Eurocities, 2008a, p.9). Associated partners and associated business partners participate in forums and working groups, and can run for chair of a working group or forum. They do not, however, have the right to vote for the ExCom. Subscribers are not eligible to participate in neither forum nor working groups. Their type of

affiliation with Eurocities is restricted to receiving information and does not endow rights of participation (Eurocities, 2008a, p.11).

3.4.1. Entering and exiting the network

In order to enter the network, prospective members need to file an application. These are considered and approved by the ExCom and the AGM (Eurocities, 2008b, p.2). Prior to this, the Eurocities secretariat assumes a role as negotiator. The secretariat contacts prospective members to discuss possible membership and to support them during the application process. Once accepted by the AGM and admitted to the network, membership cannot be refuted (Eurocities, 2008b, p.3). Members can leave Eurocities by revoking their membership in written form (Eurocities, 2008b, p.3). Members can also be excluded from Eurocities following a vote of the AGM, in which at least two thirds of members present support the expulsion. The ExCom has the right to preliminary expulse a member if he has disregarded the statues (Eurocities, 2008b, p.3).

3.5. Eurocities budget and membership fees

Membership fees vary depending on the form of membership an actor assumes. Full member cities partaking in the ExCom pay €21,540. Full members not participating in the ExCom and associate members from a non Central and Eastern European Country (CEEC) pay €15,820. Associate members from a CEEC are levied €4,260. Associated partners and business partners pay a rate per participation - €4,420 and €11,040 respectively. Subscribers pay €2,570 to receive Eurocities information. All fees are based on the year 2009 (Eurocities, 2008a, p.11). Each year, the AGM approves the budget for the following year.

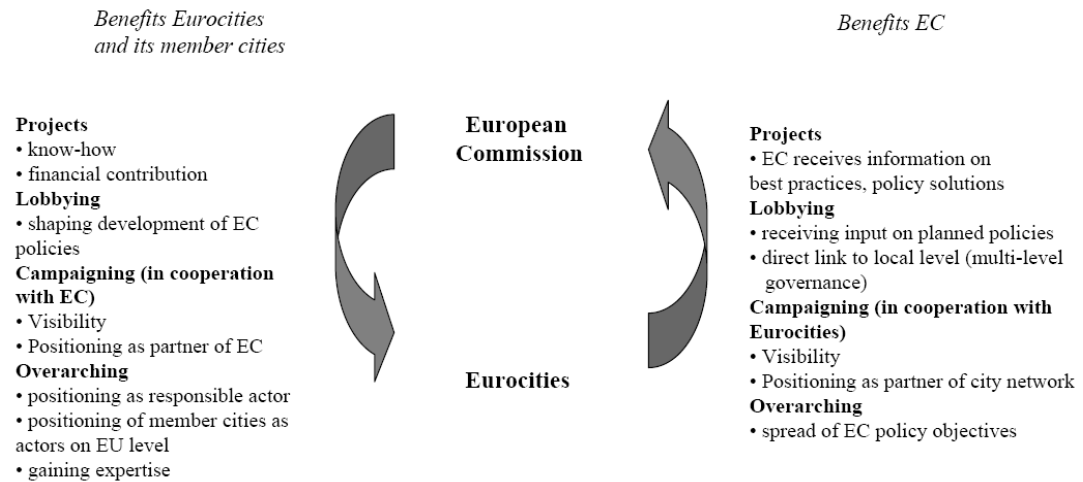
3.6. Eurocities within the context of the European Union

The European Commission has been quite active in recent years in supporting transnational city networks and has been described as a supporter of European-wide city cooperation (Benington & Harvey, 1998, p.151). Eurocities is a powerful actor in European urban policy and is embedded in the wider framework of European policy-making. It engages in a dialogue notably with the European Commission and is also a 'target group' for the Commission. It disposes of direct access on the local level in all EU member states, which makes the network an interesting partner for the European Commission. In its White Paper on European Governance (EC, 2001), the European Commission clarifies the importance of the

involvement of stakeholders from the European, national and local level, from both the public sector and civil society. The aim is to enhance effective policy-making, democracy, and legitimacy by involving stakeholders in the policy-making process. Two target groups of the Commission’s approach are relevant in this case: these are the local level and networks (EC, 2001). This means that city networks are a target group in two ways as they are both networks and representing the local level.

Notwithstanding the different nature of activities which Eurocities engages in (e.g. lobbying, campaigning, project) all imply exchange with the European Commission. These links can be roughly divided into firstly financial support of projects and secondly into ‘cooperations as a result of shared stakes’. Financial support is carried out through a number of projects, which link Eurocities and the EC to each other (Eurocities, 2009i, online). In total, there are 15 projects, which are either still running or which ended in 2009. Projects usually fall within the scope of a specific EU policy programme. Cooperations on issues of ‘shared stakes’ can be expressed for example in a common campaign like the Sustainable Energy Europe Campaign (Eurocities, 2009e). The following table exemplifies the interrelationship between Eurocities and the European Commission. It shows the benefits for both actors divided into the three activities ‘projects,’ ‘lobbying’, ‘campaigning’ as well as ‘overarching’ benefits.

Table 3: Interrelationship between Eurocities and the European Commission



(Source: own research)

Having introduced the case Eurocities, the following part will now present the research methodology of this study.

4. Research Methodology

Having introduced the research setting in chapter 3, the following part turns to the research design, the operationalisation and strategy of the present study. In order to investigate the research question of how meta-governance in Eurocities can be characterised and how this influences functioning of the network, chapter 4 is organized as follows:

Section 4.1 presents the *research design* of the study and introduces the reader to the case selected for the study and why this case is suitable for the intended research. It defines the meta-governors as found in the present case. Finally, it introduces the sources of evidence used for this study and demonstrates the process of triangulation. Section 4.2. presents the *operationalisation* of the research model by introducing the dependent and independent variables and how they help to provide evidence to the research questions. Finally, section 4.3 turns to the *research strategy* applied. It provides a short introduction to the interviewees and the interview set-ups.

4.1. Research Design

This section presents the *research design* of the study and introduces the reader to the case selected for this research and the sources of evidence used to conduct the research. According to Yin (2003, p.19, p.34), a research design is “the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of study”.

4.1.1. Definition and characteristics of case study research

This study falls into the category of qualitative research and conducts a case study. Numerous definitions for case studies can be found in the literature (Robson, 2002, p.89, p.165, p.178; Blatter, 2007, p. 2; Yin, 2003, p. 5, p.13-14). These definitions lead to the following features of case study research:

- Case studies focus on the development of an *in-depth analysis* of a single case or multiple cases (which can be e.g. individual persons, a group, a setting, an organization)
- Cases are studied within their *real-life context*. *Factors of influence* cannot be controlled by the researcher (in contrast to e.g. experiments conducted in a laboratory)
- Case studies involve *multiple methods of data collection* and are therefore based upon *multiple sources of evidence* (e.g. interviews, documents, archival records, direct observations, participant observation and physical artefacts)

- Case studies benefit from the prior development of *theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis*.
- Case studies focus on *descriptive-interpretative elements* rather than causal questions.

Taking these features into account it becomes clear that case studies constitute a very interesting research method when one wishes to gain a rich understanding of the context of the research (Robson, 2002, p.178). Since it is the aim of this study to gain a deep and rich understanding of how meta-governance can be characterised in a governance network and how this influences functioning of the network, conducting a case study is a suitable research method.

While case studies have often been criticised for being unscientific and failing to produce compelling evidence, supporters of case study research have argued that case studies need to be considered as a fundamentally different research strategy with its own design and need to be measured by other criteria than e.g. a laboratory experiment in the natural sciences (Robson, 2002, p. 181). According to Yin (2003, p. 34), the quality of a research design is determined by four conditions:

1. construct validity (enhanced by using multiple sources of evidence during the data collection process)
2. internal validity (enhanced by pattern-matching , explanation-building and the use of logic models during the data analysis)
3. external validity (enhanced by using multiple cases or using theory in a single-case study)
4. reliability (given by using a case study protocol and develop a case study database during data collection)

These conditions are kept in mind in the design of the present case study.

4.1.2. Introducing the selected case Eurocities & defining Eurocities as governance network

This part introduces Eurocities as the case chosen for this study. Firstly, it is argued that Eurocities offers a good opportunity to learn about the intended research inquiry. Secondly, it is demonstrated that Eurocities is indeed a governance network.

With regard to the first point, Stake (2005, p.451) argues that when conducting a case study one should chose a case that offers the best opportunity to learn: “That may mean taking the one most accessible or the one we can spend the most time with.” For the present

research, it was important to research a network which was relatively transparent and open for research in order to receive information with a reasonable input of time and effort. This was especially important since research did not take place as part of an embedded activity in the organisation but from the outside.

Eurocities fulfils the criteria of providing a good opportunity to learn as it is a matured network and geared towards long-term cooperation. It has fully-fledged statutes and decision-making structures, and runs a secretariat with a staff of more than 30 employees. Related to this, it has developed structures of interaction with its members but also with European institutions like the European Commission. This is particularly important considering the fact that this paper focuses on meta-governance. Moreover, its work can be described as relatively transparent with an informative website including inter alia working documents and information on members.

Secondly, as this study focuses on governance networks, Eurocities has to fulfil the criteria of being a governance network. In their study on trust in governance networks, Klijn et al. (2009, pp.6-7) use three criteria to verify whether their chosen case corresponds to a governance network. These are:

- many actors and frequent contact;
- existence and stability over time;
- complex issues.

Applying this “test” to Eurocities leads to the following results:

Firstly, the *existence of many actors and frequent contact between them* can be confirmed for the following reasons: with 141 members and additional actors like the secretariat and the ExCom, there is a large number of actors involved in Eurocities. In fact, Eurocities is the largest European city network in terms of membership. Furthermore, frequent contact between the many actors in Eurocities is given. These contacts take on different forms and can be divided into formal and informal forms. Considering first of all the network level, on the formal side there is the Annual General Assembly, which takes place once a year. Each forum holds at least two to three thematic seminars each year (Eurocities, 2009d). Moreover, the ExCom schedules meetings with the secretariat on a regular basis and the forum leaders also meet regularly.

On the informal side, contacts take place much more frequently but these are more difficult to document. For example, there is a members’ section within the Eurocities website which offers members a discussion forum and the possibility to exchange documents. Moreover,

Eurocities policy officers are in frequent exchange with the members of forums and working groups.

The second criterion is *the existence and stability* of Eurocities over time. This can be affirmed in a straightforward manner by pointing to the time period Eurocities has existed and by considering the network structure which has emerged since its inception. Founded in 1986, Eurocities has been active ever since. The case introduction showed that its structures developed over time, related to the stark increase in membership and new tasks. The structures can be said to create stability since network rules guide issues like membership and decision-making. Moreover, these structures and ways of interaction have been used for many years. This implies that a certain degree of institutionalisation has taken place. This again is an indicator of the existing stability in Eurocities as it decreases uncertainty in the network.

The third point is whether the network deals *with complex issues*. Eurocities does not focus on one policy issue but deals with a wide range of policy problems. This can be seen for example when looking at the different thematic forums. The topics dealt with by Eurocities are always EU policy issues. Generally, their nature is complex since they need to be implemented in very different jurisdictions in all EU member states. Issues are also complex due to numerous interests at stake and more often than not with regards to content and the technical side of policies.

Having positively correlated the three criteria to the case of Eurocities, it can be concluded that the European city network can be characterised as a governance network. To conclude this part, Eurocities has been proven to be a good case when researching the influence of meta-governance strategies on functioning of a governance network.

4.1.3. Using mini-cases within a single-case study

As mentioned in the definition of case studies in section 4.1.1., case study research can entail single or multiple-case studies. Eurocities, as an example of one governance network, constitutes a *single-case study*. However, as Stake (2005, p.451) argues, even though the case (here: Eurocities) is decided in advance, there are subsequent choices to make about persons, places, and events to observe. They are *cases within the case* – embedded cases or mini-cases. Hence, while the present study constitutes a single-case study, it does include several mini-cases, namely the organisations and persons chosen for interviews. This selection process is presented in the following section.

According to Yin, the theoretical framework (or research model) of a study should guide the selection of the cases (here: selection of mini-cases or interview partners) (Yin, 2003, p.47).

Furthermore, according to Yin, every case (here: mini-case or interviewees) has to serve a specific purpose within the overall scope of inquiry. This means that the selection has to follow a certain replication logic. A case should either be selected to predict similar results (literal replication), or to predict contrasting results but for predictable reasons (theoretical replication) (Yin, 2003, p.46-47, pp.54-55). Providing for literal and theoretical replication makes the research design more robust and increases the external validity of the study (see point 3 of the categories listed by Yin in section 4.1.1. which determine the quality of a research design).

4.1.4. Specifying the research focus: meta-governance on different levels

Before turning to the selection process, the focus within the selected case needs to be introduced. Eurocities is a big network and analysing meta-governance in the entirety of the network would have gone far beyond the scope of the present study. Additionally, meta-governance can take place at various levels within a network – e.g. the project level, the programme level and the overall network level. It is the aim of this study, to include all levels within this research. However, in order to limit the scope of the paper and to have a starting point for selecting interview partners, one specific project within one specific policy area was selected. The main focus – also during the interviews – will be upon the project. However, the application of meta-governance strategies at the other levels, namely the programme and network level, will be considered as well. The reason for including more than just one level of analysis is the fact that a multi-level study is most likely to reveal important insights into the interrelation between multi-level meta-governance strategies. The other network levels are looked at in order to find out whether meta-governance took place on these levels and what their impact was on the one specific project.

The choice fell onto the project Connections which falls within the policy field of social affairs. Connections was a project of eight Eurocities member cities which dealt with multiple deprivation of citizens such as housing, nutrition, health etc. (Connections, 2009, p. 7). It ran from 1 January 2009 – 31 December 2009. The final presentation of Connections took place during the Eurocities Annual General Meeting Stockholm in November 2009 (Connections, 2009, p.35). The city of Rotterdam was lead partner while Eurocities officially assumed the role of ‘disseminating partner’ (Eurocities, 2009j). Participating member cities were Newcastle, Malmö, Budapest, Vienna, Munich, Rotterdam, Leeds and Oslo. All of them are also members of the Eurocities social affairs forum.

Connections could be put into practice due to a specific programme of the European Commission called 'Progress', which is an employment and social solidarity programme of EC Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equality (DG Empl). The European Commission especially emphasises the involvement of stakeholders in the policy-process in social affairs. It explicitly aims at engaging in partnerships with city networks and Eurocities is one of the networks which maintain a partnership with the Commission. To this end, DG Empl supports a number of European networks dealing with employment and social solidarity. Within the area 'social protection and social inclusion, Eurocities is one of the networks receiving support'⁷ (DG Empl, 2009b).

The idea to apply for Connections originated in the Eurocities social affairs forum. As the project was approved, it was co-financed by the European Commission. Rotterdam obtained 542.417,80 € for running Connections, which was 72,18% of total costs for carrying out the project (DG EMPL, 2009d, p.1). It was selected since it was the project within the field of social affairs, which ended recently (31 December 2009), thereby allowing an ex-post perspective.

This introduction to the specific focus within Eurocities shows that the different levels within the network are intertwined. The project level Connections is closely linked to the programme level (social affairs forum): its participants are also members of the social affairs forum. Decisions in the social affairs forum clearly influence the project level. Connections would not have been created without the decision taken in the social affairs forum. Both levels are also linked to the overall network level. The case introduction in chapter 3 shows that the forums are a part of the overall network. It follows that in order to study meta-governance in the project Connections, meta-governance on the other network levels need to be considered in the analysis. This allows finding out more about the relationship between the different levels and to what extent meta-governance activities at different levels affect the project Connections. Omitting them would run the risk of losing out on relevant findings.

The focus of the study which has been introduced above also narrows down the possible choice of interview partners. The choice of interviewees is explained further in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

⁷ Besides Eurocities, the following European networks receive support under the PROGRESS policy area of 'social protection and social inclusion': Caritas Europa, Cecop Europe, Coface, EAPN, Eurochild, Eurodiaconia, European Foundation for Street Children, European microfinance network, European Social Network, FEANTSA, Mental Health Europe (DG EMPL, 2009b).

4.1.5. Selecting meta-governors as interview partners

When looking at the research question, *meta-governors* constitute the most important interview partners as they will be able to provide information on their strategies towards the network and what they intend to achieve through their work. To recall, the definition of meta-governance is:

“the endeavour to regulate self-regulating policy networks by shaping the conditions under which they operate. It involves the attempts of politicians, administrators or other governance networks to construct, structure and influence the game-like interaction within particular policy networks”
Sørensen & Torfing (2005, p.202).

Preconditions for becoming a meta-governor are:

- resources
- legitimacy
- authority (Sørensen & Torfing, 2006, p.102).

When looking at the case description of Eurocities, the following actors could act as meta-governors and are selected as mini-cases. Firstly, the **European Commission** and secondly the **Executive Committee**, thirdly the **lead partner**, fourthly the **Eurocities secretariat** and fifthly the **member cities**.

The European Commission is an external actor and not a member of Eurocities (Eurocities, 2009c). It fulfils the preconditions stated above to the fullest: firstly, the European Commission disposes of resources in terms of finances and in terms of knowledge. Secondly, as executive body of the European Union, the European Commission is a legitimate actor. Thirdly, due to its political power, competence and financial means, the European Commission can be said to act as authority.

By fulfilling these preconditions, the European Commission is considered as possible meta-governor. Another aspect reinforces this view: due to their organisational objectives, there is a working relationship between the European Commission and Eurocities. Since the city network deals with EU policies, it is influenced by the activities of the European Commission which is in charge of many EU policies in question.

Secondly, the ExCom is the political body of Eurocities, staffed with elected senior politicians of their member cities. The ExCom also fulfils the three preconditions. It disposes of resources (more human resources and knowledge), it is legitimate since it is elected by the AGM and it disposes of authorities as a result of its position which is vested in the Eurocities

statutes. As a Eurocities body, the ExCom is also close to Eurocities and has means of access to engage in meta-governing strategies. Finally one remark about both actors: both are in a position, which enables them to ‘overview’ activities in Eurocities.

Thirdly, the lead partner of Connections is important because it assumed a prominent role in Connections. The city of Rotterdam is also a regular member of Eurocities. As lead partner, the city of Rotterdam was a focal point for the course of the project. Moreover, they were responsible for the output of the project. Strictly based on the project Connections, the lead partner also fulfils the three preconditions. It disposed of resources (know-how and finances) to allow for two members of staff to work full-time on Connections. Moreover, legitimacy and authority relates to the fact that Rotterdam filed the application as lead partner. After the European Commission granted the funding, the city of Rotterdam was officially recognized as such by the European Commission and was therefore also the prime contact point for the European Commission.

Fourthly, the Eurocities secretariat plays a vital part in the structure and the works of Eurocities. The case description showed that it is concerned with administrative as well as management and political tasks. It interacts closely with the ExCom, which can pass on responsibilities to the secretariat. The secretariat is a point of contact for all member cities. Concerning the three preconditions, the secretariat especially disposes of human resources and know-how. As the one Eurocities actor who is permanently based in Brussels, the secretariat possesses in-depth knowledge on EU policy-making, policy issues, and project management. It has legitimacy as its role is vested in the Eurocities statutes, which all member cities agree to when joining Eurocities. Resulting from the know-how it has gathered over time and its legitimacy, it can also be argued in favour of authority stemming from these two.

Fifthly, turning to member cities, the discussion in chapter 2 has shown that members of a network themselves can act as meta-governors (O’Toole, 2007, p.220). Therefore, the possible meta-governing roles of member cities are also researched in this study. Moreover, their viewpoints are also used to replicate statements of the other interviewees. Concerning the three preconditions for becoming a meta-governor, this depends on the city under consideration. Generally, member cities can have the ability to assume resources, legitimacy and authority. However, this depends on the individual city.

When investigating how meta-governance can be characterised and how this influences functioning of a network, it is important to consider the viewpoint of the possible meta-governors themselves. Their answers will give clues as to how they perceive their own role

within the network. However, in order to validate their self-perception or to maybe find discrepancies between the position of the meta-governors researched in one mini-case and the other actors, the viewpoints of the other possible meta-governors towards the meta-governor in question will be taken into consideration. This will enable to support or contradict the positions, and thereby allow for literal and theoretical replication.

To conclude, the following possible meta-governors have been identified:

- European Commission
- Executive Committee
- city of Rotterdam as lead partner in the project Connections
- Eurocities secretariat
- Eurocities member cities participating in Connections and the social affairs forum

4.1.6. Clarifying involvement of meta-governors in Eurocities

Having argued for Eurocities as case and having introduced the possible meta-governors, it is necessary to point to an important consideration in relation to the expected findings of meta-governing activities. This is more relevant for the case of the European Commission as meta-governor than for the other four possible internal meta-governors. This is because the European Commission is an external political actor, which disposes of more financial resources and a more influential political agenda than the other actors. Some might argue that finding actions of the meta-governors in Eurocities does not allow concluding that these activities really relate to meta-governance. Instead, it could be brought forward that they are in fact features of hierarchical steering and by no means instances of meta-governance.

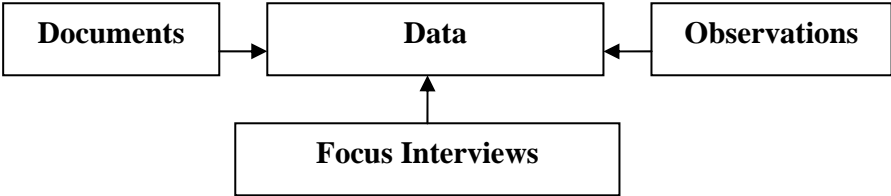
This raises the question whether the meta-governor is simply using traditional modes of hierarchical steering. This would be incompatible with the functioning of a governance network. Meta-governance strategies can include elements of steering but it differs from actual steering because it is employed within an existing governance network and within functioning self-regulation. Meta-governance is used to manage aspects of the policy processes within a network but it does not interfere with self-regulation of the policy network (Sørensen & Torfing, 2007, p.170). If the actions on the part of the meta-governor were solely top-down, this would inevitably entail that the supposed network was in fact not a governance network. In reverse, meta-governing activities within Eurocities can be classified as meta-governance as long as it can be established that Eurocities was indeed a governance network. Part 4.1.2 has shown that Eurocities is an established governance network with functioning

self-regulation. Therefore, the study stipulates that even if activities of the meta-governor seem hierarchical (e.g. financing), they are seen as part of meta-governing activities.

4.1.7. Sources of evidence and triangulation of data

Besides *interviews*, other sources of evidence are used. These can be documents, archival records, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts. From this list of possible sources of evidence, the study uses *documents* and *direct observations* made when conducting the interviews. According to Yin (2003), the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of inquiry. He refers to this as the process of *triangulation*. Any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on different sources of information. Data triangulation helps to enhance the *construct validity* of a case study because more sources of evidence support a conclusion (Yin, 2003, p.98). The triangulation of the data in the present study looks as follows:

Table 4: Triangulation of Data (Source: own research)



To conclude section 4.1. on the research design, this study is designed as a single-case study incorporating several mini-cases through various interview partners. This will help to gain a deep insight into the meta-governance at Eurocities and the influence on functioning. The theoretical framework of the study has led to the identification of five categories of mini-cases. Namely, the European Commission, Eurocities Executive Committee and secretariat, the lead partner and member cities. The problem statement will be investigated by gathering data from these mini-cases by means of focused interviews. Section 4.2. now presents the operationalisation of the research model applied in this study.

4.2. Operationalisation of the research model

This section presents the operationalisation of the research model by introducing the dependent and independent variables and by explaining how they help to provide evidence to the research questions. The research consists of two steps: Firstly, there is the question how the meta-governance strategies used by the meta-governors of the Eurocities network can be characterized. Secondly, there is the question on how these strategies influence functioning within Eurocities. Section 4.2.1 presents the operationalisation of the first part. Section 4.2.2 presents the operationalisation of the second part.

4.2.1. Operationalisation of meta-governance strategies

To recall, four different strategies of meta-governance have been identified: network design, network framing, network participation and network management. The indicators used to determine the choice of meta-governance strategy are derived from the discussion of the literature in chapter 2. The following gives an overview:

Table 5: Operationalisation of meta-governance strategies

Meta-governance strategy	Indicator
Network Design	The meta-governor influences rules, statutes, decision-making procedures
	The meta-governor sets deadlines to complete tasks in the policy process
	The meta-governor increases the political scope
	The meta-governor defines policy objectives when setting-up a governance network
Network framing	The meta-governor introduces intermediate policy objectives
	The meta-governor engages in story-telling
	The meta-governor strengthens relationships between actors
Network participation	The meta-governor actively participates in policy processes and discussions
Network management	The meta-governor enhances interaction
	The meta-governor uses conflict management
	The meta-governor activates members
	The meta-governor supports information-sharing

The left column lists the four meta-governing strategies and the right column presents the indicators which are used in the empirical research to test whether the meta-governing strategies have been used in the case. Except in the case of network participation, multiple indicators have been allocated to the strategies. Importantly, this does not mean that all of them have to apply in order to confirm the existence of one strategy. Instead, as the literature discussion on the different strategies has shown, there are different possible meta-governing behaviours *within* one strategy. The operationalisation accounts for this by incorporating different indicators.

4.2.2. Defining & operationalising functioning

As the second part of this study looks at the influence of meta-governance strategies on functioning, this becomes a dependent variable. The discussion on the functioning of governance network (see part 2.5) discussed “cohesion factors”. To recall, the following factors – or here indicators for the dependent variable – were singled out:

- network size
- rules
- veto power
- strength of relationship
- shared meaning & concerted action
- common goals
- conflicts
- trust
- leadership & skills
- power

In order to operationalise functioning, and based on the line of argumentation in chapter 2, these cohesion factors will serve as indicators of the dependent variable. The following explains what is meant for each factor when relating them to influence. To recall, it has been argued that the conditions underlie and can facilitate the functioning of governance networks. Functioning refers to a process in which network conditions enable outcomes (Provan & Kenis, 2007). Starting with *network size*, literature does not stipulate a specific number of members. There are indications that a large size affects functioning negatively. Finding a change in network size in terms of membership which has been induced by one of the meta-governors is understood as an indicator for an effect of meta-governance on this factor. *Rules*

can influence functioning in a twofold-manner: they can either act restrictively or improve functioning when they are designed to enable cooperation. *Veto power* negatively influences functioning when it is used too much in a network. Meta-governance would affect veto power if it impeded the use thereof. *Strength of relationships* has a positive impact on functioning when the level of strength, i.e. its intensity is high. The degree of existing *common goals* is positively related to functioning. The same holds for shared *meaning & concerted action*, *trust* and *leadership & skills*. A high degree of these two has a positive influence on functioning. *Power* impedes functioning when highly unbalanced power structures exist in a network. This would be the case when few participants were in a dominant position due to e.g. resources. Power can also act positively when it is used by one member to motivate participants.

Concerning all factors, it holds that the study does not investigate whether functioning was successful or not. Instead, these factors are indicators for the involvement of meta-governors.

Having operationalised the meta-governing strategies and having identified and explained the indicators for functioning, the following incorporates these elements into one operationalisation chart. Even more so, the operationalisation chart gives a comprehensive overview over the empirical research of this study including the research questions. It is to be read from left to right: beginning with the relevant research question, it shows each meta-governance strategy and the respective indicators (which were already presented above). The questions asked to measure the indicator and the type of research (interview/document-based) is indicated on the right. The interview questionnaire is found in Appendix 1. The chart of operationalisation & research questions is subsequently followed by the research strategy in section 4.3.

Table 6: Chart of Operationalisation & Research Questions

Meta-governors	Guiding Question	Meta-governance	Indicator	Question	Type of research	
European Commission, Executive Committee, Lead partner, Eurocities secretariat, Member cities as Meta-governors	Research Question Part 1 How can meta-governance in the city network Eurocities be characterised ?	Network design		Does your organization have guidelines how a project should be organized in terms of rules, decision-making, structures?	Interview/Document-based	
				The meta-governor influences rules, statutes, decision-making procedures	Is the ExCom/EC/lead partner/secretariat/MC involved in decisions on rules, statutes, decision-making of Eurocities? If so, to what extent? Can you give examples?	Interview/Document-based
				The meta-governor sets deadlines to complete tasks in the policy process	Did you set deadlines to receive results on the ongoing project?	Interview
				The meta-governor increases the political scope	Do you think cooperation in Connections entailed a reward in terms of finances, political significance, autonomy? If so, who was the actor involved?	Interview
				The meta-governor defines policy objectives when setting-up a governance network	Who defined the policy objectives of the network? What was your role in this? Can you give examples?	Interview / Document-based
		Network framing		The meta-governor engages in story-telling	Do you think a shared vision is important? If yes, what did you do to support the creation of a shared vision? Can you give examples?	Interview
				The meta-governor introduces intermediate policy objectives	What was your involvement in the creation of overall goals / strategies? How could you influence the overall goals / strategies? Can you give examples?	Interview / Document-based
				The meta-governor strengthens relationships between actors	How does the network deal with different interests & perceptions in the network? What is the role of ExCom / EC/secretariat/lead partner/MC in this?	Interview

<p>European Commission, Executive Committee, Lead partner, Eurocities secretariat, Member cities as Meta-governors</p>	<p>Research Question Part 1</p>	Network participation	<p>The meta-governor actively participates in policy processes</p>	<p>Would you say that the following actors take part in decisions on content and rules?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ExCom ○ EC ○ Lead partner ○ Secretariat ○ Member city <p>To what extent? Can you give examples? If so, could you describe the role when decisions are taken?</p> <p>Did they actively participate in meetings of Connections or the social affairs forum? If so, could you describe its role when decisions were taken?</p>	Interview
		Network management	The meta-governor enhances interaction	Do you think interaction is important in the network? If so, do you encourage interaction in the network? Can you give examples?	Interview
	The meta-governor uses conflict management		What happens in cases of conflicts in the network? Can you give example?		
	The meta-governor activates members		Do you think the success of cooperation can improve or worsen due to the good or bad performance of one member? If so, what happens in this case? Can you give examples?	Interview	
	<p>How can meta-governance in the city network Eurocities be characterised ?</p>	The meta-governor supports information-sharing	Do you think sharing of information is important? Can you give examples?	Interview	

Meta-governors	Guiding Question	Meta-governance	Indicator	Question	Type of research
<p>European Commission, Executive Committee, Lead partner, Eurocities secretariat, Member cities as Meta-governors</p>	<p>Research Question Part 2: How do meta-governors at Eurocities influence functioning of the network?</p>	<p>Meta-governance strategies identified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ network size ○ rules ○ veto power ○ strength of relationships ○ concerted action & shared meaning ○ common goals ○ conflicts ○ trust ○ leadership & skills ○ power 	<p>Do you think is the involvement the meta-governors (EC, ExCom, secretariat, lead partner, member) has an influence on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ network size ○ rules ○ veto power ○ strength of relationships ○ concerted action & shared meaning ○ common goals ○ conflicts ○ trust ○ leadership & skills ○ power <p>To what extent? Can you give examples?</p>	Interview
				<p>According to, what was the influence of the meta-governors (EC, ExCom, secretariat, lead partner, member) involvement on the network? Can you give examples?</p>	Interview
				<p>According to you, what was the influence of EC, ExCom, secretariat, lead partner, member in the network? Can you give examples?</p>	Interview

4.3. Research strategy

This part presents the research strategy of this study. It starts by presenting the interviewees of the mini-cases. For each interviewee, the institution and relative position therein is described. While for each category at least two interviewees would be necessary in order to fulfil the criterion of literal replication, this has not been possible since an institution like the European Commission or the ExCom will only provide one interview partner for a research of this kind. The section concludes with a short description of how the interviews were conducted.

4.3.1. Introducing the interview partners

a) European Commission

- Michele Calandrino, Policy Analyst, Inclusion, social policy aspects of migration, streamlining of social policies, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, responsible for Connections as operational agent

b) Executive Committee

- Carsten Krabbe, Head of Section Lord Mayor's Department International Affairs, City of Copenhagen, Presidency of Eurocities ExCom

Both the city of Copenhagen and the city of Den Haag as president and vice-president of the Executive Committee were contacted. An interview was arranged for with both. However, the contact person from Den Haag had to cancel the appointment due to unforeseen circumstances. A new appointment was agreed upon but could not be realized in the following weeks. An interview with a representative of the city of Den Haag as ExCom vice-president could therefore not be carried out.

c) Eurocities secretariat:

- Jean-Pierre Ernotte, Assistant to the Managing Director of Eurocities
- Simon Güntner, former Policy Officer for Social Affairs, Eurocities, now Professor for Social Sciences at Hamburg University of Applied Sciences

d) Lead partner:

- Jos Maaskant, City of Rotterdam, Policy Officer/Policy Manager of the project Connections and Kris Luijsterburg, Policy Officer of Connections

e) Member cities:

All member cities were contacted and asked whether they would be willing to participate in an interview. These cities were: Oslo, Munich, Leeds, Vienna, Newcastle, Budapest,

Malmö. Out of the seven, three cities responded and agreed to an interview. These three were:

- Pia Hellberg Lannerheim, City of Malmö (Project Officer, Department of Integration and Employment), member of the Eurocities social affairs forum and Connections
- Fruzsina Baumann, City of Budapest (Project Officer, Regional Social Welfare Resource Centre Budapest BSZF), member of the Eurocities social affairs forum and Connections
- Gerhard Eitel, City of Vienna (Project Officer, International network department, Vienna Social Fund), member of the Eurocities social affairs forum and Connections

4.3.2. Outline and conduct of interviews

The interviews correspond to the criteria of a *focused interview*. Most interviews lasted for one hour. While following the interview outlines, they were carried out in an open-ended conversational style. The conversational style is an inherent part of a focused interview. Therefore, the order of the questions was subject to change during the interviews. There were changes to the focus on the different issues. Some were discussed more and others less intensively than anticipated, and some issues appeared during the conversations which had not been envisaged in the interview outline. All interviews were recorded. Moreover, handwritten notes were taken during the interviews. In some cases, additional material was handed out to the interviewer, for example brochures and reports. Transcripts were sent to the interview partners for confirmation, enhancing the *reliability* of this study. The upcoming chapter 5 presents the research findings.

5. Research Findings

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the empirical research conducted of the city network Eurocities. It relates the data gathered through interviews and documents to the theory. The first part of chapter 5 presents the findings with regard to the first part of the overall research question: “How can meta-governance in the city network Eurocities be characterised?”. It is supported by sub-question five: “Who are the meta-governors in Eurocities?” and sub-question six: “What meta-governance strategies do the meta-governors at Eurocities apply?”.

The second part of chapter 5 presents the findings with regard to the second part: “How do meta-governors at Eurocities influence functioning of the network?”

5.1. Meta-governance at Eurocities

This part presents the meta-governance strategies applied by the meta-governors with regard to Eurocities. To analyse and discuss these meta-governing strategies, each meta-governor is presented separately in terms of his role and activities in Eurocities and the relationship with the network. Using the indicators for the four meta-governance strategies as presented in chapter 4, it is discussed which strategy has been used by which meta-governor. The findings are presented in the following order for each meta-governor: network design, participation, framing and network management. To recall, the following strategies and indicators were identified in chapter 4:

Meta-governance strategy	Indicator
Network Design	The meta-governor influences rules, statutes, decision-making procedures
	The meta-governor sets deadlines to complete tasks in the policy process
	The meta-governor increases the political scope
	The meta-governor defines policy objectives when setting-up a governance network
Network framing	The meta-governor introduces intermediate policy objectives
	The meta-governor engages in story-telling
	The meta-governor strengthens relationships between actors
Network participation	The meta-governor actively participates in policy processes and discussions
Network management	The meta-governor enhances interaction
	The meta-governor uses conflict management
	The meta-governor activates members
	The meta-governor supports information-sharing

5.1.1. The European Commission as meta-governor

The following sections turn to the role of the European Commission as meta-governor in the field of social affairs policies of Eurocities and the exemplary case of Connections.

5.1.1.1 European Commission and network design

The meta-governance strategy network design refers most importantly to influencing the structure of governance networks by influencing rules, statutes and decision-making procedures. Other indicators were mentioned above which were tested during the empirical research. The findings for this meta-governance strategy are mixed.

Concerning the first (and most important) indicator *influencing rules, statutes and decision-making procedures*, the empirical findings did not lead to any conclusive evidence as to whether the European Commission engaged in this kind of strategy with regard to the project Connections. Instead, decisions related to the structure of Connections were taken by the city of Rotterdam. In this respect, the lead partner explains that “Rotterdam set it up. We had ideas, went into meetings, proposed them and gave the others the opportunity to comment”.

The interviewee of the city of Rotterdam listed this explicitly when describing their tasks in the project. This view was confirmed very clearly by the member cities which concurrently refer to the lead partner Rotterdam when asked about rules, statutes and decision-making procedures. Finally, the Eurocities secretariat confirmed this, too.

However, when looking at the partnership agreements which are part of Progress, one might think that the European Commission does engage in rules, statutes and decision-making procedures. That is because the European Commission ties certain conditions to the partnership agreements. For example, in order to be eligible to become a partner of the European Commission, the Eurocities social affairs forum needed to fulfil eligibility criteria. According to Mr. Calandrino from the European Commission, these eligibility criteria relate to the existence of a governance structure, statutes, decision-making processes and elections for an executive committee. Mr. Calandrino states that “we help capacity directly through funding and indirectly because the partnership agreements have strict requirements on the governance of organisations”. He thus refers to it as an indirect incentive to create a robust governance structure. Generally speaking, this activity is therefore an instance of network design on the side of the European Commission since it aims at changing the structure of a network. However, when looking at the empirical research findings, this cannot be clearly related to the case of the Eurocities’ social affairs forum. The European Commission currently

engages in 25 partnerships with European networks and these preconditions apply to all of them. While it is an incentive for some of them to introduce these structures, Eurocities has had them since its formation. Therefore, it is concluded that the network design strategy of the European Commission did not directly target Eurocities. This view is supported by the fact that neither interviews nor documents offered evidence that this case affected Eurocities. Neither the eligibility criteria were mentioned by the interviewees nor did they seem to feel that the European Commission had an influence on the structure of the cities network.

As to the second indicator, the European Commission was not involved in setting *intermediate milestones or deadlines* during the running of Connections. This was a task which the city of Rotterdam assumed. This is supported by the member cities and clearly confirmed by the city of Rotterdam, which states that it prepared all intermediate milestones and deadlines before the kick-off meeting.

Turning to the indicator of *political scope*, the findings do not suggest that the European Commission increased the political scope during the run-time of Connections. None of the interviewees mentioned this aspect. However, on a different level, the member cities did feel that their cooperation with the European Commission in the framework of Connections increased the political scope of their city and of Eurocities as a whole. This feeling seemed quite prominent among the interviewed member cities, and was expressed both in their statements but also in the way they reacted to questions about the European Commission. There was a common feeling of respect but also pride to be involved in the project. Especially highlighting the respect prominent among member cities, one participant states that cities thought of the European Commission “as someone who might be punishing us if we didn’t perform well”.

Considering this argument, it is worth bearing in mind that the Progress programme in general and the partnership agreements in particular are an expression of network design aiming at increasing the political scope of European networks. The increase in political scope is confirmed by the Eurocities secretariat as well as member cities. Especially member cities – thus the local level and active ‘on the ground’ – feel that through Progress, DG Empl reaches out to local actors and makes an effort in learning about their position. Fruzsina Baumann argues: “Focusing on social issues, I would say that the Commission supports cities because it is obvious that national governments are not accessible for this kind of activities. It is like an extending circle of actors”. Mr. Calandrino replies to this by arguing that the European Commission has a professional duty to know what is going on on the ground. In this regard,

the secretariat mentions that one advantage of cooperation with the European Commission is to enter into a dialogue on specific policy issues.

The final point for network design is the definition of *policy objectives when setting up a network*. This predetermines the scope of a network and shapes upcoming activities. In the case of Connections, the European Commission was involved in the definition of policy objectives. For the specific case of Connections, the European Commission expressed its expectation of policy objectives and also participated later on in the development and gave its blessing. According to Mr. Calandrino: “We agree on the overall objectives and the activities and we make sure that activities are carried out”. Referring to all projects supported within the framework of Connections, the city of Budapest does not perceive this as negative but points to the financial contribution of the EC and the vested political interest, which according to her is the reason for influencing policy objectives. Concerning the financial aspect, she refers to the European Commission and states that “when giving money for a project you better make sure that the objectives are achievable”. This issue is closely linked to network participation but is not similar altogether. In contrast to participation, this instance is rather the predetermination of objectives at the beginning of activities.

5.1.1.2 European Commission and network framing

The results of the research findings with regard to this meta-governance strategy are again mixed and not all indicators could be confirmed.

Firstly, with respect to *intermediating policy objectives*, the empirical research on the project Connections revealed that the European Commission did not make use of this activity. No activity related to this was mentioned. Moreover, the analysis of the project reports did not hint into this direction. On the contrary, both member cities and the lead partner concur that the European Commission was active on the overall policy objectives and in decisions related to the content. According to Jos Maaskant: “The European Commission was also present at the kick-off meeting and shared its expectations with us. These different expectations made it necessary for us to create common goals. We also introduced steps towards these goals”. In fact, this field was the prerogative of the city of Rotterdam and therefore should have been implemented by them if deemed necessary. However, neither the interviewees from Rotterdam nor the member cities mention that this was the case. Additionally, the final report of Connections does not state that intermediate policy objectives were used. Therefore, this point can be neglected in this analysis of network framing.

The next aspect, *storytelling*, offers more results. The European Commission has made use of this activity in several instances. In general, it appears to have promoted the Progress programme and the policy objectives related thereto to the participants of Connections but also to the other projects falling under this strand. The ideas were promoted by using the website, and intermediate reports. Moreover, the European Commission prepared a CD which inter alia shows best practice cases of social inclusion. Among them, the city of Vienna was chosen to present its case on the CD. This left a positive impression in the member cities. As Gerhard Eitel says, these actions express that the European Commission recognises the role of cities and this is “positively met by European cities”. Moreover, Connections was included in the “Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2009” of the European Commission in a section on best practice. Furthermore, the European Commission has organised a conference during which the results of Connections and the other projects were presented. This again motivates the members of Connections and might give way for a new project in this field. To this extent, the city of Rotterdam has been invited to the event and expresses that the European Commission is starting a new programme as of 1 January 2011: “Connections or whatever it is which will continue will hopefully get a place therein”.

The last aspect is the question whether the European Commission *strengthened relationships* in Connections. This could be the case for example through financial compensation, political importance or increased autonomy. The research found evidence for this case, especially for financial compensation and political importance. A notion of satisfaction was observed related to the fact that the European Commission chose to support this kind of project on the local level. This was the case for the city of Budapest but also for the city of Vienna and Malmö. For example, according to Mr. Eitel: “After ten years of discussions on the national action plans on social exclusion, the European Commission has realized that exchange with the national level does not bring them closer to the source of the problem and does not always match reality on-site. Instead, the role of cities for social inclusion has been emphasized. Connections results out of this realisation and is a step into the right direction”. The financial compensation surely also played a role. The member cities knew from the beginning that the project was financed by the European Commission. Framing of the policy objectives in this context can be related to the adaptation of the cities to the expectations of the European Commission. Since the financial part was necessary in order to carry out the project, its scope was adapted to the policy objectives of the European Commission. In retrospective, Mr. Maaskant criticizes this by stating: “The application included too much of what we thought the European Commission wants to hear to grant

funding. We did not really think through what we wanted this project to be”. This is an interesting remark especially since it is made in connection with criticism. Clearly, EC funding as such is a very common element in the EU sphere. This is stated by the Eurocities secretariat. At the same time, through this funding and in relation to the discursive conveyance of desired objectives, the European Commission engages in network framing.

5.1.1.3 European Commission and network participation

Network participation refers to an *active involvement in decision-making processes and policy discussions*. Several pieces of evidence point to this type of involvement of the European Commission. First of all, the representative from DG Empl participated in a number of meetings including the kick-off meeting, the concluding session and some working meetings in between. Jos Maaskant explains that the European Commission “gave a presentation at the kick-off meeting which was very impressive because it showed that that he had very high expectations”. Participation was clearly focused on the content of the project, for example the choice of indicators. All interviewees mention this kind of participation of the European Commission. In this regard, one participant refers to the impression that the actor “did manage to follow the process of the project. This was impressive. He attended the kick-off meeting, a few workshops and the closing session and I think it is very good that the Commission is monitoring what is going on in these projects”.

Both lead partner and all member cities convey that they were impressed with the involvement of the European Commission especially in the beginning of the cooperation. They perceived the presentation, which the European Commission held during the kick-off meeting as quite strict and demanding. This presentation presented the ideas, objectives, expectation of the European Commission vis-à-vis Connections. The Eurocities secretariat does not give this impression, which might be due to its extensive experience in working with the European Commission.

In this context, it is necessary to note that when comparing the two groups of interviewees, the Eurocities secretariat generally perceived the role of the European Commission as less prominent than the member cities. The research findings do not offer a clear answer as to why this is the case. Possible reasons, albeit not confirmed by the findings, are the fact that the secretariat is much more used to co-operating with the European Commission than the member cities. Eurocities engages in several projects at once and therefore disposes of a greater wealth of experience. Therefore, it is possible that the Eurocities secretariat compared the role of the European Commission with other projects in which it was even more active.

A second instance of network participation was more bilateral between the lead partner and the European Commission. During the run-time of Connections, the city of Rotterdam remained in contact with the European Commission and received regular input and suggestions on how to proceed in the project. The city of Rotterdam highly appreciated this support and exchange of ideas, referring to the EU official as “sparring partner”. These exchanges were focused on the content of the project. The following quote from the lead partner sheds light on the involvement of the European Commission: “He (Mr. Calandrino) would pick points up from the discussions and get involved and set things straight from the EC’s perspective – expectations-wise or just from sheer authority as far as the content was concerned”. Interestingly, this quote refers to the involvement based on content but also mentions authority. This is in correspondence with the point that the member cites seemed impressed by the involvement of the European Commission: the authority – and this refers to the extensive knowledge and the political weight rather than top-down steering – clearly shaped the relationship between the meta-governor and the members of Connections. The relationship and the involvement of the European Commission in terms of participation is illustrated further by the lead partner who thinks that “we have created an atmosphere with the full team in which you could be critical. When he (Mr. Calandrino) joined the meetings, he would give comments, give critical remarks on the content. He is an expert and very professional”.

The view of the European Commission on its involvement in Connections was similar. As already pointed out in a quote of Mr. Calandrino in section 5.1.1.1, he states that it was the task of the European Commission to agree to the priorities of Connections and to ensure that activities take place.

5.1.1.4 European Commission and network management

To recall, network management tries *to influence interaction, employs conflict management, activates members and supports information-sharing* (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005). No activities were detected which would have linked the European Commission to any of these indicators. Member cities referred to the city of Rotterdam as the actor responsible for ensuring that interaction took place sufficiently and to deal with conflicts and performance of members. Fruzsina Baumann sums the task of Rotterdam up by saying that “the structure was their job”. The city of Rotterdam confirms this by stating that ensuring interaction was one of its most important tasks. In Jos Maaskant’s view, “I think we have done well in creating an open atmosphere in which people feel comfortable to exchange their views”. Rotterdam did

so by frequently keeping in touch, by organising informal meetings and by aiming at creating a friendly atmosphere. Network management requires a certain degree of closeness and close involvement, and the European Commission did not assume this role. There is no indication that member cities viewed a degree of closeness for the part of the European Commission. They did confirm participation in meetings but interaction with member cities, which would have been needed for network management, did not take place. When talking about the involvement of the European Commission, Fruzsina Baumann for example does not always speak of her own experience but also about what she has heard about the involvement of the European Commission. This indicates that there were no direct links between member cities and European Commission except for discussions on the content during the project meetings. According to Mr. Calandrino, the objective of the European Commission was also “to give guidance on the policy debate related to their topic”. Moreover, as pointed out above, the goal was to monitor that the overall objectives matched the Commission’s objectives and that the foreseen activities took place. While especially the last point could theoretically be supported by network management (e.g. improve interaction), this was not the case in the present research.

5.1.2. The Executive Committee as meta-governor

The role of the ExCom and its activities was introduced in section 3.3.1 of the case description. To recall, the ExCom is the political body of Eurocities. It is made up of twelve mayors from Eurocities member cities. The ExCom (and therefore Eurocities) is chaired by one member city for a term of three years.

The ExCom considers its main tasks within Eurocities as dealing with administrative and management tasks and as shaping the political strategy of the network. This is supported by the city of Copenhagen. Carsten Krabbe states that this task includes dealing with the “political agenda concerning the question into which direction we are steering Eurocities and where our primary targets lay”. This view is supported by the secretariat which states that the ExCom is the manager of political and strategic objectives of Eurocities. The internal rules of Eurocities draw a similar picture by listing the following policy-related tasks for the ExCom:

- Preparing and supervising the implementation of the Eurocities annual work programme;
- Approving all Eurocities policy positions and papers;
- Overseeing activities of the forum and working groups and the Eurocities secretariat;

- Representing Eurocities legally and vis-à-vis the European institutions (Eurocities, 2008a, p. 3).

The following will consider the meta-governance strategies used by the ExCom.

5.1.2.1 Executive Committee and network design

To recall, network design is defined most prominently by dealing with the structure of governance networks and influencing their rules, statutes and decision-making procedures. The evidence gathered during the empirical research does not confirm that the ExCom applied this meta-governance strategy for the project Connections.

It was clearly affirmed by participating member cities, lead partner and Eurocities secretariat that it was the city of Rotterdam which was responsible for determining the *structure, decision-making procedures and processes*. The ExCom was not involved in this activity. Instead, as Pia Hellberg Lannerheim points out for example: “Generally, they (*the ExCom*) would look at a project like this and give their blessing for doing this kind of application”. This is also supported by Simon Güntner who describes the ExCom as an actor who keeps an overview over developments in Eurocities but who is not involved in the practical implementation of activities in forums and working groups. Therefore, the first – and most important – indicator of network design cannot be affirmed in this case.

The second indicator raises the question whether the ExCom increases the *political scope* in the field of social affairs. The research has found an instance in which the political scope in the field of social affairs has been broadened: especially in the years 2004 and 2005, the thematic focus in the social affairs forum lay on migration policy. This changed in 2008 and inclusion policy was added to the political agenda of Eurocities. This could be an instance in which the ExCom used network design to broaden the political scope of Eurocities. However, there is no unequivocal evidence to support this hypothesis. It is true that the focus on inclusion policy has widened the political scope of Eurocities. Moreover, this view is supported by the fact that following the focus on social inclusion, Eurocities was able to engage in the partnership with the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. In this respect, Simon Güntner, former Eurocities policy officer for social affairs, points to an interplay between Eurocities and the EU agenda: Eurocities focuses on political issues which its members have stakes in. At the same time Eurocities tries to match these topics with the political agenda of the European Commission. Carsten Krabbe also explains that “they (*the strategic priorities*) change according to what is ranking high on the political agenda”. Therefore, the decision to position social inclusion high on the political

agenda of the Eurocities social affairs forum was influenced by the policy priorities of the European Commission. Within Eurocities, these types of decisions are taken by the forum leaders, the Eurocities secretariat and the ExCom collectively. In the instance discussed, there is no evidence that the ExCom engaged in a meta-governing strategy to put the policy issue on the political agenda. Before the decision was taken, the forum had prepared a policy paper on the issue and the ExCom apparently agreed with the political stance and the importance of the policy field. This means that the insights gained through the interviews did not give any distinct clues as to the involvement of ExCom with the other two indicators (*deadlines, objectives*).

5.1.2.2 Executive Committee and network framing

Framing is “the formulation of the political goals and objectives to be pursued by governance networks” (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p. 204). The empirical research reveals that the ExCom uses network framing as means to promote policy goals and strategies. This is also reflected in the quote of Carsten Krabbe (which also already presented in section 5.1.2) who explains that the main task of the ExCom refers to dealing with the “political agenda concerning the question into which direction we are steering Eurocities and where our primary targets lay”. However, not all instances of framing can be affirmed.

The first indicator can be ruled out since neither the interviewees nor the documents studied suggested that the ExCom has used the *introduction of intermediate policy objectives in order to influence the overall scope of a policy-process*. The last two indicators, however, were supported by the evidence gathered. *Strengthening the relationships* between members can for example include clarifying or shaping the interests of members. It is generally carried out through financial compensation, increasing political importance or increased autonomy. The ExCom engages in this activity in regular meetings with the head of the social affairs forum. In these instances, it is able to clarify and shape interests and does so especially by emphasising the autonomy of the forums. Carsten Krabbe repeatedly refers to the independence of the social affairs forum and he also suggests that the ExCom explicitly tries to observe this principle in their meetings. At the same time, though, he does mention that this is not always the case: “Of course, we cannot always agree 100% on everything and sometimes we need to take a vote on a specific matter”.

Moreover, the ExCom engages in *storytelling* by for example sending out one-pagers to the member cities in which the strategic goals of Eurocities are emphasized. Another example

for this is presentations held during the Annual General Meeting, which present visions and strategies. This is also reflected in the website of the city network.

In the interview with the city of Copenhagen, the interviewee mentions that the ExCom aims at consistently highlighting the common strategy and priorities vis-à-vis the Eurocities members. This is seen as important: Carsten Krabbe refers to instances in which the different thematic forums, which work separately contradict each other in their positions towards policies. “It was very difficult to say what it is that Eurocities wants”. Again, this indicates that the ExCom maintains an oversight of the policy work of Eurocities as a whole and engages in matching diverging policy views. In order to maintain a sound policy focus of Eurocities, the ExCom monitors and coordinates policy objectives and interests. As Carsten Krabbe from the city of Copenhagen states: “You need the ExCom to say what the strategic priorities of the organisation are so that we all go into the same direction”.

These framing activities take place on the overall network level and do not specifically target Connections. No network framing was detected on this level. None of the interviewed member cities gave clues concerning possible network framing in the ExCom. This means that the ExCom does not engage in framing to target the common strategy of Connections but instead targets the overall goals of Eurocities. Surely, this bears repercussions for Connections, too. Thus, indirect effects can be argued for because the member cities of Connections are part of the social affairs forum and therefore affected by framing in this field. This means that indirectly, the overall strategy of Eurocities, which includes social policy, has allowed Connections to take place.

To subsume, as a result of the ExCom’s focus on creating a bond through a common vision and strategy, the meta-governance strategy of framing is quite strong in this case. On the level of Connections, however, these activities are not very visible.

5.1.2.3 Executive Committee and network participation

To re-cap, network participation refers to the *active involvement in the decision-making processes and policy discussions*. This means that for the ExCom to participate in the network, findings would be needed concerning its active involvement in these processes in the field of social affairs and especially the project Connections. This also implies an involvement in everyday decisions and processes. However, all interviewees brought forward that this is not the case as they were not aware that the ExCom directly participated in the daily work of forums and projects. Instead, the implementation of political strategies on this level is left to the member cities. This is stated by the city of Copenhagen itself and was confirmed in the

interview with the Eurocities secretariat. According to Carsten Krabbe: “In general, the forums set their own priorities within the strategic priorities set from the ExCom”. Simon Güntner states that the ExCom deals with the “big picture and not with smaller strategic decisions strategic decisions of the thematic forums and working groups”.

This is supported by further evidence: the Eurocities members who were interviewed did not see a great involvement of the ExCom in social affairs and specifically in the project Connections. On the working level of policy officers, who are directly involved in projects and thematic forums, the role of the ExCom is not very prominent. They perceived the lead partner Rotterdam as most important player. None of the interview partners from Eurocities member cities mentioned ExCom involvement. Instead, their reactions to the respective questions ranged from a notion of ignorance of the ExCom’s activities to the impression that they did not feel affected in their project by what the ExCom was doing. In accordance with these findings, this type of meta-governance can therefore be excluded for the ExCom.

5.1.2.4 Executive Committee and network management

Network management includes ‘hands-on’ involvement in a governance network and targets specifically *at interaction, making use of conflict management, activating members and supporting information-sharing* (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005). The findings do not lead to the conclusion that the ExCom is engaged in these activities. In fact, none of the interviewees suggested that the ExCom engages in these activities in the field of social affairs or within the project Connections. Instead, as already pointed out in section 5.1.1.4 for the case of the European Commission, interviewees from the member cities link these activities to the city of Rotterdam. They agree that it was Rotterdam’s task as lead city to ensure interaction, spread of information, and conflict management. The city of Rotterdam confirms these statements. Again, the interviewees stress the engagement of the ExCom on taking care that the overall strategies of Eurocities are met, and that they are sound and adapting them in cases in which they do not match.

5.1.3. The lead partner as meta-governor

Considering preceding parts have already given some clues concerning the involvement of the city of Rotterdam as lead partner in Connections. This part takes a closer look at its role as meta-governor.

5.1.3.1 Lead partner and network design

Starting with network design and its most prominent feature, namely *structures, decision-making procedures and processes*, a strong involvement of the lead partner is established. As has already been stated above when analysing the role of the other meta-governors, the city of Rotterdam clearly assumed responsibility for introducing and maintaining the structural side of Connections. In this regard, Fruzsina Baumann states in a clear-cut manner: “The structure was their job”. Jos Maaskant confirms this view and describes their approach to setting-up the structure as democratic. This means that Rotterdam’s team did not strictly impose the structure but instead developed suggestions and proposed them to all members. While this left room for objections and alterations and therefore seems like an open approach, it was nevertheless the prerogative of the lead partner to propose the structure and also to take a final decision if no agreement was reached. Their proceeding was in line with the lead partner’s overall approach to management which was guided by an open exchange and atmosphere. Fruzsina Baumann seconds this. She also noticed the open approach engaged in by the lead partner by saying that the management was very much present but democratic.

Turning to the development of *intermediate milestones or deadlines* as an expression of network design, this is also very evident in the activities of the lead partner. Moreover, the lead partner appears to have been quite strong in this instance. According to Jos Maaskant, the lead partner presented a working plan during the kick-off meeting, which set out all intermediary deadlines and milestones. Moreover, they also ensured that the milestones and deadlines were met by contacting participants and reminding them to deliver. The member cities seem to perceive this point as crucial in the project. Pia Hellberg Lannerheim for example refers to the importance to make sure that “everybody is following the book”.

Turning to the question whether the lead partner influenced the *political scope* of Connections during its run-time, none of the interviewees and neither the documents suggested that this activity took place. The lead partner was heavily involved in what could be termed the internal management of Connections. This means that instances like introducing structures and decision-making procedures as discussed above were pushed by Rotterdam. The political scope seems to have been a task assumed by the European Commission, as has been argued for in section 5.1.2.1. Simon Güntner, for example, describes the role of the lead partner as overseeing the different interests developing within the projects and to balance them. Moreover, in the description of its own tasks, Rotterdam restricts its role to the inside of the project, which means both structure and content: “Our role was on the practical side and

on the content side”. Therefore, there is no evidence that the city attempted to shape the political scope.

The introduction of *policy objectives when setting up a network*, finally, is an interesting point. First of all, it can be stated that the city of Rotterdam was involved in the definition of policy objectives. However, their involvement was not all-dominant. First of all, as has been discussed in the section on the European Commission, the overall policy objectives were set by the European Commission as a result of the Progress programme. Moreover, the Executive Committee had an indirect influence on the policy objectives due to its meta-governing role in the overarching Eurocities strategies and priorities. Concerning the objectives for the specific case of the Connections project, these were laid down in the application which was submitted to the European Commission. This application was written in a team of different actors, and Rotterdam was a member thereof. The other actors were the Eurocities secretariat, and the cities of Newcastle, Leeds and Malmö. The city of Rotterdam does not appear to have played a decisive role in formulating the policy objectives in this group. None of the interviewees referred to Rotterdam as being exceptionally influential. Due to this, it is concluded that the city of Rotterdam did participate in this type of network design, albeit not as strongly as in the first two instances discussed above.

5.1.3.2 Lead partner and network framing

The application of network framing on the activities of the lead partner does not offer strong evidence that the lead partner engaged in this meta-governing activity. First of all, there are no indications that the lead partner introduced *intermediate policy objectives* during the project in order to shape the overall policy objectives. Policy objectives were clarified in the application for the European Commission. None of the interviewees suggested that they were shaped in the forthcoming implementation of the project. The next indicator for framing is the *strengthening of relationships between members*, which can be done for example through financial compensation, political importance and increased autonomy. While this instance has been affirmed for the European Commission and the Executive Committee, this is not the case for the lead partner. There were no statements of any interviewees which linked the lead partner to any financial means, which ascribed outstanding political importance to the city or which referred to its possible competence of increasing the autonomy of Connections. Regarding financial compensation, the only actor who had financial power was the European Commission, which financed 80% of the project. According to information of the city of Rotterdam, the remaining 20% were the costs of the participating cities for the personnel

working with Connections. This means that Rotterdam was in no position to use financial means in order to frame expectations. The same holds for the possible rise of political importance. As a member city of Eurocities, which is not active in the ExCom neither a chair of the social affairs forum at this point in time, the city of Rotterdam had a rather restricted scope when it comes to increasing the political importance of Connections. Following this line of thought, the same holds for a possible increase in autonomy.

Furthermore, there are no clear-cut results which would either support or refute that the lead partner made use of *storytelling*. To recall, storytelling or discursive framing can be about shaping perceptions, creating a common vision or pointing out to common strategies. The lead partner very much emphasised discussions and informal meetings in order to support relationships between members. They did engage in creating a common vision, according to the city of Malmö. This is especially linked to the debates which took place during the meetings. Pia Hellberg Lannerheim says that a shared vision “is very important, really important. I think we had that on and off”. The following quote also suggests that Rotterdam used framing in order to shape perceptions: “It was especially important to keep a clear focus on the projected outcome. You have to start thinking about this very early on”. This means that Rotterdam attempted to keep the project on track in order to reach the envisaged outcome. However, as a whole these pieces of information do not suffice to clearly depict whether and how Rotterdam used storytelling.

5.1.3.3 Lead partner and network participation

The lead partner has been *actively involved in the decision-making processes and policy discussions* which took place in the framework of Connections. The preceding discussion has already hinted to this involvement and is analysed more in-depth in the following. The city of Rotterdam participated in all meetings and discussions and was therefore not only involved in designing the structure but also in the content of the project. In this regard, it not only participated but also chaired meetings and discussions. This is stated concurrently by the lead partner itself, the Eurocities secretariat and the participating member cities. The Rotterdam team was the one which provided input, suggestions and proposals for meetings. According to Jos Maaskant, they also prepared the agenda and clarified at the beginning of each meeting what the objectives of the discussion were. As has been mentioned previously, Rotterdam not only participated but assumed the prerogative of taking final decisions on the debate. This happened notwithstanding their self-proclaimed approach of engaging in a democratic and open exchange and of having all voices heard. Jos Maaskant perceived network participation

as a crucial part of their activities as lead partner: “We chaired all meetings, prepared minutes, looked at the major points, and made proposals for working documents”. This view is shared by the member cities. In this context, a statement of Pia Hellberg Lannerheim is interesting. She states that “in general, they (*lead partner*) were very important, extremely important. I don’t think they knew how important they were.”

5.1.3.4 *Lead partner and network management*

Regarding the meta-governing activities of the lead partner, network management is a strong case in point. All aspects of network management as identified by Sørensen & Torfing (2005), namely *influencing interaction, employing conflict management, activating members and supporting information-sharing* were found to be used by the lead partner. The city of Rotterdam *promoted interaction* by creating an open atmosphere between members which invited them to participate in discussions. The interviewees from the city of Rotterdam described their approach as “shared ownership” – they tried to base interaction on consensus-building and an open exchange of views. Moreover, they emphasised informal exchange between participants whenever they had meetings. These activities are seen as an investment by the city of Rotterdam to foster relationships between participants. This is illustrated in the following quote: “If you are between friends it is easier to communicate. Formally, we had the leadership and had formal authority but we tried to apply it as informal as possible”. This is backed by the member cities, for example Malmö: “A big part of it was having a nice time as well through meetings, interactions, and socialising. They tried to create an atmosphere of belonging”. Related to this, the city enabled the distribution of *information* in order to ensure interaction. This was done mainly via e-mail but also a members section on the Connections website, according to Jos Maaskant. The members section consisted of a forum, on which documents for each meeting were posted and could be accessed by all participants.

Moreover, the city *activated members* in order to improve performance. In one instance, which Rotterdam, Malmö and Budapest referred to, a participant produced a report which did not live up to expectations of Rotterdam. As a result, the participant was asked to re-write the report. While Rotterdam saw their request as a result of time pressure, Malmö and Budapest seemed to perceive this approach as inadequate. Moreover, as already stated in connection with network design, the lead partner also ensured that deadlines and milestones were met and approached members who did not live up to their expectations.

Where necessary, Rotterdam used *conflict management*. This is stated by the city itself and secondly by the member cities. Again, conflicts were attempted to be solved by trying to

reach consensus between members. According to Rotterdam, this was done by mediating between all participants and listening to their opinions. In cases in which no consensus could be found, Rotterdam would take a decision. This, however, did not occur many times. The use of conflict management was confirmed by the city of Malmö, albeit judged in a different light. The interviewee thought that the conflict management of the lead partner involved too much discussion. While the quality thereof is not subject of this research, it remains to be stressed that the lead partner made use of network management in the form of conflict management, activation of participants, sharing of information and supporting of interaction.

5.1.4. The secretariat as meta-governor

The research suggests that the Eurocities secretariat was not as much involved as meta-governor as it could have been taken its prominent role as secretariat. At the time of inception, Eurocities did not have sufficient capacity to act as lead partner in Connections. Therefore, the secretariat was disseminating partner for Connections, which means that it was only responsible for opening its network and providing its members with information on Connection. It was not the lead partner, which would have meant a higher degree of involvement. As soon as the fund for Connections was granted and project implementation started, there was no role envisaged for the secretariat.

The abstention of the secretariat from becoming lead partner could have had two possible implications: firstly, the secretariat could have tried to still act as strong meta-governor albeit without being the lead partner. In this case, not assuming the role as lead partner would have simply been due to a lack of resources. A second possibility is that the restraint as such was already an expression that the secretariat did not see a great need for acting as a strong meta-governor. The latter explanation is supported by the findings. Whereas the secretariat is found to have used network design and network participation, these were used for very selective issues. In its position as secretariat, which has extensive knowledge and therefore also authority, the actor could have acted as stronger meta-governor. However, the finding that the secretariat did not want to be lead partner suggests that the secretariat did not aim at doing so. The following now looks at the use and non-use of the four strategies in more detail.

5.1.4.1 Secretariat and network design

The Eurocities secretariat used the meta-governance strategy of network design. Network design can take the form of influencing rules, statutes and decision-making procedures, introducing intermediate milestones and deadlines, influencing the political scope or

introducing policy-objectives. The Eurocities secretariat did *not influence rules, statutes and decision-making procedures*. This activity of network design was assumed by the city of Rotterdam as lead partner as has been shown in the preceding part (please turn to this section for the evidence on this). None of the interviewees linked the Eurocities secretariat to this task. Instead, the city of Budapest for example points out to the essence of the secretariat's role: "They were not really involved". Therefore, *introducing intermediate milestones and influencing the political scope* can also clearly be excluded. The last point – introducing policy objectives – however, is affirmed for the secretariat. According to the self-perception of the secretariat and affirmed by the city of Rotterdam and Malmö, the secretariat was involved in defining the policy objectives of Connections when compiling the application for the European Commission. Herein, the Eurocities secretariat assumed an influential role, according to Rotterdam and Malmö. Jos Maaskant: "In the initial phase when structuring the project Simon (Güntner) made a very valuable contribution". The quote shows that although the Eurocities secretariat was relatively little involved, its meta-governing activities it did engage in had an impact on Connections. According to the city of Rotterdam, the secretariat especially ensured that there was a proper link between the project and EU policy goals. The reason why the secretariat supported the application had to do with its wider activities in the social affairs forum. Since social inclusion was on the EU agenda, engaging in a project in this policy field enabled Eurocities and its members to get involved and to present themselves as a player vis-à-vis the European Commission.

Moreover, Eurocities aimed at feeding the results of the project back into its policy work on social inclusion. Simon Güntner refers to this as "window of opportunity", which means that it was an opportunity for Eurocities to push its involvement on social inclusion on EU level. Eurocities was thus pushing the project to position itself in the field of active inclusion on a "higher level". Eurocities therefore supported the social affairs forum and the task force on social inclusion prior to the kick-off of Connections. It was not too much involved during the running of the project as pointed out by participating cities.

5.1.4.2 Secretariat and network framing

Network framing – shaping political goals and objectives – was not found for the secretariat. As has been shown above, the secretariat was involved in beginning of Connections when introducing the policy objectives. This activity did not involve, however, the shaping of perceptions as framing would have involved. Instead, this activity was more direct. Moreover, also in the running of Connections, no statements of the interviewees suggested that the

secretariat shaped the process by introducing *intermediate policy objectives in order to influence the overall scope of the policy-process*. Neither did it invest resources to strengthen the relationships between members. Moreover, there were no statements which suggested that the secretariat used discursive framing or storytelling. While not having had findings for these instances, it is possible that they did take place anyways. As framing is an indirect meta-governing activity, which is not hands-on like for example participation, it cannot be ruled out that interviewees were not aware of these activities. Considering the fact, however, that the secretariat did not assume the role of a lead partner, it seems that the secretariat did not see a great need for its involvement. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that framing did nevertheless take place. At the same time, there are no strong indications which support this possibility. Instead of framing, another meta-governance strategy, namely participation, was used by the secretariat. It is discussed in the next section.

5.1.4.3 Secretariat and network participation

The analysis of the interviews found that the secretariat made use of network participation. Network participation – or the *active involvement in decision-making processes and policy discussion* – took place during the implementation of Connections when the policy for social affairs participated in meetings, giving input on which steps were necessary in order to reach the objectives of Connections. In doing so, member cities found this involvement valuable, as Pia Lannerheim Hellberg points out: “He commented on our discussion which was very helpful”. Fruzsina Baumann seconds this but also remarks that the engagement between secretariat and participants was restricted. She refers to another way in which the secretariat participated, which is also confirmed by the lead partner and the European Commission: the secretariat participated by engaging in bilateral discussions with the lead partner. In these discussions, decisions on the content of the project and the policy objectives were discussed, as the lead partner explained. Rotterdam even referred to these exchanges as ‘teaming up’. This means that in terms of participation, the Eurocities secretariat acted as meta-governor more ‘behind the scenes’ and not in a public way, which was visible to all participants.

5.1.4.4 Secretariat and network management

Following the information that the secretariat did not assume a big role after Connections started, it was found that the actor did not use network management. The preceding section on the lead partner elucidated the big role it had in network management. Neither the secretariat itself nor the lead partner or member cities mentioned that the secretariat played a role therein.

As had already been said, Jos Maaskant explained that after the drafting of the application, the role of the secretariat was limited. The only meta-governing activity it did assume afterwards was network participation. The secretariat was not concerned with the actual interaction processes in Connections, which it would have had to be in order to use network management. Instead, the secretariat's role was very limited after the grant for Connections was approved. Instead, its prerogative was to position the network as an actor in social affairs – which it did by using network design to draft the policy objectives of Connections, thereby gaining the grant for the project.

5.1.5. The member cities as meta-governor

Member cities were not involved as meta-governors in the selected case. Starting with *network design*, it has been shown that the city of Rotterdam had the lead in setting up structures and decision-making processes. Regarding the lead partners' activities, the cities clearly supported the fact that it should have been the city of Rotterdam. To recall the statement of Budapest in this context: “The structure was their job”. Rotterdam perceived its involvement as quite dominant and they did indeed assume control of the agenda, deadlines, minutes and the final report as the interviewees suggested. Fruzsina Baumann also stated that it was the task of Rotterdam to fulfil this role. In this regard, neither a statement nor an observation was detected which could lead to the conclusion that the member cities attempted to meta-govern Connections. The interviews rather hint at the opposite, namely that the member cities expected Rotterdam to act strongly. All stressed that the role of Rotterdam was important for the project. According to Fruzsina Baumann: “The role of the lead city is very important. Before, I have seen projects falling apart because of a lack of charismatic leadership”. The statement of Pia Hellberg Lannerheim which highlights the importance of the lead partner as “strong moderator” who ensures that everyone follows the plan points into the same direction. Overall, this shows that the participating member cities subordinated to the lead of Rotterdam.

Due to this, there is no evidence that a member city engaged in *network framing* or *network participation* as meta-governing strategy. Concerning network participation, there is surely evidence that the member cities participated in the discussion and gave input on ongoing debates. This is reflected in the interview with Jos Maaskant who says that they were listening to the input of the participants but also in the interview with the city of Malmö, for example, in which the interviewee even felt that Rotterdam allowed for too much discussion.

However, there is no indication that the input of the cities was aimed at guiding the overall processes of the network. Moreover, no instances of *network management* of the member cities were found since none of the interviewees referred to the involvement of a member city. Instead, as discussed in the part on the lead partner, findings show that the city of Rotterdam was the major meta-governor using this strategy.

As to the reasons why they did not assume meta-governance strategies, the research did not find specific reasons. As stated, the cities did have a say in the ongoing discussions. Gerhard Eitel, for example, refers to constructive discussions, which took place in Connections. This kind of involvement might have sufficed for their purpose. Another piece of information can explain the lack of meta-governing activities in this context: both the city of Rotterdam as well as the secretariat explained that finding a lead partner for the project was not an easy task. Since it involved responsibility and the investment of time and human resources, none of the cities volunteered promptly. Why Rotterdam eventually accepted the job was not revealed in the interview. Malmö suggested that the reason was the fact that Rotterdam at that time held the chair of the social affairs forum. This might have been a reason for convincing Rotterdam to step up but has not been confirmed. In any case, even though the participating cities would have had a chance to assume a more influential role in the project, they did not opt to do so.

5.1.6. Meta-governance strategies identified

The use of the following meta-governance strategies in Eurocities can be confirmed. The **European Commission** has engaged in

- network design
- network framing
- and network participation

The empirical research did not give evidence for network management for the case of the European Commission.

In the case of the Eurocities **Executive Committee**, the use of the following strategy was confirmed:

- network framing

The strategies of network design, network participation and network management were excluded. In the case of network management and network participation, evidence suggested quite clearly that these two strategies were not used by the Executive Committee. There were indicators which pointed to network design but they did not suffice and could therefore not be confirmed.

The **lead partner** was involved in:

- Network design
- Network participation
- Network management

Findings do not suggest that the lead partner engaged in network framing.

Moreover, the **Eurocities secretariat** was found to use:

- Network design
- Network participation

The meta-governing strategies network framing and network management were excluded.

Last but not least, **member cities** were excluded as meta-governors.

5.2. Influence of meta-governance strategies on functioning

Having established the different meta-governance roles, the second part of this analysis turns to the impact of the meta-governors on the functioning of Eurocities. Where applicable, the parts will of course bear in mind differences in perception among the interviewees and discuss them.

To re-call, the following cohesion factors have been used to investigate the influence of meta-governance on functioning:

- network size
- rules
- veto power
- strength of relationship
- common goals

- shared meaning & concerted action
- conflicts
- trust
- leadership & skills
- power

To begin with, the empirical research did not yield any findings concerning the following indicators:

- network size
- leadership & skills
- rules
- power
- veto power

Concerning network size, the research did not find any evidence that network size was affected by the meta-governors. The membership of Connections remained the same throughout. Leadership and skills offers a mixed picture. None of the cities which were interviewed related their skills to the role of one of the meta-governors. Concerning leadership, it can be argued that this is directly related to the meta-governors. This means that participating cities did not see an effect on leadership within the project as they regarded the lead city as leader. As the lead city was a meta-governor itself, no findings could be drawn for this factor. What can be concluded is an overlap in this respect between meta-governors and the cohesion factors. This becomes also apparent when looking at rules. The meta-governor himself makes use of rules in the network. The factor could therefore not be isolated in this respect. Power and veto power is an interesting case in point. None of the interviewees specified power relations including the power to veto over an issue. Moreover, no participating city was found to be in a more dominant position. Instead, trust, openness and reciprocity were the prevailing features of network cooperation. This was the case for all interviewees and on all levels.

Different reasons can account for the lack of findings for these cohesion factors. Firstly, the factors can exist as cohesion factors but were not affected by the meta-governors. Since the list of cohesion factors shows *general* conditions for functioning without specifically taking meta-governance into account, this would be a possible explanation. In addition to this, it is possible that they do not constitute a ‘target’ for meta-governors.

A second reason is that these cohesion factors do not apply to the case of Eurocities. Chapter 2 explained that networks can take on different forms, for example in terms of formality, size, members or long-term/ad-hoc orientation. The cohesion factors are extracted from the general literature on networks and no research has been conducted yet to link specific cohesion factors to certain kinds of networks. Therefore, it is possible that these factors are not applicable.

Due to the lack of findings for these conditions, the subsequent part only deals with the following indicators:

- strength of relationship
- common goals
- shared meaning & concerted action
- conflicts
- trust

5.2.1. Meta-governors and strength of relationships

The strength of relationship in the selected case has been influenced by the meta-governing activities of the *lead partner*. One of the main objectives of Rotterdam was to create strong relationships between the participants of Connections. This is expressed by Jos Maaskant for example who reported that the lead partner aimed at creating bonds between participants and at an open atmosphere in which exchange could take place. In doing so, they took great care that frequent, informative and collegial interaction was taking place.

This is also confirmed by the member cities, for example Gerhard Eitel who says that Rotterdam emphasised the development of relationships by for example supporting informal exchange between the participants. The city of Malmö agrees by saying that the lead partner tried to create an open atmosphere by organizing regular meetings and by allowing for personal exchange. Furthermore, she gives another example by referring to the forum of the website.

Looking at the influence of specific meta-governance strategies on the strength of relationships, *network management* sticks out. All statements of the interviewees said that the lead partner strengthened relationships by increasing interaction via meetings, informal exchanges and the website forum. To recall, enhancing interaction in such a manner is an element of network management. As such, creating strong relationships is an objective of network management (Sørensen & Torfing, 2009, p.427). The findings show that this applies

to the case of Connections. Rotterdam used network management in order to strengthen relationships. In this respect, the other two strategies used by the lead partner (network design and network participation) were not related by the interviewees to enforcing relationships. This study does not rule per se out that the two strategies can generally impact relationships. For example, the structures which were developed by network design could help participants to create relationships. Therefore, it is possible that these strategies could also impact relationships – this was, however, not shown in the current research and only network management was found to have a significant impact.

While the role of the lead partner for relationships has been demonstrated, the role of *European Commission, Executive Committee* and *Eurocities secretariat* was not deemed to influence the strength of relationships. Interviewees did not link these meta-governors to their relationships but instead only mentioned the lead partner and his activities. For the European Commission, only the lead partner Rotterdam believed that the European Commission strengthened relationships in Connections by supporting the member cities in being “critical friends”. This view, however, was not replicated by the member cities. Concerning the Executive Committee, Carsten Krabbe explained that the Executive Committee organized meetings and forums in order to get members together and to create relationships. His self-perception, though was not supported by the interviewees who did not mention the Executive Committee at all when talking about the influence of the actors on relationships. The same holds for the Eurocities secretariat, which did not seem at all to be ‘on the radar’ of participants as an actor who could have had an influence on their functioning.

5.2.2. Meta-governors and conflicts

Very similar to the findings made regarding the strength of relationships, the meta-governing role of the *lead partner* is the major influence on managing and decreasing conflicts in the project. The member cities referred to the lead partner as the actor who was able to influence this cohesion factor. Fruzsina Baumann explains that the management of Rotterdam was able to decrease conflicts due to the debates and exchanges it enhanced. In its self-perception, Rotterdam states that its aim to create an atmosphere of “critical friends” and “shared ownership” was meant to channel possible disagreements into productive outcomes. Jos Maaskant says that conflicts as such are not negative if they take place in an environment in which participants feel comfortable to raise their voice and in which solutions can be sought for. Pia Hellberg Lannerheim also sees a clear link between conflicts and the activities of the lead partner. She is, however, more critical because she disagrees that the lead partner was

successful to reduce conflicts by using its strategy of interaction and open exchange. Nevertheless, she confirms the impact of Rotterdam's meta-governing role on conflicts. Similar to the section on strength of relationships, the *network management* of Rotterdam has affected the issue of conflicts. Again, the creation of interaction and exchange, which is an integral part of network management, is specified by the interviewees as most important activity affecting this cohesion factor.

The meta-governing roles of the European Commission, the Executive Committee and the Eurocities secretariat are not found to influence conflicts. Although there are indications that these meta-governors are aware of conflicts, they were not found to be influential in Connections. For example, Carsten Krabbe mentioned conflicts between member cities which take place due to different political view. According to him, the Executive Committee actively engages in resolving these conflicts by trying to conciliate the different views. This activity, however, was not found to have affected Connections since none of the interviewees supported this view.

5.2.3. Meta-governors and common goals

The findings attest a strong link between the activities of the *European Commission* and common goals. All meta-governing strategies used by the European Commission are found to have exerted an influence. The strategies were *network design*, *network participation* and *network framing*. Ms. Hellberg Lannheim for example states that the participation of the European Commission in meetings and seminars and giving information led to the creation of common goals. This is confirmed by the city of Rotterdam: the participation of the European Commission during the kick-off meeting (network participation) and its predefined policy expectations (network design) added to the need to create common goals. The participation of the European Commission in meetings is part of its *network participation*. The EC's policy expectations which have been shown to have led to the creation of common objectives is linked to network design. The mechanism which led Connections to develop common goals is explained by Jos Maaskant: "These different expectations (*of the EC*) made it necessary to create common goals".

Network framing influenced the creation of common goals because the storytelling of the European Commission which emphasised social inclusion and the importance of cities therein led to the cooperation of the participating cities in Connections. Importantly in this context, Gerhard Eitel says that the "involvement of the European Commission plays a role in shaping

a common position”. This suggests that network framing of the European Commission has added to the willingness of cities to work together.

The importance of the European Commission for the creation of common goals is highlighted by Jos Maaskant who states that “objectives are very much needed, especially in the light of the expectations of the EC”. This is supported by Carsten Krabbe who explains that the European Commission has an influence on the agenda of the network through its policy programmes.

Turning to the influence of the *lead partner* on common goals, a link between the two is confirmed. Jos Maaskant explains that it was the lead partner’s task to support the creation of common goals. It did so in close cooperation with the participating cities and by ensuring that they could give input and make suggestions. This is supported by the member cities, for example Malmö by saying that common goals were developed and discussed under the lead of Rotterdam. Looking at this evidence, it appears that *network participation* was especially used for the creation of common goals. In this respect, the interviewees emphasised the participation of the lead partner in discussions – which is an element of network participation. The statement of Pia Hellberg Lannerheim which highlights the importance of the lead partner as “strong moderator” who ensures that everyone follows the plan points into the same direction. It means that the lead partner participated in discussion, thereby engaging in the creation of common objectives.

For the side of the *Executive Committee*, Carsten Krabbe mentions that strategic priorities are important for Eurocities as a whole and that they alone improve co-ordination in the network. Both the city of Copenhagen and Simon Güntner highlight that in a network, participation is voluntary. They are both well aware that members can opt to leave the network when they feel dissatisfied with cooperation. This explains the feeling that the task of the Executive Committee is to create common goals, thereby keeping the network together.

However, while the analysis of the meta-governance strategies used by the ExCom revealed that the body aims at framing perceptions and common goals, the empirical research does not come up with reliable evidence therefore. On the one hand, there are statements, which would support the view that network framing of the ExCom influences common goals: Carsten Krabbe on the part of the ExCom describes the activities taken in this respect and argues that they shape common goals and consolidate diverging goals present in the networks. The secretariat argues similarly. However, these two views –which are the self-perception of the ExCom and the view of the Eurocities secretariat – are not replicated by the members. Importantly though, they are neither expressively denied by the member cities which were

interviewed. This means that while network framing was found for the ExCom, the link between these activities and their impact on the creation of common goals is not supported by unequivocal evidence. Statements by the two interviewees do strongly suggest that there is a link but this conception but member cities neither back this view nor do they refute it. On the level of Connections, the participating role of the *secretariat* was perceived by the members as “useful” in terms of their input but its role for common goals was not strongly emphasised.

5.2.4. Meta-governors and shared meaning & concerted action

The *network framing* activities of the *European Commission* have influenced the creation of shared meaning and concerted action in the selected case. As has been shown in the preceding part on the meta-governing strategies, the European Commission engaged in network framing to influence perceptions on EU social affairs policies. This has added to shared meaning among cities.

The interviews showed that in the case of the European Commission, shared meaning is to be understood in the sense that member cities feel that co-operating on the European level is worthwhile and effective. Moreover, it relates to the feeling that it strengthens the role of cities in Europe and that the European Commission recognises the role of cities in European governance. This view is expressed by the member cities in the interview. Gerhard Eitel from the city of Vienna, for example, states that the cities react positively because they see that the European Commission is applying the conception that cities are very important actors in the field of social policy. As already mentioned previously, member cities gave the impression – both observed but also expressed in words – that they had a stance of mixed pride and respect towards the European Commission. It can be argued that this added to shared meaning and therefore, the research indicates that the overall discursive framing in the field of social affairs influenced functioning within Connections. This is because the member cities were well aware of the Commission’s track record and previous engagement in the field. They were also well aware that they were dealing with a highly competent partner. The latter point was clearly expressed by the city of Rotterdam, Malmö, Budapest and the Eurocities secretariat.

Evidence for the role of the *lead partner* in relation to shared meaning and concerted action is much weaker compared to the European Commission. Only the city of Malmö expressed the view that the lead partner was involved in creating a common vision. Since this is not replicated by any of the other interviewees, it is concluded that the influence of the lead partner on this cohesion factor was not significant.

The *Executive Committee* is related to the factor by Carsten Krabbe who states that the ExCom is engaged in creating a common vision in Eurocities. However, no definite conclusion can be drawn for the impact of the ExCom. It has been shown that it uses framing to target exactly this factor. Moreover, Carsten Krabbe from the city of Copenhagen states that the ExCom enhances the underlying common meaning of cities through the shaping of perceptions and strategies. However, member cities do not establish a link between these two. Finally, as was the case for the previous cohesion factors, none of the interviewees saw a role of the *secretariat* for shared meaning and concerted action.

5.2.5. Meta-governors and trust

Trust is an important factor for the functioning of the selected case. This is illustrated by Jos Maaskant: “If you don’t trust you will be less willing to cooperate”. Trust was affected by several meta-governing roles. The *European Commission* and the lead partner were found to be the meta-governors influencing trust. The research suggests that trust was mostly linked to *network participation* of the European Commission. To recall, network participation is used to participate in decisions and debates on the policy content. In this respect, the city of Malmö says that the European Commission reduced the complexity of the project. Moreover, the city of Malmö refers to the fact that “everybody trusted the European Commission” since it was consistent in its position. The lead partner states that the European Commission supported the fact that the participants trusted each other as “critical friends”. The statements link the role of the European Commission to the content of the project. This was influenced by the European Commission by using network participation.

The lead partner was also found to influence trust in the network. Jos Maaskant about the role of the lead city: “All partners are responsible to contribute to an atmosphere of trust but as leading city this is something you have to initiate”. Research suggests that *network management* especially added to trust. The reason for this is that the city of Rotterdam predominantly aimed at improving interaction in order to create trust. This activity is part of network management.

In the case of the *Executive Committee*, trust was only mentioned by Carsten Krabbe. He describes that the Executive Committee engages in creating trust by engaging the network members with each other. Since this was not replicated by the other interviewees, no conclusions can be drawn on the influence of the Executive Committee on trust. Moreover, the Eurocities secretariat was not related to have had an influence on trust at all.

6. Conclusion on the Analysis & Discussion

This research paper investigates meta-governance strategies in the European city network Eurocities and the influence of meta-governors at different network levels on the functioning of the network. To this end, Chapter 2 introduces the concept of governance networks. It discusses the most defining characteristics of governance networks and deducts a list of cohesion factors from the existing body of literature. Thereafter, the research turns to a concept of management strategies, which can be used in governance networks to offset possible malfunctions. This concept is meta-governance, which is used to “regulate self-regulating policy networks by shaping the conditions under which they operate” (Sørensen & Torfing, 2005, p.202). In a research model, the meta-governance strategies identified are related to functioning in the European city network Eurocities. Chapter 4 introduces the reader to the case of Eurocities. The subsequent research in Chapter 5 identifies and discusses the meta-governing roles for the European Commission, Executive Committee, lead partner, secretariat and member cities and the impact of meta-governors on functioning within Eurocities. Chapter 6 now draws the conclusions on the findings presented in chapter 5 and discusses them. The discussion concludes with an answer to the overall research question based upon the evidence gathered during this single-case study. Thereafter, the chapter continues with a discussion on the contribution of this study to existing research and its limitations.

6.1. Conclusion on the meta-governing activities in Eurocities

The first findings address the following sub-questions:

Sub-question 5: Who are the meta-governors?

Sub-question 6: What meta-governance strategies do they apply?

The findings for this part of the empirical research are presented in the following order: Meta-governance took place in Eurocities, and multiple meta-governors were found to be active. Meta-governance took place on multiple levels in the network. Moreover, the meta-governors in the network did not make use of all meta-governing strategies at hand. Overall, it is argued that both the level on which they are active and the strategy they use depends on the relative context in which an actor is embedded.

First of all, the study revealed that meta-governance is indeed being used in the selected case. This finding has been reached by testing the four meta-governance strategies and

applying them to Eurocities. While the presence of meta-governance has been confirmed, their use is not linear but different meta-governors make use of different strategies.

This leads to the second major finding: the study revealed that more than one meta-governor can exist within one governance network. The European Commission, the Executive Committee, the lead partner, the Eurocities secretariat and member cities were selected as possible meta-governors. The findings showed strong cases of meta-governance activities for the European Commission, the Executive Committee and the lead partner. The Eurocities secretariat also acted as meta-governor albeit less than the preceding three. The member cities showed no meta-governance activities.

The finding that an external actor like the European Commission and an internal actor like the Executive Committee are meta-governors is in line with the literature on meta-governance. While the literature emphasises the role of public actors as meta-governors, it neither includes internal actors or non-public actors as possible meta-governors (O'Toole, 2007, p.220; Sørensen & Torfing, 2005). Interestingly, the findings of this research do suggest that the major public actor, namely the European Commission, was quite strong in its meta-governance activities towards the case. This would therefore be in line with the focus of meta-governance strategies on public actors or politicians.

Another finding is that meta-governance can take place at different levels, in this case the project, programme and overall network level. This is confirmed by the European Commission's activities. Network design was found in relation to the EC's social affairs policy and therein especially social inclusion. It was shown that the European Commission's objective was to strengthen the local level and European networks in order to improve European policy on social affairs. This can also be seen as its objective to act as meta-governor. Connections is thus also an outcome of this overriding strategy of the European Commission. The following points can be highlighted:

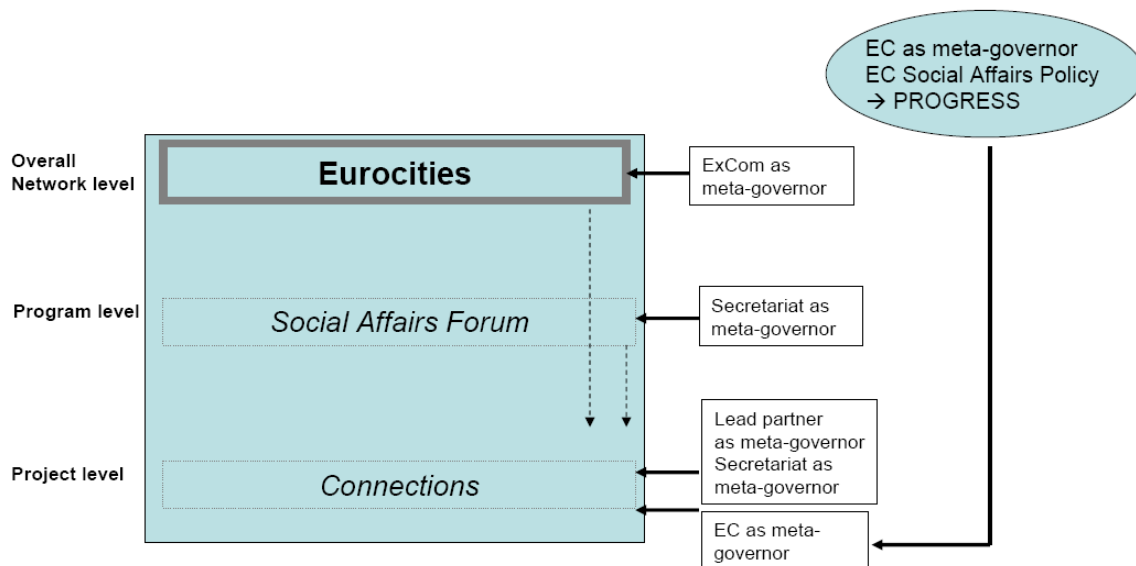
- the European Commission acted as meta-governor directly on the level of Connections (network framing) but also with regard to the overall level of EU social affairs policy (network design & network framing)
- the Executive Committee acted as meta-governor on the overall Eurocities network level (network framing)
- the Eurocities secretariat acted as meta-governor on the level of the Eurocities social affairs forum (network design) and on the level of Connections (network participation)

- the lead partner acted on the project level of Connections (network design, network participation, network management)

There were direct meta-governing activities at the project level by the lead partner, the secretariat and the European Commission. The Executive Committee was not found to be directly involved on the project level. It used meta-governing on the network level. Next to its meta-governing role at the project level, the secretariat also had a meta-governing role at programme level, which influenced the project level.

This translates into the following illustration:

Table 7: Different levels of meta-governance



The *context* in which the meta-governor acts seems important for the meta-governing roles assumed. The European Commission supported Connections in the light of EU social affairs policy and the overall strategy on governance which aims at strengthening networks and the local level. It also participated directly on project level. The Executive Committee framed the overall strategies of Eurocities on the network level. The European Commission is not in a position to frame the overall strategies of Eurocities like the Executive Committee did. As external actor, the European Commission neither had access nor legitimacy to do so (especially bearing in mind that Eurocities is a self-regulating governance network). Moreover, the European Commission was not involved in the daily business of Connections to allow for network management. The same holds for the Executive Committee and the

Eurocities secretariat. This meta-governance strategy was fulfilled by the lead partner who worked much closer with the network participants. Due to this, the lead partner was involved in the processes inside Connections but was not found to engage in an activity which linked to the overall strategies of Eurocities like the Executive Committee did. Neither did Rotterdam link its meta-governing role to the overall EU social affairs policy as the European Commission did. It seems therefore that the meta-governors selected strategies which corresponded to their objectives, position and overall context in which they were acting.

The *Executive Committee* was found to engage in network framing. This was done by shaping the overall common strategy of Eurocities, thereby allowing for social inclusion to be set high on the agenda. What has been found clearly is that the meta-governing strategy of the Executive Committee focuses on ‘overarching’ issues and does not target operational processes of the network and the implementation of strategies in the thematic forums and projects. This means that meta-governance activities of the Executive Committee targeted the overall strategies of the city network Eurocities with a view to maintaining a sound Eurocities approach to its policies. To recall the quote of Carsten Krabbe: “You need the ExCom to say what the strategic priorities of the organisation are so that we all go into the same direction”. The meta-governing activities towards Connections can be seen as an outcome thereof.

The interviewees, especially the member cities seemed very much aware of the activities of the *European Commission*. The European Commission used network design, network framing and network participation. In the cases of network participation, the European Commission was involved in discussions on the content of Connections. This activity thus was very much targeted at improving processes within the project. It is concluded that the meta-governing role of the *European Commission* was strong. Several explanations can be found for this: to begin with, the European Commission has much more authority as it disposes of more resources in terms of finances and know-how. This was clearly expressed by the interviewees of the member cities who regarded the European Commission with a mix of respect but also pride to be engaged with such a powerful institution. This is because the member cities were well aware of the Commission’s track record and previous engagement in the field. They were also well aware that they were dealing with a highly competent partner. Furthermore, the European Commission was more involved in creating common goals than the ExCom.

Moreover, through meta-governance strategies, the European Commission was found to act as a motivator for the cities to engage with each other. All interviewees of member cities expressed that they very much valued the involvement of the European Commission in their

project. All interviewees of member states felt that cooperating on a European level is worthwhile and effective. This was due to the fact that they felt that the European Commission strengthens the role of cities in Europe and that recognizes the importance of cities in European governance. For example, one participant stated that the cities react positively because they see that the European Commission puts into practice the idea that cities are very important actors in the field of social policy.

While the secretariat and the European Commission both used network design and participation as part of their strategy, the ExCom focussed on framing. This difference is most likely due to the distinct objectives of these actors: the ExCom aimed at structuring the overall policy context both secretariat and European Commission also aimed at ensuring that Connections was a successful project. Compared to the Executive Committee, the European Commission has also been found to be much more involved in actual processes in the network, and especially on the project level.

The latter point was also found to take place for the *Eurocities secretariat*. The secretariat was not a strong meta-governor in the case. It was not closely involved in the daily processes of Connections. Meta-governing activities related to the participation in meetings at times and to the design policy objectives of Connections. Its objective of getting involved was to pursue a successful social affairs policy for Eurocities. As has been discussed, the Eurocities secretariat supported Connections because it aimed at positioning Eurocities as an actor in the field of social inclusion. Its meta-governing activities were thus targeted at the social affairs branch of Eurocities in order to increase the political influence thereof. Next to network participation, the secretariat used network design by drafting the policy objectives of Connections in the application.

All in all, the *lead partner* was closer to the project than the other three meta-governors. The lead partner engaged in network design, participation and network management. Rotterdam was directly engaged on the project level and prominently used network management, which is a hands-on strategy aimed at affecting processes by directly targeting interaction. None of the other meta-governors were found to use network management. Even more so, their possible involvement in network management was quite clearly refuted.

It stuck out in the research that the lead partner maintained a close overview of processes within Connections. Rotterdam was the prime contact point for the participants. Therefore, the relative intensity in which the city of Rotterdam was engaged as well as its relative closeness to the participants can be seen to have allowed them to use network management.

Finally, *member cities* did not assume meta-governance strategies. One explanation is that member cities lacked one or all preconditions to act as meta-governor. This could be supported by the fact that compared to the other meta-governors – and especially the lead partner who was also a Eurocities member – the member cities disposed of less resources, legitimacy and authority. The lead partner invested more financial resources and know-how into Connections because two members of staff worked full-time on the project. Moreover, the lead partner assumed legitimacy because he was officially recognised by the European Commission as lead partner. This also led to authority since the lead partner was responsible for the outcome of the project. He also had a legitimate role because he was accepted by the participating members. The last point can be concluded since cooperation takes place voluntarily and member cities could have disapproved the choice of lead partner. On the contrary, none of the member cities seemed to be overly willing to act as lead partner as it took some time to find a city which agreed to assume this role. This means that the member cities deliberately chose not to take on a role in Connections which would have allowed them to be more influential.

6.2. Conclusions on the influence of the meta-governors on functioning in Eurocities

Turning to the discussion on the role of meta-governors for the functioning of networks, the following part answers the sub-question 7:

How do meta-governors at Eurocities influence the functioning of the network?

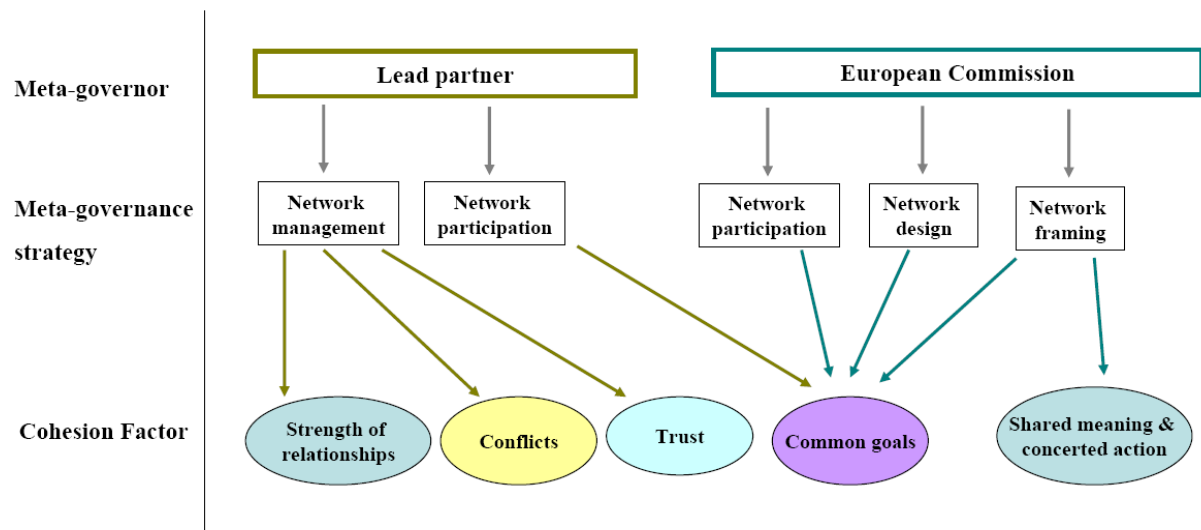
First of all, the elementary finding is that meta-governors influenced cohesion factors in the selected case. However, not all cohesion factors were affected; the factors network size, leadership & skills, power, veto power and rules did not seem to be affected by the meta-governors. Two explanations are possible: firstly, these cohesion factors did not play an important role for the functioning of the network. Since they are derived from the literature and since there is no existing framework, they might not be applicable in the case of Eurocities. The second explanation is that the meta-governors did not affect these cohesion factors.

While five cohesion factors were excluded, five factors were influenced by the meta-governors. These are:

- strength of relationship
- common goals
- shared meaning & concerted action
- conflicts
- and trust

Importantly, the cohesion factors were found to be influenced by different meta-governors and different strategies. This leads to the next major finding, namely that not all meta-governors which were identified in section 5.1 actually influenced the cohesion factors. The meta-governing roles of the European Commission and the lead partner were most meaningful in terms of their influence on cohesion factors. Only their meta-governing roles could be linked to cohesion factors. Hereby, specific meta-governance strategies could be singled out and linked to specific cohesion factors. Overall, the analysis shows that meta-governors from both outside and inside of a network can act as meta-governors and affect the functioning of a governance network. The following table illustrates the influence of the different meta-governors by specifying which strategies they used and which condition they affected.

Table 8: Influence of meta-governors on cohesion factors



For the role of the lead partner, network management clearly stands out. It was found that through network management the lead partner was the sole meta-governor who had an impact on the cohesion factors strength of relationship and conflicts. Shared meaning and concerted action on the other hand was influenced by network framing of the European Commission.

While these factors were only influenced by one meta-governor, the other factors were influenced by both. Common goals were influenced by the activities of the European Commission but also by network participation of the lead partner. Moreover, trust was influenced by the European Commission's network participation and the lead partner's network management. The evident presence of more than one strategy affecting the same cohesion factors simultaneously implies that meta-governance strategies may be complementary. Possibly, the involvement of more than one actor and more than one meta-governance strategies is even a precondition to influence certain cohesion factors. This should be subject to future research. It does appear, however, that some conditions are clearly linked to one meta-governor. This is especially case for the conditions strength of relationships, conflicts and trust which were only subject to network management. For these conditions, an influence of the European Commission was ruled out. It is worth considering whether the lead partner was in a position to influence these factors due to his role as *internal* meta-governor. This is supported by the fact that network management was used in relation to these conditions, which necessitates a relative closeness and insight into the network. Coming back to the important issue of self-regulation, it could be argued that an internal meta-governor possesses more legitimacy to appease conflicts or to influence relationships than an external meta-governor like the European Commission. In comparison, the meta-governing role of the Commission in respect to the conditions it affected appears more abstract. It did not influence a cohesion factor which had to do with the relationships of participants. Instead, common goals can be described as a rather technical factor. Also, shared meaning and concerted action was influenced via framing in a more overriding manner without directly getting involved within the network. This is not to imply though that the meta-governing role of the Commission is less relevant. Instead, the meta-governing activities of the European Commission played an important role on common goals and shared meaning of Connections. Through framing, the European Commission has repeatedly emphasised the role of cities and city networks for social inclusion. This has been met positively by cities and increased their willingness to engage in projects like Connections.

Another finding is that network participants are often not aware of ongoing meta-governance activities. This means that they cannot always be explicitly identified by participants. Strategies like network management or design are felt most easily because participants are directly affected by them. This was the case for the lead partner engaging in network management. For this instance, participants could clearly articulate the involvement of the lead partner and they were also aware of the impact of the lead partner's activities on

the functioning of the network. It was not so much the case for more indirect activities like framing. Moreover, activities which take place on a different level – for example the case of the secretariat which engaged in network participation by exchanging ideas with the lead partner – were not identified by participants. With different meta-governors in place who employ different strategies, participants cannot identify strategies at hand in a straightforward manner. The same holds for their influence on functioning.

Finally, another important finding is the fact that the Executive Committee and the Eurocities secretariat have been identified as meta-governors but did not play a role for the cohesion factors. One possible reason are the different levels on which meta-governance has taken place in the selected case. Especially the Executive Committee did not use its meta-governing role directly on the level of Connections. Instead, it has been shown that the Executive Committee has meta-governed the overall strategies of Eurocities, which again had an indirect impact on Connections. The Eurocities secretariat did not seek to act as lead partner. However, it did engage directly on the level of Connections through the use of network participation. Network participation was demonstrated openly by attending some of the Connections meetings. Primarily, though, it took place bilaterally with the lead partner. It is possible that this engagement was therefore not identified by the member cities as having an influence on cohesion factors.

6.3. General characteristics and influence of meta-governance in Eurocities

The following answers the overall research question:

How can meta-governance in the city network Eurocities be characterised and how do meta-governors influence the functioning of the network?

Due to the multiple meta-governors and the different cohesion factors they affected, it is concluded that substantial meta-governing activities take place in the selected case. However, in the selected policy field of Eurocities and the special case Connections, meta-governance is not clear-cut and used by one actor. Instead, there are several meta-governors which make use of different meta-governing strategies. The meta-governors stem from both inside and outside the network. The European Commission as external actor plays a significant role as meta-governor. This is intriguing since it is a major actor on the EU level and a highly relevant partner for Eurocities and its members in the sphere of EU policy-making. The most influential meta-governor from inside of Eurocities is the lead partner of Connections, the city

of Rotterdam. Interestingly, meta-governance in Eurocities takes place on different levels of the network. Moreover, in their role of meta-governors, the European Commission and the lead partner influenced the cohesion factors strength of relationships, common goals, shared meaning and concerted action, conflicts and trust.

Furthermore, the case study has shown that the context of a meta-governor has an impact on the meta-governing role he assumes. For example, the lead partner - as an internal actor who was very close to the network - assumed the meta-governing strategy of network management. The European Commission on the other hand was more aloof and this is displayed in its meta-governing role which also linked the overall EU context to the project through network framing. Importantly, both meta-governing roles had an effect on the functioning of the network. It also shows that meta-governing roles in Eurocities do not take place exclusively but are complementary.

Moreover, even though the other meta-governors were not found to exert a meaningful influence on the cohesion factors, they are nevertheless aware that network functioning is crucial and that they play a substantial role therein. A statement by Carsten Krabbe fits well in this context: “The goal of the ExCom is to have a well-functioning network. We are working towards that goal. We should work into one direction and everyone should cooperate in good order”.

Overall, this case study shows that meta-governance is an important strategy to maintain or improve the functioning of the European city network. The meta-governing roles exerted guidance for ongoing processes in an environment, which is shaped by self-regulation. This is a vital role especially regarding the political potential which is gathered in a network such as Eurocities – as safeguarding its functioning translates into maintaining the engagement of European cities on the EU level.

6.4. Contribution of this study to the literature on governance networks

This part turns to the contribution of this study to existing research, thereby also answering the final sub-question: “Which lessons can be drawn from the case findings?” As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the influence of meta-governance strategies and meta-governors on a European governance network has not been investigated. Considering the fact that governance networks are on a steady rise in the European context, it is surprising that no research has been conducted in this area so far. By characterizing meta-governance strategies applied by meta-governors of Eurocities and analysing the influence of these meta-governors

on functioning of Eurocities, this study contributes to the existing literature on governance networks.

Since this study is rather unique, no pre-existing general framework could be used. It is the achievement of this study to have gathered together the various possible cohesion factors that lead to the functioning of a network. Also, no literature on the influence of meta-governance strategies on European networks exist so far, they usually focus upon national networks. Here, too, the study makes a contribution to the existing literature. Looking also at the role of the European Commission as meta-governor, this study was able to shed some light on the way that the European Commission stimulates functioning of a European city network. As one special focus of this study was on which meta-governance strategies were used by meta-governors, new insights into the relevance of meta-governance for European city networks were gained.

6.5. Limitations and recommendations for further research

The first limitation of the present study relates to the general validity of the results. While conducting a case study has led to valuable in-depth insights, the strength of this approach is simultaneously a weakness because it decreases the external validity of the results. For example, with regard to the testing of the cohesion factors, the findings are solely based upon answers by people involved, rendering the generalization of the findings to governance networks in general rather impossible. Also, Eurocities is a well-established network which allows for a mature structure that other governance networks do not necessarily have. While Eurocities was a very good case to investigate the research questions at hand as it was accessible to an outside-researcher, the fact that only one (mature) governance network was studied reduces the generalization of the results. Certainly, investigating e.g. an ad-hoc network would have added further valuable insights into the topic. However, the scope of the paper only permitted a single-case study. Multi-case studies in this field, which allow for comparison between networks to find out about differences and similarities, would certainly bring further valuable insight into this research field.

Secondly, this study adopted a multi-level approach regarding the study of meta-governance. It looked at the project Connections but also paid attention to the extent to which meta-governance on programme and overall network level affected the project. This was designed to cater for the interconnections between these levels. While this focus indeed allowed for the finding that meta-governance took place at different levels, there is also a limitation. For example, the focus on social affairs and the project Connections did not allow

for extensive findings on the role of the Executive Committee as meta-governor. Two reasons account for this: firstly, research has shown that the meta-governing role of the Executive Committee is one of framing strategies, perceptions and objectives on a super-ordinate level ("meta level" in the truest sense of the word). Therefore, in the field of social affairs and the project Connections, findings were sparse compared to the European Commission since the Executive Committee does not deal so much with the actual daily implementation of projects and policies.

Thirdly, the concentration on one project and policy field was also necessary to limit the number of potential interview partners. As Eurocities is a very diverse network, dealing with a wide range of policy issues and assuming various tasks (lobbying, networking, campaigning), a focus was certainly needed. The problem with this limitation is that the findings do not present all policy fields at Eurocities (e.g. culture might be subject to less meta-governance due to less stakes on the side of the European Commission). The same holds true for the choice of the project: It is one of many projects within social affairs; constellation of actors and therefore functioning might differ in other projects. However, while this limits again the validity of the research, the findings do reveal mechanisms (for example that the Executive Committee is not involved in network management) that could probably be affirmed for other projects at Eurocities as well.

Fourthly, only three of the seven Eurocities members which participated in Connections responded to the request for an interview. All seven cities were contact and asked whether they would be willing to give an interview. The fact that only three interviews were conducted narrows the insight which was gained into processes within Connections.

Fifthly, the theory surrounding the four meta-governance strategies relate to an ideal-type governance network. When conducting field research, not all of the theoretical assumptions were applicable and could therefore not be tested. Also, while the focus of this study was on the influence of meta-governance strategies on functioning, there was no room for studying the quality of meta-governance strategies (e.g. whether personal knowledge or knowledge of the network makes these strategies more successful). This could be another interesting endeavour when researching meta-governance strategies in governance networks.

Sixthly, in order to draw conclusions on functioning, the indicators used in this study were deduced from the literature. However, research in this field has been rather sparse so far and it was difficult to find common universally accepted criteria. Again, they are ideal-types and no prior research has led to an accepted list entailing all possible factors. Additionally, no research has yet fully indicated which factors can be influenced by meta-governors. This

means that the lack of findings for some factors (rules, power, veto power, network size) could be related to the fact that they are indeed important for success but not a target of meta-governance. It is strongly suggested that the factors influencing successful network functioning and the influence of meta-governance strategies on functioning should be further developed in future research.

Finally, another aspect to research is the question to which extent the quality of meta-governance plays a role when looking at the link between meta-governing and functioning. This was not included in the research since it would have overburdened its scope. Put bluntly, weak meta-governing which does not target the right processes cannot be expected to enhance functioning. Again, the question of quality is another very crucial issue which deserves to be researched in future endeavours.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

1. Introduction and formalities

1.1 Introduction Thesis

1.2 May I record the interview?

1.3 May I state your name and organisation in my research?

2. Background Information

2.1 How would you characterise your organisations' role within Eurocities / Connections?

2.2 Can you describe how a project like Connections is initiated?

2.3 Can you describe the working relationship within Eurocities and Connections?

2.4 Are there guidelines which you follow when cooperating in a network?

3. Network design

3.1 Does your organization have guidelines how a project should be organized in terms of rules, decision-making, structures?

3.2 Is the ExCom/EC/lead partner/secretariat/member city involved in decisions on rules, statutes, and decision-making? If so, to what extent? Can you give examples?

3.3 Did you set deadlines to receive results on the ongoing project?

3.4 Do you think cooperation in Connections entailed a reward in terms of finances, political significance, autonomy? If so, who was the actor involved?

3.5 Who defined the policy objectives of the network? What was your role in this? Can you give examples?

4. Network framing

4.1 Do you think a shared vision is important? If yes, what did you do to support the creation and the maintenance of a shared vision? Can you give examples?

4.2 What was your involvement in the creation of overall goals / strategies? How could you influence the overall goals / strategies? Can you give examples?

4.3 How does the network deal with different interests & perceptions in the network? What is the role of ExCom /EC/secretariat/lead partner/member city in this?

5. Network participation

5.1 Would you say that the following actors take part in decisions on content and rules of Connections/social affairs policy?

- Lead city
- Member city
- Secretariat
- ExCom
- European Commission

To what extent? Can you give examples?

5.2 Did these actors actively participate in meetings of Connections or the social affairs forum? If so, could you describe their role when decisions were taken?

6. Network management

6.1 Do you think the success of cooperation can improve or worsen due to the good or bad performance of one member? If so, what do you do in this case? Can you give examples?

6.2 Do you think interaction is important in the network? If so, do you encourage interaction in the network? Can you give examples?

6.3 What happens in cases of conflicts in the network? Can you give example? 6.4 Was there an Intranet which you used? If so, who set it up?

6.4 Do you think sharing of information is important? Can you give examples?

7. Role of the Eurocities secretariat

7.1 How would you describe the role of the secretariat? How would you describe its main tasks?

7.2 Do you think the role of the secretariat is important? Can you give examples?

8. Role of the ExCom

8.1 How would you describe the role of the Executive Committee? How would you describe its main tasks?

8.2 Do you think the role of the ExCom is important? Can you give examples?

9. Role of European Commission

9.1 How would you describe the role of the Executive Committee? How would you describe its main tasks?

9.2 Do you think the role of the EC is important? Can you give examples?

10. Role of lead partner

10.1 How would you describe the role of the lead partner? How would you describe its main tasks?

10.2 Do you think the role of the lead partner is important? Can you give examples?

11. Role of member cities

11.1 How would you describe the role of the member cities? How would you describe their main tasks?

11.2 Do you think the role of the members is important? Can you give examples?

12. Influence on Functioning

12.1 According to you, what is important for successful functioning?

12.2 Do you consider the following factors and important precondition for network functioning?

If so, why? Could you give examples?

- network size
- rules
- veto power
- strength of relationships
- concerted action & shared meaning
- common goals
- conflicts
- trust
- leadership & skills
- power

12.3 Do you think the following actors have an influence on these factors?

- ExCom
- EC
- lead partner
- secretariat
- member city

12.4 According to you, what was the influence of EC, ExCom, secretariat, lead partner, member in the network? Can you give examples?

Appendix 2: EC grant awarded to the city of Rotterdam for Connections



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
 Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG
 Social Protection and Integration
 Inclusion, Social Policy Aspects of Migration, Streamlining of Social Policies

Open Call for Proposals VP/2007/012 Mutual Learning on Social Inclusion and Social Protection under Budget Line 04.04.01.02

Organization Name	Title of project	Grant Awarded	Co-financing rate	Address
Amici dei Bambini	Life after Institutional Care Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion for Young People Identification and Promotion of Best Practices	517.328,25 €	79,00%	Via Per Melegnano, 10 - Mezzano Di S. Giuliano Milanese I - 20098 S.Giuliano Milanese (Milan)
ASB Schuldnerberatung	Standard Budgets: An Instrument to Prevent and Fight Over-Indebtedness	461.035,36 €	79,99%	Bockgasse 2 B A - 4020 Linz
City of Rotterdam	Connections: Organisational Approaches to the Complexities of Multiple Deprivation at a City Level	542.417,80 €	72,18%	Coolsingel 40, NL - 3000 KP Rotterdam

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