

Europeanization and Multilevel Governance: Trying to Make Sense of International Activities of European Local Governments*

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This paper analyzes the links among Europeanization, multilevel governance, and international activities of local governments. To do so, a revision of the literature on these three areas is provided, with a special emphasis on the effects that the Europeanization process (hierarchical and horizontal) and multilevel governance (type I and type II) have had over the internationalization of local governments. Thus, local governments' international activities have evolved and adapted to a complex system of governance. Furthermore, the paper offers a reflection on current trends such as European Union (EU) and national programmes aimed at fostering International initiatives of local governments, and the impact of the economic crisis on these activities.

Keywords: multilevel governance, Europeanization, local governments

Introduction

There are nearly 95,000 local and regional authorities in the European Union (EU) that have significant powers in key sectors such as education, environment, economic development, urban planning, transportation, and public services. Besides, one of the many impacts of the European integration process is the creation of system of multilevel governance that allows cities and towns to pursue their own interests at European level, often bypassing member states. Those two facts take us to reflect on the relation between Europeanization and the increase on the international activities of local governments. This paper aims at analyzing the connections between Europeanization, multilevel governance and “foreign policy” of local governments, given the fact that current multilevel governance arrangements allow for a significant amount of autonomy of local governments in European affairs.

After presenting several definitions of Europeanization and multilevel governance, which offers a scenario with countless opportunities for local governments, the evolution of the international activities of these actors is described. This evolution has led to the creation of numerous European-wide networks and the

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construction of several bodies of representation of local governments at European and global scale.

Finally, a reflection is offered on current trends such as the impact of multilevel governance on the EU's democratic deficit, the legitimacy of local governments to perform international initiatives, and the consequences of these two on the Westphalian definition of nation-state. Also, given the current financial crisis, a cautionary note is made in relation to the reduction of the capacities of local governments. Finally, future lines of research are outlined.

Europeanization

There are several ways to define the EU, and thus to understand the Europeanization process. The EU has been labeled many different ways: It is less than a state but more than an international organization (Sbragia, 1992), a "post-modern state" (Caporaso, 1996), a "condominio", or "consortio" (Schmitter, 1996), a "compound polity" (Bache, 2005) or a "composite polity" (Tarrow, 2001). The majority of analysts stressed the fact that the EU was a *sui generis* case and we would agree that in order to understand the Europeanization process and the evolving nature of EU governance, and theorists started on the realm of International Relations and were progressively advancing towards Political Science (Hix, 1998).

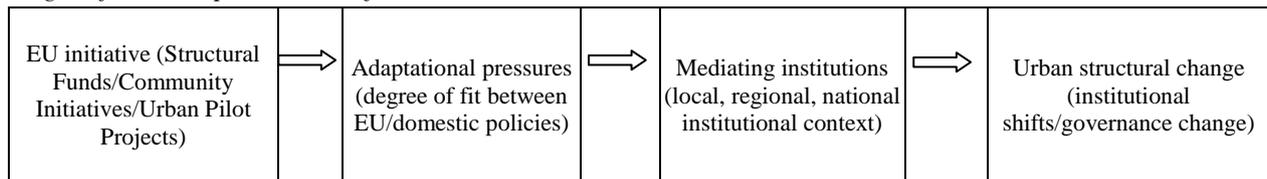
If defining that the EU is complicated, the same is true for Europeanization. Experts emphasized the fact that Europeanization should be seen as a (academic) problem, not a solution, and that has contributed to the emergence of new insights on research agendas (Radaelli, 2004). This exercise has been characterized by tensions between liberal intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism. Both lines of argument share the view that "European integration is triggered by a mismatch between efficiency and existing structures of authority" (Bache, George, & Bulmer, 2011, p. 17). Liberal intergovernmentalism is a synthesis of rationalist theories, combining "theories of preference formation, bargaining, and institutions" (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2009, p. 84); however, if we pose the question of what are the actors involved, liberal intergovernmentalists seem to focus their analysis in central states. Moravcsik stressed the fact that the EU is not a "superstate" in the making and that is best characterized as "one level in a complex multi-level decision making system or, more precisely, a severely limited international organization for bureaucratic and judicial coordination among democratic governments" (Moravcsik, 2001, p. 186). Other analysts argued that the Europeanization process is a "reorientation or reshaping of politics and governance in the domestic arena in ways that reflect policies, practices or preferences advanced through the EU system of governance" (Bache & Jordan, 2006, p. 30). In this regard, we would find ourselves closer to the latter description, which allows for the study of the role of non-state actors, and more specifically, local governments. Thus, researchers would agree with authors such as Cowles, Caporaso, and Risse, who pointed out that Europeanization matters and that "in nearly every case, Europeanization has led to distinct and identifiable changes in the domestic institution structures of members-states" (Cowles, Caporaso, & Risse, 2001, p. 1).

Along the same lines, and getting closer to the analysis of local governments, Marshall (2005) argued that "Thanks to the unique role played by cities in both territorial and political hierarchies, it is critical to articulate and test a framework for the evaluation of the phenomenon of Europeanization at the urban level" (p. 669). In any case, there is an important amount of European funds (mainly Structural Funds) available for local

governments, which has led cities to adapt to the existence of new funding opportunities. In this context, Marshall claimed that at least two types of Europeanization took place: On one hand, there is a “download Europeanization”, which concentrates on the changes in policies, practices, preferences or participants within local systems of governance, arising from the negotiation and implementation of EU programmes; on the other hand, there is also an “upload Europeanization”, which is focused on the transfer of innovative urban practices to the supranational arena and results in the incorporation of local initiatives in European policies (p. 672).

This classification is consistent with the one used by Sobczak, who also distinguished between two types of mobilization emerging from European projects: a top-down institutionalized mobilisation based on the emergence of new institutional arrangements related to decision making process (similar to the aforementioned “download Europeanization”) and a bottom-up *ad hoc* mobilization resulting from local governments and actors of the area that come together in order to benefit from EU funded projects through the creation of cooperation arrangements within the city and even from other territories (which would be a more city-centered version of the “upload Europeanization”) (Sobczak, 2007, p. 2). To better understand the Europeanization of cities, Marshall argued that local governments’ engagement in EU policies resulted in a four-stage pattern of interaction and adjustment (see Table 1).

Table 1

Stages of the Europeanization of Cities

Note. Source: Marshall, 2005.

Following the same argument, Sobczak (2007) identified that “particular EU policies and regulations associated with structural funds affect the inner structure of a city, contributing to the mobilization of various groups and the emergence of new actors” (p. 1). The influence of the power structure of the city will change in order to incorporate more actors to the decision-making of European projects. Taking the cases of Glasgow and Krakow, Sobczak explored various forms of cooperation and competition among actors in European cities which emerge from the impact of structural funds regulations and policies. In this line, Sobczak argued that “an important change in the interpretation of the partnership principle in the structural funds should be noted, which significantly affects European cities” (Sobczak, 2007, p. 4), calling for the importance of the involvement of local stakeholders in the decision-making process. However, we do not share Sobczak’s use of the terminology, which refers to local actors interacting within the city as “horizontal”, and beyond city borders as “vertical”. From our point of view, horizontal should refer to interaction between local actors, while vertical should point towards the interactions of local level with other levels of governance (mainly member-states and EU bodies). In any case, this categorization gives an idea of the extent to which cities adapt themselves to European regulations.

Kern also analyzed how cities cope with the European integration process. Conversely, she identified three

areas or forms of Europeanization in which local governments adapted to the pressures and opportunities offered by Brussels: First, through the implementation of EU regulations (hierarchical Europeanization); second, through the creation of strategies to bypass the nation-state (cooperative Europeanization); and finally through the exchange of best practices and the transfer of knowledge associated with twinnings and networking initiatives (horizontal Europeanization) (see Table 2).

Table 2

Dimensions of the Europeanization of Cities

	Hierarchical Europeanization	Cooperative Europeanization	Horizontal Europeanization
Levels involved	EU, Member States, subnational authorities	EU, cities	Cities
Dynamic between levels	Top-down	Top-down and bottom-up	Horizontal
EU-local Relations	Indirect relations, Member States as "gatekeepers"	direct relations, lobbying at EU level in consultation of local authorities	EU not directly involved (except as facilitator, funding)
State-local Relations	Hierarchical local authorities as part of the Member States	Paradiplomacy, state-local relations loosen	Paradiplomacy, state-local relations loosen
Institutional Changes	European affairs offices within the local administration	Offices and lobbying in Brussels	City twinning, transnational city networks
Differences between local authorities	All local authorities affected, differences along national lines (regulative policies) differences along regional lines (redistributive policies)	Pioneers dominate associations and networks	Pioneers dominate associations and networks

Note. Source: Kern, 2009.

Thus, it is clear that the Europeanization process has fostered the international activity of local governments. Here is where we find a clear link between Europeanization and multilevel governance: The new context marked by the European integration process led local governments (among other actors) to adapt to the pressures coming from Brussels and reacting to new opportunities. These developments are the basis for new modes of governance, and more precisely, the emergence of multilevel governance. Beach (2005) explored the relationship of Europeanization and multilevel governance focusing on Britain. In his words, Europeanization was "the reorientation or reshaping of aspects of politics (and governance) in the domestic arena in ways that reflect the policies, practices and preferences of European level actors" (p. 4). More precisely, he identified six main uses of the term Europeanization: a top-down impact of the EU on its member states; the accumulation of policy competences at the EU level; the growing importance of the EU as a reference point for national and sub-national actors; the horizontal transfer of concepts and policies in the EU among member states; the two-way interaction between states and the EU; and the constraints on national autonomy for domestic political maneuvers.

In sum, many views of Europeanization open the door for an active participation of local governments in European affairs, which have progressively adapted to a diverse and rich world of opportunities.

Multilevel Governance

The European integration process has created a new environment for governments at all levels, resulting in the appearance of novel modes of governance. It is in this context that in the early 1990s appears the concept of

multilevel governance, which allows people to better understand the complexity of the EU. The concept was brought about by Marks (1993), who defined multilevel governance as a “system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers” and explained the interaction among levels because “supranational, national, regional and local governments are enmeshed in territorially overarching policy networks” (pp. 392-402). Since then, Marks has continued to work on multilevel governance, which has been widened to include not only institutional arrangements among different levels of public administration, but also other actors such as the private sector and the civil society in the analysis of new modes of governance. Marks and Hooghe (2003) emphasized that “governance has to operate at multiple scales in order to capture variations in the territorial reach of policy externalities” (p. 3). They would argue that the dispersion of governance across multiple jurisdictions is both more efficient than, and normatively superior to, central state monopoly. For them, multilevel governance has several positive impacts: first and foremost, in order to better deal with territorial externalities, governance must be multilevel; besides, having multiple jurisdictions produces other benefits such as reflecting the heterogeneity of citizens’ preferences, facilitating credible policy commitments, allowing for jurisdictional competition, and facilitating innovation (Marks & Hooghe, 2003, p. 3).

Despite the important benefits resulted from multilevel governance, there is no agreement about how multilevel governance should be organized. Marks and Hooghe described two types of authority dispersion that captured the characteristics of two contrasting visions of multilevel governance under the unoriginal labels “type I” and “type II”. While both cases allow for the dispersion of authority, these models represent ideal types of multilevel governance.

Type I is characterized by having a limited number of general-purpose jurisdictions (international, national, regional and local). They are formed by same level-administrations, not allowing for the intersection among jurisdictions. In this model the citizens are placed in the center of “nested jurisdictions”, in such a way that there is one jurisdiction at any given territorial scale. Type I creates durable systems in which change is difficult; the image that could illustrate it is a set of Russian dolls that can be placed one inside the other. The intellectual foundation for this type of multilevel governance is federalism, where different levels of public administration operate stably in a given territory. Type I is found often at domestic level, where there is a constitution that organizes the scope of each jurisdiction and avoids overlapping.

By contrast, the type II model of multilevel governance is composed by numerous specialized jurisdictions, each one dealing with a particular topic. In this ideal type the number of jurisdictions is potentially enormous and the scales in which they apply vary greatly. Thus, there is no hierarchical set-up and jurisdictions tend to be flexible, provided that they are formed for a particular issue and disappear once it is solved. These task-specific jurisdictions are functional and goal-oriented, causing intersection and overlapping between jurisdictions. This takes some authors to speak about poly centricity given the existence of many centers of independent decision-making (Ostrom & Walker, 1997). Type II comes from public choice and political economy theorists and it is often found at international level, where the lack of system-wide regulations allows for numerous, specific, and overlapping jurisdictions. However, it is also widespread at local level due to the fact that there are several administrations and actors that provide services (Hooghe & Marks, 2003, p. 19). Table 3 presents the main attributes of each type in terms of the shape of

jurisdictions and its systemic characteristics.

Table 3

Types of Multilevel Governance

	Type I	Type II
Variation among individual jurisdictions	General-purpose jurisdictions	Task-specific jurisdictions
	Non-intersecting memberships	Intersecting memberships
Systemic proprieties	Jurisdictions organized on a limited number of levels	No limit to the number of jurisdictional levels
	System-wide architecture	Flexible design

Note. Source: Hooghe and Marks, 2003.

These two authors have been recently reflecting on the shape of jurisdictional architecture, which they attribute to the interaction of three logics: efficiency, distribution and identity (Hooghe & Marks, 2008, p. 1). On this topic, they notice that government in civilized societies has never operated at a single level and that large countries have historically had several layers of subnational governments (Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p. 228). When they reflect about whether efficiency shapes the territorial structure of government, their answer is affirmatively taking into account that several efficiencies come into play (technical efficiency, allocative efficiency, and interjurisdictional efficiency). They argue that the “territorial shape of governments is, in almost every case, historically rooted, and this gives rise to path dependencies that resist convergence to a single optimum. If efficiency shapes the government, it does so within an historical frame” (Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p. 228). For them, there is a surprising degree of universality in the territorial structure of government and the “fact that several policies are provided at a similar scale in different countries is consistent with an efficient explanation” (Hooghe & Marks, 2009, p. 232).

Authors other than Marks and Hooghe have reflected about new forms of governance and have made the effort to define multilevel governance. It is worth highlighting that the concept of multilevel governance has progressively been widened to incorporate not only “vertical” governance arrangement, but also “horizontal” relations that incorporate non-state actors and new forms of public-private partnerships. In Piattoni’s words, the new processes are not only multi-level, but also multi-actor (Piattoni, 2009, p. 7). For Schmitter multilevel governance can be defined as “an arrangement for making binding decisions that engage a multiplicity of politically independent, but otherwise interdependent actors (private and public) at different levels of territorial aggregation in a more-or-less continuous negotiation/deliberation/ implementation, and that does not assign exclusive policy competence or assert a stable hierarchy of political authority to any of these levels” (Schmitter, 2004, p. 49).

When analyzing the evolution of governance in South East Europe, Stubbs summarizes the four key dimensions of multilevel governance (Stubbs, 2005, pp. 68-69): the increased participation of non-state actors; the identification of decision-making not as the result of the activities of territorial governments, but as “complex overlapping networks” (Bache & Flinders, 2004, p. 197); the changing role of the state, which evolved towards a coordinating entity; and a reflection on democratic accountability. However, Stubbs also warns us about the dangers of stretching the concept too far, especially when taking multilevel governance as an independent variable in different geographical contexts (Stubbs, 2005, p. 69). Along the same lines,

Carmichael presents the findings of a research project funded by the 5th Framework Research Programme of the European Commission that aimed at identifying how multilevel factors have influence on European urban governance. “Cities have had, so far, a limited role in the European multi-level governance, remaining the poor relatives of integration and depending on national power sharing controlled by the central level. However, the EU and national authorities increasingly see cities as key policy making partners to ensure both democratic legitimacy and policy effectiveness” (Carmichael, 2006, p. 209).

We can locate examples of the importance of local and regional governments for European institutions in documents such as the European Commission’s European Governance, A White Paper, and the Committee of the Regions’ White Paper on Multilevel Governance. The Committee of the Regions is the institution that formally represents local and regional governments at European level and defines multilevel governance as the “coordinated action by the European Union, the Member States and local and regional authorities, based on partnership and aimed at drawing up and implementing EU policies” (Committee of the Regions, 2009, p. 6). Not only that, it also states that “multilevel governance actually serves the fundamental political objectives of the European Union: A Europe of citizens, economic growth and social progress, sustainable development, and the role of the European Union as a global player. It reinforces the democratic dimension of the European Union and increases the efficiency of its processes. It does not, however, apply to all EU policies, and when it does, it rarely applies symmetrically or homogeneously” (Committee of the Regions, 2009, p. 4).

Also the Mayor of Stuttgart and President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions suggests that the European governance model is characterized by “governing in partnership” and based on three principles: power-sharing, partnership, participation (Schuster, 2011, p. 9). Regarding power-sharing, Schuster argued that the Treaty of Lisbon—provided that the European level can therefore only operate to the extent that goals cannot be accomplished at a national, regional or local level—promoted cooperation and fosters power-sharing on key fields for Europe’s future, such as economic and social development, education, science and research, the demographic development, migration and integration, environment and climate protection, stability of law, homeland and national security, and foreign policy. In terms of partnership, the EU Governance Model is not a hierarchical model of top-down regulations (with the exception of a few exclusive European level jurisdictions such as customs union, competition policies, fisheries and trade policies, monetary policies). Thus, in the vast majority of areas, each level of government contributes to obtaining shared goals. On the subject of participation, Schuster argued that the EU Governance Model opens up many opportunities for participation, both formally and informally; besides the citizens’ initiative that allows to bring forward policy proposals with one million signatures, there is a significant number of options to become involved in the decision making process.

Beyond the EU territory, in her paper on multilevel governance in OECD countries, Charbit provided a methodology to diagnose multilevel governance challenges. With a focus on domestic multilevel governance, subnational governments and central governments are not isolated actors but mutually dependent (Charbit, 2011, p. 5). She argued that to manage public policies in a decentralized context, multilevel governance was always required, even though there was no optimal level of decentralization. In any case, the interdependence between levels can be of different nature: institutional (when the allocation of roles and responsibilities is not exclusive); financial (when central and subnational governments are co-funders of public spending in regions);

and socio-economic (when issues and/or outcomes of public policy at one level have impact on other regions and the national level) (Charbit, 2011, p. 13).

Furthermore, there are numerous studies about multilevel governance in particular fields. Corfee-Morlot and others have analyzed to what extent multilevel governance is a useful mechanism for urban adaptation to climate change (Corfee-Morlot, Kamal-Chaoui, Donovan, Cochran, Robert, & Teasdale, 2010). On another front, in his research about multilevel governance and business interests, Eising argued that in the EU we have been witnessing “the evolution of a multilevel system in which public and private actors jointly design and implement public policies” (Eising, 2004, p. 235). For this author, multilevel governance reaffirmed the positions of those organizations that had already developed capacities to articulate, organize, and represent the interest of their members. Thus, he argued that multilevel governance strengthened the already powerful companies, groups and governments, and operated on the disadvantage of weaker companies and interest groups (Eising, 2004, pp. 236-237).

The evolution of governance in the EU has allowed for the implementation of the open method of coordination, the main goal of which is to achieve greater convergence among member states’ policies in a flexible way. This formula is “contributing in an important manner to the changing governance patterns of the EU” (Borras & Jacobsson, 2004, p. 201) through overcoming the functional boundaries of formalized EU integration, contributing to the growing transnationalization of the EU as a political system and strengthening the multilevel nature of the EU polity. However, not all the experts agree on the values of the open method of coordination. Benz, who considers the open method of coordination a soft-mode of multilevel governance, claims that “it is not unrealistic to expect a co-evolution of policy competition and a revival of national parliaments in EU multilevel governance. [...] Despite these arguments in favor of policy competition, it can be doubted whether this mode of coordination really works in practice. Even if it generates innovation, the process will not necessarily end in convergence” (Benz, 2007, pp. 521-522). Thus, Benz was skeptical about the open method of coordination, which is said to demonstrate the flexibility of European multilevel governance due to the fact that provides the Council and the Commission with a tool to influence the policies of other levels of government (even when they have no formal competencies).

The use of the open method of coordination and the introduction of multilevel governance at European level is the result of a set of changes (or propositions) that have taken place. Following Piattoni, there have been several developments that foster multilevel governance: a shift on the scale of economic or political activity (from state to substate or suprastate) that fosters the mobilisation of actors; a blurring of the public-private dichotomy, which takes place when governments and authorities act as private actors, and private interests claim their public nature outside the existing institutional order; a blurring of the domestic-international dichotomy associated with the redefinition of a given institutional order; the activities of actors that look for improving their position and legitimising it through the establishment of new rules; and a blurring between positive and normative analysis, through which actors are encouraged to obtain normative support for actions that are already taking place. This results on a debate between those who focus on empirical evidence and those who use normative arguments. These changes impact the politic, the policy and the polity of the EU (Piattoni, 2009, pp. 2-4).

In the words of Bache, the EU is a highly compound regional polity in which multilevel governance characterizes the “changing relationship between actors situated at different territorial levels and from public, private and voluntary sectors” (Bache, 2005, p. 5). Bache understood vertical governance as the acquisition of competences by local and regional governments (what Piattoni called “institutional empowerment”), which leads to multilevel governance type I; and on the other hand, horizontal governance as the establishment of governance schemes that incorporate private actors and civil society (policy empowerment for Piattoni), which leads towards type II (Piattoni, 2009, p. 26).

Regardless of the capacity of multilevel governance to describe the current governance arrangements of the EU, it is criticized for its inability to explain the origins of the European integration process and to identify future developments. For Bache and Flinders (2004), multilevel governance remains a contested concept, in spite of “its broad appeal reflects a shared concern with increased complexity, proliferating jurisdictions, the rise of non-state actors, and the related challenges to state powers” (p. 4). Going deeper in the critique, Jordan argues that the concept can be criticized on both theoretical and empirical grounds: First, it is not especially novel, being an amalgamation of existing theoretical statements more than a new “theory” of European integration; it provides a “thick” and compelling description of contemporary changes in European governance, while lacking a causal motor of integration; it overstates the autonomy of local and regional actors even in policy areas where one would expect it to perform quite well; it adopts (maybe implicitly) a top-down view of subnational authorities; it focuses too much on subnational authorities, leaving aside other actors such as pressure groups; it misjudges the fact that just because local and regional governments bypass central governments, it does not imply that they are influential enough to shape outcomes; and finally, it ignores the international level of interaction, where the EU now has its own independent institutional presence and a recognizable impact (Jordan, 2011, pp. 201-202).

From several analyses of multilevel governance, and despite some criticism, it is clear that local governments play an important role in European governance arrangements. It might be said that Europeanization and multilevel governance are the two sides of the same coin.

International Activities of Local Governments

Local governments are a minor actor of the international arena. However, the international activities of this type of actor have evolved substantially from the mid-20th century to our days. The internationalization of local governments would not have been possible without a series of political, economic, cultural and technological developments. These changes have created opportunities for local governments to act outside their territories, and especially outside the boundaries of their own countries. As we have seen in previous sections, Europeanization has played an important role in fostering the internationalization of local governments and has undoubtedly contributed to the establishment of a multilevel system of governance.

The political factors that allow for the expansion of local governments’ international activities are diverse. First of all, the European integration process opened a new field of action for local governments; the creation of supranational structures of governance offered these actors the possibility to interact with equivalent counterparts. A key document of the European Commission such as *European Governance; A White Paper*

reads that “(there) needs to be a stronger interaction with regional and local governments and civil society” and that it should be established “a more systematic dialogue with representatives of regional and local governments through national and European associations at an early stage in shaping policy”, while at the same time acknowledging that “regional and local authorities are increasingly involved in EU policies” (European Commission, 2001, pp. 4-10). Along the same lines, the Committee of the Regions has stressed in its *White Paper on Multilevel Governance* the importance of subnational governments by stating “the need for local and regional authorities to be closely involved in shaping and implementing Community strategies, since they implement nearly 70% of Community legislation” (Committee of the Regions, 2009, p. 3). Probably that is the reason that takes European local governments to argue that the Lisbon Treaty consolidates the local autonomy principle and strengthens the subsidiarity principle (as stated on the Barcelona Agenda resulting of the 2010 European Summit of Local Governments).

The expansion of decentralization processes is another political factor worth exploring. Local governments, along with other subnational levels of public administration, have increasingly expanded its competences since the last third of the 20th century. In Europe, decentralization processes have enhanced both the responsibilities and levels of autonomy of local governments, contributing to the establishment of a multilevel system of governance. In this sense, local governments play a key role in the provision of public services and infrastructures such as transportation, water, social services (like education or health), etc. The undeniable advance of decentralization has been labeled for some experts as a trend that could ultimately be as influential as other major institutional transformations of the past century, such as decolonization in Africa and Asia, or the transition from planned to market economies in the former Soviet Union (Martínez & Smoke, 2010). The strengthening of local governments has supposed a progressive deepening of local democracy, the alleviation of internal regional tensions in conflict prone areas, the promotion of broader and deeper citizen participation in public affairs, and the overall strengthening and efficiency of the public sector (Brancati, 2009; Grasa & Gutierrez-Camps, 2009). By the same token, some experts argued that the efforts of central governments to restore their legitimacy through decentralization reinforced centrifugal trends, approaching citizens to the government and yet increasing their distrust to the nation state (Castells, 2003, p. 335).

Even though it is not the focus of this article, we should mention that other factors also played an important role in the internationalization of local governments. Economic globalization—as the process through which markets and companies expand their activities around the globe—has brought consequences for local governments. In this context of global competence and economic integration, cities have become the motors of economic growth. Municipalities are the knots on the territory where companies and markets interact. Cities and its governments, to use Sassen’s words, have evolved into “enabling environments” that allow their citizens to take part on global networks. In other words, it is politics at the closest level to the citizenry made possible through global digital links (Sassen, 2004, p. 652). Thus, local governments, who are partly responsible for administering the lives of their constituency and faced with the impacts of globalization in their territory, in turn, are pushed to undertake international activities in order not to lose the opportunities that Europeanization offers. By the same token, social and cultural factors also played a role in the internationalization of local governments, especially in Europe. The aforementioned economic globalization has been accompanied by a social and cultural globalization based on new communication processes. Citizens have become global consumers and are a part of movements that transcend borders. A clear example of this is the emergence of global themes and preoccupations such as Human Rights, climate change or global terrorism.

Social globalization takes the form of a new valorization of territory, and thus, at the local level. These changes foster the appearance of social movements based on global problems, but at the same time linked to local (NGOs and private organizations shape into global networks with local representation). Local governments insert themselves in these debates in order to participate on problems that affect them, but also pushed by citizens, which often demand their position on global issues. Also the intensification of the urbanization process only adds to this; in Europe more than 72% of the population lives in cities, and the projections say that by 2050 it will be around 85% (UN Habitat, 2008, p. 12).

We have identified four stages of international local activity in Europe. The origins of the phenomenon could be found right after World War II, when local governments of France and Germany established friendship ties in order to show respect and common understanding (Van der Pluijm, 2007, p. 20). During the 1970s, local governments went from twinings to development cooperation projects and started to collaborate with NGOs. In the so-called “United Nations Second Decade for Development” (resolution 2626, 1970), advanced economies committed to devote 0.7% of their budgets to development cooperation. Many European local governments jumped on the train, turning empty political statements from the previous stage into projects aimed at improving living standards in less favored countries. This line of action is fostered as well by the European Commission, as shown by the communication to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on “Local Authorities: Actors for Development”. In addition, as stated by the Committee of the Regions on its White Paper on multilevel governance, “by recognizing the contribution of territorial governance and decentralized cooperation, international and European institutions have in recent years strengthened the role of local and regional authorities in global governance” (Committee of the Regions, 2009, p. 14).

The end of the Cold War and the escalation of Europeanization allowed for an intensification of local international initiatives. The use of international networks by local governments is related to the decrease importance of proximity; new technologies allowed for fluid communications among partners from far away, fostering municipal activities at the international arena based on shared interests, not geography (Subirats, 2002, p. 407). This is especially true in Europe, where growing interactions fostered by the integration process and the setting up of a multilevel system of governance allowed for an active implication of local governments on international initiatives (see Table 4).

Table 4

Stages of the International Activities of European Local Governments

Stages	Timeline	Context	Main instrument	Theme
Origins	1945-1970	Beginning of European integration/ Post World War II	Twinings	Post-conflict reconciliation
Evolution	1970-1989	Europeanization/Distension	Projects	Development cooperation
Explosion	1989-2004	Intense Europeanization	Networks	Economic, political, social
Consolidation	2004 to present	Globalization	Institutions	Economic, political, social

Note. Source: Gutierrez-Camps, 2010.

Networking and lobby permitted the expansion of instances of local governments and the creation of the Committee of the Regions, which in the European integration process could be labeled as a success for subnational governments. The development of international structures of representation reached its peak in

2004, with the creation of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) out of the fusion of the French-oriented FMCU and the Anglo-Saxon IULA. It could be argued that this point marks the start of the consolidation stage, in which local governments' agenda widens up to include every topic that affects its population (from development and urban planning to climate change and conflict reduction). In Carmichael's words, "globalization has led to a resurgence of cities as centers of growth [...] The EU has developed its urban agenda in recent years, on the principle that public authorities closest to citizens must be involved in a number of policy areas" (Carmichael, 2006, p. 210). This is done through extensive participation in international networks.

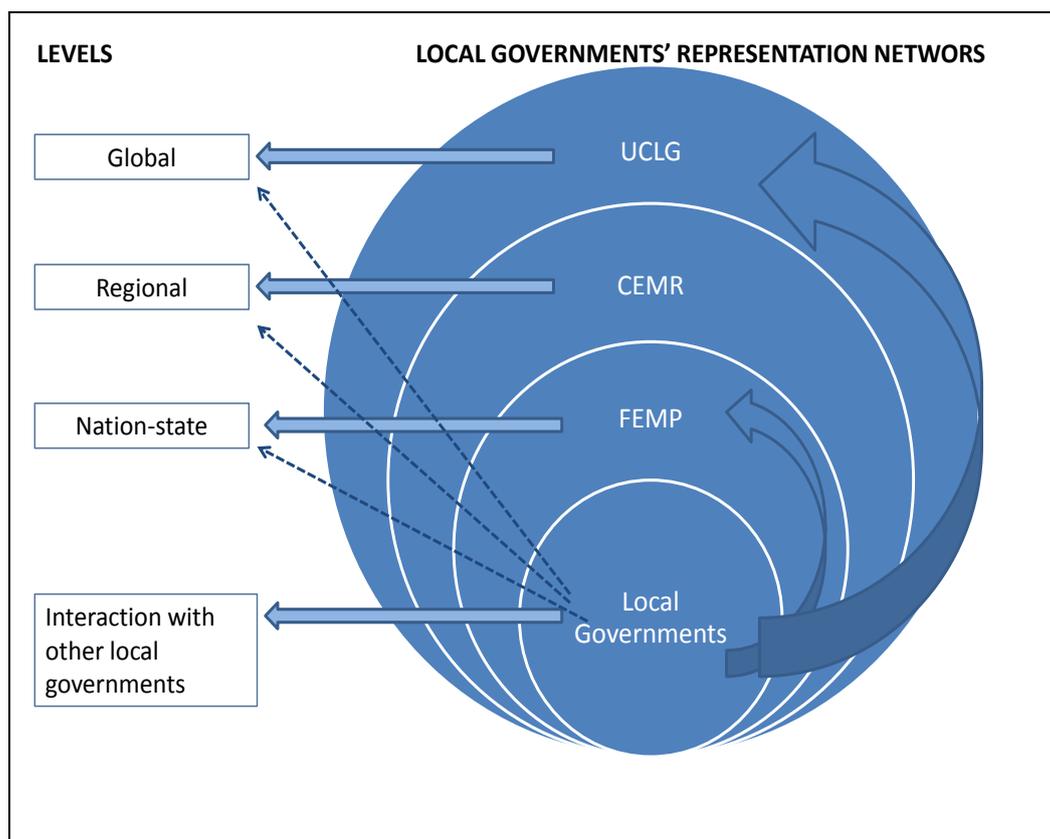


Figure 1. Representation networks of Spanish local governments.

Note. Source: Gutierrez-Camps, 2010.

The national, regional and global structures of local government representation are composed by several organizations which do not operate one inside the other (as Russian dolls). The arrows illustrate direct participation of a local governments' representation organization at each level. In the Spanish case, local governments are represented by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP), which participates in the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CMRE), which is at the same time the European section of UCLG (world organization of local governments). However, discontinuous lines show the participation of Spanish local governments at higher levels; Spanish cities and towns, besides interacting with their homologues, operate at national level, participate in European affairs and interact with UN agencies such

as the UNDP and UN Habitat (see Figure 1).

The importance of local governments is not exclusive of Europe. The director of the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program recently argued in the *Financial Times* that cities are pursuing strategies that build on their distinctive strengths in the global economy, looking abroad for new growth possibilities catalyze and reward bottom-up economic growth strategies (Katz, 2012).

The degree of competitiveness of any given country or territory is directly related to the competitiveness of its cities, where local governments have a say in each of the boxes of the “urban competitiveness maze” (see Figure 2), especially taking into account that multilevel governance arrangements are suited for those policy issue —such as city competitiveness in an European context—that have a clear territorial impact (Piattoni, 2009, p. 32).

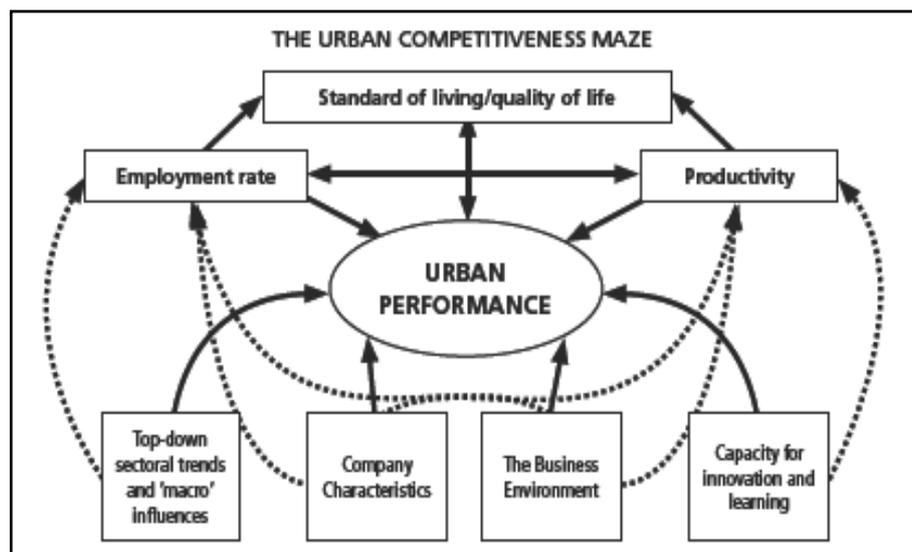


Figure 2. Competitiveness of Cities.

Note. Source: ZHANG, 2011.

Current Trends

Before closing the paper, it is pertinent to briefly reflect on two issues related to the interaction among Europeanization, multilevel governments and the capacity of local governments to undertake international initiatives. Those are the effects of multilevel governance on the legitimacy cities’ “foreign policy”, and the impact of the economic crisis on the phenomenon. First, there is a significant group of experts stressing that multilevel governance arrangements contribute to EU democracy (Piattoni, 2009, p. 33). In this respect, the EU seems to walk on the direction of strengthening multilevel governance and subsidiarity; the conclusions of the group of experts on the future of the EU (Project *Europe 2030*) read that,

Delivering “good governance” is by far the EU’s most powerful means of ensuring the continuous commitment and engagement of its citizens. Underpinned by the principles of openness, participation, power sharing, accountability, partnership and effectiveness, good governance must also conform to the principle of subsidiarity—the notion that decisions should be taken at the most effective level and as close as possible to the citizen. The EU endeavors to deliver on

these principles through a system of “multi-level governance”, where competences are shared—rather than split—between various levels of authority”. (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2010, p. 47)

Beyond the debate on the impact of multilevel governance on the democratic deficit, the question of whether it is legitimate for local governments (elected to manage a city) to design and implement international initiatives remains. Regarding the legitimacy of local governments “foreign policy”, it should be noted that the phenomenon is not acknowledged by any constitution of EU member states. However, central governments allow for (and even encourage) international activities of local government in fields such as tourist promotion or competing for international events, i.e. the Olympic Games. Moreover, the European Commission fosters it through the thematic programme “Non State Actors and Local Governments in Development”, and national governments in countries like France and Spain have strategies to support local development cooperation projects (i.e. Commission Nationale de la Coopération Décentralisée and Municipia, respectively). While accepting that the European context fosters the internationalization of local governments, the impact of this phenomenon on the relevance of the Westphalian state is limited. As some experts contend that European multilevel governance “can and should be interpreted and discussed also as a theory of European integration and as of the transformation of the nation-state” (Piattoni, 2009, p. 21), the majority of authors argue that “the nation-state is not about to be replaced as the primary instrument of domestic and global governance. Instead, we believe that the nation-state is being supplemented by other actors—private and third sector—in a more complex geography” (Keohane & Nye, 2000, p. 12).

Another issue that deserves our attention is the impact that the economic crisis on European local governments and its capacity to participate on international initiatives. Local governments and the many other actors are immersed on financial difficulties that affect their capacity to intervene on the international arena. Several examples can illustrate this point: Greece has significantly reduced the number of local governments, in Italy and Spain there is a strong debate on the abolition of provinces, and several representation offices of local governments in Brussels have been closed. Despite that, the Committee of the Regions highlights that “the current global crisis underlines the importance of governance, particularly at European level, and the need for local and regional authorities to be closely involved in shaping and implementing Community strategies, since they implement nearly 70% of Community legislation” (Committee of the Regions, 2009, p. 3). In this context, the participation of local governments in European affairs is likely to focus on the search for funds.

Conclusion

This paper is an exercise to establish links among Europeanization, multilevel governance and the foreign policy of local governments. Amongst the various factors that have allowed for the internationalization of cities and towns, the European integration process and the appearance of multilevel governance arrangements have been central.

The diverse definitions of Europeanization that have been presented in relation with local governments leave room for (at least) two clear realities: On one hand, the impact of European regulations on local level is responsible for the implementation of a significant part of EU legislation which are driven to adapt to a new

institutional, economic and social environment (“download” or hierarchical Europeanization); on the other hand there are changes resulting from the interaction between European local governments, which allow for exchange of experiences and innovation that eventually reach the EU level (“upload” or cooperative Europeanization). These changes produce numerous opportunities for local governments, which have been forced to adapt to the advance of Europeanization.

In parallel with the evolution of the European integration process, experts have identified the appearance of new systems of governance. In this regard, multilevel governance seems the best proposal to define government arrangements in the EU. There are at least two ideal types of multilevel governance: one based on the existence of a limited number of non-overlapping jurisdictions, and the other based on having numerous task-specific jurisdictions of intersecting memberships that overlap; in this respect, while national levels tend to follow the former multilevel governance scheme, the international arena and the European level might tend to look more like the latter. The intersection of both types of multilevel governance arrangements is to be found, for example, in the use of the open method of coordination as a formula to converge diverse jurisdictions.

In this context, local governments have progressively become more active in the European arena. The evolution of the mechanisms used by cities and towns illustrates the complexity of the international relations of local governments; from the first twinnings, passing by the implementation of projects, and all the way to the creation and multiplication of international networks, which in some cases are being institutionalized. Examples such as the creation of the Committee of the Regions to represent the voice of local and regional governments in the EU or the fusion of several organizations of local governments to create a world-wide organization (United Cities and Local Governments) are illustrative.

Regarding future lines for research, in order to better measure the impact of Europeanization on the capacities of local governments to “go international”, an in-depth analysis of the internationalization of cities from other regions should be done in order to be able to establish a framework for a comparative analysis. Furthermore, we would also stress the need to advance the impact of multilevel governance on the democratic deficit of the EU, which could be linked to the study of the legitimacy of international activities of local governments and its impact on the endurance of the Westphalian state.

Despite the evolution of the international activities of local governments, the current financial crisis is limiting the capacities of cities and towns to be active in the international arena. From the limitations imposed by central states (Greece, Italy) to the reduction of their budgetary capabilities (Spain), local governments are facing difficulties that might affect their capacity and will to participate in European affairs.

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