

A Comparative Analysis of Northern European Cities' Strategies for Engagement in the EUROCITIES network



Aletta Willemijn Versluis

MUE 930622883060

22-04-2019

Word count: 23.113

MSc Thesis Environmental Policy Group

Supervisor: V. Sayel Cortes Berrueta

ABSTRACT

Cities are becoming increasingly important actors in global governance which stimulated them to organise in so-called Transnational Municipal Networks (TMN's). These networks have grown exponentially in number over the last decades and cities today are 'swimming in a sea of networks'. Therefore, cities should have a structured and organized approach to be successfully engaged with TMN's. Also, there is a variation between the mode and extent of engagement of cities in these networks, creating an uneven landscape of cities that act as pioneers and cities that are regular members. This variation emerges from differences in local underlying structural conditions (USC's) and motivations that influence cities' choices to be engaged with a network. Although TMN's have been studied widely, few studies address cities as actors in these networks. By looking at Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Riga as actors in the EUROCITIES network, this research examines why cities participate in TMN's and what strategies they use to engage with them. The cities represent a pioneer city (Rotterdam), a regular city with similar USC's (Amsterdam) and a regular city with different USC's (Riga). The cities are compared on their underlying structural conditions, motivations and mode of engagement in the EUROCITIES network using data from interviews and strategy documents. In short, the findings suggest that all cities have a distinct strategic engagement approach based upon local USC's and motivations. Acknowledging cities as actors is therefore central to understanding TMN's.

Keywords: Transnational Municipal Network, EUROCITIES, Pioneers, Engagement Strategy

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1. Introduction

1.1 Global challenges, local solutions

In recent decades, there has been a growing trend of urbanization. Cities currently house more than half the world's population, making them concentrations of environmental challenges (United Nations, 2016). For instance, 60 to 80 percent of the global CO₂ emissions stem from urban areas (Hakelberg, 2014; Lee, 2013; Bansard et al., 2017; Bulkeley, 2010). This concentration of people, industries and infrastructure translates into a high demand of energy and resources. But besides being responsible for environmental damage, cities are strategic places for making environmental impact and are crucial actors to establish stronger climate change governance (Sassen, 2009; Bansard et al., 2017, Bulkeley & Betsill, 2007). Some articles even note that 50 to 75 percent of the CO₂ emissions could be reduced by means of action taken by local governments (Hakelberg, 2014). Not only environmental or climate change issues are arising on a global scale, but also issues such as poverty alleviation, the improvement of existing trade deals or the management of increasing rapid flows of people across the globe (Acuto et al., 2017). Although the complex nature of these global issues calls for action across many scales, the local level is seen as one of the places where concrete goals can be achieved, and local authorities are recognized for their strong position to achieve these goals (Sassen, 2009). To increase action at a local level, their authorities have started to collaborate and initiated Transnational Municipal Networks (TMN's) collectively (Lee, 2013). TMN's have emerged as a means to seek commitments from other cities on matters of pressing concern and support implementation of improving policies (Hakelberg, 2014). The increased inclusion of cities in international challenges highlights a common frustration among local governments with the inability of central governments to address globally pressing issues (Acuto et al., 2017). Through such networked constellations, cities that were normally linked to local issues and policies are now seen as critical actors in global governance (Bouteligier, 2013). In interest of the increasing importance of cities in global governance, this research focusses on TMN's and specifically the way in which cities are engaged in these networks.

1.2 Transnational Municipal Networks

In general, there are three drivers of TMN formation: lack of knowledge at the local level, lack of involvement of supranational level, and lack of funding (Niederhafner, 2013). TMN's initiated as a means to overcome these problems as obstruction to take action in urban sustainability. According to Kern & Bulkeley (2009), TMN's generally have three defining characteristics. Firstly, member cities are free and autonomous in their decisions to join or leave. Secondly, TMN's are often characterized by a form of self-governance, because they are generally non-hierarchical, horizontal, and polycentric. Thirdly, they note that members are directly implementing the decisions made by the network. Most city networks share the aspiration to exchange information, knowledge and best practices, increase

cities' capacity, and voice cities' concerns in the international arena (Bouteligier, 2013). They do so by, for instance, staging events and building professional relationships. TMN's provide their members with functions such as information exchange, cooperation, funding, lobbying, and plan provision (Lee & Jung, 2018). They empower cities with resources, capacity, relationships, and a voice representing them on international level (Bouteligier, 2013). The networks can help local authorities to enhance their ability to address urban issues, deliver services to inhabitants, and develop urban management structures (Keiner & Kim, 2007).

City networks are not a new phenomenon (Bouteligier, 2013). The first networks dealing with urban issues emerged in the 1970's as a result of the effects of globalization and the economic and demographic growth (Keiner & Kim, 2007). The 1990's saw an explosion of the number of networks, specifically the networks with a focus on the environmental domain (Bouteligier, 2013). In the time between 1982 and 2004, the number of sustainability-oriented TMN's rose from 8 to 49 (Keiner & Kim, 2007). A great influence for the rise of the city networks during this time was Agenda 21, a program by the United Nations that promoted sustainable development, especially with regards to urban areas. In their comprehensive action plan, they addressed the importance for cities to work together in networks *"to exchange experiences and mobilize national and international technical and financial support"* (Keiner & Kim, 2007, p. 1373). Thereby, it recognized the importance of local authorities to collaborate to promote sustainable development. Ever since that, cities have been establishing alliances in the form of TMN's to address urban issues (Toly, 2008). Because of the rapid creation of city networks during the 1990's, some networks have adapted a narrow focus, whereas others have adapted a broader scope, focussing on overarching themes such as 'sustainability' or 'resilience' (Acuto et al, 2017). Not only do city networks differ in their focus, but also in their scale (sub-nationally, nationally, regionally, and globally), their goals and objectives (ranging from social and environmental issues to promoting peace), their member characteristics (large and small cities), and their number of members (few or many) (Bouteligier, 2013).

One of these TMN's is the EUROCITIES network. This network has a regional scale, focusses solely on European cities, and addresses a broad range of themes, including environment, mobility, social affairs, economic development, knowledge society, and culture. The scholarly articles that have emerged on TMN's have addressed these environmentally focused networks. The EUROCITIES network, which has a broad range of themes, has not been researched substantially, despite some articles with a stronger focus on the trend of Europeanisation (Marlow, 1992; Griffiths, 1995; Payre, 2010; Verhelst, 2017) and the factors behind a successful relation of sister cities (Baycan-levent et al., 2010). The engagement and motivations of member cities in the EUROCITIES network will therefore be central to this study.

1.3 Pioneers and regular members

This study intends to unveil the differences and similarities in engagement strategies between cities. Since TMN's have a horizontal character, it is assumed they generate equal relations. However, a critical assessment of city networks demonstrates that the reality is more nuanced, and inclusion does not guarantee an equal representation and expression of opinion (Bouteligier, 2013). Although TMN's offer the same functions to all its members, different actors within the network are seen to experience TMN's differently. Kern & Bulkeley (2009) mention that a broad range of actors is merely involved in activities and processes of a TMN. They find that "*in large networks, the majority of the member cities are relatively passive. Membership in this case may be only symbolic*" (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p.316). In these networks, there is an active core of cities that participate in the governance of the network and engage in strategic development, and a large group of cities on the fringe, who are merely involved with network discourses and activities. In their article they conclude by saying "*networks are networks of pioneers for pioneers, contributing to the uneven landscape of urban climate governance across the region*" (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009, p. 329).

These findings raise questions about possibilities for regular cities to make effective use of a TMN. Potentially, there is a divide created between the cities that have sufficient resources to act on climate change and are 'pioneers' in their actions, thereby creating a positive spiral of gains and rewards, and the cities who cannot do so (Bulkeley & Betsill, 2013). The study by Kern & Bulkeley (2009) explains that pioneer cities generally join networks in early stages and take on an active role in the network evolution. On the other hand, 'passive' or regular network members are often not able to participate in certain network activities due to a lack of financial, human, and political resources (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). For instance, the amount of freedom of action and autonomy from the national government can be an issue of local governments (Gustavsson et al., 2009; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). This research will use this differentiation between pioneers and regular members to find out more about differences between cities' engagement in the EUROCITIES network.

1.4 Problem definition and literature gap

In recent decades, transnational climate governance initiatives have grown exponentially, and many of them have similar ideas and goals (Roger et al., 2017). The emergence of this variety in TMN's results in a tendency towards fragmentation of urban matters. Acuto et al. (2017, p. 19) point out that cities today are "*swimming in a sea of networks*" and argue that because of this, cities should have a more structured and organized approach to be involved with TMN's. In their engagement with TMN's, cities are faced with questions about what network processes they should engage in, what resource commitments they should make, how they should manage external relations and how they remain accountable for their local needs (Acuto et al., 2017). Besides, city representatives only have access to a limited number of resources that can and should be used effectively. Local urban contexts, such as

local strategies, political leadership, and locally available resources affect choices made by local governments to engage in TMN's (Huggins, 2018; Mocca, 2017). Depending on a city's priority, purpose, and resources, it can choose the extent to which they want to engage in a TMN (Lee & Jung, 2018). Due to this difference in underlying structural conditions (USC's) between cities, engagement of cities in TMN's remains marked by variation, both in the extent and mode of engagement (Huggins, 2018). This creates an unequal landscape of engagement of cities in TMN's. Acuto et al. (2017) address that cities that draw most satisfaction from city participation have a strategic networking approach, regardless of the city size. Nevertheless, a broad range of member cities is merely involved in activities and processes of TMN's (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). They seem to lack a systems perspective on the networking activities they are involved with. This raises questions about the motivations and the function of membership for these cities.

Although many scholars have addressed the broader phenomenon of transnational climate governance and the benefits TMN's can have, little is known about the way cities engage with city networks and their motivations for this (Acuto et al., 2017). To overcome issues with variation in engagement of cities in TMN's, their motivations for participation should be researched (Huggins, 2018). Davidson & Gleeson (2015) argue that to obtain a deeper underlying motivation of cities to join TMN's, further empirical examination of key actors' attitudes and roles is needed. Previous studies on city networking have approached cities as places, which has caused the city as actors and agents in city networking to remain relatively understudied (Acuto et al., 2017). This has resulted in a lack of comparative literature that is available for cities to gain an understanding of engagement in city networking (Acuto et al., 2017). Therefore, it is necessary to increase the knowledge about cities as actors in TMN's by looking at why and how they participate in them.

1.5 Aim and Research questions

This study aims for a deepened understanding of why cities participate in the EUROCITIES network and what strategies they use to engage with them by qualitatively examining their current engagement strategies and their underlying motivations for this. It will do so by comparing the engagement strategy of a pioneer city (Rotterdam) and two 'regular' cities (Amsterdam and Riga). The findings of this study will contribute to theory on differentiation in engagement of cities in TMN's and inform cities on questions related to their engagement with TMN's.

The following research question will be answered in this paper:

- Why do pioneers and regular cities engage in the EUROCITIES network and what strategies do they use to engage with them?

Supported by the following sub-questions:

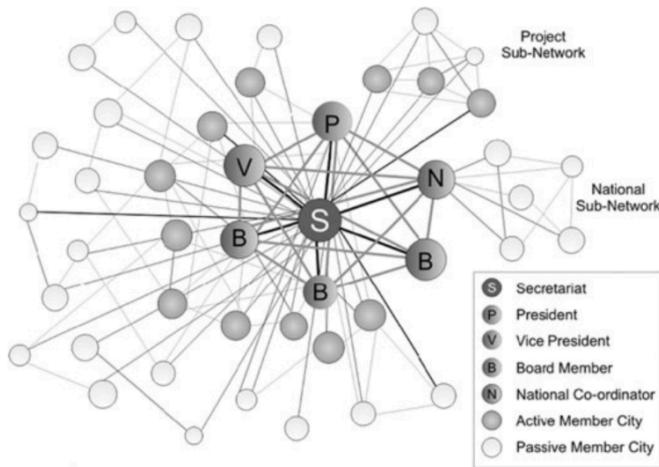
- What underlying structural conditions influence the cities' motivations and engagement strategy?
- What are the differences in motivations between pioneer and regular cities?
- On what networking functions offered by TMN's are pioneer and regular cities focussing their networking efforts?

For a start, this study will first discuss previous studies on TMN's and the theories that have been used to conceptualize TMN's. The conceptual framework specifies on the theories and concepts that were tailored to match this study. Based upon the concepts defined in the conceptual framework, the methodology chapter describes the research methods to gather and analyse data. The following chapter portrays the EUROCITIES network and describes their orientation, linking modality, and all functions the network provides to its members. This chapter is meant to give a solid foundation of knowledge on the possible uses of the network before describing the ways in which the cities make use of the network. Then the case-studies Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Riga will be described according to their underlying structural conditions, motivations, and network engagement. Thereafter a comparative analysis of the differences and similarities between these three cities will be given, followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to the theory and conclusion.

2. Conceptual Framework

This chapter will describe and elaborate on all the concepts that are used in this study. To do so, the following description by Keiner & Kim (2007) is used as guideline throughout this chapter. They note that: “*networks are constructed of nodes (actors) and linkages (information flows) between these nodes. The activity of connecting the nodes (e.g. the exchange of information) is what we call ‘networking’, essentially comprised of virtual and or real interaction and collaborative decision-making*” (Keiner & Kim, 2007, p.1382). This theoretical idea will be the basis of assessing the engagement of cities as nodes in TMN’s. Figure 1 gives a schematic illustration of these linkages between nodes in relation to Transnational-Municipal Networks. This is followed by an elaborate description of the main concepts of the illustration, starting with the theory about the organisation of a TMN which is discussed and conceptualised. Then the so called ‘nodes’ or actors in a TMN are discussed, followed by the linkages between the actors and how these are forged.

Figure 1: Structure of Transnational Municipal Networks



Source: Kern & Bulkeley (2009)

2.1 The TMN organisation

Although the aim of this study is related to cities engagement in TMN’s, this subchapter provides a conceptualization of different typologies of TMN’s to give a contextual background in which the decision-making process of cities is embedded. As mentioned before, TMN’s generally have 3 defining characteristics. First of all, member cities are free and autonomous in their decision to join or leave. Second, these types of networks are often characterized by a form of self-governance, because they are generally non-hierarchical, horizontal, and polycentric. Third, members are directly implementing the decisions made by the network (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). Apart from the characteristics TMN’s have in common, scholars also address the different typologies of TMN’s. For instance, Andonova et al.

(2009) distinguish different types of transnational forms of governance according to their actors (public and private) and their governance process or functions. A recent study by Lee & Jung (2018) identifies the geographical orientation, linking modality, and functions. Because both articles overlap in their typology of TMN's, this paper will use the geographical orientation, the linking modality, and the functions to describe the organisational structure of the TMN.

The **geographical orientation** of a TMN can vary from local to regional or global. Local networks are seen as effective due to their shared history and language (Lee & Jung, 2018). Nevertheless, at regional level, cities are able to choose from a broad range of other cities, based on their similarities as well as their differences. On global scale, TMN's have the advantage to share best practices across state boundaries. For these networks, hierarchical relationships with states might prevent effective action (Lee & Jung, 2018). Secondly, the **linking modality** distinguishes multilateral cooperation, which is cooperation of two or more cities initiated by city governments, and institution-led cooperation which involves the coordination by institutions (Lee & Jung, 2018). The main advantage of a multilateral cooperation is the widened sharing of knowledge between cities. Multilateral cooperation could have a disadvantage in their organisation, because questions arise about who is in charge. Institution-led cooperation's can provide organisational support and take a leading role. The challenge lies in providing cities with enough resources, which is the main issue for cities to combat climate change (Lee & Jung, 2018). Lastly networks distinguish themselves by providing a range of **functions** to its member cities. These functions are used as a means to forge linkages and are therefore elaborately explained in subchapter 3.3 about linkages. Before defining the linkages between nodes, the nodes are defined and conceptualized.

2.2 Nodes (actors)

As figure 1 shows, there are different actors in a TMN, consisting of the secretariat and the network members. This research focuses on member cities as acting entities in the network by taking the city as unit of enquiry. By 'the city' this study specifically refers to the local city government (Mocca, 2017). As mentioned before, cities have autonomy in their decisions to be engaged in networks (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). Local urban contexts, such as local strategies, political leadership, and locally available resources affect choices made by local governments to engage in TMN's (Huggins, 2018; Mocca, 2017). Depending on a city's priority, purpose, and resources, it can choose the extent to which they want to engage in a TMN (Lee & Jung, 2018). Because the combination of elements in cities are all unique (Sassen, 2009), each city, or representative of a city, will have different motivations for their actions, affecting decisions on why to join a certain network. Therefore, this subchapter will provide a conceptualization of the influencing underlying structural conditions in cities and their motivations for engagement.

2.2.1 *Underlying structural conditions*

Decisions about cities' engagement in TMN's are affected by underlying structural conditions (USC). This subchapter aims to uncover what USC's could be of influence in shaping cities engagement in TMN's by examining previous research. The findings are summarized in table 1 at the end of this chapter. In their research about the TMN Cities for Climate Protection (CCP), Kern & Bulkeley (2004) found that the limited action taken by local governments does not solely lie in the absence of information or guidelines but results from a lack of resources and power to act. In a different study, Bulkeley & Betsill (2003) found that programs undertaken by CCP member cities differ in their success as a result of a variety in five factors, namely the presence of committed individuals, the available funding, political will, and local autonomy from the national government on issues such as land-use and transportation, and the definition of synergies. Furthermore, Bulkeley & Betsill (2005) find that a lack of knowledge among local officers about urban sustainability issues is often mentioned as an incentive for action. Whilst researching climate action taken by local governments in China, Qi et al., (2008) found that motivation of individual persons, power to act, and capacity in terms of knowledge and resources were important factors influencing the way in which local governments decide on issues of urban sustainability. Especially the relationship between local and central governments is critical in determining their activity. In a study by Huggins (2018), engagement of local governments in France and the UK in TMN's is studied in relation to a process of Europeanisation. He finds that cities' engagement in TMN's is different depending on their local strategic objectives, their local political objectives and leadership, and their pre-existing experience with TMN's.

A study by Rooij (2002) conducted in the Netherlands, found that depending on their location, size, money, and personnel, some cities benefit from EU opportunities and others do not. In a study by Lee & Meene (2012), geographical location also came up as factor influencing policy learning of cities

in TMN's. Verhelst (2017) studied the degree of Europeanisation among TMN members and linked this to the municipalities' internal competencies, the interest of the administration in EU affairs, and the political and administrative political agenda. Mocca (2017) found that to understand the participation of second and third cities in socio-ecological urban networks, four factors had to be understood, namely patterns of economic development, institutional arrangements that provide autonomy and the political leaning of a council and political discourses. The article also found that past experience affects involvement in TMN's. Fenton (2014) uses a similar argumentation by discussing the importance of underlying structural conditions on the decision-making process for urban sustainability strategies in a municipality. Fenton (2014) addresses a total of five factors as underlying structural conditions that affect urban sustainability strategies. They concern "*the capacity of municipalities and others to act for urban sustainability; their mandate to do so; the resources available to them; the scope of their processes and intended outcomes; and their will, individually and collectively, to pursue urban sustainability.*" (Fenton, 2014, p. 5). Although these authors are using different words to describe the underlying structural conditions, in general there is an overlap between the elements. The reoccurring themes in theory on underlying conditions are summarized below (table 1).

Table 1: Theory on underlying structural conditions

<i>Underlying structural conditions (USC's)</i>	<i>Literature</i>
<i>Capacity</i>	Qi et al., (2008), Verhelst (2017), Fenton (2014)
<i>Local autonomy</i>	Betsill & Bulkeley (2004), Bulkeley & Betsill (2003), Qi et al. (2008), Mocca (2017), Fenton (2014),
<i>Local politics</i>	Bulkeley & Betsill (2003), Huggins, (2018), Verhelst (2017), Mocca (2017), Fenton, (2014)
<i>Resources</i>	Betsill & Bulkeley (2004), Bulkeley & Betsill (2003), Bulkeley & Betsill, (2005), Qi et al. (2008), Rooij (2002), Fenton (2014), Mocca (2017)
<i>Committed individuals</i>	Bulkeley & Betsill (2003), Qi et al. (2008), Huggins (2018), Verhelst (2017), Fenton (2014)
<i>Pre-existing experience</i>	Huggins (2018), Mocca (2017)
<i>Size & Location</i>	Rooij (2002), Lee & Meene (2012)

All USC's can be used to justify action or inaction in engagement with TMN's (Fenton, 2014). This does not mean they are always identified as factors that influence a cities' engagement. The main themes that are found as USC's are defined as follows:

- **Capacity** has been described by Fenton (2014) as the ability of stakeholders to participate and act in processes and subsequent implementation, relating to competencies or capabilities in terms of knowledge and understanding. As an example, commentators often refer to a lack of knowledge among local officers about urban sustainability issues (Bulkeley & Betsill, 2005). Capacity does not only refer to the what is available within the municipality, but also in other knowledgeable institutions within the city, such as universities and businesses, that can be consulted by the municipality.

- **Local autonomy** is the extent of autonomy that municipalities have to exercise in critical policy sectors, like transportation, land-use planning, infrastructure, building standards, and waste management (Bulkeley, 2010). This issue is generally determined by central governments who delegate tasks to local governments. Having local responsibilities for the provision of services in these sectors, which is the case in most Northern European countries, has been proven to increase opportunity to address climate change (Bulkeley, 2010).

- **Local politics** involve the leaning of a local council and the goals and objectives they set. The level of engagement of cities in TMN's is explained by the varied local strategic and political importance given to transnational engagement or topics a TMN is concerned with (Verhelst, 2017).

- **Resources** are the (actual as well as perceived) time, budget, personnel and information available for municipalities (Fenton, 2014). Availability of resources could influence a cities' engagement, for instance because resources in terms of time and personnel are needed to apply for funding (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2007).

- **Committed individuals** are individuals within a municipality with a strong desire to address urban challenges or desire to be involved with TMN's. This can come from political leaders or influencing individuals striving for change. It is further described as the extent to which people are willing to change or modify systems, regulations, and norms that pose barriers for action and the extent to which people understand the impacts of their actions and are willing to embrace new ideas or substantial changes to the status quo (Fenton, 2014).

- **Pre-existing experience** is the range of TMN's that cities have been or are currently involved with (Huggins, 2018). Based upon this experience, cities can be affected to work together with specific cities they already have a relation with or choose to participate in particular activities. Positive past experiences can reinforce present involvement (Mocca, 2017).

- **Size & Location** refers to the size in number of inhabitants and geographical location of the city in relation to other cities in the network. Cities in the same geographical location could want to seek information from cities in similar geographical region (Lee & Meene, 2012).

2.2.2 Motivations

Although it is difficult to make a conceptualization of the motivations for cities to engage in TMN's, this subchapter will describe previous research that identified cities' motivations. The USC's and other general characteristics in cities will influence the motivations for cities to join TMN's (table 1). While studying different cities in Sweden, Elander & Gustavsson (2007) found that most common arguments for joining a TMN were that: networks were seen as sources for ideas and knowledge; local and national governments could be influenced through common petitions in collaboration with other members; cities could involve in city advertising and establish contacts through the network; and cities could involve in projects and apply for funding. The article also addresses some arguments against networking, which are not included as part of the conceptual framework because all studied cities are in favour of networking. In a study about EUROCITIES Griffiths (1995: p. 220) found several motives for cities to be part of the network. Motives included: seeking access to EU funding (financial), experience exchange, sharing know-how, informal contacts, first-hand information on EU-affairs, city profiling, and forming a coherent EU policy (political). Mocca (2017) addressed that engagement in TMN's could enhance a cities' reputation by building an international identity. Furthermore, TMN's are seen as a means for cities to cooperate at EU level. The motivations are summarized in table 2 below.

Table 2: Theory on motivations

Motivation	Literature
<i>Source for knowledge</i>	Elander & Gustavsson (2007); Griffiths (1995)
<i>Influencing policy</i>	Elander & Gustavsson (2007)
<i>Access to EU funding</i>	Griffiths (1995)
<i>Establish contacts</i>	Elander & Gustavsson (2007); Griffiths (1995)
<i>First-hand information on EU-affairs</i>	Griffiths (1995)
<i>City profiling</i>	Elander & Gustavsson (2007); Griffiths (1995); Mocca (2017)

2.3 Linkages

As Keiner & Kim (2007) say, the linkages within a network are comprised by the information flows between the actors. Networks are centred around the idea that each actor brings different resources to the fore and shares them with other actors (Keiner & Kim, 2007). Therefore, establishing these linkages and sharing know-how are essential to the success of a TMN. Member cities of TMN's can make use of all, or just a fraction of, the functions a TMN provides. Because this research aims to find out how cities engage with TMN's, this chapter will elaborate on the possible functions a TMN can provide to its members followed by a description of the extent to which a city can engage in these functions.

2.3.1 Network functions

One of the themes that has been widely addressed in research about TMN's are the functions and benefits TMN's provide to its members (Andonova et al., 2009; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Lee & Jung, 2018). These functions can be applied by local authorities to forge linkages. A TMN can, for instance, host series of seminars and workshops about local climate change policies. Not only hosting events is important, but also the production of regular reports, establishing joint pilots and policies, and information exchange (e.g. issuing newsletters) are highly important networking activities (Acuto & Rayner, 2016). Tangible outcomes like these are often just as important as intangible ones, such as building trust and creating a place for discussing new issues (Keiner & Kim, 2007). Andonova et al. (2009) identify information sharing, capacity building and implementation, and rule setting as main overarching functions provided by TMN's. Kern & Bulkeley (2009) found other functions as main themes and say that TMN's can apply three core strategies to facilitate linkages between actors, namely: information and communication; project funding and cooperation; and recognition, benchmarking and certification. This research uses the description by Lee & Jung (2018), who distinguish between information exchange/networking, lobbying, funding operations, research, target and plan provision, and monitoring and certification as possible functions a TMN can provide its members. To give a better understanding of the functions provided by a TMN the functions in Lee & Jung (2018) will be further described here. In general, when cities decide to join a network, these functions become available for them as a means to take action.

Of these functions, **information exchange/networking** is the most common. This is because originally, TMN's came into being as a result of a lack of knowledge, which makes information sharing their primary function. This can be confirmed by the members, who generally regard information sharing as the most important function (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Labaeye & Sauer, 2013; Lee & Jung, 2018). There is a common assumption that municipalities implement changes for local action more effectively when they hold the necessary information to address urban sustainability issues (Bulkeley, 2010). Seemingly, there is a lack of knowledge among local officers about these issues (Bulkeley & Betsill, 2005). This leads to the assumption that municipalities are not taking action due to a lack of

knowledge and understanding of urban sustainability issues (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004). TMN's can help to overcome this issue by disseminating information and providing their members with sufficient knowledge. Information exchange and networking involves sharing best practices and expertise about urban topics, for instance by sharing enhancing policies or climate related news (information sharing) or hosting meetings and conferences with their members (networking) (Lee & Jung, 2018). This flow of information can be an online 'good-practice' database, writing (online) newsletters or organising tours (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009: 320). Depending on local institutional and political context, best practice information of other cities is used as a source of inspiration by other cities, or as a means to check their own policies (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009; Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004 Bulkeley & Betsill, 2013). Currently, a share of the member cities already has sufficient knowledge at hand. This makes them more likely to use other functions (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004).

Secondly, the article mentions **lobbying** with (national and international) governments as function. Traditionally, Europeanisation has been a top-down process. However, TMN's initiated from the inability to access upper-level policymaking (Lee & Jung, 2018; Niederhafner, 2013). Therefore, cities aim to change upper-level governance by taking action at local level but also by lobbying their shared interests with higher-level governments. It is now recognized that TMN's facilitate a two-way relationship between local governments and the EU, as TMN's advocate for change policy at (inter)national institutions or governments (Huggins, 2018).

Third, **funding operations** are an important function of TMN's. Often, lack of resources is an obstruction for climate action to take place (Lee & Jung, 2018). Networks can therefore "*provide means through which members can contact each other in order to bid jointly for (usually EU) project funding, or by submitting bids themselves together with their constituent municipalities*" (Kern & Bulkeley 2009: 321). Most EU grants call for the participation of at least six EU member states as a group. By creating groups of multiple participants, TMN's can get funding that upper-level governments provide (Lee & Jung, 2018). These funding operations tie cities together on day-to-day basis, thereby enhancing the cities connection to the network, as they depend on the network for contacts and resources to carry out projects (Lee & Jung, 2018; Kern & Bulkeley 2009). During this process, the cities will be assisted by the networks that provide them with financial resources required to implement local action. It is therefore reliant on resources or capacity provided by the network, rather than having to consult what is locally available. Although it may seem to be a perfect way for cities with a lack of resources to make use of the network, this method is usually applied by more active and established members, because it is still resource intensive (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). This can also mean that inactive cities do not win in competitions for project funding and may therefore be discouraged to continue their participation in the network (Betsill & Bulkeley 2004).

Fourth, TMN's can make use of documenting and disseminating **research** findings. This function tries to bring about policy improvement by disseminating best practices found in research. For instance,

a network could provide a database to identify opportunities for further action, help prioritize potential ideas and analyse key trends (Lee & Jung, 2018).

Fifth, the **provision of targets and plans** is seen as a networking function. It provides members with standards and agendas to follow, varying from membership and shared targets to following standards (Lee & Jung, 2018). For instance, networks can set milestones or develop an action list (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). The targets can either be commonly set for all network members or individually set (Lee & Jung, 2018). Targets are generally important incentives for cities to act and at the same time they provide TMN's with a management tool to assess developments among members (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009).

Lastly, **monitoring and certification** is a function that aims to establish and measure compliance of the cities (Lee & Jung, 2018). These strategies can also be a means in which peer pressure is used to stimulate members to take action. Sometimes, cities are rewarded for their actions by means of certification, which enhances a members' reputation. Recognition uses rewards for performance, for instance by calling out a municipality for good practice or the creation of a competition (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). This is generally an incentive for cities that are already active, because only a limited number of municipalities can get rewarded (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009).

2.3.2 Actor engagement

This subchapter will look at linkages from the perspective of cities instead of the TMN's. Cities have autonomy to decide what functions they engage in and to what extent they want to be involved. Generally, cities' engagement in TMN's is marked by differences, both in the extent and the type of engagement. This is explained by the presence of local underlying structural conditions which shape cities' response to the functions presented by TMN's (Huggins, 2018). This study starts by arguing that cities who draw most benefits from networking have a strategic networking approach (Acuto al., 2017). This means cities should have a comprehensive view of their local resources and how they can use them effectively to achieve their future goals. Depending on the underlying structural conditions and motivations, cities can choose to engage in TMN functions and the degree to which they want to be active in them. This consideration of USC's and motivations in decisions to engage in network activities which will be referred to as a cities' engagement strategy.

3. Methodology

Now that the concepts and variables have been elaborated in the previous chapter ‘conceptual framework’, this chapter describes the methods that will be used in this research to find answers to the main research question and the sub questions. This research emerged from the idea that cities should have a more strategic networking approach to make more effective use of city networks. The study therefore aims for a deepened understanding of why pioneer and regular cities participate in the EUROCITIES network and what strategies they use to engage with them. The main question composed to address this aim is: “*Why do pioneers and regular cities engage in TMN’s and what strategies do they use to engage with them?*”. To find an answer a structured methodology is necessary, including a description of the research strategy and design, a description concerning the sampling techniques, the methods for data gathering and analysis, and a reflection of the trustworthiness of the study.

3.1 Research strategy and design

First of all, both the research strategy and design will be discussed in this subchapter. In short, this is an interpretative research that is exploratory and qualitative in nature, based on a comparative case-study design to explore the differences and similarities between ‘pioneers’ and regular cities. The research strategy is a general orientation to the conduct of social research (Bryman, 2012). This research is *exploratory* in nature, aiming to explore why cities participate in a city network and what strategies they use to engage with them. Exploratory research “*tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has been done*” (Brown, 2006, p.43) The research is of qualitative nature, because the goal is to explore the motivations and engagement strategies. Davidson & Gleeson (2015) argue that to obtain a deeper underlying motivation, key actors’ attitudes and roles should be examined qualitatively with document analyses and semi-structured interviews with experts. Qualitative research has its focus on the variation and nature of an issue and tries to understand, explain, and explore (Kumar, 2005). It is therefore more descriptive and narrative in its nature. This type of research has a much smaller sample size and aims to cover a broad variety of issues from a fewer number of respondents (Kumar, 2005).

The research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2012). Since this study aims for a deepened understanding of engagement strategies in pioneer and regular cities, a comparative case-study method is used as a framework in which the research takes place. A case-study is a mode of research that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2009). Generally, case-study research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question (Bryman, 2012). Due to its in-depth nature, case-study methods would likely improve our understanding of the relationship between individual cities and networks (Lee & Meene, 2012). This study highly expects contextual factors in cities to be of influence on their networking strategy and case-studies provide an opportunity for that (Yin, 2009). This study specifically

follows the design of a *comparative case-study*. In comparative case studies, similarities, differences, and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal are analysed (Goodrick, 2014). According to Naoum (2012), exploratory case studies explain causality and reveal linkages among the objects of the study. It is concerned with the question why things happen the way they do by collecting facts and studying the relationship between them. The aim of this research is to give an in-depth analysis of different cases. It tries to explore the differences and similarities between the engagement strategies of ‘pioneers’ and regular city members in TMN’s. The case-studies will therefore be member cities of the EUROCITIES network. The sampling of these cities is described in the next subchapter.

3.2 Sampling

This subchapter specifies on the cities that were sampled as case-studies to compare and the reasons behind this. The main issue regards the differences between engagement strategies of cities in TMN’s. This has led to the main research question ‘*Why do pioneers and regular cities engage in TMN’s and what strategies do they use to engage with them?*’. To answer this question, there needs to be a delineation between pioneers and regular members and at least one of each category should be included as case. Subsequently, having different underlying structural conditions is mostly mentioned as cause for being active or passive in a network (Kern & Bulkeley 2009). Therefore, a total of three cities will be sampled, including one ‘pioneer’ city, one ‘regular city’ with very similar underlying structural conditions to the pioneer, and one regular city with different underlying structural conditions (table 3). This gives insight into the effect of underlying structural conditions on the motivations and final networking strategy of a city. Bryman (2012) identified different types of cases. The representative or typical case is described as a case that exemplifies a broader category of which it is a member (Bryman, 2012). The general aim is to capture the conditions of an everyday situation (Yin, 2009). Since this research seeks member cities that qualify as pioneers and member cities that are regular, this type of sampling provides a suitable context for the research question to be answered (Bryman, 2012). This study is narrowed down to cities that are linked to the TMN of EUROCITIES, which draws the attention to similarities and differences city’s motivations and driving forces, instead of differences between TMN’s.

3.2.1 Sampling cases

This subchapter describes how the three case-studies (consisting of one pioneer and two regular member cities) are identified. Firstly, there is a need for a distinction between ‘pioneer cities’ and regular network members. Therefore, a strict definition of a pioneer city is being pursued. To classify as a pioneer a city, the cities had to meet the following 4 defining characteristics:

- Whether a representative of the city has been president of the EUROCITIES network in the past (following the argumentation of Kern & Bulkeley, 2009);
- Furthermore, this study looks into what cities have been noteworthy for their strong

contributions in the report 25 years of EUROCITIES (Bloomfield, 2011);

- The involvement of city representatives in the current executive committee
- The winners of the EUROCITIES awards for outstanding achievements.

This study purposefully uses strict preconditions for qualifying a city as a ‘pioneer’ city, using these four characteristics. In literature, no definition of pioneer cities is given which makes the concept perceptual and subjective. Using the four conditions guarantees a city to be characterized as ‘pioneer’. One of the few cities that meet all of these criteria is the city of Rotterdam. Together with six other cities, Rotterdam initiated the network. The city of Rotterdam is furthermore mentioned in EUROCITIES papers for their strong contributions (Bloomfield, 2011), currently part of the executive committee of the network and have won the EUROCITIES awards in the past. Therefore, for this study, Rotterdam qualifies as pioneer. Now that the pioneer has been identified, the following step is to find a city with similar underlying structural conditions. A city that meets these criteria is the city of Amsterdam, which has similar underlying structural conditions, such as population size, GDP, geographical location, and organisational structures, since they are both located in the Netherlands. Out of the four defining characteristics of a pioneer as listed in the beginning of this paragraph, the city of Amsterdam only qualifies for the characteristic of winning awards and is therefore not considered a pioneer in the EUROCITIES network according to the argumentation of this study. The last case should be a city that is not a pioneer with different underlying structural conditions than Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Nevertheless, for a robust comparison there should be some overarching factors. Therefore, this study is seeking a city with a similar number of inhabitants and a similar geographical location. The city that met these criteria was the city of Riga. Being from another country, this city has different underlying structural conditions compared to the two cities in the Netherlands. This city does not qualify for any of the four requirements to be a pioneer used in this study. Nevertheless, the three cities have several factors in common. First of all, their number of inhabitants ranges from 600.000 to 900.000. They are all geographically located near the sea, which influences their environmental risk due to sea level rise. As a result of their location near the sea, the cities are all harbour cities. Furthermore, all cities have previous experience with other TMN’s. All cities have a certain degree of autonomy from their national governments in terms of transportation, waste management and infrastructure. Lastly, the cities receive a similar amount of structural funding, which is a financial instrument of the European Union to minimize inequalities between areas. The amount of received structural funding could be an influencing factor that cities want to lobby for through the network (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2007). Homogeneity in these variables allows for a more straightforward comparison between the cities, in which the influence of these external factors is diminished. With the sampling techniques, the cities of Rotterdam (pioneer), Amsterdam (regular), and Riga (regular) have been sampled (table 3).

Table 3: Representation of sampled cases

	<i>USC's similar</i>	<i>USC's different</i>
<i>Regular member</i>	Amsterdam	Riga
<i>Pioneer member</i>	Rotterdam	

3.3 Data gathering

While the previous chapter described the way in which the sampling techniques identify the three cases, this subchapter describes how data about the three cities will be gathered. This study makes use of semi-structured interviews and strategy documents as data sources. The aim of this research is to get a deeper understanding of the cities' engagement strategies. In the conceptual framework, existing theory was used to operationalize the main concepts in the research questions; these operationalized concepts will be further elaborated in order to establish what data needs to be gathered and where it should be collected from. This information is gathered in Table 4, which aims to give an overview of the research questions, the concepts within those questions and the data collection methods for those concepts. The table shows that data will be retrieved from primary sources (semi-structured interviews), as well as from secondary sources (desk research). All data used in this study is summarized in appendix 1 and explained below.

Previous scholars into TMN's have identified interviews as a method to provide thorough understanding of the connection between individual cities and TMN's (Lee & Meene, 2012). Moreover, Davidson & Gleeson (2015) found that document analysis and semi-structured interviews can provide a thorough understanding of deeper underlying motivations of actors. Following this line of argumentation, all interviews are semi-structured, using a list of topics to be covered based on the operationalisation (Bryman, 2012). The topic list followed during the interviews with the city representatives are included in appendix 3 and the topic list used in the interview with the EUROCITIES employees is included in appendix 2. Interviews have been conducted face-to-face and over the phone. All interviews have been recorded using a recording app on a mobile phone, to increase accuracy of collected data (Kumar, 2005). A more elaborate description of the data management is included in appendix 5. A total of 6 interviews were conducted for this study with a length varying from 40 to 80 minutes. The interviews were deliberately lengthy, because only a few people carry the right knowledge and experience related to the main research questions. The people that were interviewed for this study are the people responsible for European affairs and the EUROCITIES network within their municipality. Also, one employee at the EUROCITIES network was interviewed to give a comprehensive outline of all functions the network offers as well as to see how the network tries to improve cities' engagement and how they see differences between cities and their strategies. The cities' engagement strategies are therefore seen from different perspectives: two different perspectives within

each city, and from a perspective of the EUROCITIES network.

To find out even more about the cities underlying structural conditions, motivations and engagement strategies, and to enhance validity of the data from interviews, secondary sources are being used. Especially municipal strategy- and vision documents, and the available documents and information on the EUROCITIES website were consulted. All interviews and documents used as data source for this study are included in appendix 1. Table 1 below is a schematic representation of the data collection method per question. The table starts with a description of the network to define the context in which the cities act, followed by the research question.

Table 4: Methods per research question

Research questions	Concepts	Data gathering
TMN Organisation	TMN organisation (in The TMN organisation, 2.1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographical Orientation (local/regional/global); • Linking Modality (multilateral/institution-led); • Function (information exchange/networking, lobbying, funding operations, research, target and plan provision, and monitoring and certification) 	Desk research on the EUROCITIES website Interviews with EUROCITIES employee
What structural underlying conditions influence the cities' motivations and engagement strategy?	Underlying structural conditions (in Nodes, 2.2.1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity; • Local autonomy • Political will/strategic objectives • Resources; • Individual will; • Pre-existing experience • Size & location 	Semi-structured interviews Municipal strategy- and vision documents
What are the differences in motivations between pioneer and regular cities?	Motivation (in Nodes, 2.2.2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of knowledge • Influencing policy • Access to EU funding • Establish contacts • First-hand information on EU affairs • City-profiling 	Semi-structured interviews Municipal strategy- and vision documents
On what networking strategies offered by TMN's are pioneer and regular cities focussing their networking efforts?	Activities (Linkages 2.3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information exchange/networking • Lobbying • Funding • Research • Target and plan provision • Monitoring and certification 	Semi-structured interviews Municipal strategy- and vision documents

3.4 Data analysis

As mentioned before, this study uses a qualitative comparative case-study design to answer the question “*Why do pioneers and regular cities engage in TMN’s and what strategies do they use to engage with them?*”. Interviews and municipal strategy- and vision documents were used as data sources. For the analysis of this data, this study uses a directed content analysis represented using a framework method. The goal of a directed approach to content analysis is to validate or extend a theoretical framework (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Directed content analysis is guided by a structured process using existing theory or prior research (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This method is suitable for this study, since important themes and concepts have been established in the conceptual framework and the aim is to identify these themes in the interviews and documents. Following this method, the researcher starts by identifying key concepts or variables as initial coding categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Furthermore, the framework method is a means to represent data by allowing data to be reduced and summarized into a matrix output with rows and columns (Gale et al., 2013). This representation in the form of a matrix allows for a straightforward comparison between the three cases. There are several steps involved with the framework method described by Gale et al. (2013). Since this research has established important themes and concepts from the literature and seeks to identify these themes in the interviews and documents, the order of the steps is as follows:

1. Developing an analytical framework
2. Transcription of interviews
3. Familiarisation with the data
4. Applying the analytical framework (by indexing subsequent transcripts)
5. Charting data into matrix
6. Interpreting the data

First an analytical framework is developed based upon the conceptual framework (appendix 4). Then the interviews are transcribed and added into the program NVivo 12. The program allows for analysis of both interviews and documents. The analytical framework will be applied to the interviews and strategy documents. The main concepts (USC’s, motivations and engagement strategy) are created as so-called nodes in the program. Each of these main concepts has sub-categories according to the analytical framework. After the main data for every concept had been identified, the data is summarized into a data matrix using Excel. The matrix cannot be included in the appendix due to the size, but a representation is included in table 7 in the conclusion of the data description chapter (5.4). The framework method allows for a systematic procedure and a visually straightforward matrix, that makes it easier to recognize patterns in data (Gale et al., 2013). The matrix includes rows regarding the different concepts and columns with the three cities, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Riga. Furthermore, it

allows for non-interview data to be included in the matrix. Especially for this study, which aims to make a comparison between three cities based on qualitative data, the ability to systematically review the primary and secondary data gathered in each city is crucial for the analysis. The two types of data (primary and secondary) are referred to in different ways. The secondary data is included by the source of the document, following the APA guidelines on referencing. The primary sources are referenced by the name of the city/institution, the number of the interview and the year during which the interview has been recorded respectively. Appendix 1 shows all data that has been used as input for the data analysis.

3.5 Trustworthiness

This subchapter explains the quality of this research in terms of its trustworthiness. A weakness to a case study method is that it can be subjective and vulnerable to being shaped according to the researchers' own interests and perspectives (Yin, 2009). Therefore, some measures will be taken to overcome this issue. There have been some discussions about the relevance of validity and reliability for qualitative research, since the aim of qualitative research is essentially different to quantitative research. Trustworthiness is an alternative criterion for evaluating qualitative research using four criteria: *credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability* (Bryman, 2012).

Credibility entails ensuring the research has been carried out according to the canons of good practice and submitting the findings to the members of the social world who were studied (Bryman, 2012). Respondent validation and triangulation are mentioned as means to achieve credibility. One issue that has to do with credibility is concerned with language. Some of the interviews of this research will be conducted in Dutch. Afterwards, the interviews will be transcribed in Dutch and the main findings will be translated into English afterwards. This could pose a risk for the loss of nuance in the conversation due to translation. For the English interviews, another issue may come up, because none of the interviewees have English as their native language. To overcome issues concerned with language, and to ensure respondent validation and to ascertain the interviews truly reflect the situation, all transcribed interviews are returned to the respondents for confirmation and approval. The interviewees will have time to read the transcribed interview and send any additional comments in return. The data will only be used for the research after all participants agree upon the final version of their interview. Returning interviews and ensure approval from respondents ensures accuracy of the collected data (Kumar, 2005). Appendix 5 includes the complete data management protocol used in this study. Triangulation entails using multiples source of data to study a social phenomenon and come to research findings (Bryman, 2012). To confirm the answers from the interviews and to provide an external opinion about the cities' engagement, one interview with an employee at EUROCITIES has been conducted. Furthermore, secondary data in the form of strategy- and vision documents have been used to verify the interviews and to provide more elaborate answers to the research questions.

Since qualitative research tends to be oriented towards contextual uniqueness rather than generalisation, qualitative researchers are encouraged to use a thick description (Bryman, 2012). *Transferability* is increased by a rich description of details in a study, so others can judge whether the study is transferable to another milieu. The three cities have been described according to their general characteristics and a description of the main similarities and differences between the cities has been addressed earlier in 4.2.1 sampling cases. However, this study aims for an in-depth review of the three cities and although this research can indicate directions for further research, generalisation is not the aim. Furthermore, *dependability* (parallel to reliability) and *confirmability* (parallel to objectivity) as named as means to measure trustworthiness. To ensure this, qualitative researchers could adapt an ‘auditing’ approach, which means they should ensure that complete records are kept from all phases of the research process. Nevertheless, Bryman (2012) discards this method for being too demanding. This study aims to increase objectivity by sharing the analytical framework that has been used to code the interviews.

4. Chapter EUROCITIES

Now that the concepts and methods have been identified, this chapter is a beginning of the result chapters that answers the question “*Why do pioneers and regular cities engage in TMN’s and what strategies do they use to engage with them?*”. To answer the main research question, a solid description of the EUROCITIES network is needed to provide a context for this study. It does so by explaining the EUROCITIES network according to its geographical location, linking modality and functions. Together with chapter 5, the case-study description, it provides an overview of the data gathered within the boundaries of this study. The data used for this chapter stem from theory, information on the EUROCITIES website and an interview with a EUROCITIES employee who works for the headquarters in Brussels.

4.1 Network of large European cities

As the name already implies, the EUROCITIES network focuses on cities within Europe, and is therefore characterized as regional. This is reflected in the requirements for becoming a full member, which is specified as: authorities of cities with an important regional centre and an international dimension and a population of at least 250,000 (EUROCITIES, 2008). The membership is open to cities which are located in the member states of the European Union or the European Economic Area (EEA). For cities that do not fulfil these requirements, there is a possibility to become an associate member or partner. Also, for companies and businesses that wish to participate in the network, there is a separate category, namely associated business partner (EUROCITIES, 2008). These requirements show the focus of the network is exclusively on European cities with at least 250,000 inhabitants. As a result of these specific requirements, EUROCITIES is seen as a high-profile network (Giest & Howlett, 2013).

Linking modality refers to the way in which TMN’s create ties (Lee & Jung, 2018). The network initiated from a conference organised in Rotterdam in 1986 and one in Barcelona in 1989, that inspired a group of six cities (Barcelona, Birmingham, Frankfurt, Lyon, Milan and Rotterdam) to establish the network (Payre, 2010). The cities committed to promote an integrated urban model in Europe. On the initiative of Birmingham’s councillor, the group adapted rules that established membership criteria which regarded the fees, the placement of an executive committee and the opening of a secretariat in Brussels. This shows that the EUROCITIES network has a linking modality based on multilateral cooperation. As mentioned earlier, multilateral cooperation means the network has been initiated by cities (Lee & Jung, 2018). Also, the current organisation of the network resembles a multilateral form of cooperation. For instance, the executive committee is made up of twelve representatives, each elected to manage the business of the organisation. The executive committee meets three times a year and oversees the annual work programme and is responsible for internal rules and budget (EUROCITIES1, 2018). The main decision-making body is the Annual General Meeting of the membership, where each city has one vote (Niederhafner, 2013). Although the organisation of the network is multilateral, the

network does include other institutions and companies and businesses. They can become respectively associated partner or associated business partner of the network. Moreover, EUROCITIES works together with many more partners as an ad-hoc cooperation (EUROCITIES1, 2018). This is a broad range of institutions and organizations and Member States from within as well as outside Europe.

4.2 EUROCITIES main functions

Based on the article by Lee & Jung (2018), this research distinguishes between information exchange/networking, lobbying, funding operations, research, target and plan provision, and monitoring and certification as possible functions a TMN can provide to its members. According to the article, the EUROCITIES network is especially focussing on networking, lobbying, target setting, and research. They based this assessment on whether or not the network hosts meetings and conferences (networking), the network advocates change in climate change policy (lobbying), making an effort to gain funding (funding), offers research outcomes (research), provide a mitigation target or voluntary target (target), and if they request cities to monitor and disclose their performance online (monitoring). Niederhafner (2013) identified the following structural aims of the EUROCITIES network:

- to promote the international cooperation of cities through a wide range of forums, working groups, projects, activities, and events;
- to offer members “a platform for sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas”;
- to “influence and work with the EU institutions to respond to common issues that affect the day-to-day lives of Europeans”;
- to “shape the opinions of Brussels stakeholders and ultimately shift the focus of EU legislation in a way which allows city governments to tackle strategic challenges at local level”;
- to “strengthen the investments in cities via the structural funds in the next programming period from 2014 – 2020”.

Although these articles already give indication about the functions of the network, this chapter will provide a more elaborate description of all functions the EUROCITIES network is active in, based on information gathered on the EUROCITIES website and an interview with an employee working at the headquarters of the EUROCITIES network. The network distinguishes itself from other networks by having 6 different themes on which they focus. Where other networks are narrowed down to specific topics, EUROCITIES covers a broad range of issues. These 6 themes are called forums and are: environment, social affairs, economic development, culture, knowledge society, and mobility. The forums play an important role in offering cities functions like lobbying and information dissemination (Griffiths, 1995). The 6 forums and 40 working groups are the foundation of the functions the networks provide. An organigram of the forums and working groups is visualised in figure 4.

Figure 4: Organigram of forums and working groups 2018



4.2.1 Information exchange and networking as priority function

According to EUROCITIES1 (2018), information exchange and networking were found to be the most important functions for the EUROCITIES network. As mentioned earlier, the forums and the working groups are the foundation of the network. Through these structures, the network tries to disseminate information to its members. Besides meetings organised by the working groups, each forum also organises 2-3 meetings per year, in which members come together to exchange best practices. Furthermore, in a guidebook about peer-to-peer learning, 6 different learning methods are addressed along with an explanation of its importance and a description of how to effectively put it into practice (Green Digital Charter, 2018). The learning methods are training workshops (engagement in discussion), work shadowing visits (observing how things are done elsewhere), study visits (to get inspired by other projects), mentoring visits (to find tailor-made solutions), peer review (to get an outsider's perspective), and webinars (Green Digital Charter, 2018). In addition, there is the news that is being shared on the website. It is updated with new posts a couple of times per week and sometimes multiple times a day. Also, network events are posted on the website's calendar, that is open to any website visitor.

4.2.2 Lobbying as distinctive component compared to other networks

Secondly, the lobbying function is important to the network (EUROCITIES1, 2018). This is affirmed by several scholars, that even state that EUROCITIES is the most influential network of cities in the

European realm (Verhelst, 2017; Heinelt & Niederhafner, 2008). The network represents cities in Brussels and works together with cities to develop position statements on different lobby dossiers. EUROCITIES1(2018) mentions that within the network, everyone does a part of the work regarding lobbying. There are policy advisors who are mainly focused on lobbying, but also the project coordinators are occupied with lobbying for funding. The interviewee sees it as a duty of the network to represent cities at all times. The website lobbyfacts.eu (2018) explains that last year, the network spent about 4,5 million euros on lobbying costs and had 34 meetings with the European Commission. Furthermore, EUROCITIES state that their fundamental purpose as a network is to represent the 75% of Europe's population living in cities and shape European policy (lobbyfacts.eu, 2018). They want to do this to make sure policy is based on experience and to increase resources and recognition for cities in addressing strategic priorities. EUROCITIES is working together with the European Commission as well as with the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and EU Member States. With their lobbying efforts, the network tries to ensure that issues such as climate, recovery, and inclusion are addressed properly at international level.

4.2.3 Facilitating funding operations

According to the article by Lee & Jung (2018), funding is not offered as a function by the EUROCITIES network. Although the network does not offer funding itself, it does disseminate information explaining how funding can be acquired through EU funding schemes. The network disseminates information about European legislation and upcoming calls (Verhelst, 2017). Furthermore, they offer cities to engage in trainings, in which cities learn how to develop a consortium and a proposal to apply for funding. EUROCITIES1 (2018) affirmed that the network organises trainings for funding twice a year, often at times when there is an event in Brussels to make sure a sufficient number of cities can be present. The interviewee also highlighted that the network keeps their members up to date about all the calls coming in on European level. Since most funding bids require a combined application of a number of cities, EUROCITIES facilitates collective participation in European projects (Verhelst, 2017). So, although funding is not the primary function of the network, effort is put into providing member cities with sufficient information on where to get funding elsewhere.

4.2.4 A shortage in research dissemination

Although the article by Lee & Jung (2018) found that the EUROCITIES network offers research outcomes to its members, research does not seem to be an important function of the network. EUROCITIES1 (2018) explains that the network sometimes provides member cities with information on research but states that there are no people actively working on dissemination of research within the network.

4.2.5 Target and plan provision through working groups and forums

Lee & Jung (2018) found that the network is involved with targeting if a mitigation or voluntary target is provided by the network. EUROCITIES1 (2018) addresses that every forum or working group develops its strategy with set objectives of what they want to achieve per year. The achievements are being assessed on a yearly basis. This is mainly the work of the chair of the working group or forum, in collaboration with the policy advisor on the relevant topic. EUROCITIES has knowledge about what is going on at European level and structures their programs according to this. Besides the general targets set in forums and working groups, the voluntary targets of the individual member cities are mentioned on the website (EUROCITIES, 2017). These range from targets for emission cuts to mobility plans. Nevertheless, these targets are generally not set in collaboration with the network itself and vary between cities according to their own goals and visions.

4.2.6 Monitoring and certification for the EUROCITIES awards

Following the argumentation of Lee & Jung (2018), which says a network is involved with monitoring and certification when the network requests cities to monitor and disclose their performance online. The network has a collection of best practices stated online and in the internal newsletter case-studies and best practices are distributed (EUROCITIES, 2017). Furthermore, the network makes use of recognition, which is described as the use of rewards for performance (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). The EUROCITIES awards is a competition in which members are called out for their exceptional performance in three categories: innovation, participation, and cooperation (EUROCITIES, n.d.). Also, the Integrating Cities Report is a monitoring report published regularly by EUROCITIES. It contains an assessment of cities' policies and practices on migrant's integration, with a complement of practices on four areas (EUROCITIES, 2018b). So, although cities are not asked to monitor their performance on every issue, the network does share information on best practices and case-studies, uses a competition based on performance, and shares some monitoring reports regarding certain topics.

5. Description of the case-studies

Now that the network has been described according to the functions they provide to their members, the case-studies will be discussed. The conceptual framework shows that in order to answer the main research question of why pioneers and regular cities engage in TMN's and what their engagement strategies are, we first need to know the cities' underlying structural conditions (USC), motivations and engagement in activities. This chapter describes these elements per city respectively, using data collected from the interviews and strategy- and vision documents of each city (appendix 1). First of all, Rotterdam's engagement in the network will be discussed, followed by Amsterdam and Riga. The cities have been sampled based upon their similarities in size (600.000-900.000 inhabitants), level of autonomy, received structural fund, previous experience with TMN's, geographical location, and they all qualify as harbour cities. Nevertheless, Rotterdam was the only city that qualified as pioneer in the network and is the only second city included. Amsterdam and Riga were sampled as regular cities. Amsterdam has similar USC's as Rotterdam (e.g. their GDP, national framework and culture), while Riga differs most from the three cities in its USC's. The subchapters entail information about the cities' general characteristics and locally set strategies, the influencing underlying structural conditions, their motivations to be part of the network and lastly the activities they take part in and why. All data is described according to the concepts and variables of the analytical framework (appendix 4) and the findings are summarized in table 7 at the end of this chapter.

5.1 Rotterdam

This subchapter outlines Rotterdam's engagement in the EUROCITIES network. It has been written based on an interview with the contact officer of Rotterdam and strategy- and vision documents of the municipality (Rotterdam1, 2018; Gemeente Rotterdam, 2015). Rotterdam is the second largest city in the Netherlands with a total of 638.181 inhabitants and a population increase of about 0.6% per year (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2018a). The population density is 2962 inhabitants per square kilometres and the unemployment rate is calculated to be 8,1% (OIS Gemeente Amsterdam, 2018a). The city has a GDP per capita of about €43.000 (Jonkers, 2017). The local council consists of 45 members, of which the largest representation is Leefbaar Rotterdam, a party known for being relatively right wing and conservative. The mayor Aboutaleb is part of the Labour Party (left wing). Distinctive for Rotterdam is its port, which is the biggest in Europe and the 4th largest in the world, handling a cargo volume of 466.4 million tons (Kiprop, 2018). Now the key characteristics of the city have been outlined, the general strategy of the city will be examined in order to find out what the goals of the city are.

5.1.1 Rotterdam's general strategy: positioning and profiling

Rotterdam's international strategy is laid out in the document Rotterdam Internationaal 2015-2020

(Gemeente Rotterdam, 2015). The main goal proposed in this strategy document is to maintain and extend the international position of Rotterdam and to respond to new chances to strengthen the ties with existing economic relations of the city and harbour. To do so, Rotterdam aims to stimulate the economy by connecting the city to the harbour, focus on international economic activities, and profiling and marketing of Rotterdam's knowledge and best practices (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2015). The most important goals that come to the fore in the strategy document are: profiling of the city internationally; creating stronger international and European ties; marketing Rotterdam's knowledge; and acquiring constructive insights from best practices from other places. Positive profiling of the city should lead to an improved business environment. In the strategy document the city refers to the policy goals of the EU. Within the EU, Rotterdam wants to focus on the themes: influencing policy, knowledge exchange, gaining subsidies, and profiling (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2015). The main strategy goals are elaborated in their implementation program (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2016). The document states Rotterdam's engagement in EUROCITIES and its aim to remain part of the executive committee, stay active in the social affairs forum and more specific information about the events the city wants to host over the years (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2016).

5.1.2 Influence of USC's: the mayor and local priorities

While the general strategy was determined for the city itself and emerged separate from the network, the underlying structural conditions are specific factors influencing the city in terms of their network engagement. This subchapter therefore describes the underlying structural conditions that are influencing Rotterdam's engagement in the network. The conditions that affect Rotterdam's engagement in the network are most of all capacity, local politics, and committed individuals.

The city of Rotterdam seems to be well aware of their local *capacity* in terms of knowledge. For instance, the Gemeente Rotterdam (2015) sees itself as an example for other cities and living lab with regards to urban innovation, harbour and transportation, social policy, and environment and safety. This is also emphasized by Rotterdam1 (2018), who sees the harbour, safety and urban sustainability (water management), and migration and integration as themes in which the city has excelling projects. The awareness of capacity relates closely to Rotterdam's goal to engage more in profiling and marketing Rotterdam's knowledge (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2015). Not only is the city able to identify their strengths, the interviews and strategy documents showed that it is also very open about issues that could do with improvement. For instance, the Gemeente Rotterdam (2007) mentions that the city does currently not succeed in keeping well educated people in the city. As a result, the urban population is out of balance. The Gemeente Rotterdam (2007) addresses issues with suitable housing and living environment as cause for this. Furthermore, Rotterdam1 (2018) addresses an issue of a mismatch between the skills and people available in its labour market, and the aim of the city to realise an energy transition.

The city's network engagement is also shaped by *local politics*. Rotterdam1 (2018) explains that every four years when a new city council is elected, the city of Rotterdam defines what their effort is in Brussels. The last council was not very involved with Europe, but the current council is, alongside a strong focus on energy transition. Rotterdam hopes to use the network to gather knowledge on where possible challenges lie in achieving an energy transition and how this can be addressed at European level. The working program of Rotterdam is generally a mix between local challenges and themes addressed by local politicians and priorities set at European level (Rotterdam1, 2018).

The city has *resources* available in terms of personnel and budget. About 8 to 10 people at the municipality work on European affairs. The total number of people working at the municipality is 1200. The city receives a structural fund of 45 million euros from the European Union. Despite the fact that a limited amount of resources makes the city think about their networking engagement strategically, resources do not particularly affect the cities' engagement.

On the other hand, *committed individuals* are strongly influencing Rotterdam's network engagement. Rotterdam1 (2018) specifically names mayor Aboutaleb as a factor influencing networking activities of Rotterdam. The mayor believes in international cooperation for cross-border issues, like crime and environmental issues and addresses the importance of Europeanisation at municipal level. He has a good story to bring across for which he is often asked to speak in Brussels at the EU or elsewhere internationally (Rotterdam1, 2018). His drive to work and collaborate more at European level stimulates Rotterdam to engage closely in networks such as EUROCITIES.

Like the other cities, Rotterdam also has *pre-existing experience* with a number of other city networks, including 100 Resilient Cities, C40, and Connecting Delta Cities. This experience allows Rotterdam to see the way in which EUROCITIES distinguishes itself from other networks. Rotterdam1 (2018) makes use of Connecting Delta Cities to share information about large scale water management and C40 for their global outreach. In comparison to the other networks, the EUROCITIES network is particularly valued for their lobbying efforts at EU level and for covering a broad range of themes.

5.1.3 Motivations: positioning at EU level

The strategy of the city and underlying structural conditions have laid the foundation of Rotterdam's engagement strategy with the EUROCITIES network, but before this can be established, the motivations of Rotterdam to engage with EUROCITIES will be described here. During the interview, a broad range of motivations came to the fore when discussing Rotterdam's engagement with the network. According to Rotterdam1 (2018), the city has joined the executive committee of the EUROCITIES network because it *positions* the city and provides it with a certain place in Brussels. The network generally provides the city with "*close engagement with the European Commission, and close engagement with the network* which facilitates *rapid access to information*" (Rotterdam1, 2018). Throughout the interview, the main motivations that came to the fore were *knowledge exchange*,

influencing law- and regulations, generating position, and profiling of the city in the network (Rotterdam1, 2018). Rotterdam1 (2018) especially addresses *knowledge exchange* as an important factor and says: “*we need the expertise of others as a mirror to see what we do right and what we do wrong*” (Rotterdam1, 2018). Raising awareness for *Europeanisation* within Rotterdam and Europeanisation of cities in general is mentioned as another side effect, because the involvement in the network makes officials in the city think not only about local municipal policy but also about European policy. The mayor of Rotterdam, Aboutaleb, wants more involvement towards Europe and is therefore planning to show the influence of Europe in a large debate about the European elections. This suggest that local politics and individual will are needed for a city to be involved on a European level and closely engage in networking activities. Rotterdam1 (2018) sees the lobby function as the distinctive model of the organisation. This brings up the goal mentioned by Rotterdam1 (2018): “*the end goal is that we can operate in such a way that we are not disturbed by European law and regulations that affect our trade position.*” The network is used to express ideas to ‘Brussels’ and watch over the competitive position of the Rotterdam harbour and minimise the negative impact of Brussels regarding laws and regulations. If Brussels implements strict rules for air pollution, Rotterdam will have trouble with the grand economic activities in the harbour. To minimize these laws and regulations proposed by Europe, the city of Rotterdam is lobbying their interest at European level. The harbour is therefore an important influence on Rotterdam’s motivation to be involved with the network.

5.1.4 Activities: engaging in European institutions

All aforementioned factors influence the cities’ final decision to engage in certain networking activities. As specified before, the city of Rotterdam is part of the *executive committee* of the EUROCITIES network. Rotterdam1 (2018) says positioning and having a stronger voice in Brussels are the main reasons for this. The city gets invited by the European Commission and the European parliament often, which provides the city with a position within Europe and in relation to Brussels. Furthermore, Rotterdam is first in line when EUROCITIES is passing along information. It has also become easy for the city to find partners within the network and to persist on European projects. The city is engaged with *knowledge exchange and networking* and has ideas about what programs from other cities would be interesting to look into (Rotterdam1, 2018). The influence of politics is directly linked to what activities the city takes part in. For instance, the city is interested in knowledge exchange with Glasgow because they have adapted an electrical transport system, which is the focal point of the current local council. Rotterdam is interested in how Glasgow set up these projects and tackled issues with regards to the shifting labour market (Rotterdam1, 2018). Also, the city is interested in how other cities deal with issues such as polarisation (Rotterdam1, 2018). The city of Birmingham was named for their advancement on social impact bonds. The city of Rotterdam also organised an event in the city for the social affairs forum on skills development, in which a dilemma from within the city was highlighted.

The dilemma was about how to match skills in the local labour market, so an energy transition can be realised. Rotterdam1 (2018) highlights the importance of EUROCITIES' *lobby function* at European level and broad range of topics as benefits in comparison to other networks. It is seen as a large lobby organisation for large cities. The city of Rotterdam finds this function important because they want to make an impact, which is made possible by EUROCITIES because it connects a large number of big cities (Rotterdam1, 2018). The EU is a rule-making institute and especially sets environmental regulations. If the rules from the EU are too strict, for instance on air quality, Rotterdam faces a problem. Their air quality is low because of economic activities in the harbour and therefore the city aims to minimize restrictions issued by the EU to maintain their trading position. Rotterdam is making use of the *funding operations* of the network by using their information to get subsidies and funds. Rotterdam1 (2018) says he would like the EUROCITIES network to come to the executive committee with information on funding first, so the board members have more rapid access. Lastly, the network sometimes participates in *monitoring and certification* as part of the EUROCITIES awards, if there is a theme that suits Rotterdam. By winning awards, the city gains recognition for policy implementations and to ensures application for European subsidies (Rotterdam1, 2018). Subsidies are granted more easily if a city has gotten international recognition for a certain project in the form of a prize. Also, there can be more commitment and support for a policy internally when a project has been nominated to win a prize (Rotterdam1, 2018).

5.2 Amsterdam

This subchapter describes Amsterdam's engagement in the EUROCITIES network. Based on 2 interviews (with the contact officer and a policy advisor of Amsterdam) as well as strategy- and vision documents of the city, the following subchapter has been constructed. Amsterdam is the capital of the Netherlands and counts a total of 854.316 inhabitants, with a yearly increase of about 1,1% (OIS Gemeente Amsterdam, 2018a). The population density in the city is 5.186 inhabitants per square kilometre. The city had an unemployment rate of 5.8% in 2017 (OIS Gemeente Amsterdam, 2018b). Jonkers (2017) found that the Greater Amsterdam area has a regional GDP of 75.000 euro's per capita. Although the city is sometimes mentioned in relation with Rotterdam (as the metropolitan area the Randstad), Amsterdam is the only city in this study that is mentioned in lists of global cities. For instance, Amsterdam ranks 22nd on the AT Kearney's (2018) Global Cities Index and 7th on the Global Power City Index by the Mori Memorial Foundation (2017). Another characteristic specific to the city is the number of visitors. The city welcomed about 15,3 million visitors in 2010 and each year this number increases (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2010). The local council has 45 seats of which the political party with the largest representation is GroenLinks, which is known as left-wing and progressive in its ideals. Also, the recently assigned mayor of Amsterdam, Femke Halsema, has her roots in this party.

5.2.1 Amsterdam's general strategy: becoming a smart global hub

The city of Amsterdam has an extensive paper on their Europe strategy that outlines how the city should act in order to become a smart global hub (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012). According to the document, Europe should be an integral part of municipal policy. The document focusses on 4 main ambitions the city would like to achieve in its engagement in Europe, namely becoming a business hub (1); knowledge and innovation (2); sustainable urban development; (3) and active citizenship and participation (4). The document raises questions about which EU topics link to the ambitions of the city and thereby aims to help both Amsterdam and the EU to improve. The document starts by stating the city is a hinge point between Europe and the world. Since the main ambition is to become a smart global hub, Amsterdam also seeks to find the best qualities of the city which they can use as competitive advantage. The phrase 'choose your battles' is mentioned in the document as well as by the interviewee from the municipality (Amsterdam1, 2018; Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012). Amsterdam aims for a careful selection of priority topics with persuasion and consistency. Especially increased insight into the contacts and networks in which the city operates would help to achieve this. Furthermore, the strategy document addresses the possibilities the EU can offer. This insight is confirmed by an interviewee who sees that many local parties still approach Europe in a defensive manner, because the EU is seen as a 'rule-producing' institution (Amsterdam1, 2018). Amsterdam1 (2018) sees it as a two-way street through which both parties can benefit. In the structural vision of Amsterdam key themes were: an attractive city, improvements in public transport, high quality public space, recreational use of green and water, post-fossil era, and organizing the Olympics in 2028 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2010). The possible organisation of the Olympics has now been postponed to 2032. This aim relates to the idea that Amsterdam sees itself as a hinge point between Europe and the world and confirms that Amsterdam's strategies are internationally focused.

5.2.2 Influence of USC's: a responsible capital

Apart from the city's strategy, there are some underlying structural conditions that influence the cities engagement in the network. In their Europe strategy the municipality states they want a focused and guided capacity utilization on selected topics (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012).

For the city to become a global business hub and to invest in knowledge and innovation, it needs to know its *capacity* in terms of knowledge. Amsterdam is actively trying to incorporate the available knowledge within the city to create policy frameworks. In strategic sessions with people on selected themes, Amsterdam consults partners from within and outside of the municipality about what Amsterdam should do to contribute to European ambitions in the city, including knowledge institutions, businesses and for instance the waterboard (Amsterdam1, 2018; Gemeente Amsterdam, 2010). The city is thereby consulting local knowledge and experience to define important themes and issues to set as strategy. Also, Amsterdam identifies themes to focus on within the EUROCITIES network by looking

at locally available capacity (Amsterdam2, 2018). For instance, sustainable energy and the circular economy were seen as themes in which Amsterdam is pioneering, and other cities are interested in how Amsterdam progresses on these topics. Amsterdam is thereby aiming to fulfil the role of “*being a responsible capital*” (Amsterdam1, 2018). At the same time, pioneering in certain topics could help Amsterdam with motivations such as profiling and positioning. Furthermore, Amsterdam aims to become a knowledge hub within Europe and wants to increase its competitive advantage with regards to other cities.

Another influence are the *local politics* within the city. Amsterdam1 (2018) mentions that the newly assigned local council is notable in its progressiveness on environmental and social themes. Although the former council was engaged with these topics, there is a change in nuance between the two councils: the current council is taking action more forcefully. These themes will therefore be represented to a greater extent in Amsterdam’s strategy. Also, democratization and citizenship are important topics for the current council which will be pursued in Amsterdam’s strategies. Furthermore, government employees will be able to do more to achieve progress in these themes and are provided with a mandate to do so.

Amsterdam has *resources* available in terms of personnel and budget. Although the team of space and sustainability is rather comprehensive, the team working on European affairs takes up 60-70 people, out of 16000 (Amsterdam1, 2018). Apart from giving the city an incentive to focus their networking effort on selected themes, the resources do not seem to have a great effect on the cities networking engagement. Similar to the other two cities researched in this study, Rotterdam and Riga, the municipality of Amsterdam receives a structural fund of 50 million euros from Europe (Amsterdam1, 2018).

Another influencing factor was Amsterdam’s *pre-existing experience* with city networks, such as the Covenant of Mayors and C40. The involvement of the city with other networks has influenced the way in which Amsterdam is engaged in EUROCITIES, as the city has a thought through comprehension of the differences between the network and what the networks brings to each city. The cities’ previous experience has shown that a lack of overview could result into conflicting propagated messages and ambiguity in how the city comes across towards Brussels and other cities. This motivated the city to make an unambiguous strategy with a focus on selected themes (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012). Another influence of previous experience is the strategic effort to involve in the EUROCITIES network and specifically in what activities it takes part in. Amsterdam2 (2018) mentions that EUROCITIES should be used where its strength lies, which are the lobby function, geographical spread, and a broad range of themes.

The will of *committed individuals* is also mentioned as a critical influence on network engagement. Amsterdam has chaired the environmental forum for the past two years, which was largely due to the will of a local governor. The governor was willing to take on this responsibility, because within the

municipality of Amsterdam, he did not feel more ambitious air quality aims could be achieved. In the end, Europe was seen as a level where change could be realized, which would be facilitated by EUROCITIES (Amsterdam2, 2018). The latter is less common for newly assigned councilors, who are more likely to explore local issues first (Amsterdam2, 2018).

Lastly, *Size & Location* are discussed as influencing factors. Amsterdam2 (2018) addresses that it is an extra benefit that it is only two hours by train to get to Brussels. Nevertheless, this should not be a driving factor for cities to attend meetings. But the events that are centrally located are visited more (Amsterdam had 200 participants) than the events on the edge of Europe (Tampere has 80 participants). Furthermore, Amsterdam has a strongly increasing population and a high number of visitors each year. Amsterdam1 (2018) mentions that size influences cities' decisions about what activities to take part in. For instance, smaller cities might be more inclined to profile themselves than larger cities. Furthermore, not only the size is seen as influencing factor, but whether a city has an increasing or decreasing number of inhabitants. This is because cities of different sizes and growth rates generally cope with very different issues (Amsterdam2, 2018).

5.2.3 Motivations: doing the 'real work'

First and foremost, the *exchange of knowledge* was mentioned as the most important function of the network (Amsterdam1, 2018; Amsterdam2, 2018). Subsequently, both Amsterdam1 (2018) and Amsterdam2 (2018), underscored the *lobby function* of the network as an important reason to engage with EUROCITIES. According to the interviewees, Europe has control over several issues, such as sustainability, air quality, and noise pollution that are of importance to the city. Taking into account the number of cities in Europe it is good to have a *centralized voice* representing the wishes of European cities of a certain importance within Europe (Amsterdam1, 2018). The lobby function is also seen as strength of EUROCITIES compared to other networks, and it is therefore regarded as especially important to make use of it (Amsterdam2, 2018). Some subjects and projects require a collaboration with other cities. Therefore, another benefit of being part of the EUROCITIES network is that they have *extensive network* within European institutions. This network has been built up throughout the years ever since the network initiated in 1989, now comprising of a large number of (important) European member cities, institutions and organizations. The number of years they have existed and their extensive network in Europe also provides the network with a certain *status* (Amsterdam1, 2018). With regards to other networks, EUROCITIES was seen as a network with which the city has *warmer contact* and there is a more *direct connection*. Drawing upon the cities' pre-existing experience with other networks, Amsterdam1 (2018) refers to the C40 network to describe them as high profile, more political, more international and focused on standing and large cities internationally. The C40 network is seen to provide a city with a certain status, it's referred to as a network you "*want to be part of*" (Amsterdam1, 2018). Although it is said to be an interesting network with regards to the large cities that are linked to

it, it is not always relatable to what the city of Amsterdam does. EUROCITIES does less for Amsterdam in terms of profiling but focusses on what was referred to by Amsterdam1 (2018) as “*the real work*”.

5.2.4 Activities: broad engagement

All previous factors influence the cities’ final decision to engage in certain networking activities. With regards to *knowledge exchange* the city of Amsterdam is active in several working groups, especially in environmental, physical and social working groups, but also in housing and health. Their engagement can therefore be seen on a broad spectrum. For some of the working groups, the city is chair and up to November 2018, Amsterdam was chair of the environmental forum (Amsterdam1, 2018). As discussed previously, the forums are the overarching themes within which projects, events and working groups are organized. Amsterdam is also planning to do a secondment with Barcelona by exchanging personnel, which is a more forward form of knowledge exchange. The idea is still up for experimentation in the form of pilots and the interviewee expects bureaucratic issues to come up in the process. Nevertheless, he states that if there is a need for help or knowledge and there is something to get out of it in return it should be a good idea (Amsterdam1, 2018). The city regards sharing their own experience and knowledge with others as important and deems itself as a ‘responsible capital’ (Amsterdam1, 2018). The *funding function* of the network is considered as most important after information exchange (Amsterdam1, 2018). The interviewee states that EUROCITIES has a lot of knowledge on funding and organises useful workshops on the topic. Although in the end the execution of getting funding for projects is something the city has to do by itself, Amsterdam does make use of the services offered by the network that make it easier to get funding. The city is also actively engaged in the *lobby function* the network provides. The lobby function is regarded as the strength of the network and the city of Amsterdam should make use of that (Amsterdam2, 2018). Engagement with the EU is seen as a two-way street in which Amsterdam can influence policy and the EU can learn from the implications of their policy from cities. Amsterdam1 (2018) says Europe is responsible for environmental law, but less on, for instance, social topics. Therefore, especially environmental topics such as air quality, noise pollution, and sustainability are important to the city. There is one person from the municipality who works in Brussels to lobby for the city in collaboration with the network. Amsterdam2 (2018) mentions the city is interested in organising the forum because it is strongly focused on political activities such as creating policies and lobbying at European level, whereas the working groups are more involved with the content. The last main function of the network is *monitoring and certification*. Amsterdam has joined the EUROCITIES awards multiple times and won the Capital of Innovation awards in 2016. Amsterdam1 (2018) says that Amsterdam does engage in reward related activities but actually thinks it is meant for smaller cities that would like to come to the fore and show others they are on the map.

5.3 Riga

This subchapter describes Riga's engagement in the EUROCITIES network. The following information was derived based on two interviews with the two contact officers for EUROCITIES in Riga and the strategy documents (Riga1, 2018; Riga2, 2018; Riga City Council City Development Department, 2017; Riga City Council City Development Department, 2014). Riga is the capital of Latvia, which is one of the Baltic countries. The city has a total of 639.600 inhabitants but has to deal with a steady decline in its population, which was calculated on -1,8% between 2016 and 2017 (Riga City Council, 2017; Riga Municipality, 2018). The GDP per capita in the region of Riga was counted to be € 33,316 in 2015 (OECD, 2018). While the unemployment rate in the city was 4% in 2017 (Riga Municipality, 2018) the youth unemployment rate was 11,2% in 2015 (OECD, 2018). The city has a population density of 2.700 people per square kilometre (Worlds capital cities, 2018). The main economic sectors are in trade (19.0%) and transport and logistics (14.3). The GDP per capita in Riga was 26.300 in 2012 (Knoema, 2012). The ruling local political party is Harmony. Harmony is known as a social democratic party (centre-left party in the Latvian politics). The mayor Nils Ušakovs has his roots in this party as well. Despite the similarities between the three cities (population size and geographical location), Riga differs due to its lower GDP, small size of harbour and decreasing population.

5.3.1 General strategy: Northern European Metropolis

Similar to the other cities, Riga's strategy will be discussed first. The city of Riga has a Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030, which they use to guide their networking efforts (Riga City Council, 2014). In this document the city states that it strives to become an internationally recognisable Northern European metropolis with a good quality of life, modern management, resource-saving administration, innovative economy and active participation of their inhabitants (Riga City Council, 2014). It covers four main long-term development objectives which are: "*a skilful, provided and active society; innovative open economy with export capacity; convenient, safe and pleasant urban environment; and Riga – internationally recognizable, important and competitive Northern European metropolis*" (Riga City Council, 2014, p. 14). These four long term development objectives are essentially driven by the fact that Riga wants to prevent a decrease in number of inhabitants (Riga City Council, 2014). In the strategy document of the city of Riga, the following is written about what's being called the biggest challenge of the municipality: "*to prevent the decrease in the number of the city's population and to begin increasing the number of the city's population by improving the life quality in the city*" (Riga City Council, 2014: p. 14). Riga's motivations show that the city is strongly concerned with their status within Europe which links to their aim to become an internationally recognizable Northern European metropolis. The largest scale of the territory specialisation in the strategy document is at European level.

5.3.2 Influence of USC's: improving current status

The motivations of the city are embedded in underlying structural conditions in the city of Riga. Not all issues mentioned in the theory chapters are regarded as important factors for Riga. For instance, committed individuals and local politics do not seem to have a significant influence on the networking strategy of Riga. The city is not very involved with the network on a political level (Riga2, 2018), and says it would be useful and necessary to increase involvement of politicians and try to convince colleagues of the importance of it.

In Riga, local *capacity* is used to identify relevant subjects in the EUROCITIES network. Riga looks into what knowledge is available locally and how the network can help to enhance the knowledge (Riga1, 2018). Furthermore, the interviewee addressed they wanted to learn about European structures when they first became a member of the network.

The city of Riga is considering their *resources* in their engagement strategy. The city has 60 people working in the city development department. The foreign affairs office contains 13 people, who do not only work on Europe but on all international affairs. Approximately 2000 people work at or for the municipality of Riga, a lower number than the municipalities in Dutch cities. The structural fund received by the city is 55 million euros (Riga2, 2018). Riga1 (2018) & Riga2 (2018) mention that they are a central institution for everyone that is responsible for participation in networks, followed by the note that twice a year all institutions and departments are asked to send information about their connectivity in a network and check whether or not they are actively engaged, and if participation in the network is deemed necessary. The strategy documents of the Riga municipality are used as a guideline for the city to see on which themes they should focus their networking activities.

Riga has *pre-existing experience* with other networks, including energy cities, WHO healthy cities, Union of Baltic cities. Compared to these other networks, EUROCITIES addresses a broad spectrum of themes and high-quality information (Riga1, 2018). The interviewee also praises the network in comparison to other networks for their network of contacts and for its lobby activities on European level.

Although *location* is not mentioned as particularly important when considering network issues, some issues special to Riga are mentioned to have an effect on networking. When a certain issue arises in the city, the EUROCITIES working group working on this issue will then become interesting. These problems or issues with the city can sometimes be linked to location, for instance, Riga2 (2018) addresses some issues with environmental management during winter. Sometimes an issue links more specifically to northern or southern countries. Decreasing *size* of population on the other hand is a very important factor. The general strategy is largely based on this issue and the activities Riga takes part in are also influenced by this issue of population (Riga City Council, 2014; Riga2, 2018).

5.3.3 Motivations: profiling and networking

During the interviews several motivations for engagement in the network were mentioned. At the time Riga joined the network, around the year 2000, the main argument was to improve Latvia's "*integration into European structures in all levels and areas*" (Riga2, 2018). Although the interviewee recalls some disputes over the admission fees for engagement in the network, which was higher than those for other networks, EUROCITIES was considered too important not to join. As a result of these high fees, the city decided to become as active as possible. The municipality sought the committee that was most interesting (which turned out to be the city development committee) and focused their networking efforts on this area (Riga1, 2018). Currently, Riga is interested in EUROCITIES because of their *broad range of forums and working groups*, which cover several issues concerning city life and city development. This is reflected in the fact that the city is involved in all forums the network provides.

The city furthermore values EUROCITIES' extensive *network of contacts*, which secures high quality information (Riga1, 2018). According to both interviewees, the network has helped Riga to become the European Capital of Culture. Riga has been particularly active in the culture forums and working groups. Therefore, the city had support from other cities, who knew, due to Riga's involvement in the network, what Riga could offer and supported the city to submit their proposal. Participation in the EUROCITIES network provided the city with enough experience and contacts to reach this goal of becoming cultural capital (Riga1, 2018). The network safeguards the opinion of their members by organising discussions and study meetings with the institutions responsible for policy making, like the European parliament and the European Union and invite experts from world leading organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Overall the verbal *exchange of experience* in the forum meetings and working groups are considered most important by the city. This exchange of experience is augmented by the intermunicipal site-visits, during which a variety of urban projects are presented. Riga1 (2018) also mentions that "*EUROCITIES is the biggest network for international organisation of cities, so, it looks very fine that we can be a member of this network*" which relates to the argument of status and profiling. She also mentions that the strategy documents are not only about EUROCITIES but since EUROCITIES is the biggest network Riga is involved with EUROCITIES is central to the strategy documents. Both interviewees mention the importance of involvement in the network to "*show their good practice, to show what we have done and where our strength is*" (Riga 2, 2018). So, Riga is purposefully trying to use the network to profile itself and become more known and attractive to other cities. According to Riga1 (2018), the city is aiming to organise tourism for business people from municipalities institutions and agencies in the form of meetings, seminars, congresses and big forums to establish Riga as an important city in Europe.

5.3.4 Activities: going for recognition

For the city of Riga, *information exchange and networking* are important activities in which the city tries to take part actively by joining and organising visits and being the leader of a working group for several years. Although Riga would like to lead a forum, and tried to become a forum leader twice, they have not been chosen by the EUROCITIES network to do so. Riga is interested to become forum leader to “*show their good practice, to show what we have done and where our strength is*” (Riga2, 2018). This motivates the city to become more active in the network and lead working groups and forums. So not only is the city involved with this function for information exchange, Riga also wants to become more known and attractive to other cities. An important reason for Riga to be engaged in the network and try to organise forums is to show that Riga is a good city (Riga1, 2018). The city is aiming to organise tourism for business people from municipalities institutions and agencies in the form of meetings, seminars, congresses, and big forums.

When the network is preparing new proposals and has discussions with the European Commission, Riga tries to respond to the network by sharing experiences in good practices and problems whenever this is relevant. The lobbying function of the network seems to be partially important to the city when it concerns certain topics. For instance, colleagues from the city development department wanted to stress the importance of the lobby function with regards to the joint project Riga has with Vienna, Stuttgart, Warsaw, Berlin and Oslo in connection with the research of ESON targeted analysis about economic sprawl (Riga1, 2018). The city tries to get *funding* with help and resources of the network especially with regards to integration. Similar to the aspiration of Riga to lead a forum, the city is interested in monitoring and certification. The city would like to win the EUROCITIES awards and has already made several attempts to achieve this. Winning an award would be a means to show good practices and show where the cities’ strengths lie (Riga2, 2018).

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored and explained the three cities in terms of their strategy, underlying structural conditions, motivations, and activities they take part in. Table 7 contains a summary of the three cities and their general characteristics, motivation, underlying structural conditions, and networking strategy respectively. This table is based upon the concepts from the research questions, which are in turn subdivided into more specific variables. The variables used for this framework have all been established in the conceptual framework.

Table 7: Summary of cities' networking engagement

		Rotterdam	Amsterdam	Riga
<i>General Information</i>	Inhabitants	638.181 people	854.316 people	639.600 people
	Population increase/decrease	0,6%	1,1%	-1,8%
	Population Density	2962 inhabitants/km2	5186 inhabitants/km2	2700 inhabitants/km2
	GDP per capita	€43.000	€75.000	€33.316
	Unemployment rate	8,1%	5,8%	4,8%
	Largest represented political party	Leefbaar Rotterdam	Groenlinks	Harmony
<i>Strategy</i>		Global focus	Global focus	European focus
<i>Underlying Structural Conditions</i>	Capacity	X	X	X
	Local autonomy			
	Local politics	X	X	
	Resources	X	X	X
	Committed individuals	X	X	
	Pre-existing experience	X	X	X
	Size & Location		X	X
<i>Motivations</i>	Sources for knowledge	X	X	X
	Influencing policy	X	X	
	City profiling	X		X
	Establish contacts	X	X	X
	First-hand information	X		
	Europeanisation*	X		X
	Positioning*	X		
<i>Activities</i>	Knowledge exchange & networking	X	X	X
	Lobby	X	X	
	Funding operations	X	X	X
	Monitoring and certification	X		X
	Other (executive committee)	X		

The "X" indicates the presence of a function (columns left-hand side) in the relevant cities (top row)

*These concepts have emerged from interviews with respondents and strategy documents instead of the conceptual framework

6. Results

Chapter 5 has given a broad description of the three cities, concluding with a table representing data found for all three cities. This table will be the starting point for this chapter, which aims to describe the most important similarities and differences between the three cases based on their general characteristics, their general strategy, motivations, and activities.

6.1 General comparison: regional and global outlooks

First of all, there are some general similarities and differences. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the similarities the three cities have in common are their number of inhabitants (between 600.000 and 900.000), their geographical location near the sea, their pre-existing experience with TMN's their degree of autonomy from the national government, and the received structural fund from the European Union. The cities are also harbour cities, although this is especially characteristic to Rotterdam, which has the largest harbour of Europe. The main differences can be found in the GDP per capita, which is more than twice times as high for Amsterdam as for Riga. Also, Amsterdam is seeing an increase in its population while Riga is experiencing a population decline. Only one of the three cities, Amsterdam, is acknowledged in lists of so-called 'world cities' (ATKearney, 2018; Mori Memorial foundation, 2017). Of the three cities, Rotterdam is the only city that is a second city and not a capital. In their strategy documents, the first thing that stands out is the global focus of Rotterdam and Amsterdam, and the European focus of Riga. The strategy documents of Rotterdam are titled Rotterdam Wereldwijd (Rotterdam worldwide) and specify on creating stronger international ties for the harbour (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2015; Gemeente Rotterdam, 2016). Amsterdam aims to become a 'smart global hub' and sees itself as a hinge point between Europe and the world (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2010). It is also interested in organising the Olympics. Riga wants to become an internationally recognizable Northern European Metropolis (Riga City Council, 2014). The largest scale described in Riga's document is at European level. The strategy documents of Riga show that the city is strongly concerned with improving their status within Europe and how other European cities see them, whereas the other two cities are more concerned with their international profile. The strategies of Riga originate from Riga's issue with population decline (Riga, 2014).

6.2 Influence of USC's: pioneering with committed individuals

There were several underlying structural conditions that were similar in the three cities. All three cities have capacity and resources available to them to be involved in networking activities. As explained in the conceptual framework, *capacity* is the ability of stakeholders to participate and act in processes and subsequent implementation, relating to competencies or capabilities in terms of knowledge and understanding (Fenton, 2014). All cities have the knowledge available to take action and a lack of capacity in terms of knowledge has not been mentioned as a reason not to take part in certain activities of the network. In Rotterdam, local capacity is deemed especially important by the contact officer of the city as well as the strategy documents (Rotterdam1, 2018; Gemeente Rotterdam 2015). Rotterdam is, in contrast to the other cities, very open about which urban themes could use some improvement (e.g. energy transition, mismatch in labour market). Amsterdam thinks about what it can teach others and calls itself a responsible capital (Amsterdam1, 2018). Also, Riga1 (2018) mentioned it engaged in the network to learn about European institutions and adopt European features. Knowledge on European institutions can influence a cities' ability to engage in a European-focused network such as EUROCITIES.

Secondly *local autonomy* from the national governance could be of influence for cities' engagement. The local autonomy on issues such as transportation, waste management and infrastructure were similar for all three cities and was not mentioned by any of the interviewees as a particular factor influencing the engagement strategies.

On the other hand, *local politics* and the political leaning of the cities did influence the networking engagement of Rotterdam and Amsterdam. The leaning of the local council in terms of prioritizing themes such as Europeanisation or urban sustainability, influenced engagement in the network. Rotterdam is prioritizing energy transition based upon local political objectives (Rotterdam1, 2018). This influence is found in several theoretical articles, such as Mocca (2017) who claims that the political leaning of a council influences the propensity of a local authority to engage in initiatives at EU-level.

Resources were described by Fenton (2014) as the time, budget, personnel, and information available for municipalities. The city of Amsterdam has most people working on European affairs and Riga the lowest. When looking at their resources, Amsterdam mentioned that it can sometimes be difficult to find time for European issues. Since only a small number of people is working exclusively on European issues, other colleagues have to be pursued to help work on certain projects. Nevertheless, apart from stimulating cities to think more strategically about where these resources should go to, the availability of resources did not come up as an important influencing factor for any of the three cities.

Rotterdam and Amsterdam mentioned *committed individuals* as an influencing factor. The mayor of Rotterdam, Aboutaleb, has sparked Rotterdam's interest in European affairs and engagement in activities internationally (Rotterdam1, 2018). Committed individuals refer to the desire of individuals to address challenges (Fenton, 2015). The mayor has also initiated plans to normalize Europeanisation at local level and is thereby willing to modify systems and norms (Fenton, 2015). Also, Amsterdam mentions committed individuals influence the extent of engagement in the network (Amsterdam2, 2018). Since mayors and councillors have the power to decide the degree upon which they would like to participate in a network, network engagement strongly depends on an individuals' will to do so.

In general, related to *size and location*, *location* is not a strongly influencing factor in cities' engagement in the network. All three cities mentioned they did not seek information from particular cities but identifies issues within the city and thereafter seeks the working group associated to this issue. Only for some specific issues (cold weather management), certain cities with the same issues are contacted (Riga2, 2018). As all three cities have a similar population size, the *size* of a city does not seem to be important. Rather, their global status and having an increasing or decreasing population has an influence on a cities' engagement strategy (Amsterdam2, 2018).

According to Huggins (2018) *pre-existing experience* with other TMN's can influence the network engagement of cities. All cities have pre-existing experience with a multitude of other networks. The other networks the cities are involved with can influence to some extent what activities the city takes part in and therefore influences a cities engagement. Knowledge about the functions other networks offer, allows cities to choose more strategically about the activities they engage in. For instance, Amsterdam uses other networks (e.g. C40) for profiling while Riga is interested in EUROCITIES to profile themselves. All cities expressed their interest in EUROCITIES because of their broad range of themes and their status among other TMN's (Rotterdam1, 2018; Amsterdam2, 2018; Riga1; 2018). Furthermore, the network's established lobby activities are valued as a distinguishing characteristic by both Rotterdam and Amsterdam (Rotterdam1, 2018; Amsterdam1, 2018; Amsterdam2, 2018).

6.3 Motivations as essential influence on networking activities

Overall, the cities were positive about networking and being in a network. All three cities appeared to be interested in the network as sources for ideas and *knowledge* and access to a *network of contacts*. The network was described to have a broad range of themes in which it operates. The cities addressed their need for other cities experience and expertise to learn what they do right and wrong, which made sources for knowledge the most important motivation for all cities. The network is also praised for having an extensive network with warm and well-maintained contacts. Influencing EU policy was a motivation for all cities, but particularly for Rotterdam and Amsterdam. The network facilitates a close engagement with the European parliament and enables cities to propagate their opinion on European level. For Rotterdam, close engagement with the European Commission was the main reason to be in the executive committee of the EUROCITIES network. In a study by Verhelst (2017) one of the main

results was that a considerable group of local governments were not very interested in EU affairs. This study suggests otherwise, since all three cities have showed interest in European affairs. Not only influencing European policy, but also a general process of *Europeanisation* is valued by the cities. Europeanisation did not come to the fore as a motivation in the conceptual framework (subchapter 2.2.2 motivations). Riga addressed that one of their motivations to join the network was to “*integrate into European structures*” (Riga1, 2018), by which they mean they want to adopt European features. Also, Rotterdam mentions Europeanisation and raising awareness as motivations to join the network (Rotterdam1, 2018). The close engagement of the network in EU affairs is valued highly. This Europeanisation of cities, or Urban Europeanisation, “*can be seen as important indirect lever or even precondition for the successful development of EU urban policy in the end*” Verhelst (2017: 77). The EU has increasingly provided cities with the opportunity to engage in programmes and propagate their local political interest at EU level, instead of making them comply with regulations (Verhelst, 2017; Huggins 2018). The ability to influence policy at EU level has showed to be an incentive for the cities of Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Riga to be more engaged at EU level.

Profiling was mentioned as a motivation of both Riga and Rotterdam. As mentioned in their strategy, Riga is interested to show others they are a recognizable Northern European capital. They are interested in establishing a different identity of their city by showing best practices. The city of Riga therefore seems to follow the argumentation of Mocca (2017) who says that TMN’s serve as shop window and helps local authorities to show off their image as being a modern city. By marketing themselves, cities seek inward investments that stimulate their economy. Cities can make use of TMN’s to redefine their urban identity (Mocca, 2017). This motivation is influenced by Riga’s general population decline. TMN’s help to broaden a cities’ reputation because they contribute to building an international profile (Mocca, 2017; Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004). For the city of Amsterdam, the EUROCITIES network was not regarded suitable for profiling (Amsterdam1, 2018). Rather, a more internationally oriented network, such as c40, was seen as an important means for profiling and providing status. Besides profiling, Rotterdam wants to *position* itself in Brussels and at the EU. They would like to show their good practice to the European Commission and extend their influence on EU level. For Rotterdam, the underlying reasons for profiling is to influence European policy and to get rapid access to information.

6.4 Activities tailored to achieve local goals

Finally, the activities the cities take part in are described here. All cities participate in *knowledge exchange and networking* and take part in all forums organized by the network. Amsterdam is very active in the environmental forum, of which they have been the chair up to December 2018. Rotterdam is particularly active in the social forum and Riga values the cultural forum. While Rotterdam is open about what they think they can learn from other cities, Amsterdam is more concerned with what they can show others as responsible capital. Riga has tried to organize this forum but was not selected by the

EUROCITIES network. This shows a degree of power of the network itself to decide who are the ‘active cities’ within the network. Especially when ‘chairing a forum’ or ‘being part of the executive committee’ are used as characteristics to see which cities are pioneers and which are not, which has been the case for this study. Castells (2009: 50) describes this power relation as networking power which is about the exclusion and inclusion of actors, nodes, and ideas in the network. The degree of engagement in these chairing functions within the network are therefore a combination of the USC’s of the cities and the preferences of the network itself. In general, cities do not seek information from particular cities but identifies issues within the city and thereafter seeks the working group associated to this issue. Only for some specific issues (cold weather management or increasing/decreasing population), certain cities with the same issues are contacted.

Amsterdam and Rotterdam are actively involved with the *lobby function* of the network. Lobbying is often part of a long-term strategy, since the impact of the activity is not visible on the short-term. Especially Rotterdam has several motivations, such as influencing European policy, that strongly support their participation in the lobby function of the network. Rotterdam accepts and incorporates their weaknesses, one of which is the environmental impact of the harbour. The city therefore lobbies to lower the restrictions on air pollution, so they avert getting a fine for their polluting economic activity in the harbour. Although the general aim of the network is to reduce environmental impact, this lobby activity of Rotterdam is doing the opposite in favour of their international economic activity.

Although EUROCITIES does not provide funding itself, their knowledge on *funding* being used by the cities and funding operations can be seen as important activities. Amsterdam sees this function as second most important after information exchange (Amsterdam1, 2018). It is used by all three cities to get access to funds and subsidies. The network provides workshops about how to get funding and offers information about the start of new funding projects.

Lastly, all cities have engaged in *monitoring and certification* in terms of winning or trying to receive a EUROCITIES award. The city of Riga has tried multiple times to win an award but has not yet succeeded to do so. Rotterdam and Amsterdam on the other hand have succeeded to get an award multiple times. Interestingly, the contact person of Amsterdam says that Amsterdam does engage in the activities but actually thinks it is meant for smaller cities that would like to come to the fore and show others they are on the map (Amsterdam1, 2018). Nevertheless, it is more difficult for the cities with less influence to win the awards, when cities with strong capacity such as Amsterdam are involved. Also, this argument does not link to the size of the city (Amsterdam and Riga have similar sizes) but rather to their status within Europe. Rotterdam finds it important to win awards for recognition on the one hand, but on the other to secure subsidies. Subsidies are more easily granted to projects that have won awards. This finding links to the argument made by Kern & Bulkeley (2009), who say that awards are generally an incentive for cities that are active already because only a limited number of cities can be rewarded.

6.5 Conclusion

Looking back at paragraph 3.2.2 about actor engagement in the conceptual framework, all cities have a strategic networking approach (Acuto al., 2017). This means cities generally have a comprehensive view of their local resources and how they can use them effectively to achieve their future goals. All cities have assessed their local underlying structural conditions and set a future oriented strategy. Depending on the underlying structural conditions and motivations, cities can choose to engage in a TMN's linking strategy and the degree to which they want to be active in them. Participation and levels of engagement differ per city, and cities engagement in certain activities is mostly more nuanced than answerable with a yes/no question. The pioneer of this study – Rotterdam – has seen most influence of local politics and especially of committed individuals and has profiling in the EU and influencing policy as some of its main priorities. It is also very open about the themes that could use improvement and assesses how this can be realised. Amsterdam, a city rather similar to Rotterdam is also very closely engaged in the network but is engaged in other networks for profiling. Riga is interested to be more engaged in the network (awards, chairing forums/working groups) but so far has not had the chance to do so. In the next chapter the differences in engagement strategies between the three cities will be further discussed, especially in relation to existing theory.

7. Discussion

This chapter will reflect on the main research question posed in this study and see how this question and the results fit into the previous research regarding Transnational Municipal Networks. To see what has been found in this research we first reflect back upon the main research question as stated in the introductory chapter, then a brief discussion of the main findings and reflections are included, followed by the limitations.

7.1 Findings

First of all, the main research question of this study reads:

‘Why do pioneers and regular cities engage in TMN’s and what strategies do they use to engage with them?’

In this study, three member cities within the EUROCITIES network were taken as case-studies. Rotterdam was characterized as the pioneer city, Amsterdam as regular member with similar underlying structural conditions and Riga as regular member with different underlying structural conditions. Based on the article by Acuto et al. (2017), the expectation was that pioneer cities have an engagement strategy for working with TMN’s. The main finding of this comparative case-study was that all three cities had certain motivations and engagement strategies based on underlying structural conditions and local strategies. The results, which have been summarized in table 7, start with a comparison of the general characteristics and strategy of the three cities, followed by a discussion of the motivations and activities.

While Amsterdam and Rotterdam had a more global focus in their strategy, Riga was mostly interested in the European level. A result of this difference was that Amsterdam was interested to profile itself through the C40 network, while Riga aims to profile itself through EUROCITIES. Huggins (2018) found that pioneer cities involved in his research are members of more than one network and use the specific services which each of these networks provides. All three cities had specific motivations and goals for their engagement in EUROCITIES. For this reason, pioneers usually do not have issues with the fees they need to pay for the network (Huggins, 2018; Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). Riga was the only city who mentioned to have some doubt about paying the fee for EUROCITIES. Furthermore, the influence of underlying structural conditions differed per city. The presence of committed individuals, and a European focused mandate influenced Rotterdam to become part of the executive committee of the network, whereas a lack of individuals committed to engage in the network has been a reason for Amsterdam not to participate with the network on such a level. This case-study analysis suggests that the presence of committed individuals is a strongly influencing factor for cities of this size.

Also, there has been a difference in motivations between the three cities. Influencing policy was

especially important to Rotterdam and Amsterdam. This motivation enables cities to upload innovative ideas to EU level and thereby create local autonomy (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). Influencing policy is seen as an activity that is solely available to pioneers. For Rotterdam and Riga, profiling was mentioned as a motivation to make the city more known around Europe. Cities are thereby seeking inward investments (Mocca, 2017). For Rotterdam, positioning at EU level was mentioned several times, particularly as motivation to be in the executive committee. The motivation for positioning does not stem from the theory in the conceptual framework but emerged from the interviews with the city representatives. Positioning at EU level and participating in the executive committee enables the city to engage in activities such as influencing policy and increases Rotterdam's voice at European level. The fact that Rotterdam is engaging in the executive committee and aims to forge closer ties with EU institutions underscores the fact that networks are networks of pioneers for pioneers (Kern & Bulkeley, 2009). Also, the link between winning awards and applying for funds highlights the issue of inequality between members. A city has to profile and establish itself through awards before it has access to winning funds. Kern & Bulkeley (2009) also found that funding is usually applied by more active and established members, because it is still resource intensive. Both modes of profiling show some underlying structures complicating the access of regular cities to pioneering activities, such as getting funds and influencing policy. As the city of Riga demonstrated, it is difficult for them to win competitions and chair a forum. These underlying structures in TMN's are only enlarging the gap between engagement of cities. Regular cities may even be discouraged to continue their participation in the network (Betsill & Bulkeley, 2004). This issue should therefore be researched further. The recommendations for further research on this topic are elaborated in the concluding chapter.

When looking at the cities that were studied in this thesis, it is interesting to note that Rotterdam fulfils all criteria of being a pioneer, but their interest in being in the executive committee was to lobby on European level and make sure Europe's rules and regulations on air quality are not too strict, in order to maintain the strong trade position of Rotterdam's harbour. This reflects the influence of cities local characteristics and strategies on a cities' networking engagement. The results have given insight into the engagement strategies of these three cities and cities as actors in networks. It thereby contributed to diminish the knowledge-gap about the way cities engage with city networks and their motivations for this (Acuto et al., 2017). In the end, this research suggests that having an engagement strategy is not necessarily equal to being a pioneer in a network nor being environmentally progressive. Rather, having an engagement strategy can even influence a cities' strategic decisions in a way that a city does not deem certain activities as necessary, and thereby lower the extent of their engagement. Cities try to engage in a network in a way that is strategically beneficial to them.

7.2 Reflections

In the conceptual framework, existing theory on USC's and motivations were gathered and reviewed. This framework became the foundation upon which the rest of this study was based. It was used as guideline to structure the interviews with city representatives and analyse data afterwards. During the course of the data collection, two variables were addressed by the interviewees that had not been included in the framework beforehand. First of all, several interviewees referred to Europeanisation as an important motivation to engage in the EUROCITIES network. Cities are not only implementing EU policies and lobbying their interests, but also try to become more familiar with European institutions and creating a local dimension of European integration. It is also deemed important to raise local awareness for what happens at EU level. Secondly, the interviews revealed positioning as a motivation for engagement in EUROCITIES. Rotterdam mentioned the importance of positioning amidst high-level European institutions to get rapid access to information and projects. They also like to keep a close connection with European institutions to obtain a seat at the table in Brussels. Both Europeanisation and positioning should therefore be integrated as part of future theory used to analyse cities' motivations.

7.3 Limitations

This subchapter addresses some limitations that emerged throughout this study. One of these limitations is the small number of interviews that have been conducted. Although numerous people have been approached to engage in an interview, not all people responded to this invitation. In the end, a total of six respondents have been interviewed. Nevertheless, the people that have been interviewed had the proper knowledge on the subject and the interviews were deliberately lengthy. Furthermore, all case-studies have been supported by municipal strategy- and vision documents to back up and confirm the arguments stated by the interviewees.

This research has focused on an in-depth analysis of three case-studies. Since the aim of this study was to get a deepened understanding of cities' motivations and engagement strategies, the study used a qualitative case-study method. A limitation inherit to qualitative case-studies is the issue to generalise the outcomes. The findings of this study are specific to the three case-studies and have not been statistically proven. Nonetheless, the study has used an extensive framework to identify the influencing underlying structural conditions, motivations and activities. A suggestion to improve this framework for further research is to include Europeanisation and positioning as motivations for cities to engage in TMN's.

Lastly, this research used a narrow and strict definition of a pioneer, in order to increase guarantee the identified pioneer actually functions as a pioneer in the network. Only three cities within the EUROCITIES network complied with these criteria for characterization as a pioneer. Accordingly, many cities who function as a pioneer will not comply with these criteria and are therefore not seen in their full potential. Although there are many articles that address the issue of unequal engagement between members of a TMN in terms of pioneers and regular members, no clear definition of such pioneers is given in scientific literature. Some articles give approximate guidelines criteria for a pioneer, like Kern and Bulkeley (2009) who note that pioneer cities have often joined the network from an early stage and often have sent a representative to be president of the network. To fully understand pioneers and their functioning in a network, this issue could be further researched.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This concluding chapter gives an overview of the initial problem, the research questions, the main findings and recommendations for future research. This study started from the problem that little is known about the way cities engage with city networks and if they have a networking strategy for this. The aim of this study was to get a deepened understanding of why cities participate in the EUROCITIES network and what strategies they use to engage with them by qualitatively examining their current engagement strategies and their underlying motivations. Therefore, this research has been dedicated to the question:

‘Why do pioneers and regular cities engage in TMN’s and what strategies do they use to engage with them?’

To answer this question a comparative case-study has been followed using qualitative interviews with city representatives and city strategy documents as data input. The expectation of this study was that the pioneer city identified for this study – Rotterdam – would have a robust strategy for engaging in Transnational Municipal Networks, unlike the ‘regular cities’ Amsterdam and Riga. However, the findings suggest that all three cities have different motivations and engagement strategies based upon local factors.

The city of Rotterdam was influenced by the presence of the harbour, which appeared to be an important influence in the cities’ general strategy and motivations to engage in the network. Furthermore, the committed individuals were an important underlying structural condition to engage in the executive committee of the network. Rotterdam had the specific motivations of positioning itself at EU level, getting first-hand information from the network, and influencing EU policy. The city is active in all functions the network provides. Amsterdam was influenced by their global view. Their motivation was not to profile themselves, but rather to influence European policy and get funding. Committed individuals and local politics were the main reasons not to be part of the executive committee nor chair a forum. The city was mainly involved with knowledge exchange and networking, lobbying and funding operations, leaving monitoring and certification for ‘smaller’ cities. The city of Riga seemed to be influenced by their population decline. For them, profiling is therefore an important motivation alongside becoming more engaged on the European level. The city is engaged in knowledge exchange and networking, funding operations and monitoring and certification. This study shows that all three cities have their own engagement strategies based upon local preferences. Interestingly, having an engagement strategy does not make a city a pioneer in a network. It may even influence a cities’ strategic decisions in a way that cities can choose the way in which they want to engage. Although having an engagement strategy does help cities to make effective use of a network, the finding that all cities have an engagement strategy suggests that having an engagement strategy is not equal to being a pioneer or

regular member. The findings of this study therefore demonstrate that a classification between pioneers and regular members is difficult to make, especially when taking into account the complex nature of cities, depicted by their local USC's and motivations.

All in all, this study has contributed to the theory on Transnational Municipal Networks by examining the strategies of three cities to engage with the EUROCITIES network. It has therefore increased knowledge of cities as actors in TMN's. As city networks have become important for the urban agenda throughout the years, the issue of inequality within members of a network in terms of pioneers and regular cities, is something that should be researched into further detail. In order to conduct further research into this phenomenon, a clearer definition of pioneers in relation to Transnational Municipal Networks is favourable.

The findings of this study show, that local strategies, motivations and activities all contribute to the extent to which the three cities take part in the activities offered by the network. This means that looking at cities as actors in TMN's is key to understanding the way in which TMN's function. Not including cities as actors in theory leaves a gap, that makes it difficult to get a comprehensive view of TMN's. The findings of this research should function as a stimulant for further research to include cities as actors, instead of addressing member cities as equal entities. To obtain a deeper understanding of TMN's, what they can achieve, and how cities can use them to address sustainability issues it is essential to address cities' motivations in further research.

Furthermore, this research found empirical evidence of the ability of the TMN itself to make members more or less active. Accordingly, this study suggests that besides influence of local factors on cities' engagement strategies, there could also be an influence of cities and network executives with a higher degree of decision-making power to cities' engagement in TMN's. It is interesting for future scholarly research to examine when a city is a pioneer and what factors, including local factors and relationships of power, determine this. On top of that it would be interesting to see what it means to be a pioneer. It would give an even further understanding of the way in which cities engage in city networks and how cities function as actors and agents in these networks.

Besides future research that goes more in-depth, a more general and quantitative research into engagement strategies would be an interesting addition to current research. This type of research could use a similar framework to the framework used in this study. The framework could be enhanced with the motivation for Europeanisation and positioning. This would produce generalizable data on engagement strategies of different cities, which contributes to a better overall understanding of cities as actors in TMN's.

9. Literature

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Appendix 1: All data

<i>City</i>	<i>Sort of Data</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Reference</i>
<i>EUROCITIES</i>	Interview	Employee at EUROCITIES	EUROCITIES1 (2018)
<i>Rotterdam</i>	Interview	Contact officer Rotterdam	Rotterdam1 (2018)
	Document	Rotterdam Internationaal 2015-2020	Gemeente Rotterdam (2015)
	Document	Uitvoeringsprogramma Internationale en Europese activiteiten 2016-2017	Gemeente Rotterdam (2016)
	Document	Stadsvisie Rotterdam Ruimtelijke Ontwikkelingstrategie 2030	Gemeente Rotterdam (2007)
<i>Amsterdam</i>	Interview	Contact officer Amsterdam	Amsterdam1 (2018)
	Interview	Policy advisor	Amsterdam2 (2018)
	Document	Structuurvisie 2040	Gemeente Amsterdam (2011)
	Document	Europa strategie	Gemeente Amsterdam (2012)
<i>Riga</i>	Interview	First contact officer	Riga1 (2018)
	Interview	Second contact officer	Riga2 (2018)
	Document	Economic profile of Riga 2017	Riga City Council City Development Department (2017)
	Document	Sustainable development strategy of Riga until 2030	Riga City Council City Development Department (2014)

Appendix 2: Topic list EUROCITIES interview

General:

- Function within network

A brief overview of what functions the EUROCITIES network provides in terms of:

- Information exchange and networking possibilities
- Lobbying at EU level
- Funding operations
- Research
- Target and plan provision
- Monitoring and certification

Cities' Engagement strategies

- Do you see a difference in strategies that cities apply in networking with EUROCITIES?
- Do cities make use of different functions EUROCITIES provides?
- Do you recognize more active or passive cities? Can you tell me something about this? Which cities do you see less often?
- What do you think cities need to be an active participant? Do cities then need more time/budget, or does it have to do with politics/autonomy?
- How active are Amsterdam, Riga and Rotterdam? And do you see a difference in strategy between them?
- Are there cities in certain countries less likely to join? Why do you think that is?

Network strategies

- Do you see a difference in strategies that cities apply in networking with EUROCITIES?
- Can you tell me something about how cities with different characteristics make use of different functions the EUROCITIES network provides?
- Do you recognize cities that behave more actively or passively? Can you tell me something about this? Which cities would qualify for active or passive?
- What do you think cities need to be an active participant? Do cities then need more time/budget, or does it have to do with politics/autonomy?
- How active are Amsterdam, Riga and Rotterdam? And do you see a difference in strategy between them?
- Are there cities in certain countries less likely to join? Why do you think that is?

Competitive advantage

- What institutions does EUROCITIES collaborate/work together with?
- How does EUROCITIES try to distinguish themselves from other networks?
- What is special about the network?
- What do you do to include more passive cities into the network?

Appendix 3: Topic list city representatives

What is your function exactly?

Is there a certain general strategy for taking part in the EUROCITIES network?

Motivations

- Can you name any arguments that were mentioned in the decision-making process to join EUROCITIES? How did this process progress?
- Were there also arguments in this process opposed to joining the network?
- Can you name some examples of benefits your city has gotten from the network?
- What is the added value of joining this network over other networks on different scales (such as global c40 or local within your country)?
- Is there some kind of (written) goal for your cities' engagement in the network?
- What impact are you expecting from working together with the network on short as well as long-term?

Activities

- Networking/information exchange
 - Does the city organise activities or host events for the network, and why?
 - Can you name examples of what you think cities can learn from each other?
 - Can you name examples of information your city got from the network that would have been hard to get otherwise?
 - Can you name examples of information or expertise you have shared with the network? And with whom/wat working group?
 - Does your city have a particular interest in sharing knowledge with specific cities?
 - Can you tell me something about what projects/working groups the city takes part in and how this is decided upon?
- Lobbying: Does your city express ideas to the network, so they can be lobbied at European level? Is this function of the network important for your city?
- Funding operations: Does the city engage in bids to get funding with resources of the network? On what kind of projects/themes?
- Targets: Does your city make use of targets that were set in collaboration with the network?
- Research: Does your city make use of research the network provides?
- Certification: Is your city involved with competitions initiated by the network, and with what reasons?

USC

- Influence of Capacity

- Is there a team involved with urban sustainability? And how many people are in this team? And is there a team that works on European relations? How many people work at the municipality in total?
- Is there certain knowledge on urban sustainability that would be useful to have within the municipality? Does your city also get knowledge from outside of the municipality?
- In what way does your city take locally available knowledge into account when deciding on what working groups/projects to join?
- Influence of Autonomy
 - Do you think the extent of autonomy of the city from the national government influence the way you engage in the network?
- Influence of Local politics
 - Does the political party in your city put effort into addressing urban sustainability and international cooperation? Is it high on their political agenda?
- Influence of Resources
 - Are there projects and programs for urban sustainability that could use more resources (time, money, personnel)?
 - Can you name an example of projects for which the city is depending on the resources of the network to realize them?
 - Does your city receive structural funds from the EU, and can you give an indication of how much that is?
 - Where does most time go to in interaction with the network? For instance, setting up projects, writing reports, hosting events, sharing information?
 - Has there been strategic decision making on the issues your city wants to spend most time on? Why do you spend most time on this?
- Influence of Committed individuals
 - Are there individuals within the municipality that are highly motivated to work towards Europeanisation and city networking?
 - Does this influence the way in which the city is involved with the network?
- Influence of Pre-existing experience
 - What other networks is your city involved with?
 - Is your city involved with different networks for different goals?
- Influence of Size & Location
 - Is there any influence of the size of city in in their network relations?
 - Is the location with regards to other cities important in networking engagement?

Are there any other local characteristics you can mention that influence your engagement in the network? For instance, the historical background of your city/country?

Appendix 4: Analytical framework

GENERAL INFORMATION	Number of Inhabitants
	Population increase/decrease
	Population Density
	GDP per capita
	Unemployment rate
	Largest represented Political party
STRATEGY	Scope: Local/European/Global
	Main aims
UNDERLYING STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS	Influence of Capacity
	Influence of Local autonomy
	Influence of Local politics
	Influence of Resources
	Influence of Committed individuals
	Influence of Pre-existing experience
	Influence of Size and Location
MOTIVATION	Sources for knowledge
	Influencing policy
	Access to EU funding
	City profiling
	Establish contacts
	First-hand information EU affairs
ACTIVITIES	Knowledge exchange & networking
	Lobby
	Funding operations
	Monitoring and certification
	Other (e.g. chair working group/forum/committee)

Appendix 5: Data management

Since the data gathered for this interview contains personal information, this appendix includes information on the data management protocol this study has followed in order to secure confidentiality and to be transparent towards the respondents about the usage of data.

To do so, the following measures have been taken:

- All interviews have been recorded using the general recording app or a call-recording app on a phone. During these recordings all interviewees were asked for their approval. The audio-recorded files therefore include an approval of the interviewees to record.
- All respondents have been informed about the usage of the interviews for the thesis and there is a recorded consent of all interviewees to use their information for the thesis.
- All interviewees have been informed about the data management policy of the Wageningen University. This data management policy states that all data files (including survey data, interview transcripts, audio, video files and observation notes) used for the study should be stored in the data archives of the university for 10 years, for the purpose of integrity verification. There is a recorded approval of all interviews about this issue as well.
- All names have been left out of the interviews for privacy reasons. Instead, all respondents have been consulted to provide a brief function description which could be used to refer to the interviews throughout the thesis and for quotes. In a separate document, a full record is kept of all data and sources including the link between the names of the respondents and the interviews.
- The topic list of the interview was disseminated to the respondents beforehand. This enabled them to consult their colleagues and prepare for questions, particularly questions regarding budget and personnel. The interviewees consulted colleagues at the municipality departments about more specific issues like gathered information at working groups.
- All interviews have been returned to the respondents, so they could be checked and see if they have any additional comments to the interview.