1 Introduction

City-regions in Europe

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1.1 The rise of territorial reforms in Europe's city-regions?

City-regions and their governance is a persistent topic in the planning sciences, urban geography and local government studies and it's no surprise that the reconfiguration of city-regional governance is seen as an ongoing process, sometimes as an element of national reform agendas, sometimes being a more local project of transformation of cross-jurisdictional relations (Keil et al. 2017a; Zimmermann et al. 2020; Tomás 2020). Often city-regions are considered to be the hubs of the globalised knowledge economy and, at least in some cases, this prompted the support of national governments in various ways (Moisio and Jonas 2018; Lang and Török 2017; see also Katz and Bradley 2013). The following quotes illustrate the conventional wisdom in the scholarly literature with regard to the narrative of competitiveness and city-regions:

Large urban agglomerations in the Global North in particular are often understood as sites of globalization. These cities are understood through their functions and substances and the degree of integration into the purportedly “global” economy.

(Moisio et al. 2018, 137)

Hence it

has become commonplace not only for urbanists, consultant companies, globalization boosters and businesses firms (which also construct and finance urban infrastructures) but also for nation-state policymakers and politicians to argue that the strategic role of cities and city-regions has grown fundamentally during the past two or three decades. In such a geopolitical imaginary, the growth of major cities and city-regions is conceived of as an inevitable global phenomenon orchestrated by market forces, one which proceeds beyond politics, political regulation and the territorial state. Policy analyst Parag Khanna's (2016) *Connectography* is one among the many attempts to tell a story about

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the contemporary de-territorializing global processes and the related ways in which the future is being shaped less by states than by connectivities of urban hubs and flows.

(Moisio et al. 2018, 137)

City-regions, due to their role and function as “national champions” in economic development (Crouch and LeGalès 2012) are the target of territorialised national policies and, seen from the perspective of national governments, their governance is highly relevant in order to prevent failures in many public policies (such as transport, environmental protection, innovation, see Kübler and Lefèvre 2017; Gross, Gualini and Ye 2019; Keil et al. 2017b). Indeed, higher education and research institutes as well as private knowledge-based service providers are concentrated in city-regions and generate competitive advantages on an international scale. Against this background, some European states such as Germany and France as well as Poland have partially redefined the function of city-regions in their spatial development policies and have given more relevance to competitiveness and innovation – or defined city-regions for the first time at all in planning and policy documents (Moisio et al. 2018; Krukowska and Lackowska 2017; Geppert 2009; Blotevogel and Schmitt 2006).

However, the assumption that the growth and rising relevance of city-regions is mainly driven by economic globalisation is questionable and has ostensibly produced some all too schematic and even flawed theoretical insights (a position shared by Gualini and Gross 2019, 7). National reforms in France and Italy taking place in the years 2010–2015 and presented in detail in this book indicate that there is a new interest in city-regions that emerged in a period when these two states (as well as others) were facing the long-term effects of the financial crisis of 2008–2009. It seems that these conditions changed the way city-regions were seen by state governments. The assumption of the dominance of competition-oriented metropolitan policy seems to be somewhat biased. City-regions are still strategic projects of state-spatial restructuring but there are indications that the financial crisis of 2008 shifted the focus and brought metropolitan reform back to the agenda, but with a stronger focus on austerity, efficiency and cohesion policy. There is a stronger emphasis on the relevance city-regions have for the modernisation of the public sector and the coordination of public services. In addition, there is a stronger recognition of a pronounced and ongoing process of metropolitanisation and the effects this process has for effective and efficient public policies (Sellers et al. 2013; Balducci et al. 2017; Siedentop and Fina 2012; Dembski et al. 2019; Cardoso and Meijers 2021).

In a narrow sense, metropolitanisation refers to the growth of city-regions and respective processes of suburbanisation and post-suburbanisation (Dembski et al. 2019; Cardoso and Meijers 2021). In a wider interpretational frame, metropolitanisation is a multidimensional process referring to issues of scale selection, cross-jurisdictional governance and construction

of space. This implies a rising relevance of city-regions as social, economic or even political entities with many direct and indirect effects (Scott 2001). City-regions are the targets of immigration and thus places of diversity and more or less successful social integration. They reveal high levels of environmental problems and produce new forms of large-scale social inequality (Sellers et al. 2017; Keil et al. 2017b). This poses a range of challenges for public policies and subnational politics, which touches upon questions about the territorial organisation of the state (i.e. devolution, decentralisation, regionalisation). In many cases, city-regions show inadequate forms of metropolitan governance, which points to parochialism and fragmented local government structures (Scott 2019; Rosan 2016). Coordination deficits in land use planning, infrastructure development, transport planning, environmental planning and other public services such as waste disposal, energy supply, housing policy or public transport services are the obvious result. These deficits have been discussed at greater length in the debate on metropolitan governance (Scott 2019; Keil et al. 2017a; Zimmermann, Galland and Harrison 2020; Rosan 2016; Heinelt et al. 2011; Sager 2006).

At least in some European countries, metropolitanisation and the quest for higher efficiency in the public sector has triggered a renewed debate on the social, political and economic significance of city-regions, which necessarily also provokes questions of good institutional design and the setting of priorities for national spatial development policy (Gross and Gualini 2019; Salet and Thornley 2007; Zimmermann and Heinelt 2012; Sellers et al. 2013). Territorial reforms usually pursue different objectives and move along institutionally determined national paths (Loughlin 2007; Lidström 2007; Baldersheim and Rose 2010). This holds true particularly for reforms in public administration as well as decentralisation and regionalisation reforms that took shape across Europe in recent years (Kuhlmann and Bouckeaert 2016). In the following section we argue that the differentiation of production and social reproduction functions is a helpful heuristic for discussing the current changes in the governance of city-regions and this helps to answer the question of what drives city-regionalism.

1.1.1 Production or social reproduction?

The supposed one-sidedness in the orientation of the academic debate, the so-called neo-liberal plot, was the subject of a controversial debate about the question of what drives the agendas of city-regional politics in the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (Harding 2007; Jonas and Ward 2007; see also Keil et al. 2017b). Is it the production function or the social reproduction function? These two different functions stand for two different sets of policy priorities and ideas of what is at stake in city-regions. The production function is primarily supported by measures that serve to strengthen the competitiveness and innovation capacity of city-regions. In Germany, for example, this was part of the national guiding

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principles and action strategies of spatial development that allocated innovation, gateway and competition functions to a limited number of rather large metropolitan regions (BMVBS 2006; MKRO 2013).

The social reproduction function is defined very broadly by Jonas and Ward (2007, 174–175) and includes welfare policies such as housing, public services and childcare, but also refers to measures that promote quality of life, thus addressing open spaces (inner-city and regional parks) and environmental aspects (noise protection, air pollution control, climate adaptation). In a similar way, Kantor and Savitch (2005) in their comparative study on cities in the international marketplace made a distinction between market-oriented urban policies and socially oriented urban policies. In part, this refers to a distinction made in political science in the 1980s to describe the functional shift of urban policies (Hesse 1983; Harvey 1989). While cities (i.e. local governments) were responsible in the post-war period for the provision and implementation of social reproduction functions, it was national government that was in charge of innovation policies and economic development. In a shift often described as the transformation of the Keynesian *Welfare State* to the Schumpeterian *Workfare State*, this division of functions was renegotiated and re-scaled (Jessop 2002, 2010). Henceforth, cities started initiatives to create business-friendly environments and marketing campaigns and made investments in specific types of infrastructure such as airports or convention centres. Much of the literature about the re-scaling of the state described the impacts of this transition, i.e. the downscaling of innovation and competitiveness-oriented policies and the rise of cities and city-regions as actors in the globalised economy (Pinson 2020; Keil 1998).

In the view of many observers, the production function currently dominates the discussion on planning and governance in city-regions, while the social reproduction function receives less attention (Blotevogel and Schmitt 2006; Jonas and Ward 2007; Salet and Thornley 2007; Moisio and Jonas 2018; Wachsmuth 2017). However, according to our observations, the social production function is a long-standing theme for city-regions and much stronger as a facilitator of city-regional governance than it may seem when examining the mentioned literature. Hence, following Keil et al. (2017b), we want to find out if a consensus is possible between these diverging goals. In addition, we need to consider that there are new concerns potentially not covered so far (public health, digitisation, climate adaptation). Whether the attribution of new functions has actually replaced older ones as drivers for institutional change and institutional variation is empirically questionable, specifically when put into the perspective of an international comparison (Salet and Thornley 2007; Kuhlmann and Bouckaert 2016; Tosics 2019; Keil et al. 2017a).

In this respect, it is not only in Germany that the discussion on city-regions differs considerably from the discussion of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The “old” attribution of functions saw city-regions as conurbations facing problems of congestion and inner city decay. There was an urgent

need for planning interventions and concerted action, not least because of a lack of inter-municipal burden-sharing for infrastructures of regional relevance. In particular, the public transport sector was considered to put a heavy burden on the budgets of the core cities and justified the demands of these cities for the fair sharing of costs. While city-regions were territories framed as problematic in the old nomenclature, city-regions have become the bearers of hope for a regionalised economy geared towards constant innovation, with European or global significance. Sometimes this shift finds its expression in new imaginaries such as metropolitan regions, indicating higher international relevance, bigness and symbolic power (Fedeli, Harrison and Feiertag 2020).¹ These city-regions are supposed to develop new forms of governance such as voluntary and public–private self-organisation, also in anticipation of some form of devolution of statutory tasks or public policies. Is this interpretative frame still valid? Or are we entering a new period of city-regionalism where metropolitanisation and pressures to consolidate public budgets determine the agendas?

1.1.2 Effectiveness of city-regional governance?

There is a second anomaly in the debate on city-regions. We are puzzled by the discrepancy between the academic work on the rise of city-regions and the actual limited success of metropolitan governance arrangements – at least in the majority of cases (Scott 2019; Keil et al. 2017a; Rosan 2016; Heinelt et al 2011; ESPON 2018). In many states, the role of institutionalised city-regions in multi-level governance systems is far from being clear or city-regions as institutions have even been abolished. Rhetoric on the rise of city-regions and political practice fall apart and, in many cases, what seems to be a purposive designed arrangement for metropolitan governance is more a side effect of wider reforms of the state (Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014; Jessop 2010). Decentralisation, regionalisation, shifts in the multi-level architecture of the state (including fiscal federalism or asymmetric decentralisation) have an impact on city-regions but this effect is not necessarily positive. Therefore, putting reforms of city-regional governance into context is relevant to avoid traps in the interpretation about the drivers of the rise of city-regions.

Without a doubt, due to fragmented and particularistic local government structures, most city-regions are in need of better and more coherent governance structures. However, for many public policies such as public transport, sewage, waste management and regional planning, city-regional solutions are in place. In both Germany and France, inter-municipal associations are a consistent and indispensable form of provision of services of general interest and spatial planning. In France and Italy, consolidated solutions for city-regional governance have been implemented since 2014–2015. The neo-liberal plot thus seems to be too simple as an explanatory scheme for the recent developments. The reason for this is that, with few exceptions,

the debate on city-regions has in recent years hardly taken the aspect of the performance of public policies into account but has instead concentrated on processes of institution-building and the emergence of regional regimes, without full reflection of the role city-regions have in the multi-level system of public administration (Heinelt and Zimmermann 2012; Blatter 2005). So, the question is: which role do city-regions play in the process of dealing with public problems (Sellers et al. 2013)? Can shifts be identified in an international comparison? It is worth mentioning that Fürst, Hesse and Richter addressed a similar question in the early 1980s under the title “Agglomerations in the process of federal problem processing” in relation to Germany (Fürst, Hesse and Richter 1984). One of the results of this study was the insight that changes are more likely in the realm of re-distribution of financial resources (including temporary side-payments). Territorial reforms are much more difficult to render because of vested interests and local identities (Fürst, Hesse and Richter 1984, 303). The authors also pointed out that the solving of distributional conflicts has a strong cognitive dimension (ibid. 298).

We feel that the discussion on metropolitan governance and re-scaling of territorial governance in geography and planning has paid little attention to the political and administrative science discussion on regionalisation, decentralisation, inter-municipal cooperation and fiscal relationships of state levels (Loughlin 2007; Teles 2016; Steen, Teles and Torsteinsen 2017; Kübler and Rochat 2018). Indeed, the debate on the territorial organisation of the state and the role of local government has been ongoing for many years if not decades. Contrary to the assumption that globalisation, Europeanisation and internationalisation homogenise institutions and policies, we find that the diversity of territorial and functional profiles of local governments in Europe is still high (Denters and Rose 2005; Baldersheim and Rose 2010; Kuhlmann and Bouckaert 2016). Although the definition of the functions and the territorial dimension of local governments as well as inter-municipal arrangements is often seen as a question of local political negotiations, national governments have a clear interest to intervene. Recent attempts of reterritorialisation of the state in France and Italy and initiatives on city-region level in other states demonstrate that more effective and more efficient local public policies are on the agenda of national and subnational governments (Kuhlmann and Bouckaert 2016). We may apply a range of heuristics to analyse these reforms:

- asymmetric decentralisation as a form of decentralisation that gives different degrees of autonomy to regions within a nation state (OECD 2018)
- austerity policies as a result of financial and economic instability, resulting in amalgamations of local governments for the purpose of cost-efficiency (Kuhlmann and Bouckaert 2016; see Streeck 2017)

- the return of the nation state as a result of the financial crisis in 2008 (Jessop 2010).

Having said this, the well-established categories used in the long and ongoing debate on metropolitan governance in political science seem to be less and less appropriate to understand what is currently going on (Kübler and Rochat 2018). At least when referring to the distinction of metropolitan reform (consolidation), new regionalism (collaboration) and public choice (competition) as the three major theoretical positions that are often used to distinguish different periods with dominant institutional ideas of how best to govern city-regions (Nelles 2012; Tomàs 2020). Periodisation is very common in the studies on metropolitan governance but, as has been demonstrated by Galland and Harrison (2020), the temporal dimension is not necessarily a sequence of neatly separated phases. Many public tasks can be organised in different ways and we have only limited knowledge about the effectiveness of different organisational forms such as single-purpose associations, inter-municipal cooperation, interventions of upper tier governments, contracts and multipurpose organisations. Problems of metropolitan development can also be tackled in various institutional environments (regionalising states, federalism, unitary states). Scott highlights that,

an approximate template is occasionally detectable in the more successful efforts that have pushed in this direction, namely—and in sharp contradistinction to any unitary arrangement—a conglomerate structure made up of loose hierarchical relationships complemented by assorted crosscutting organizations wherever these can significantly enhance operational effectiveness. There is no compelling reason, moreover, why a well-designed structure of this type could not also enhance the democratic assets of the city-region.

(Scott 2019, 17)

The empirical chapters of this book will show if these kinds of arrangements mentioned by Scott are emerging or not. Quotes like this often suffer from a focus on a few successful cases (often Stuttgart, Lyon or Portland). But what happens in other medium sized city-regions such as Nantes or Bologna? These medium sized city-regions are relevant as socio-economic entities but not as large as the global city-regions often referred to. Do they display the same patterns of governance and politics (ESPON 2018)?

1.2 Research question and research design

Hence, in our empirical study we start from a more nuanced heuristic. As territorial and functional reforms have several dimensions, a cross-national comparison needs a selection of criteria and dimensions and this selection always depends on the cognitive interest of the research. As we want to

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address motivations for reforms as well as design options (institutional, functional, territorial) we identified the following four dimensions: ideas, functions, institutions and space. The functional, territorial and institutional dimensions are widely used in comparative local government studies. These studies, for instance, distinguish political, functional and territorial profiles of local governments (Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014, 21–22). We add the ideational dimension as we feel that discourse matters, in particular when analysing the effects of austerity measures taken as a reaction to the fiscal crisis post-2008. Each of these four dimensions, described in more detail in the next sections, refers to a specific aspect of metropolitan governance and allows us to answer the following questions with regard to the recent reforms:

- 1) Do city-regions increase in relevance as institutional sites of problem-solving? And, if this is the case, in which dimension can we observe this increase in relevance? Do reforms have a functional (more or less functions) or territorial focus (jurisdictions getting bigger) and which ideas drive these reforms (economic competitiveness (production), efficiency of public administration, social reproduction, cohesion or enhanced participation)?
- 2) Do we observe convergence, divergence or persistence of the national patterns of city-regional politics?
- 3) Is there a change in the arguments for reforms, from instrumental-analytic reflections in public administration (decentralisation, reform of the public sector, fiscal federalism) to political disputes about the role of city-regions in the context of globalisation and Europeanisation?

Although we are focusing on recent reforms (in particular in France and Italy), we see these in the context of longer trajectories of institutional change (Lowndes and Lempriere 2018).

1.2.1 Functions

We assume that a change in the allocation of functions between local government, the second tier of local government, city-region or the lower state levels is part of every reform of metropolitan governance. Functions refer to the tasks that are assigned in whole or in part to municipalities or city-regions in the multi-level system. As indicated above, we make a fundamental distinction between those functions that are more related to social reproduction or services of general interest and those that are more related to the function of competitiveness. The first group of functions is usually part of the functional profile of local government and the second tier of local government (i.e. counties, provinces, *départements*), but is often managed under inter-municipal responsibility. We think of tasks such as waste management, sewage treatment, secondary schools, public transport, social

housing, spatial planning, planning and provision of all kinds of public infrastructure and green spaces for recreation. This dimension found strong recognition in studies on decentralisation and reallocation of functions in comparative public administration (Kuhlmann and Bouckeaert 2016).

The dimension of functions also had significant repercussions in the German debate on Metropolitan Regions during the 2000s (Blotevogel and Schmitt 2006). In this national debate, emphasis was not on social reproduction but on the production function. A fourfold definition of metropolitan functions was used in order to make a distinction between metropolitan regions and smaller city-regions (Blotevogel and Schmitt 2006). These four functions were innovation, connectivity (or gateway-functions), economic development and symbolic power (i.e. creation of new urban imaginaries and lifestyles). Exemplary functions are marketing, tourism, economic development and all kinds of support for gateway and innovation policies.

The two-fold distinction of social reproduction functions and production function takes up common lines of argumentation from the geographical and administrative science discussion on city-regions and inter-municipal cooperation (see above, Kantor and Savitch 2005). Furthermore, we assume that differences between the states and city-regions under scrutiny exist with respect to the relationship of the functional dimension and other dimensions such as institutions and spatial relations. Different functions call for different spatial scales and governance arrangements which – in turn – may create fragmentation.

Our guiding questions are:

- Which functions are performed at which level?
- Are there significant shifts upwards or downwards in this respect?
- Which functional profiles result from this?
- Which actors claim responsibility for which functions?

1.2.2 Institutions and governance

The dimension of institutions in comparative local government studies and comparative planning studies often refers to some well-known formal categories (Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014):

- 1) The position of municipalities and the second tier of local self-government in the structure of the state (functional profile of municipalities; political and fiscal autonomy of municipalities; administrative culture)
- 2) The relationship between local, regional and national spatial planning (distribution of competences, interdependence).

The reforms in France and Italy changed the formal distributions of functions between local government, regional governments (in Italy) and city-regional organisations, and introduced new entities (if not institutions). Hence, the

comparison of the formal aspects and operational rules in the multi-level governance system is highly relevant for our comparative study. However, as Lowndes and Lempriere (2018) point out: institutions are more than just organisations and formal regulations. They constitute the rules in use that may take the form of informal conventions, routinised practices and institutional narratives that guide the behaviour of individual and organisational actors. Therefore, we consider also

- 3) the formal and informal institutionalisation of the city-region and forms of organisation of inter-municipal cooperation according to the fields of activity and
- 4) institutional legacies and changing narratives of past forms of inter-municipal collaboration and metropolitan governance (as in all of our case-study regions, inter-municipal initiatives existed before the reforms).

With regard to institutional ideas, the discussion on metropolitan governance and territorial reforms is based on a simple dichotomy of two positions. One is the distinction between consolidation approaches and public choice (competition) (Baldersheim and Rose 2010, 8; Heinelt and Kübler 2005). Protagonists of consolidation (or in other words: metropolitan reformers) see the creation of a new jurisdiction or amalgamation of existing jurisdictions as the best solution to create economies of scale. Multi-purpose associations are also part of this system of ideas, which not only refers to effective problem-solving but also to legitimacy, as we often find a claim for the direct election of regional councils (Blatter 2005).

Public choice, in contrast, sees the virtue in keeping the autonomy of small units (i.e. local governments). Charles Tiebout and Vincent Ostrom, being the principal protagonists of this position, argue for competition between jurisdictions in order to create choice options for citizens and firms (Ostrom, Tiebout and Warren 1961). Despite being very influential in the debate surrounding metropolitan government and governance, the distinction between these two positions has been far too simple to catch the murky reality of territorial and functional reforms in city-regions. Collaboration takes place in various fields and on different scales, some functions are shared, some are sharply separated between the local and the regional level. Organisational forms include single-purpose associations, multi-purpose associations, agencies under private law, soft and voluntary associations and contracting. We may also find different organisational forms for different policies. Hence, when describing the institutional profile of city-regions, in addition to spatial planning, further fields of action will be taken into account. In particular, housing policy and services of general interest (e.g. water supply and waste disposal, energy, public transport) will be considered as these tasks contribute significantly to the reproduction function. In addition, municipal and regional economic development (incl. marketing, tourism) is also

considered, as it articulates the production function. The main object of observation is city-regional institutions created by territorial and functional reforms, and a reflection about their role in the multi-level system.

1.2.3 *Ideas*

In addition to institutional and functional aspects, the ideational dimension is of interest as the financial crisis in 2008/2009 caused a window of opportunity for the re-articulation of a range of ideas for state modernisation and the rendering of public policies. Following Hall (1989), we understand ideas as catalysts which, in a given institutional framework, enable the formation of coalitions of actors that make their claims during the implementation of reforms (see also Bèland and Cox 2011). Baldersheim and Rose (2010) called this the framing of territorial choice: territorial and functional reforms need justification and this is done by referring to a specific set of frames and ideas. The dimension of ideas also refers to the different reform discourses in the states and takes into account the positions of the actors involved as well as the lines of conflict (Lieberman 2003). The notion of ideas captures the actors' beliefs, expectations, assumptions about cause and effects and knowledge that actors bring into the world of political reforms, or in other words "ideas, after all are a medium by which people can imagine a state of affairs other than the status quo and such imaginings might plausibly spur them to act to try and make changes" (Lieberman 2003, 698).

With regard to the reform of metropolitan governance, a set of ideas such as territorial equity, effectiveness, competitiveness or autonomy of local self-government is frequently used as a point of reference in academic writings and actors' statements. In the debate on the modernisation of the public sector it is common to refer to at least three bundles of ideas: (a) cost-efficiency (partly influenced by New Public Management); (b) effectiveness of public services (simplification, decentralisation, subsidiarity, territorial coherence) and (c) democracy (i.e. bringing decisions closer to the citizens, the option of referendums, direct elections of regional councils). In the realm of spatial planning, effectiveness means the overcoming of local particularism with regard to land use decisions. This idea, however, is in conflict with the idea and value of the autonomy of local self-government. Other ideas are organised around generic principles such as territorial cohesion or urban-rural partnership. We add competitiveness and austerity since the financial crisis of 2008 caused massive austerity programmes, in particular in southern Europe. In addition, Europeanisation may be a frame that is used when justifying reforms (often in a narrower definition than the pressures of the common market, Fricke 2020).

The analysis of ideas also aims to describe the content of what we call metropolitan policy. The term metropolitan policy covers all initiatives of a state government that explicitly aim to promote (or prevent) improved capacity for action in city-regions. Examples are the initiative of European

metropolitan regions in Germany (Zimmermann 2017; Blotevogel and Schmitt 2006) or the initiative of the *métropoles d'équilibre/décentralisation industrielle* of the French spatial development policy of the 1960s (Geppert 2009, 253). Metropolitan policy thus refers to all government measures, laws and support programmes, but also to guiding principles and ideas for action, which in every respect have city-regions as their subject. The term metropolitan policy also expresses that metropolitan reforms are not only about forms of organisation (metropolitan governance), but also the result of political disputes, which essentially revolve around the question of what function city-regions should have for the social and economic development of a country. As elaborated by Heinelt and Zimmermann, this ideational dimension addresses the level of meta-governance (Zimmermann and Heinelt 2012, 93). Impulses of the meta-level are understood as action-guiding orientation and ideas that can influence debates on city-regions. This may be accompanied by changes in the institutional system (new competencies or formats) or funding programmes (using Germany as an example: Schmitt 2009; Zimmermann 2012).

1.2.4 *Spatial relations and territorial profiles*

In public administration science, the territorial dimension has found enormous recognition in the literature on reforms of local government (Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014; Baldersheim and Rose 2010). However, space has become a contested academic notion, not least in the debate on city-regions (Cardoso and Meijers 2021). In planning science and geography, we know at least three different conceptual approaches for defining reasonable spaces for cooperation in city-regional politics (Tosics 2019, 3):

- The morphologic area (the continuously urbanised or built-up area);
- The functional urban region (often defined by commuter sheds or labour markets); and
- The larger economic area (usually vast areas constituted by a system of economic hubs and districts as well as transport infrastructures) (see OECD 2012; ESPON 2018; Dembski et al. 2019).

A fourth discourse partly takes up these definitions but sees city-space not bound to geographical boundaries but constituted by global capitalist relations or networked spaces (Paasi 2002). This body of work on relational space refers, among others, to the spatial theory of Henri Lefebvre. The TPSN-framework of Jessop et al. (2008) partly synthesises this discussion and distinguishes four categories of space: territory, place, scale and network. While territory describes jurisdictional spaces (government territories), the other three categories are in use for relational or socio-political geographies being much more in a state of flux. The consequence for our approach is that we, in addition to the conventional wisdom of the public

administration literature on decentralisation and amalgamation of municipalities, will also consider soft forms of territorial politics, networked space and collaborative governance. It is particularly these practices that show that the constitution of metropolitan space is a contested process and jurisdictional boundaries are often more part of the problem than the solution as the construction of space is the result of a diverse set of social, cultural and economic practices (Löw 2016). What a reasonable scale of social or economic action or policy-intervention would be is far from clear. Hence, we also consider the discussion on post-metropolitan territories or the in-between city (Balducci et al. 2017; Soja 2000). It is not necessary to refer to the debate on planetary or endless urbanisation to make clear that sub-urbanisation, post-suburbanisation and re-urbanisation – sometimes in parallel – create a new hierarchy of places in city-regions, even questioning in some cases where the city-region starts and where it ends (Dembski et al. 2019). This dimension does not merely refer to jurisdictional boundaries but also the space-constituting relationships between scales (Gualini and Gross 2019). A constructivist perspective is needed as actors try to establish new spatial scales by questioning others. Still, representative and accountable (local) governments exist on different levels and the formation of interest happens through the reference to (local) jurisdictions with clear boundaries.

In two of the three countries under observation in this book a reconfiguration of spatial levels happened recently and these emerging scales took different institutional shapes. These scales are not clearly related to each other in all cases. Rather, there are diffuse demarcations and overlaps. Instead of the clear differentiation of spatial levels, perforated and fragmented arrangements can also emerge. Table 1.1 summarises the four dimensions for the descriptive comparison.

Table 1.1 Dimensions for comparison

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Criteria</i>
Functions	Production function (marketing, regional development agency, gateway function, innovation) Social reproduction function (Housing policy, public services, public transport services, environmental protection)
Institutions	Multi-level Governance (local government system, planning system) Metropolitan Governance (forms)
Ideas	Justification of reforms in which the direction of change is articulated (welfare state compensation, competitive orientation); this becomes apparent in (national) spatial mission statements, programmes, declarations, studies, statements of networks of cities and regions such as IKM in Germany, interviews, possibly newspapers
Spatial relations	Scaling and Re-Scaling, disputes about boundaries, soft space, size of jurisdictions, relationship between scales

1.3 Comparing city-regions and local government systems

The new allocation of functions to city-regions described above takes place simultaneously and yet differently in the European states (Zimmermann 2017; Fürst 2010; Salet et al. 2003; see Chapter 6.1). These developments justify the need for a comparative analysis that can build on the ongoing discussion on the comparison of local governments and planning systems in Europe and beyond (Sellers 2019; Denters and Rose 2005; Nadin and Stead 2012). With regard to the state of research, it must be noted that despite the quite respectable number of publications on metropolitan governance, a systematic comparison at European level has yet not been conducted (Heinelt and Kübler 2005; Salet et al. 2003; Otgaar et al. 2008; Keil et al. 2017a; ESPON 2018).

Some elements of comparative local government research have already been discussed above (Wollmann 2008; Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014). Still, the comparison of cities and local governments risks tapping into some pitfalls. In a very basic way, Kantor and Savitch (2005) see the problems of comparative urban analysis as follows:

To begin, there is no commonly accepted general theory of urban politics and policy that can provide direction and testable propositions for examining common political phenomena in cities across nations and cultures. Without some kind of theoretical construct that highlights common properties shared by cities, comparative analysis makes little sense. This vacuum leaves those seeking to do comparative urban research dependent on what Robert Merton called “theories of the middle range” to guide inquiry (Merton 1968).

(Kantor and Savitch 2005, 136)

Notwithstanding these problems, comparative urban research has experienced a boom in recent years, raising important methodological questions (Robinson 2016; Sellers 2019; Kantor and Savitch 2005). Particular attention has been paid to the consideration of the explanatory value of local contexts (Kantor and Savitch 2005; Sellers 2019). There is, however, a difference between cities as objects of comparison and local governments. Cities are complex social, spatial and political phenomena and this complexity creates heuristic and theoretical problems when seeing the city as the object of comparison (Robinson 2016). With regard to categories and principles of comparisons, the situation is more advantageous in the field of comparative local government studies. Here it is possible to build on a range of pertinent studies and well-tried typologies (Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014). But even if comparative local government studies in Europe are somewhat more advanced than comparative global urban research, some of the fundamental methodological problems are similar (Kantor and Savitch 2005). These consist of:

- 1) analysing a sizeable number of cities (or city-regions in our case) while still providing depth of analysis (scope versus depth)
- 2) accounting for different contextual meanings, especially across different political and administrative cultures
- 3) providing conceptual tools that can accurately address the same problem in different places (symmetry) and
- 4) accessing, retrieving and processing useful data from multiple jurisdictions (Kantor and Savitch 2005, 137).

In this study, we basically follow two strategies when comparing metropolitan governance in three states: variation-finding comparison (as suggested by Tilly 1984) and multi-level matched comparison as proposed by Sellers (2019).

By following what Tilly (1984) called a variational comparison, we want to find the gradual variation in the similar patterns of the emergence of city-regional governance in Germany, France and Italy. Such an international comparison usually shows how a comparable set of variables works in different contexts. The variation-finding comparison focusses on the anomalies and allows for contrasting observations within a group of systems that share some basic elements. In our case, these are three big and long-standing EU member states that experienced the post-war emergence of a welfare state that is now gradually transforming into something new and different, also with regard to territorial welfare policies (Jessop 2002; King and LeGalès 2017). Territorial re-configuration of regions and cities is one of the elements of this ongoing transformation. Variation-finding comparison can differ with regard to the way the gradual variation of a phenomenon is controlled. A similar systems design in local government studies would usually compare similar cases taken from a variety of national contexts (with the ultimate goal of finding universal principles). However, given the territorial diversity of reforms within and across nation states and the mutual feedback between local politics and national reform initiatives, the rigidity of variable-centred comparisons needs to be rethought. Many national governments implicitly or explicitly treat regions and cities asymmetrically when implementing national reforms. They choose pilot regions, give some regions more power than others or implement reforms in an incremental way (e.g. *métropole* in France, combined authorities in the UK, German city-regions). In addition, reforms are the result of ongoing negotiations between different levels of government. Hence, the interactions between local and national (or subnational) governments are part of the variation. This prohibits the application of national typologies that are part of the conventional wisdom in comparative local government studies.² In these typologies local governments are largely seen as dependent variables but not as active agents in central-local relations. In addition, the groups that are used as an empirical reference for these typologies are less and less homogeneous due to several asymmetric reforms. Their explanatory value is therefore limited.

In nested comparisons (Sellers 2019), the definition and use of variation in variation-finding comparison (i.e. similarity and difference) is handled in a more flexible way. In what Sellers calls multi-level matched comparison, variation is observable on both national and subnational levels (Sellers 2019). Hence, the goal is explicitly to “carry out a controlled examination of how both national contexts and subnational politics matter” (96):

Multilevel matched comparison offers a design to address subnational politics in countries that differ significantly, but along dimensions that offer a tractable basis for comparative analysis.

(Sellers 2019, 96)

This type of research has thus two components:

- 1) The combination of differences on local and national levels; and
- 2) The interactions of national and local governments.

Nevertheless, comparisons need to follow some of the basic principles defined in the literature (Tilly 1984; Sartori 1991; Kantor and Savitch 2005; Sellers 2019). In regard to what is compared, comparisons need to be discrete (i.e. identifying units or objects, dimensions or functions precisely). Comparisons also need to take into consideration the principles of symmetry and functional equivalence. The research programme (the scope of the study and the portfolio of methods) must be implemented in a similar way in all case studies. This sounds self-evident, but in an international comparison with fieldwork across different cultures and languages it is a relevant issue. Part of symmetry is also what is called functional equivalence in local government studies (Sellers 2019, 90). Although this depends very much on the interest of the researcher, it is common in local government studies to compare units that are similar in terms of status or formal responsibilities. Therefore, we excluded capital city-regions (Berlin, Rome, Paris) and the German city-states.

The comparison establishes relationships among the dimensions of comparison (functions, institutions, ideas, spatial relations) that can describe and explain the differences between the most recent developments in Germany, France and Italy. Such a multidimensional approach seems to be necessary in order to grasp the observable diversity in European city-regions. It also makes it possible to capture the trends of convergence and divergence more accurately.

Germany, France and Italy were selected as they display several commonalities as well as differences that allow for a combination of variations across the three states as well the six case studies.

- As described above, the function of city-regions has been discussed more intensively in all three countries in the last 10–15 years than in other European states and corresponding programmes are being set up. While

in Germany, however, the importance of city-regions for economic and social development is being discussed, the current initiative in Italy is influenced by the consolidation constraints of a country severely affected by the financial crisis. In France, we find both of these arguments present. Furthermore, the three countries have different planning systems and local government systems, so that different framework conditions exist here. In all three states there is more than one or two city-regions that are affected by reforms, hence we have a critical mass (14 in Italy, 22 in France and in Germany about 10).

- France and Germany have a strong tradition of inter-municipal cooperation but represent different planning and local government systems and types of state (decentralised unitary state – federal state). In Italy, the regions are increasingly responsible for planning and local government (regionalised state). However, the current formation of city-regions is based on a national law.
- In their own way, Germany and France represent “successful models” of inter-municipal cooperation with strengths and weaknesses. In both countries, the question of linking new competition-oriented strategies with the classic inter-municipal institutions delivering services of general interest is also currently arising. Since Italy has only a limited tradition of inter-municipal cooperation and fewer incentives are provided in either the planning or the municipal system, the starting conditions here are more unfavourable. Nevertheless, a discourse is being conducted on the role of city-regions – with an uncertain outcome.
- France and Italy are often considered as having similar characteristics (i.e. they differ from the Northern and Anglo-Saxon models of local governments and are members of the so-called Franco or Napoleonic Group or represent the southern model), with centralised systems, weak local governments and a provincial tier (Hesse and Sharpe 1991, Loughlin 2003, Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014). Germany is part of the northern continental model with strong local governments. These typologies have a heuristic value but a comparison of France and Italy with regard to city-regional governance will show significant differences.
- The choice of the cases also allows us to gain some knowledge about the eventual impact of policy transfer and diffusion. Three of our case studies are known internationally for their – relative – success of city-regional policies (Lyon, Stuttgart and Bologna). In particular, Stuttgart and Lyon are often referred to as best practice (Fricke 2020). In addition, France and Italy share a common administrative culture and Italian protagonists often refer to the French experience.
- We selected two city-regions in each country, which allows for a minimum of subnational variation (see Table 1.2). The selection criteria for the case study regions were some established patterns of inter-municipal coordination and metropolitan governance. We also wanted a forerunner in each country and one city-region where metropolitan

Table 1.2 Case study city-regions

	City-Region	Size	Inhabitants	number of municipalities
France	Lyon (Métropole)	533.7 km ²	1,402,326	59
	Nantes (Métropole)	523.4 km ²	658,356	24
Germany	Stuttgart (VRS)	3,654 km ²	2,787,724	179
	Frankfurt/Rhine-Main	2,458 km ²	2,359,733	80
Italy	Bologna (CM)	3,702 km ²	1,014,619	55
	Florence (CM)	3,514 km ²	1,013,260	41

reforms display some implementation problems. The city-regions are comparable in terms of population size, territory and economic prosperity. However, due to territorial reforms in the 1970s, German city-regions tend to be bigger than their French and Italian counterparts. In addition, each city-region shows some specific features that we considered relevant for our study, i.e. the *pôle métropolitain* responsible for regional planning in Nantes Saint-Nazaire, the unsolved problem of regional governance in the *piana fiorentina* (Firenze-Prato-Pistoia) and the regional land use plan in the Frankfurt/Rhine-Main city-region.

1.4 Short view on cases

1.4.1 France

Since the 1980s, France has undergone various decentralisation reforms, and since 2003, France is called a decentralised unitary state in the French constitution (Borraz and LeGalès 2005; Kuhlmann 2009). The shifts in tasks that have taken place are important for the institutional formation of city-regions. They not only strengthened the regions and *départements*, but also forms of inter-municipal cooperation that have existed since the 1960s (Négrier 2005; Kuhlmann 2009; Geppert 2009). The formats provided for this purpose, EPCI (*Établissements publics de coopération intercommunale*), addressed different scales and were intended to increase the effectiveness of public service provision by forming large units. The reason for this is the high number of small and very small municipalities. The EPCI, especially the most integrated types, *métropoles* and *communautés urbaines*, perform numerous functions in the fields of urban renewal, social housing, spatial planning and economic development, and have their own financial resources thanks to revenues from the business tax. Inter-municipal cooperation was thus primarily a question of the functional and territorial profile of the municipalities and the related effectiveness and efficiency of the performance of the public sector and gradual decentralisation. In addition, the relationship of Greater Paris to the other city-regions has always been a focus of French spatial development policy (Geppert 2009,

252; Négrier 2005). Since the 1990s, the focus, which was primarily on the efficient performance of tasks and balancing of territorial disparities, has been partially reoriented (Geppert 2009, 256–257; Pinson and Galimberti 2013). In 2003, the French spatial planning authority DATAR published a call for inter-municipal cooperation, which addressed all city-regions outside Greater Paris and indicated a new orientation in many respects. Smaller urban regions were also able to participate. In terms of content, the key-word *métropole* was used to focus more on aspects of growth pole policy and competitiveness and less on territorial balance (Verhage et al. 2007, 88; Geppert 2009, 260). With regard to the forms of organisation, city networks such as Caen-Le Havre-Rouen and purely project-related forms of cooperation were now also possible alongside municipal associations. Some of those soft cooperation spaces continue to exist under the name of *pôle métropolitain*, but national metropolitan policy has shifted again after 2010 towards a metropolitan reform position. A new episode in French metropolitan policy emerged when the creation of *métropoles* started in 2010–2012 (Pinson and Galimberti 2013). *Métropoles* are one of the four types of EPCI and take on further tasks in the area of social reproduction and competition policy. However, contrary to initial plans (and unlike the provinces in Italy), the *départements* were not abolished. Only in the case of Lyon does a *métropole* fulfil the functions of the *département* on its territory.

1.4.2 Italy

Italy's local government system is characterised by many small municipalities, which in comparison have a limited functional profile (Bobbio 2005). Intercommunal cooperation in the form of special-purpose associations does not have the same status as in Germany or France. For some metropolitan policy initiatives, the provinces as the second tier of local self-government were particularly relevant in city-regions such as Milan, Bologna or Florence, as they at least partly represent and refer to a functional city-region. However, it is only since the 1990s that these provincial governments have had limited resources and competencies for city-regional policy and planning.

A law passed in 1990 with the objective of promoting inter-municipal cooperation in metropolitan regions was in line with the European-wide trend at the time, but implementation was largely unresponsive. In the wake of the financial crisis in 2008 and the resulting consolidation pressures, the initiative was taken up again by the national government and reformulated as binding law in 2012. The plan was to abolish the provinces and create a new type of city-region governance in the biggest agglomerations of the country and city-regions on the islands of Sicily and Sardinia (which are regions with a special status). The provinces were to be transformed into a sort of city-regional government (*Città Metropolitana*) in those areas, while in the rural parts inter-municipal arrangements were expected to take over

provincial tasks (d'Albergo 2012; Vinci 2019). The latter did not happen. The whole reform process was rather cumbersome but in 2014 the new entities came into life, though their functional profile remained in part open for interpretation and derogation in the national legislation. The regional governments, together with local actors, were called upon to make proposals for the structures and competences of the new entity. Still, as many commentators show, the problem of more effective coordination and strategic planning remains largely unsolved in most city-regions in Italy, for various reasons (Vinci 2019; Fedeli 2017; Tubertini 2015). In contrast to Germany and France, there is no comparable range of institutional formats that have been successfully tested.

1.4.3 *Germany*

Germany has a long tradition of inter-municipal cooperation in many areas of the public sector (especially spatial planning, services of general interest, public transport). Inter-municipal associations have proven to be a consistent solution for the provision of local public services (Lorrain 2005). Other solutions such as regional cities and districts have remained much-discussed exceptions. Since the 1990s, the repertoire of formats has expanded in the course of the governance debate. Associations (*Regionalverbände*), limited liability companies, other voluntary forms of cooperation and networks were considered the method of choice and sometimes combinations of them are used on various spatial scales. As a result, inter-municipal cooperation in city-regions happens in a wide variety of forms and is widely recognised as a solution to the problems of agglomerations. Territorial reforms and amalgamations were carried out in the 1970s, but are rare today. Only in a few cases, such as Stuttgart, Hanover or, to a lesser extent, Rhine-Neckar, do the many initiatives result in an integrated metropolitan policy in which a high degree of binding coordination of action is implemented and an extensive bundle of public tasks is performed at the city-regional level. In other metropolitan regions such as Hamburg, the Ruhr, Munich or Frankfurt/Rhine-Main, structures remain fragmented or weakly institutionalised and thus unstable (Heinelt et al. 2011; Blatter 2005).

The content of inter-municipal cooperation has also changed. In addition to traditional tasks of spatial planning and services of general interest, additional metropolitan governance arrangements involving private actors are dedicated to international marketing and economic promotion, cultural policy, digitisation and innovation policy (Zimmermann 2012; Blatter 2005). All these forms of cooperation are usually the result of voluntary cooperation. In the case of the three city-states Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen, metropolitan policy is seeking to overcome state boundaries via contracts with the neighbouring states.

National government is less relevant as local government is a domain of the states and the states pursue different strategies with regard to the

consolidation of city-regions. The struggle for adequate forms and scales of metropolitan governance is not a national policy-issue. There is no nation-wide strategy or discourse except for the so-called European Metropolitan Regions. As an element of a metropolitan policy jointly pursued by the federal government, the states and some cities, initially seven, then 11 European metropolitan regions in Germany have received special attention for some years now (BMVBS 2006; MKRO 2013). The initiative is intended to highlight the importance of these metropolitan regions for economic and social development, although some observers note a one-sided focus on competitiveness (Blotevogel and Schmitt 2006). In contrast to France, however, these metropolitan regions do not receive any subsidies, but are supposed to realise synergies and mobilise resources by themselves.

1.5 Methods

In our study, we applied a comparative case study approach. The case study approach is applied at several levels according to the principle of casing (Ragin 1992; Gerring 2007). First, two city-regions in each state were considered as cases (in total six cases). In addition, we considered the three nation states as cases as nation states define frameworks and policies for city-regions. This allowed us to compare:

- City-regions in a cross-country perspective;
- National policy frameworks in a cross-country perspective; and
- Two city-regions within each nation state, as we expected regional differences.

Case study work in the city-regions included the analysis of the institutional framework, strategic planning approaches (if present) and policy processes. This is done in combination with the preparatory analysis of national metropolitan policy and through document analyses and interviews. The interviews allowed for the identification of the evaluation schemes of actors with regard to the functions of the city-region and the ideas that motivated the reforms. The document analyses are used to identify ideas in national reform discourse as well as the different spatial definitions of the city-regions used by local actors. In each case study, at least spatial planning, services of general interest, public transport and economic development (marketing) have been examined with regard to their regional significance. Other fields of action have been consulted on a case-by-case basis (e.g. regional parks in Stuttgart or digitisation in Frankfurt/Rhein-Main) as well as projects with relevance for the city-region (Île de Nantes in Nantes; trade fair, new main station Stuttgart 21, IBA 2027 in Stuttgart; Airport, Part-Dieu and Confluence in Lyon). *Città metropolitane*, *métropoles* and *Regionalverbände* are the institutions that have been closely analysed due to their key importance for city-regional governance. However, we observed in part the repartition of

Figure 1.1 City-Regions in Italy (Città Metropolitane), France (Métropole) and Germany (Metropolregionen and Planungsverbände) 2018 Concept: P. Feiertag Cartography: F. Gela

functions to several institutions (additional special-purpose associations, limited liability companies, voluntary networks) and on several spatial scales (variable geometry due to functional aspects; superimposition of a city-regional and a larger metropolitan scale). Thus, these various relevant governance arrangements in the six case-study regions were taken into account.

1.5.1 *Selection of case studies*

On the level of states, France and Italy were chosen because both states introduced a new legal framework for city-regions in the years 2012–2015 (see above). Germany, on the other hand, tends to show a pattern of incremental change and regionalised path dependency.

In each country, we excluded the capital city-regions and the city-states in Germany as they have more powers. We selected prosperous city-regions with manifest ambitions for city-regional cooperation or regional reforms, even when these ambitions partly date back to previous periods (as in the case of Bologna). In other words, we were searching for critical and meaningful cases with regard to a positive feature (city-regional governance).

1.5.2 *Interviews with experts*

The interviews were conducted as qualitative expert interviews, which are intended to provide information on the case studies as well as access to the cognitive frames of the reforms. The interview guidelines were adapted to the respective interviewee and his or her field of activity. Between seven and 11 persons were interviewed per case study region, in total 50 (see Appendix). The duration of the interviews was between 50 and 130 minutes. Most of the interviews took place in person during a field visit. Individual supplementary interviews were conducted by telephone or video conference. All interviews were recorded.

Different groups of experts were covered in each region:

- Representatives of regional governments (in particular relevant for Italy and France);
- Representatives of city-regional authorities and / or agencies;
- Representatives of local government (core city and surrounding municipalities), largely of the administration but also mayors;
- Other actors such as *Conseil de Développement of Métropole* in France, i.e. consultative body with actors from the civil society.

The interview questions covered the following aspects:

- Competences of the city-regional institution in different fields of action such as spatial planning, transport and economic development; sharing and repartition of functions with other levels;

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- Strategic planning processes including inter-municipal land use planning, regional planning and informal development strategies;
- Projects with regional relevance including the involvement of different actors in the course of implementation;
- Decision-making processes, in particular the involvement of municipalities at the city-regional level;
- The evolution of the city-regional institutions as well as ideas justifying the strengthening or emergence of institutions;
- Functional interdependencies in the city-region;
- Competing spatial definitions of the city-region, shifting boundaries as well as the use of the term “metropolitan region”.

In addition, we did expert talks, often with academics of local universities who had conducted research regarding planning and governance of their city-region.

1.5.3 Document analysis

For an overview of documents with regard to the national debate about metropolitan regions, crucial moments had to be determined. In France, *métropoles* have been introduced by the two laws RCT (16 December 2010) and MAPTAM (27 January 2014). The document analysis covered the discussion process from the announcement of the reform by the President (October, 2008) to the adoption of the second law in 2014. In Germany, the national debate concerns the introduction of Metropolitan regions in national spatial visions by the MKRO and subsequent debates about a paradigm shift in spatial planning. For Italy, the years 2009, 2012 and 2014 were essential as important laws or bylaws were issued.

The stock of documents reflecting national debates consisted of:

- National and regional laws and bylaws;
- Preparatory reports and policy papers;
- Parliamentary debates and speeches of ministers;
- Reports of association of cities;
- Academic publications.

Regarding the six city-regions, the stock of documents consisted of:

- Statutes, annual reports and budget plans;
- Strategic plans;
- Studies commissioned by city-regional institutions;
- Statements in consultation processes;
- Self-portrayal on homepages;
- Newspaper articles;
- Academic publications.

Regarding spatial relations and territorial profiles, the use (or absence) of maps and descriptions of the city-regions as well as debates about boundaries were of particular relevance. The document analysis revealed whether the appropriate spatial dimension was debated or not, how the choice of perimeter of metropolitan institutions was justified and whether functional and morphological aspects of the city-region were taken into account. Regarding the national framework in the three states, the question is whether the spatial dimension of city-regions played any role in the reshaping of the multi-level system. At the local level, i.e. regarding the six city-regions, we identified competing and evolving spatial definitions of the city-region.

For the dimension of ideas, a selected number of documents has been coded. In the French case, for example, these were speeches of presidents and ministers regarding the two laws RCT and MAPTAM³ as well as the report of an expert commission (Comité pour la réforme des collectivités locales 2009) and a publication of the Ministry of the Interior explaining the reform (Ministère de l'Intérieur 2011). The intention was to show ideas used by the government to justify metropolitan reforms. As the laws concern all levels of territorial government, a two-step analysis was made, exploring in a first step ideas justifying the reform as a whole and in a second step identifying ideas directly related to metropolitan regions and to the creation of the *métropole*. For the German case, documents from the MKRO related to the national spatial vision as well as academic articles describing the discussion process were analysed. National spatial development reports presented to the parliament are also included in the stock of documents as they reveal the contemporary interpretation of major challenges to be tackled by national policy and the ideas related to metro regions.

In the coding process, we have coded sentences or words that evoke specific ideas (Saldaña 2016). The categories used for coding have been in part

Table 1.3 Categories in the dimension of ideas

Category	Coding Indications (exemplary)
Cohesion	Balanced territorial development, benefit for the entire country, spill over to rural hinterland
Austerity	Financial crisis, debts, cutbacks
Welfare	Services of general interest, housing, mobility, sustainability
Democracy and social participation	Direct election, democratic legitimacy, identification of citizens with territorial entities
Efficiency and functional reforms	Modernisation of the state, fragmentation, decentralisation
Equal treatment of territories	Same treatment of all territorial authorities vs. adaptation to the spatial diversity
Local self-organisation	Top down vs. bottom up
Economic competitiveness	Economic growth, international competition, marketing, large-scale projects

pre-defined on the basis of academic writings and in part added during the process of coding (see Table 1.3). As a result, we could interpret which have been the dominant ideas driving the national reform discourse.

Notes

- 1 We continue to use the notion of city-regions, not only to avoid confusion but also with regard to our empirical case studies.
- 2 Usually the Anglo-Saxon type, the Scandinavian type, the southern European or Napoleonic type and the continental type (Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014).
- 3 Sarkozy 22.10. 2008 and 5.3.2009; Hortefeux 19.1.2010; Hollande 20.11.2012; Lebranchu 10.4.2013 and 29.1.2014.

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