2 France

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2.1 City-regions and their governance in France

The preferred solution for addressing metropolitan issues in France is municipal groupings with their own taxation. Their administrative capacities have been gradually extended since the 1970s. The recent creation of *métropoles* as a specific form of municipal grouping is another step in a longer history of territorial reforms (Parnet 2016, 242–243). *Départements*, the second tier of local government, are highly visible for citizens because of their responsibility for social welfare funds. However, their function has been mainly reduced to the implementation of national social welfare policies and the growth of compulsory expenditure limits their possibilities to become active in other policy fields (Négrier and Nicolas 2011, 77; Desjardins and Geppert 2020, 124). The *régions* created in the 1980s have become the leading level of government concerning economic development and transport, and cover large territories, in particular since their number was reduced from 22 to 13 in 2016 (without overseas territories). Due to their size, they are less relevant for city-regional governance.

In this section we will give an account of national metropolitan policy by focussing on the recent developments, i.e. the establishment of *métropoles* and *pôles métropolitains*. We will first explain the evolution of metropolitan groupings culminating in the creation of *métropoles* for joint policy-making in city-regions (2.1.1) and their extensive functions (2.1.2), and then we will discuss the ideas that guided the territorial reforms of the 2010s and that led to the creation of *métropoles* (2.1.3) as well as the spatial dimension of *métropoles* and *pôles métropolitains* (2.1.4).

2.1.1 Metropolitan institutions: a long history of municipal groupings instead of amalgamation

France is the country with the highest number of municipalities in Europe. Many of them are small or very small: about three-quarters (i.e. 25,059 out of 34,841) of the municipalities have fewer than 1,000 inhabitants (DGCL 2019). As attempts to amalgamate municipalities failed throughout the 20th century, multi-purpose associations were promoted to overcome

municipal fragmentation (Hertzog 2018, 134; Borraz and Le Galès 2005). France has a rich history of inter-municipal cooperation that began in the 19th century with contribution-financed single-purpose unions (*syndicats*), mainly in rural areas for public services such as water supply, sewage, waste collection, electricity and gas. From 1959 onwards, multi-purpose unions as well as *districts*,¹ which could levy their own taxes, were set up (Wollmann 2008, 58). The first wave of *communautés urbaines* was created by law in the 1960s, including Lyon, Lille, Bordeaux and Strasbourg, later followed by Brest in the 1970s, Nice and Nancy in the 1990s, Nantes and Toulouse in the 2000s and Dijon, Saint-Étienne and Clermont-Ferrand only between 2015 and 2017. A system of different types of groupings depending on the size of municipality was established in 1999 and complemented 11 years later by the *métropole*.

The creation of enlarged unions with more functions has accelerated throughout recent territorial reforms (see Figure 2.1). Since 2017, all² French municipalities have been engaged in one of the four forms of municipal groupings (*Etablissement public de coopération intercommunale à fiscalité propre*, EPCI): *communauté de communes* (CC), *communauté d'agglomération* (CA), *communauté urbaine* (CU) or *métropole*. Those municipal groupings have become an important pillar of French subnational government (Geppert 2017, 227). The difference between EPCIs and technical multi-purpose unions for water supply or sewage is that they have a number of compulsory functions and fiscal powers. Single-purpose and multi-purpose unions have been partly absorbed, but will continue to exist both inside and between EPCIs if their perimeters are more pertinent to their task than the EPCI (Hertzog 2018, 143). One example is the regional planning associations (*syndicats de SCoT*, see 2.2.3 and 2.3.3).

In analogy to rural and peri-urban areas, city-regions are organised as municipal groupings instead of merging the municipalities and creating new jurisdictions. The laws on reform of local government (RCT, 16 December 2010) and on modernising public territorial action and consolidating the metropolises (MAPTAM, 27 January 2014) created a specific kind of grouping called a “*métropole*” for city-regions. The main difference to the other types of EPCI is that *métropoles* have more compulsory functions and accordingly also a higher budget. Lyon is the only one with the status of a local authority, exerting the powers of the *département* over its territory.

Twenty-two *métropoles* have existed in France since 2018. All of them had been organised in some kind of municipal grouping before, meaning that there is a path-dependency of inter-municipal cooperation at the local level. Their trajectories, however, have been different as can also be seen in the two cases of Lyon (see 2.3) and Nantes (see 2.2). The pre-existing place-specific institutional structures had an impact on the recent metropolitan reform and its outcome, most notably in the case of the three *métropoles* with special status: Paris, Aix-Marseille and Lyon (Parnet 2016). The transformation of the former CUs and CAs into a *métropole* mainly took place in 2015, followed by a second wave of *métropoles* in 2018 (see Table 2.1).

Figure 2.1 Development of municipal groupings from 2007 to 2020 © Cartography: DGCL - Banatic

Table 2.1 The 22 French Métropoles

Name	Population	Area in km ²	Municipalities				History of municipal grouping			
	(1.1.2020)	(2020)	(2020)	District	CC	CA	CU	métropole		
Grand Paris	7,109,664	814.2	131							2016 ⁱ
Métropole d'Aix-Marseille-Provence	1,900,023	3,149.2	92							2016 ⁱⁱ
Métropole de Lyon	1,402,326	533.7	59	---	---	---	1969			2015
Métropole Européenne de Lille	1,157,126	647.8	90	---	---	---	1968			2015
Bordeaux Métropole	802,350	578.3	28	---	---	---	1968			2015
Toulouse Métropole	780,995	458.2	37	1992	---	2001	2009			2015
Nantes Métropole	658,356	523.4	24	1992	---	---	2001			2015
Métropole Nice Côte d'Azur	543,556	1,465.8	49	1959	---	---	1996			2012
Eurométropole de Strasbourg	499,357	337.6	33	---	---	---	1968			2015
Métropole Rouen Normandie	497,180	663.8	71	1995	---	2000	---			2015
Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole	478,548	421.8	31	1959	---	2001	---			2015
Rennes Métropole	456,784	705.0	43	1970	---	2000	---			2015
Grenoble-Alpes Métropole	450,626	545.5	49	---	1994	2000	---			2015
Métropole Toulon Provence Méditerranée	440,926	366.4	12	---	---	2002	---			2018
Saint-Étienne Métropole	409,614	723.5	53	---	1996	2001	2016			2018
Tours Val de Loire	298,907	389.2	22	1959	---	1999	2017			2018
Clermont Auvergne Métropole	295,898	300.6	21	---	1994	2000	2017			2018
Orléans Métropole	292,177	334.3	22	---	1999	2002	1/2017			7/2017
Métropole du Grand Nancy	261,055	142.3	20	1959	---	---	1996			2016
Dijon Métropole	258,782	240.0	23	1972	---	2000	2015			2018
Metz Métropole	225,082	306.0	44	1975	---	2002	---			2018
Brest Métropole	214,022	218.4	8	---	---	---	1974			2015
Median	442,500	490.8	35							
Average	855,705	630.2	44							

Source: Population and Municipalities: DGCL (Direction générale des collectivités locales, www.collectivites-locales.gouv.fr); Area: INSEE Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques

ⁱ New creation. The city of Paris was excluded from tax-collecting municipal groupings before. Existing EPCI on the territory of the *métropole* have been replaced by 12 sub-units (Établissements Publics Territoriaux), including formerly isolated municipalities (Geppert 2017, 239).

ⁱⁱ New creation formed by the CU Marseille, four CA and one *syndicat*. Marseille was organised since 2000 as CU and consisted of 18 municipalities.

2.1.1.1 Legitimacy

Métropoles are governed by a council composed of municipal councillors (*conseil de la métropole*), a president elected out of the council (*président de la métropole*) and an executive body formed by the vice-presidents (*bureau*). A *conférence métropolitaine* formed by the mayors of all member municipalities has advisory status and a coordinating function between the *métropole* and its member municipalities. The *conseil de développement* is another body with advisory status. It is composed of members of the civil society, organises debates and formulates propositions and statements both at the request of the *métropole* (e.g. within planning processes such as the local land use plan) and to self-selected topics.

It is common practice to elect a mayor as president, though national law does not prescribe this as a rule. The president is often the mayor of the core city (e.g. in Toulouse, Bordeaux, Brest and Montpellier), leading to a concentration of power. Each member municipality is represented by at least one councillor (or a number of councillors corresponding to the demographic weight of the municipality), but the number of vice-presidents is restricted to 20. It is noteworthy that the variation in the number of member municipalities is huge, ranging from eight to 131 municipalities (median of 35; see Table 2.1). Very large groupings are more challenging to manage, because governance is based on finding consensus. As councillors represent the interests of their municipality and mayors play a significant role as local leaders, finding consensus may be difficult. Four *métropoles* have more than 70 member municipalities: Métropole Rouen Normandie, Métropole Européenne de Lille, Métropole d'Aix-Marseille-Provence and Grand Paris.

Whereas the inter-municipal cooperation in the form of the *métropoles* is adopting the model of a hard, powerful institution, the urban-rural cooperation with their hinterland is either not institutionalised or happens through soft, flexible agreements (*contrat de réciprocité*) or light institutions dedicated to running the cooperation (*syndicat mixte, association, pôle métropolitain*; support of *agences d'urbanisme*). In 2018, 21 *métropoles*³ indicated in a survey 173 partnerships with surrounding territories, i.e. an average of 8.2 each, including both multi-thematic and single topic cooperation (43% single topic) as well as different degrees of institutionalisation (CGET 2019). This illustrates well that cooperation beyond the borders of the *métropoles* follows the logic of flexible geographies, with many different, overlapping perimeters of cooperation, depending on the topic. The *pôle métropolitains* are a case in point.

2.1.1.2 Pôles métropolitains

Pôles métropolitains are a soft form of voluntary inter-territorial cooperation introduced at the same time as the *métropole* by the RCT law in 2010. The legal definition is much more open in terms of members, spatial

but are financed by membership fees and project-related funding from upper level government. They therefore depend on the commitment of their members, in particular the presidents of the largest EPCI.

On first sight, *pôle métropolitains* and *métropoles* may seem to be concurrent forms of metropolitan governance. In fact, after a phase of experimentation with soft metropolitan networks such as the pôles (call for cooperation issued by DATAR in 2004, see Motte 2007; Demazière and Sykes 2021; Megerle 2008, 26), the state favoured the model of *métropoles*, which became obligatory in 2014 (loi MAPTAM). However, the municipalities often sympathised with the more flexible model of the *pôle métropolitain* and established it in numerous city-regions. Between 2011 and 2013, only one *métropole* was created, Nice, but 11 pôles. Since 2014, the *métropoles* have dominated the national discourse, but numerous new pôles have emerged in areas with smaller urban centres. Measured in terms of incentives granted by the state, resources and attention, the *métropoles* can be considered as winners in the competition between the two models (Vanier 2017). Measured in terms of the number of pôles created, however, they have also been able to establish themselves. Since many large cities (Lyon, Nantes, Rouen, Strasbourg, Rennes, Saint-Étienne, Clermont-Ferrand, Nancy, Metz and Brest; and in a preliminary stage also Toulouse and Grenoble) are today part of both a *métropole* and a *pôle métropolitain*, both can be interpreted as complementary forms rather than competing models for the organisation of metropolitan spaces. In terms of administrative power, the *métropole* is much more relevant.

2.1.2 *Functions: redistributing responsibilities within the emerging multilayer system*

Throughout the history of inter-municipal cooperation in France, a gradual shift of municipal responsibilities to the inter-municipal level has taken place (Borraz and Le Galès 2005). Municipal groupings only have powers in matters that are explicitly listed in their statutes, whereas municipalities can act in any matter of municipal interest. However, today the responsibilities of the EPCIs are more important than the powers left to the municipalities. Hertzog (2018, 146) even anticipates, that they will in the long run become “the consistent municipal level, the old communes staying like the parishes in England.” Out of the different types of municipal groupings in France, *métropoles* have the broadest portfolio of functions. Compared to inter-municipal cooperation in other countries, even *communautés de communes* “have an important list of compulsory competences and are incited to progressively absorb the technical unions” (Hertzog 2018, 148); this statement applies even more to the *métropoles* (see Table 2.2).

As a general rule, inter-municipal cooperation is more intense in urban areas than in rural ones, reflected by the functional profile of CCs, CAs, CUs and *métropoles*. However, local variation is possible. Member

Table 2.2 Overview of compulsory responsibilities of municipal groupings according to the MAPTAM law

<i>Policy field</i>	<i>Communauté de communes (CC)</i>	<i>Communauté d'agglomération (CA)</i>	<i>Communauté urbaine (CU)</i>	<i>Métropole</i>
Economic development	x	x	x	x
Urban planning	SCoT	SCoT	SCoT, PLU, development projects	x
Flood protection	x	x	x	x
Mobility	Optional	x	x	x
Housing	Optional	x	x	x
Services of general interest	Optional	optional	Drinking water and sewage, cemeteries and crematoria, slaughterhouses and wholesale markets, fire brigade, electricity, heating networks, gas, charging devices for electric vehicles	x
Environment	Optional	optional	Waste, air pollution, noise pollution, energy consumption	x
Culture and sports	optional	optional	Infrastructure of mutual interest	Infrastructure of mutual interest

municipalities of each municipal grouping can delegate additional functions to the inter-municipal level, depending on local consensus and the willingness to pursue inter-municipal integration. Or, on the contrary, they can choose a type of municipal grouping with fewer compulsory functions if they do not wish to adopt them, e.g. a CA instead of a CU or a CC instead of a CA. Brest is an example of a city-region with a higher degree of integration despite the relatively small size of the city-region (Geppert 2017, 236). Whether the transformation into a *métropole* induces significantly enlarged competencies or not depends on prior integration. Changes in the functional profile were significant in the case of the former CAs such as Rennes or Grenoble and only minor in some former CUs (see section 2.2.1 and Table 2.1).

The redistribution of responsibilities within the multilayer system did not only apply to the municipalities and municipal groupings, but to all levels of territorial government. A key aim of recent French territorial reforms was to redefine the functions of each layer and reduce the overlap of powers (Parnet 2016, 241). The *régions* and the municipal groupings have been strengthened whereas *départements* and municipalities have lost functions, in particular in urban areas. The *métropoles* have acquired some former departmental functions. An entire delegation of functions of the *département* to the *métropole* within its territory has so far only happened in Lyon, where the transfer came about due to an alliance of the mayor of Lyon and the president of the Département Rhône (Geppert 2017, 237; see 2.3.1). The French government sympathises with the idea of expanding this model to all *métropoles*, but has met local opposition both from presidents of several *métropoles* (e.g. Nantes, see 2.2.1) and *départements*. So far, a mandatory transfer of responsibilities concerns only departmental roads and some minor tasks, whereas the *départements* keep their role concerning school education and social policy. Each *métropole* had to sign an agreement with its *département* about at least three responsibilities out of a list of eight to be transferred in January 2017. The most popular have been funds for housing and youth care. The same law (NOTR 2015) also abolished the general clause of competence for *départements* and *régions*. Previously, each level of government had the power to intervene in any policy field concerning its territory, without a hierarchy between them. The reform was supposed to clarify roles and define the main responsible level of government (Desjardins and Geppert 2020, 125). Regions have the leading role for economic development and intermodal transport, *départements* for social policies such as minimum income, job placement and social services for elderly people and youth care (Négrier and Nicolas 2011). There are still policy fields shared by all levels such as culture, sport, tourism, education and environment.

Régions and *métropoles* have overlapping responsibilities in the field of economic development and environmental protection. In the field of planning, a hierarchy of comprehensive plans developed at different levels of

government below the state was introduced in 2015. The *régions* had to adopt a legally binding strategic plan until 2019, the SRADDET (schéma régional d'aménagement, de développement durable et d'égalité des territoires). The SRADDET replaces a range of sectoral plans and is binding for the lower scale regional plan SCoT (schéma de cohérence territoriale) developed by the municipal groupings. The SCoT was introduced in the year 2000 (law SRU), leading to a first generation of plans in the mid-2000s. This was an attempt to reintroduce a strategic dimension to spatial planning and to link land use, transport and housing (Verhage et al. 2007, 83; Wollmann 2008, 186). Inter-municipal cooperation was deepened by this joint task of developing a future vision for the territory and staff for spatial planning tasks was increased (Kuhlmann et al. 2011, 162). The subordination of the already existing SCoT to the SRADDET can lead to conflicts, because the *métropoles* have much more experience, know-how and manpower in the field of spatial planning whereas *régions* have in the past concentrated on regional economic development and the distribution of regional funds. Despite decentralisation, France continues to be a unitary state and *régions* remain rather weak in terms of budgets and decision-making power as they cannot formulate laws (Beyer 2017, 40). Due to the power of the *métropoles*, *régions* are tempted to focus their efforts on the compensation of non-metropolitan areas, while their competencies – innovation, regional rail transport, etc. – relate strongly to large agglomerations (Desjardins and Geppert 2020, 130).

2.1.3 *Ideas behind territorial reforms: efficiency in the public sector*

The simplification of the territorial organisation of the French state and the clarification of power relations between governmental levels were the main preoccupation of the territorial reforms of the years 2010 and 2014/15 (Geppert 2017, 234; Vanier 2017, 18; Négrier and Nicolas 2011). Terms such as “excessive number of levels”, “confusion”, “dysfunction and redundancies” used by president Sarkozy (2008) underline the need to intervene and to rationalise the distribution of responsibilities. In the speeches of presidents and ministers related to the RCT and MAPTAM laws, only limited parts concern the *métropoles* introduced by those laws. *Pôles métropolitains* are for the most not mentioned at all. This illustrates well that the reforms concerned the entire system of public administration and territorial representation, not just the metropolitan regions.

Although the main driver in terms of ideas is efficiency in the public sector, when speaking of *métropoles*, the main idea that is evoked by the government is the increased competition of cities on a European and global scale related to globalisation. This idea is used to justify the need for strong, integrated institutions to govern city-regions. Their new legal status and functions such as economic development, marketing and innovation are supposed to enable them to better ensure their international competitiveness

and economic dynamism (Lebranchu 2014). The debate focuses on the distribution of functions between layers of government, whereas the spatial dimension of metropolitan regions is left aside. In consequence, the national laws favour institutional integration of the *métropoles* instead of addressing an enlargement or redefinition of perimeters.

Another idea often referred to is the provision of services of general interest. The argument is that city-regions are congested areas with an increased need for steering and coordination. The city-region is seen as an appropriate problem-solving level for housing, transport, education, social services and environmental issues related to the needs of the inhabitants. This argument justifies the transfer of additional responsibilities to the *métropole*. It also implies that *métropoles* are not only dedicated to production functions, but also to functions of social reproduction, which is in fact reflected in the profile of their compulsory responsibilities set by the legislator. The concentration of functions at the level of *métropoles* is justified in conjunction with efficiency arguments.

The idea of local self-government was relevant in 2009–2010. The issue was whether metropolitan governments should be created top-down by national law as argued by the expert commission Balladur (Comité pour la réforme des collectivités locales 2009) or based on voluntary inter-municipal initiatives. The interior minister Hortefeux (2010) argued at that time that “the dynamics must come from the territories themselves. State-imposed *métropoles*, from Paris, will guarantee useless polemics and certainly fail” (own translation).⁵ Accordingly, the legal status of *métropole* was first introduced as a voluntary option. But only one city-region, Nice, adopted it. This position was therefore partly revised with the MAPTAM law in 2014, when the transformation into a *métropole* became compulsory for the largest municipal groupings with at least 400,000 inhabitants located in a functional urban area (*aire urbaine*) of 650,000 or more inhabitants. Smaller ones may be granted this status on their request but only with the agreement of the national government.

The idea of national territorial cohesion (*égalité du territoire*) is related to the concern of rural areas and small towns about being disadvantaged by the reforms strengthening the territorial organisation of metropolitan regions. The counter-argument of the government follows the theory of spill-over, arguing that the entire country will benefit economically from strengthening metropolitan regions. This is related to the idea of competitiveness as metropolises are seen as engines of growth.

Participation has played a minor role when justifying the reforms. The idea of citizen involvement and strengthening local democracy was therefore not the driving force behind the legislative initiative, but was taken into account. It is related to decentralisation (“closer to the citizens”) and accountability and concerns mainly the local level. Still, the democratic control of inter-municipal politics by the citizens is acknowledged as a weakness: “there is some anomaly in the fact that the EPCIs, some of which

exercise almost general competence, remain indirectly elected, even though the expenditure they incur is equivalent to that of the regions” (own translation,⁶ Comité pour la réforme des collectivités locales 2009). At the same time, the representation of municipalities within the EPCI will be kept (Hollande 2012). Despite attempts to overcome the democratic deficit (Wollmann 2008, 45; Demazière 2018, 70) by introducing direct elections, the election of the metropolitan council is still tied to the municipal election. Since 2014, candidates that will represent the municipality in the metropolitan council have been separately listed on the ballots for municipal elections (Hertzog 2018, 147). The only exception, with different constituencies and electoral lists for the metropolitan council, is Lyon due to its status as a *département* (see 2.3.1). Therefore, the legitimacy of metropolitan governance and planning remains weak, whereas technical capacities are strong.

2.1.4 *Spatial relationships: partial enlargement based on population threshold*

The creation of the *pôle métropolitain* displays a multi-scaled logic of creating flexible spaces for governance. The dimension of space did not play any role in the process of creation of the *métropoles*. If any cartographic visualisation was used at the national level in the context of the creation of the *métropoles*, the city-regions were represented as dots on the map (see Figure 2.3). The debate centred on their number and their functions in the multilayer system. Regarding their sociospatial relations, *métropoles* were conceptualised as “scale” (Jessop et al. 2008, 293), meaning that the vertical differentiation between state institutions and scalar division of labour is emphasised. The national laws left the definition of the appropriate perimeter to the municipal groupings themselves. An exception was Aix-Marseille, where local actors could not reach a consensus to overcome institutional fragmentation, and the national government intervened by merging six municipal groupings (Parnet 2016; Douay 2013).

Instead of setting a perimeter, a minimum threshold of population was fixed to be eligible as a *métropole*. However, this criterion turned out to be flexible and was modified by various tailor-made exceptions at the request of local actors willing to acquire the status. This means that the criteria of eligibility have been adapted to the existing municipal groupings instead of forcing them to expand their territory to meet the population threshold. The category of *métropole* was initially intended for the largest agglomerations with at least 500,000 inhabitants (law RCT 2010) as well as the four CUs compulsorily created in the 1960s.⁷ In 2014 (law MAPTAM), the threshold was lowered to municipal groupings of 400,000 inhabitants with a functional urban area of 650,000 or more. During the elaboration of the law, Montpellier and Brest, which were below the population threshold, successfully campaigned to be granted the metropolitan status. Tailor-made additional criteria fitting each case were included (Geppert 2017, 235):

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Figure 2.3 Map of métropoles by the French government

regional capitals as well as EPCIs, which already exerted the full powers of the *métropoles* when the law entered into force. In 2017, the criteria were relaxed again due to lobbying of the presidents of the municipal groupings (Demazière and Sykes 2021; Beyer 2017, 38) and enabled a substantial increase of *métropoles* from 15 to 22 (see Figure 2.3). Each municipal grouping can request to be granted the status of *métropole* if it has more than 250,000 inhabitants and is a regional capital with an employment zone of more than 400,000 inhabitants or a former regional capital⁸ with an employment zone of more than 500,000 inhabitants.

Apart from the first *métropole* Nice, none of the current 22 *métropoles* voluntarily changed their perimeter during the transformation into a *métropole*. They did not wish to integrate and enlarge at the same time. Since

gaining the status of *métropole*, the spatial extension has been stable in 20 out of 22 cases; only Lille and Strasbourg added new member municipalities. Therefore, “instead of creating large alliances on the scale of broad urban areas, metropolises result in the increased integration of the urban cores of the municipalities, crystallizing pre-existing territorial structures” (Geppert 2017, 235). However, in a few cases, an enlargement took place in the years before the creation of the *métropole* (see Table 2.3). The CAs of Rennes and Saint-Étienne had fewer than 400,000 inhabitants before their enlargement and thereby exceeded the threshold. All in all, eight *métropoles* did adapt their perimeter at all between 2010 and 2020, and three only in minor terms with one or two additional municipalities. The most significant changes of

Table 2.3 Enlargement of *métropoles* by additional member municipalities between 2010 and 2020 (March 2020)

<i>Métropole</i>	<i>Enlargement in preparation (after 2010)</i>	<i>Enlargement simultaneous with change to métropole</i>	<i>Enlargement after creation of métropole (until 2020)</i>
Grand Paris		2016 New creation	0
Aix-Marseille Provence		2016 New creation	0
Lyon	2011 + 1 municipality	0	0
Lille	2014 + 1	0	2017 + 5 municipalities
Bordeaux	2013 + 1	0	0
Toulouse	2011 + 12	0	0
Nantes	0	0	0
Nice	0	2012 + 22 municipalities	0
Strasbourg	0	0	2017 + 5
Rouen	0	0	0
Montpellier	0	0	0
Rennes	7/2012 + 1	0	0
Grenoble	2014 + 5	0	0
Toulon	2012 + 1	0	0
Saint-Étienne	2014 + 21	0	0
Tours	0	0	0
Clermont	2013 + 2	0	0
Orléans	2017 + 8	0	0
Nancy	2014 + 3	0	0
Dijon	0	0	0
Metz	2013 + 2	0	2019 -1 due to merger of two municipalities
Brest	2014 + 4	0	0
	0	0	0

perimeter took place in Aix-Marseille, Rouen (already in 2009 by merging two CAs and two CCs), Nice, Grenoble, Toulouse and Saint-Étienne. Aix-Marseille, Nice and Saint-Étienne are also among the *métropoles* with the largest area (see Table 2.1).

The dynamic of spatial redefinition and consolidation has been higher in spaces beyond the *métropoles*. Other types of municipal groupings have been considerably enlarged due to many mergers of small *communautés de communes* and the emergence of large *communautés d'agglomération*, partly in direct vicinity of *métropoles* or *pôles métropolitains* (see AdCF 2017, 22 and Figure 2.1). An example of a huge CA is Pays Basque with an area of 2,967 km², 159 member municipalities and about 300,000 inhabitants. Its territory is much larger than most *métropoles* (see Table 2.1). The CU Grand Reims with 144 municipalities was created out of seven CCs and the CA Reims Métropole. Both were established in 2017 as alternatives to a *pôle métropolitain* initially preferred by the municipalities.

The redrawing of the map of inter-municipal cooperation was pushed by the state and was largely accomplished by 2017 (Hertzog 2018, 142; Geppert 2017, 233). Since 2010, a representative of the government (préfet) has prepared a scheme (*schéma départemental de coopération intercommunale*, SDCI) after each municipal election which includes a proposition on how to redefine the boundaries of municipal groupings in the *département*. It is submitted to a committee of local representatives; they can deviate from the proposition, but only with a two-thirds majority. The second generation of SDCI was adopted in 2016 and induced significant changes, though not in all *départements* equally. The objective was to complete the coverage of the national territory by municipal groupings, reduce their number and upgrade them into more integrated categories in order to rationalise the territorial organisation and increase the efficiency of the local administration. As a result, the weight and technical capacity of municipal groupings has increased, but the very large groupings are running the risk of losing the proximity to their citizens (Geppert 2017, 234).

The upscaling also concerned planning perimeters. The more integrated groupings are obliged to take responsibility for land use planning. Even CCs and CAs are supposed to draw up inter-municipal land use plans (*Plan local d'urbanisme intercommunal*, PLUi) since 2010 (law Grenelle), because the national law foresees the PLUi as the desired standard and the municipal PLU as an exception (Molino and Allé 2013, 7). A PLUi with a regulatory part for the entire municipal grouping already exist in the *métropoles* such as in Lyon and Nantes (see 2.2.2 and 2.3.2) or are under preparation. They will become much more common in the near future in other areas as well. Until December 2017, only 22 PLUis were valid in France, but 324 were in the process of elaboration (Fédération des SCoT 2018, 4).

The city-regional strategic plan *schéma de cohérence territoriale* (SCoT) has also been up-scaled. As standard for the future, the SCoT has to be developed by several groupings forming a planning association instead

of individual municipal groupings. In addition to that, the size of EPCIs increased and thus led to the revision of SCoT perimeters (Vanier et al. 2017, 34). Note that the institutional territory of a *métropole* and the territory for a SCoT do not coincide, with few exceptions. Whereas the *métropoles* themselves are mainly monocentric, covering one urban core and its adjacent built-up area, the planning regions are larger, mostly more polycentric, and include peri-urban areas. The functional area defined as *aire métropolitaine* is in most cases even larger than the SCoT planning region (see 2.3.2). Not all *métropoles* are yet part of a larger SCoT with surrounding municipal groupings. Montpellier (Moscarelli 2016), Rouen, Nice and Orléans still have a SCoT for the territory of the *métropole* and a more detailed PLUi for the same area under preparation.

The legal possibility of a PLUi having the function of a regional land use plan (SCoT) existed for a short period, but was revoked in 2017, meaning that their number is limited to the 13 plans already started and is not an option anymore. All urban regions are part of a SCoT. This is not the case for all rural territories. Though the number and size of planning regions have increased in the last decade, the plans do not cover the entire country yet (see Figure 2.4). The size of planning regions varies greatly and is defined at the local level. However, strong legal incentives due to limited possibilities of urban extension without a SCoT have led to a step-by-step implementation even in rural areas and to an enlargement of planning areas.

Hence, the French planning system foresees in the future a hierarchy of three planning documents with a SRADDET at the scale of the *région*, a SCoT at the scale of several EPCIs and a PLUi at the scale of each *métropole*. At the national level, a comprehensive spatial development plan does not exist, but several sectoral schemes (e.g. regarding flood risk management) define binding rules that have to be taken on in the subsequent planning instruments SRADDET, SCoT and PLUi (Desjardins and Geppert 2020, 126). These changes in the planning system seek to ensure the coordination of spatial planning across different levels and thus to reduce the institutional fragmentation and the competition between municipalities for investments and tax revenues. Whether this aim is achieved or not varies from city-region to city-region and depends to a high degree on the maturity of inter-municipal cooperation, as Demazière (2018) argues.

The French state intervened in the 1990s by launching regional plans for some areas of national interest, the “directive territoriale d’aménagement” (DTA). They cover city-regions such as Lyon and Nantes (see sections 2.2 and 2.3), but also areas with high vulnerability (the Alps and river deltas) or difficult economic situations such as the former mining area of the Lorraine (Carpenter and Verhage 2014, 61). Six DTAs were approved by the state between 2003 and 2007.⁹ Existing DTAs are still legally binding for local land use plans, but new ones after 2010 (Law Grenelle II) would only have a guiding character (and are called DTADD [directive territoriale d’aménagement et de développement durable]). After this legal change, no

Figure 2.4 Planning regions for SCoT Data: DGALN/ BSCI SuDocUH

state-led regional plans have been developed. All in all, France is en route towards more consolidated forms of territorial governance for city-regions. The main components are the municipal groupings of the core of metropolitan regions (*métropoles*), supplemented by larger spaces for regional planning and soft coordination of policies.

2.2 Multi-scaled governance of Nantes: *métropole* and bipolar metropolitan region

Nantes is a regional capital and gateway city in Western France, a former working-class town (ship-building industry, agri-food industry) as well as an inland port city (Masson et al. 2013, 26). In addition, Nantes was the former residence of the dukes of Bretagne. Its economic structure, physical shape and image have been altered over time and especially in the course of a successful structural change. While the industry and port activities have been

declining since the 1960s, the university reopened in 1962 and around 5,500 jobs in the tertiary sector were transferred to the city between 1970 and 1985 due to a deconcentration of the national administration, for example the services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Devisme 2009, 23). Multiple transport connections have been enhanced in the last 40 years, increasing the gateway function of the city-region. Among these enhanced connections are the motorway to Paris (mainly constructed in the 1970s and 80s) and connections to Bordeaux and Rennes, a high-speed rail line (opened in 1989) as well as flight connections to various European destinations (Renard 2015). During the 1990s, Nantes was the French city-region with the highest population growth (Devisme 2009, 23). At the same time, large public and private companies such as the French Post and the railway company SNCF as well as the multimedia chain FNAC settled in Nantes (Masson et al. 2013, 12–13). Industrial working places have been replaced by higher service functions. Nowadays, the university hospital (CHU, to be relocated on the Île de Nantes), French Post, Airbus, public administrations (*région, département, métropole* and city), the university as well as banking services and regional headquarters of construction and insurance companies are large employers. Nantes' economy has proved to be reasonably resilient since the 2008 crisis (Griggs et al. 2018, 6). Alongside economic transformation, Nantes has succeeded in branding itself as an attractive, vibrant city with a high quality of life. This was mainly achieved through cultural events, international networking, large-scale urban projects, rankings and labels such as EcoCité (Griggs et al. 2018, 6; Garat et al. 2005, 149; Gravari-Barbas 2009).

When talking about metropolitan governance and planning, the following key characteristics should be mentioned, which will be unpacked throughout this chapter:

- Strong inter-municipal institution *Nantes Métropole* with the main integration phase in the 2000s;
- Specific governance arrangements such as *pôles de proximité* and merged administration show that the national laws only define a framework for the metropolitan institution, leaving space to adapt it to local conditions;
- Cooperation in the wider metropolitan region Nantes – Saint-Nazaire has been developed in parallel to the strong municipal grouping and relevant for local actors though less institutionalised;
- The mayor of Nantes has a leadership position within the city-region due to multiple positions as president of the *métropole*, of the *pôle métropolitain* and of the local development agency SAMOA;
- Importance of the successful flagship project regeneration of Île de Nantes and the SAMOA for the entire metropolitan region.

In this section, we will analyse governance and planning in the metropolitan region of Nantes as one of two French case studies in the book. We first focus on the core of the metropolitan region, organised in the form of the

institution Nantes Métropole (2.2.1). Second, we will show institutional borders, planning perimeters and functional interrelations in the metropolitan region (2.2.2) and we will scrutinise governance arrangements covering larger spaces than the core area (2.2.3).

2.2.1 *The institution: Nantes Métropole*

Nantes was one of the 11 city-regions adopting the status of a *métropole* in January 2015 due to the national law MAPTAM (see 2.1.1). The transformation of the municipal grouping into a *métropole* was mandatory since it exceeds the threshold of 400,000 inhabitants. Nantes was not subject to special arrangements in the legislation, unlike Lyon, Aix-Marseille, Paris, Brest and Nancy (the latter two were exceptions due to their population size being below 400,000) or Lille and Strasbourg (appellation that refers to their cross-border character). Compared to the other 21 *métropoles* existing since 2018, Nantes is above the median in terms of number of inhabitants (7th largest) and in the middle position in terms of area (11th largest), but has a relatively small number of member municipalities (15th of 22 *métropoles*).

2.2.1.1 *From communauté urbaine to métropole*

In the case of Nantes, the intensification of inter-municipal integration started late compared to the first four *communautés urbaines* created in the 1960s (see 2.1.1). Nevertheless, it was one of the most integrated municipal groupings in the 2010s when the national metropolitan reform was established. The major step in its institutional development was the creation of the CU in 2001. The emergence of inter-municipal cooperation started in 1982 with the creation of a *syndicat intercommunal à vocation multiple*, the SIMAN, that became a *district urbain* with own tax revenues in 1992, but these predecessors were very light structures with few human resources, limited tasks and at that stage a poorly developed attitude towards inter-municipal collaboration. The transformation from a *district urbain* to a CU was fundamental, as a common policy was gradually put into place (Garat 2013, 99). The crucial impetus for the transformation towards a municipal grouping with substantial responsibilities and resources came from the national level (law Chevènement 1999) with the incentive of additional financial allocations. The mayors of the 24 member municipalities reached a compromise about governance rules through intensive debate. The compromise included tangible advantages for the municipalities through municipal projects realised by the CUs and a key role of the mayors in decision-making processes through a regular conference of mayors (*conférence des maires*). The governance rules were laid down in a charter (*charte de fonctionnement*), which forms the foundation of today's governance mechanisms. The fundamental rules of the Nantes model of collaborative governance were

the maintenance of a central role for mayors across the conurbation; negotiated outcomes, often between mayors; multicenter urban development not solely concentrated on Nantes; the multiplication of spaces of dialogue and engagement; and significantly, the investment in the “urban project” as a primary site for, and instrument of, urban governance.

(Griggs et al. 2018, 7)

Due to its late creation, the CU de Nantes deliberately transferred a larger number of responsibilities to the inter-municipal level compared to other CUs that had been created decades previously. These included urban planning, housing, transport, management of public space and economic development.

The municipal grouping has slowly progressed: in the first years municipal projects were put together, but later on collective objectives were defined to guide its public policies in a more transversal way. A significant step in the institutional development took place in 2008/2009. At that time the administration of the CU was pooled with the city administration of Nantes (see below), a plan for investment for the period 2008–2014 (*PPI programmes pluriannuels d'investissement*) was negotiated between the CU and each member municipality, and thematic conferences were started to prepare strategic documents on transport and housing (Garat 2013, 99–108).

In 2012, the presidency of the municipal grouping changed. Jean-Marc Ayrault, who had been mayor of Nantes for 25 years and president of the CU since its foundation, became Prime Minister¹⁰ in 2012 when the MAPTAM national law was passed and he did not stand as a candidate again afterwards. He had established a “consensual and pragmatic logic of decision making” (Griggs et al. 2018, 7) and had been crucial for inter-municipal integration. The handover of power to his successors Patrick Rimbart (interrim) and Johanna Rolland elected in 2014 cannot be seen as political disruption as both politicians belong to the left-wing party PS. Nevertheless, it caused some changes in terms of the leading positions, including a generational change, a surplus of women in power as well as a change in policy priorities, communication style and topics. During the era of Ayrault, community participation went hand in hand with highly visible redevelopment projects, and an agenda of internationalisation and growth orientation. Rolland, whose first mandate was shaped by a period of austerity, reinforced the culture of proximity associated with the Nantes model by highlighting citizen dialogue (Griggs et al. 2018, 6–15). Also, she directed the political work towards the everyday life of citizens, services of general interest in the neighbourhoods, schools, green spaces in the city and energy transition.

The legal status of *métropole* obtained in 2015 did not induce a significant institutional change in Nantes, in contrast to what has happened in many other *métropoles*. The municipal grouping already possessed all the

competencies required by the MAPTAM law at that time. Only minimal changes of its functions took place on a voluntary basis, concerning the responsibility for some cultural and sports infrastructure such as the opera as well as financial support for inter-municipal company kindergartens. Due to a national law (Law NOTR 2015, art. 90) Nantes had to adopt an agreement (*convention de transfert de compétences*) with the *département* about departmental responsibilities to be transferred until 1 January 2017 and took over the competence for departmental roads as well as the assistance for social housing, youth care and the elderly. According to the interviewees, the creation of the *métropole* felt like a natural step. This was mainly because it was not intensively debated on the political level and passed almost unnoticed by the citizens. The name of the institution did not change either as the term *métropole* had already been used since 2004.

2.2.1.2 Nantes Métropole in the multilayer system

The *métropole* is part of the multilayer system and shares responsibilities with higher territorial authorities. Additionally, it seeks to coordinate public policies via soft institutions beyond its own boundaries (see 2.2.3). Nantes is the largest agglomeration and the capital of both the Région Pays de la Loire and the Département Loire-Atlantique, and has been growing in terms of its economy and population in the last 30 years. This has contributed to Nantes' economic relevance as well as to its self-confidence and claim for self-government, underpinned by the capacities of its institution. The described configuration could potentially lead to conflicts with the *région* whereas the sharing of responsibilities with the *département* is more consensual because of similar political majorities and fewer overlapping functions.

The *département* is mainly responsible for social reproduction functions, more specifically social policy, and has seen its responsibilities being diminished within the last decade (see 2.1.2). In the past, it has played a role in coordinating spatial development, but this is no longer the case. Nowadays it rather supports the inter-municipal level on a project base, e.g. concerning bicycle paths along the river Loire. According to the interviewees, a merger of *métropole* and *département* within the perimeter of the *métropole* such as in Lyon is unwanted. One of the main reasons is the high costs of social policy. The president of Nantes Métropole has explicitly proclaimed her objections against such ideas pushed at the national level, pleading instead for more agile soft cooperation beyond the *métropole* instead, e.g. in the form of contracts (Dubois 2018; see 2.2.3).

The perimeter of the Région Pays de la Loire remained unchanged during the reform of the regions in 2016. Due to decentralisation of some strategic competencies, the functions of all French regions have been increased. The region is supposed to have a strategic role concerning the production function (infrastructures, economic development), leading to an overlap of responsibilities and to potential tensions with the *métropole*. Both

institutions have roughly the same budget (Devisme 2009, 37). In the field of economic development, the region is the leading territorial authority. Anyway, the territory of the *métropole* is to a certain degree excluded from the responsibility of the region: the *métropole* also has competencies in the field of economic development and can therefore deviate from the regional strategy. Besides that, the *région* has gained responsibilities in spatial planning and possesses for the first time in its history a planning instrument that is legally binding for local land use plans, the SRADDET. *Nantes Métropole* has outlined its role and expectations within the participation process, portraying itself as the economic engine of the region and outlining at the same time particular challenges in terms of social cohesion (Nantes Métropole 2017). Concerning its more traditional instruments of distributing funding for regional development, the *Région Pays de la Loire* signs co-financing contracts with all municipal groupings within its territory, using two instruments depending on the size and the type of grouping: the *Contrat de Développement Métropolitain* (CDM) for *Nantes Métropole* and the two *communautés urbaines* (CU Angers Loire Métropole and CU le Mans Métropole) as well as the *Contrats Territoires-Région* (CTR) with the CA and CC (see 2.3.2). The difference is that the amount of subsidies for each territory is, in the case of the CTR, calculated using a distribution key¹¹ but has few thematic restrictions, whereas the choice of projects to be co-financed via CDM is more political. The distribution of funds among Nantes, Angers and Le Mans is negotiated after the local proposals have been handed in.

Apart from setting the legal framework, the state has a far-reaching influence on planning and governing the metropolitan region by taking infrastructure decisions. In the case of Nantes, the cancellation in January 2018 by the French Government of an airport project planned since the 1960s and located between Nantes and Rennes (Notre-Dame-des-Landes) has turned the development strategy of the region upside down. Due to these circumstances, the deadline for the SRADDET Pays de la Loire has been pushed to the end of 2020 to give the region sufficient time for the necessary reorientation and to organise a territorial dialogue. Secondly, the harbour of Saint-Nazaire with its considerable spatial dimension is currently under state responsibility but is no longer considered as one of the main ports of national interest according to the current national strategy. Both sites are not within the boundaries of *Nantes Métropole*, but have considerable importance for the metropolitan region and its spatial development (Terrassier 2012). In terms of strategic planning, the estuary of the Loire with Saint-Nazaire and Nantes is one of six territories of national interest covered by a *directive territoriale d'aménagement* (DTA Estuaire de la Loire, started in 1996 and approved in July 2006). The document has been particularly relevant for dealing with land use conflicts in the sensible river delta (Devisme 2009, 35). Today, the DTA is still formally binding for the SCoT, but is partially outdated and not likely to be renewed.

2.2.1.3 Functions of the *Métropole*

The institution *Nantes Métropole* does not have the status of a territorial jurisdiction, but takes on a substantial number of municipal responsibilities on behalf of the member municipalities since 2001. The competencies that the member municipalities agreed on slightly exceed those prescribed by law as compulsory competencies for *métropoles* (see 2.1.2). These additional competencies concern both production and social reproduction functions, e.g. accommodation for Roma and travelling communities, actions in favour of disabled people, equipment for higher education and research as well as major equipment for transport, telecommunications, sports and culture.

Regarding production functions, *Nantes Métropole* is responsible for the following policies:

- Economic development;
- Marketing and tourism;
- Support of innovation, higher education and research;
- Major infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, sports and culture (e.g. the art museum, the stadium, the opera house).

Regarding social reproduction functions, *Nantes Métropole* is competent in the following policies:

- Housing;
- Public transport (via the public transport company Simetan);
- Public spaces and roads (except roads of national importance; planning and construction, cleaning, street lighting, video surveillance);
- Environmental protection;
- Energy (distribution of electricity, gas and heat; advancement of renewable energies and energy efficiency; climate plan);
- Waste collection and treatment as well as water distribution and wastewater treatment;
- Minor tasks concerning social policy, e.g. services for elderly people and disabled persons.

In the field of town planning and mobility, the mayors of the member municipalities have only kept minor responsibilities. Planning procedures as well as operational tasks are carried out at the inter-municipal level. The mayors are still signing building permits but are supported by the inter-municipal administration, if they wish to be. This service is much used by the smaller municipalities or for complicated cases. Mayors also have local police power and therefore sign decisions about road closures and whether street parking is charged or not. All other issues concerning mobility and transport are decided at the inter-municipal level. When an area is

developed, the *métropole* establishes the roads, water and electricity supply as well as public spaces, whereas the municipalities have kept the responsibility for providing public facilities such as sports facilities, community facilities and schools. All in all, the remaining tasks of the mayors demonstrate their relevance to the citizens of their municipality, but technical know-how and complex administrative tasks have shifted to the administration of the *métropole*.

2.2.1.4 *The inter-municipal administration – large, decentralised, pooled with City of Nantes*

The *métropole* possesses substantial resources due to its vast responsibilities. The voted budget for 2019 amounts to 1.31 billion €, subdivided into a main budget (769 M€) and six annexed budgets for waste (85 M€), potable water (105.9 M€), wastewater (57.3 M€), industrial and commercial premises (e.g. business incubator; 3.3 M€), parking (44.3 M€) and public transport (293.7 M€). The revenues come from own taxation, fees for services, allocations from the state, compensation from the *département* (for the responsibilities fulfilled by the *métropole*) and co-financing by the *région*, the European Union or others. In terms of human resources, *Nantes Métropole* has about 3,300 employees, out of which 30% work in the administration (2017).¹² The inter-municipal administration is marked on one hand by decentral organisation units called *pôles de proximité* (since the creation of the CU in 2001) and on the other hand by shared management together with the City of Nantes (since 2008).

The administration of the *métropole* and the City of Nantes are closely interwoven. A double leadership with the mayor of the core city as president of the *métropole* is a common model in French *métropoles* (Zimmermann and Feiertag 2017, 20–21) and is also practised in Nantes.¹³ In addition to that, since 2008 the entire leadership of the administration has been shared, including the heads of administrative units (*Directions Générales* DG) and the central services have been pooled, forming a joint administration of the *métropole* and City of Nantes with about 7,000 civil servants (Dèbre and Garat 2015, 30). Within the other DGs, some divisions are assigned to the City of Nantes, some to the *métropole* and some provide services for both. According to the organisation chart from January 2018, the only DG with predominantly municipal tasks is social cohesion (composed of the divisions “childhood & education”, “prevention & solidarity” as well as “citizenship & social activities”), whereas the units for “economic development & international attractiveness”, for “environment & urban services” as well as the one for “territorial cohesion” have a large proportion of units dealing with metropolitan responsibilities. This reorganisation can be interpreted as a way to augment the influence of the City of Nantes on the administration of the *métropole* through strategic leadership positions, especially because its administrative director, Benoist Pavageau (2009–2014), had been head of the administration of the city of Nantes

before and had been a collaborator of Ayrault since the 1980s (Masson et al. 2013, 92). On the other hand, the merger is strongly driven by the idea of efficiency and cost-saving, and was implemented in a tense financial situation (Masson et al. 2013, 91). The pooling of staff is a step-by-step process that has been expanded each year, with staff numbers increasing from 173 positions in 2008 to 1,514 in 2016, resulting in a constant reshaping of the organisation (Dèbre and Garat 2015, 30). The process has not ended yet and has been extended to the other member municipalities. In the current phase of institutional development, the *métropole* and interested municipalities conclude individual arrangements for the pooling of municipal tasks that require special equipment or technical know-how (e.g. archives or video surveillance) instead of the transfer of additional competencies to the metropolitan level. This means to centralise the administration with the aim of providing efficient, professional services, but at the same time seeking to keep the political control partly at the municipal level.

The principle of proximity was called for by the mayors of the periphery in order to reduce the risk of hegemony of the core city, and was established from the beginning in the “charte de fonctionnement”. Each of the seven *pôles de proximité* groups several municipalities or city quarters of Nantes based on common characteristics. They consist of units of the administration located in municipalities around Nantes with about 200 civil servants each, and are charged with missions of planning and maintenance of public spaces and streets, sanitation, urban development and relations with companies within their geographic area (Masson et al. 2013, 90). They are meant to be an interface between the metropolitan administration and the municipal administrations; their directors are direct contact persons for the mayors as well as department heads of the metropolitan administration (Dèbre and Garat 2015, 28).

On one hand the *pôles de proximité* form an intermediary level to discuss territorial strategies, such as the land use plan PLUM, the traffic plan PDU or the climate plan for an area sharing some similarities; on the other hand they have an operational function as the mayors, metropolitan councillors and technicians meet every two months to deal with detailed questions about the implementation of public policies within their area, such as lighting for public spaces or street trees (*commission locale*). The term “proximity” thus refers to a proximity between the decision-making process of the *métropole* and its member municipalities, whereas the citizens are less aware of the decentralised units and mainly continue to use the municipal administration as a contact point (Garat 2013, 96–98; Conseil de Développement de Nantes Métropole 2017). In the first years of their existence, the staff of the *pôles de proximité* mainly consisted of previous employees of the municipalities of their area who had been transferred to the municipal grouping, whereas the central administration of *Nantes Métropole* was mainly composed of former employees of the City of Nantes or the *district urbain* or newly recruited staff (Garat 2013, 97). This composition has been slowly changing over time.

2.2.1.5 *Representation of municipal interests*

Political decision-making takes place in two deliberative bodies, the metropolitan council (*conseil communautaire*) with 97 members (election period 2014–2020) and the *bureau* with 47 members. The *bureau* is a body formed by members of the metropolitan council. They meet more often than the metropolitan council, i.e. seven or eight times a year instead of four times for the metropolitan council. The 20 vice-presidents elected by the council are responsible for different policy fields and form the executive power together with the president. The council of the *métropole* is indirectly elected; its members have to be municipal councillors at the same time. The parties flag those candidates they intend to send to the metropolitan council on the electoral lists for the municipal election. The mayors are usually members of the metropolitan council. The election campaign topics have so far concentrated on issues concerning the respective municipality, not on a political programme for the entire inter-municipal territory. This can be seen as problematic in terms of democratic representation because substantial functions have been transferred to the inter-municipal level.

The representation of the municipalities within the inter-municipal organisation depends on their demographic weight. However, each municipality has at least one seat in the metropolitan council and the *bureau*, regardless of its size. The smallest municipality St-Léger-les-Vignes had 1,640 inhabitants at the time of the 2014 election, i.e. 0.3% of the population against 1.0% of seats in the council and 2.1% in the *bureau*. The city of Nantes on the other hand dominates the metropolitan council with 48 out of 97 seats and also holds the presidency as well as seven vice-presidents. In the *bureau*, its proportion of members is lower with 11 members out of 47 (2014–2020). The socialist mayor of Nantes and president of the municipal grouping could in the past also rely on a solid socialist majority of above 80% in the council (Masson et al. 2013, 92). The model of representing every municipality even in the smaller bodies is possible in Nantes due to the relatively small number of 24 member municipalities. *Métropoles* with a similar number of municipalities are Nancy, Bordeaux, Tours, Clermont-Ferrand, Dijon and Orléans, whereas Lille, Aix-Marseille and Grand Paris have 90 or more member municipalities. Until 2014, each municipality of the CU even provided one of the vice-presidents (Masson et al. 2013, 90); *Nantes Métropole* had 33 vice-presidents at that time, but their number was reduced in 2014 to 20 due to national legislation.

The mayors of the member municipalities play an important role in decision-making processes within the *métropole*. According to the interviewees, they are the ones that express their opinions most during the council meetings, mainly speaking for their municipality. Furthermore, a conference of mayors with advisory status is a crucial mechanism to prepare council meetings and reach a consensus about political orientations beforehand (Masson et al. 2013, 89). The mayors are usually the ones occupying the position of

vice-president or member of the *bureau*. They also conduct bilateral negotiations with representatives of the *métropole*, e.g. within the PLUm process or concerning contracts between municipality and *métropole* about projects that will be carried out in shared responsibility (*contrats de co-développement*). However, Masson et al. (2013, 91) argue that the practice of negotiation between mayors has been limited to some extent by formal procedures with quantified targets. This means that the inter-municipal administration provides a binding framework.

2.2.1.6 *Île de Nantes and SAMOA – cornerstone of metropolitan development*

When talking about the metropolitan ambition of the Métropole de Nantes, its major urban development project Île de Nantes and the public agency Société d'Aménagement de la Métropole Ouest Atlantique (SAMOA) created in 2003 to implement it must be mentioned (Devisme 2009, 59). The Île de Nantes is an island of about 350 hectares at the heart of the city. It was a fragmented area composed of industrial brownfields of the former harbour, functionalist administrative buildings from the 1960s–70s and a small residential district from the 19th century and has been transformed into a united space that is understood as an enlargement of the centre of the agglomeration. The mixed-use area for creative industry, culture, higher education, commercial and residential functions is the cornerstone of an overall strategy which follows the idea of increasing the attractiveness of the agglomeration through urban quality and the use of water as a design element in the city (Pinson 2009, 44; Violeau 2011, 88–89).

The planning process of the Île de Nantes is seen as innovative because of its openness: instead of a static master plan, the urbanist Chemetoff has developed an evolving “plan guide” that has been updated every three months and values the existing traces of the history as well as the activities of actors on the site (Pinson 2009, 44; Diedrich and Dahl 2016, 76). The regeneration of the area focussed on the emergence of a creative cluster in parallel to the urban development. The SAMOA achieved this by acting as a facilitator and by providing catalyst locations with cheap temporary rooms, co-working spaces and showrooms in unused warehouses (Nicolas and Roy 2015, 78–82). All in all, the Île de Nantes is a field of experimentation with a strategic relevance extending well beyond the site itself, also influencing the external image of the city-region. *Nantes Métropole* was very active in European networks and projects in the 2000s during the development of the area and hosted a meeting of the Eurocities network about creative economy in 2009, presenting itself as an innovative forerunner (Nicolas and Roy 2015, 77).

The SAMOA is a public developer owned by *Nantes Métropole* (58%) and the municipal grouping CARENE around Saint-Nazaire (5%), the City of Nantes (17%) and the neighbouring city Rezé (5 %), the *département*

(5%) and the *région* (5%) as well as the Syndicat mixte du SCoT Nantes Saint-Nazaire (5%). It is headed by the mayor of Nantes and works closely with the administration of Nantes Métropole responsible for urban development. SAMOA represents a remarkable form of governance because stakeholders from different levels are responsible for different territories and meet and collaborate, with the concrete outcome of the Île de Nantes regeneration scheme. Though its primary mission is to develop this specific site, SAMOA has helped the larger territory of the metropolitan region Nantes Saint-Nazaire to emerge and to institutionalise by organising thematic conferences (*conférences métropolitaines*), applying for the label EcoCité obtained in 2009 and conducting feasibility studies (Ouvrard 2016, 91, 108). This orientation towards the metropolitan scale was also linked to its first director, Laurent Théry. He had previously been head of the administration of the CU (Ouvrard 2016, 98; Devisme 2009, 59) and is seen as the crucial mediator of the city-regional plan SCoT 2007 (Violeau 2011, 88). In 2012, when the Pôle métropolitain Nantes Saint-Nazaire (see 2.2.3) was founded, part of the staff from SAMOA working on the metropolitan scale had been transferred to the pôle. Since then, the SAMOA has mainly concentrated on the regeneration of the Île de Nantes.

2.2.2 *Spatial relations within the wider metropolitan area of Nantes Saint-Nazaire*

The spatial dimension of the metropolitan area is defined in different ways. Viewed as a layer of governance, *Nantes Métropole* corresponds to an intermediary layer between municipality and *département* and is responsible for the local land use plan (PLUm), whereas in morphological terms it roughly corresponds to the urban agglomeration of Nantes and is the core of a wider functional urban region.

2.2.2.1 *Institutional perimeters: Nantes Métropole in the multilevel system*

The territory of *Nantes Métropole* fits in the multilevel system of the territorial authorities *région*, *département* and municipality without transcending administrative borders (see Figure 2.5 and Table 2.4). It is composed of 24 municipalities; the city of Nantes is by far the largest one with 319,284 inhabitants,¹⁴ whereas all the others have fewer than 50,000 inhabitants. The four other municipalities with more than 25,000 inhabitants (Saint-Herblain, Rezé, Saint-Sébastien-sur-Loire and Orvault) are directly adjacent to Nantes. The municipal grouping hosts 46% of the population of the *département* and is one of 17 EPCIs in the Département Loire-Atlantique:¹⁵ one *métropole*, four CAs and 12 CCs, but no CUs (since January 2017, dynamics see below). Nantes is the only one of the 22 French *métropoles* situated in the Région Pays de la Loire. The two next largest cities in the

Figure 2.5 Nantes in the multilevel system 2021 Concept: P. Feiertag Cartography: F. Gela

Table 2.4 Nantes in the multilevel system

Level	Type of institution	Name	Composed of
Région	Territorial Authority	Région Pays de la Loire	5 départements
Département	Territorial Authority	Département Loire-Atlantique (44)	17 EPCIs (2017/01/01)
Métropole	Etablissement Public de Coopération Intercommunale (EPCI)	Nantes Métropole	24 municipalities
Municipality	Territorial Authority	Ville de Nantes	

region are Angers (158,000 inh.) and Le Mans (146,000 inh.), which are both part of a *communauté urbaine* (CU Angers Loire Métropole with 29 municipalities and 306,000 inh., CU Le Mans Métropole with 19 municipalities and 210,000 inh.)¹⁶ and a *pôle métropolitain* that is also responsible for the regional plan SCoT (Pôle Métropolitain Loire Angers with four

EPCIs and Pôle Métropolitain Le Mans-Sarthe with seven EPCIs). Another large city in close proximity to Nantes is Rennes, the capital of the region Bretagne.

The area covered by city-regional planning documents takes into account the estuary of the river Loire due to various shared issues at stake (Fritsch 2006, 27; Renard 2008, 136; Masbouni 2012). However, the two documents SCoT and DTA covering the bipolar metropolitan region of Nantes Saint-Nazaire use a different spatial definition and have a low degree of institutionalisation (see Table 2.5 and 2.2.3). The SCoT Nantes Saint-Nazaire includes three CCs between Nantes Métropole and the CARENE on the northern riverbank with 61 member municipalities in total (see Figure 2.5), whereas the *DTA Estuaire de la Loire* covers 199 municipalities (Renard 2008, 133). The latter has a significantly larger perimeter in the south and east as compared to the SCoT, is centred around the river delta and exceeds the *département* in the east, covering the municipalities Oree d'Anjou and Mauges-sur-Loire. Additionally, an informal Inter-SCoT dialogue is organised with all SCoTs within the Département Loire-Atlantique (Auran 2017; see 2.2.3). Thus, the SCoT du Pays des Mauges, which touches Nantes Métropole directly in the east, is not included because the territory is part of the neighbouring Département Maine-et-Loire. Six out of eight SCoT planning regions end at the administrative border of the Département Loire-Atlantique (see Figure 2.6).

The municipal PLU within the territory of *Nantes Métropole* has recently been replaced by an inter-municipal land use plan, the *plan local d'urbanisme métropolitain* (PLUm). The municipalities continue to play an important role in the process of development and have opted to break down the orientations of the document for each municipality (*cahier communal*). This part of the PLUm is not legally binding and has rather a pedagogical character as its purpose is to make the implications of the PLUm more understandable for citizens, politicians and public servants of the municipalities.

Table 2.5 Layers of planning documents in the city-region of Nantes

<i>Planning document</i>	<i>Year of approval</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Area covered</i>
SRADDET Inter-SCoT	2020 -	Région Pays de la Loire Informal dialogue supported by agences d'urbanisme	Région 8 SCoTs of the Département Loire-Atlantique
DTA	2006	State	199 municipalities
SCoT	2016	Pôle métropolitain Nantes Saint-Nazaire	5 EPCIs (with 61 municipalities)
PLUm	2019	Nantes Métropole	1 EPCI (with 24 municipalities)

Figure 2.6 Inter-SCoT area of Nantes 2021 Concept: P. Feiertag Cartography: F. Gela

2.2.2.2 Morphological and functional definitions: *unité urbaine* and *aire urbaine*

The territory of the municipal grouping *Nantes Métropole* roughly corresponds to one continuous urban agglomeration (“*unité urbaine*”), meaning a built-up area without interruptions of more than 200 metres, as defined by INSEE.¹⁷ Its size can therefore be seen as pertinent from a morphological point of view. Its exact delimitation, respectively the membership of some of the border municipalities, also depends on the political will to cooperate or not at the time the CU was formed rather than compelling morphological reasons. On one hand three member municipalities in the west (Le Pellerin, Brains) and east (Mauves-sur-Loire) along the river Loire are not part of the continuously built-up space; on the other hand three non-member municipalities on the south bank of the river Loire (Haute Goulaine, Pont-St-Martin, Port-St-Père) are part of the urban unit according to the INSEE definition.

The functional urban area defined by commuter relations (“aire urbaine” meaning a group of adjoining municipalities, where at least 40% of the employed resident population works in the centre or in the municipalities attracted by this centre)¹⁸ is much larger in the northern and southern direction. According to the INSEE definition it is made up of 108 municipalities,¹⁹ covers 3,405 km² and has 961,500 inhabitants (2016). As reflected in regional planning documents, Nantes has strong functional relations to the neighbouring city of Saint-Nazaire due to the river and port activities and is described as bipolar (Mahé and Bois 2012, 18; Fritsch 2006, 26). The geographers Jean Renard (2015) and Claude Cabanne (Garat et al. 2005, 36) even define the functional territory as stretching to the sea on both river banks, thus also including the seaside resorts as well as vineyard areas south of Nantes. The two agglomerations have strong economic links and are connected by the industrial and logistics axis of the estuary, but Fritsch (2006, 26–27) argues that the two cities, separated by a distance of about 50 kilometres, do not yet form a unit in terms of household practices and each has its own catchment area. It can be concluded that functional relations as well as shared interests exist in a far wider area than the institutionalised perimeter of the *métropole*. This wider metropolitan region has fuzzy boundaries that can be defined in different ways.

2.2.2.3 *Boundaries: evolution of perimeters and their impact on cooperation*

Institutional boundaries of the metropolitan region have mainly been defined by local actors and are contingent on the political will of municipalities to be part of an inter-municipal cooperation. They evolved in several steps.

The inter-municipal grouping *district urbain* was established by 20 municipalities in 1992 and expanded its territory in two steps. First, in 1995, one additional municipality became part of it. Then, in 2001, three other municipalities joined the *district urbain*. Since the transformation to a CU, there have been no additional changes to the territory. The perimeter is a political construction. Some adjacent municipalities with close links to Nantes have decided not to join, such as Treillières in a referendum in 2002. One of the reasons was the self-perception of being a rural municipality rather than part of the urban agglomeration and the wish to preserve this identity. Afterwards, the focus of the CU was on integration instead of extension. Today, an extension is unwanted by the members of the *métropole*, who argue that it is too late and too complicated because they have a well-established mode of collaborating with 24 members.

Whereas the territory of *Nantes Métropole* has solidified, a number of EPCIs adjacent to it merged and thus considerably enlarged their territory between 2010 and 2017. This was mainly done due to incentives from the national government and also to legislation defining minimum sizes of municipal groupings in terms of inhabitants (see 2.1.4). The SDCI for

2016–2022 has led to six mergers of CCs, of which five neighbour *Nantes Métropole*. This means that a ring of larger groupings around Nantes has been created instead of enlarging the *métropole* itself. Two of the EPCIs adjacent to Nantes have become *communautés d'agglomération* as a result of the merger: CA Pornic Pays de Retz in the west and CA Clisson, Sèvre & Maine with 16 communities and 54,000 inhabitants in the southeast. The departmental schéma had the explicit objective of creating CAs with additional competencies in the fields of mobility and social housing as a counter-balance to Nantes. They should contribute to a stronger complementarity between urban and rural areas (Préfecture de la Loire-Atlantique 2016, 24).

It can be concluded that there is consent among the member municipalities of the *métropole* as well as adjacent municipal groupings and the state representative *prefet* not to expand the territory of the municipal grouping of *Nantes Métropole* to its functional area because it would otherwise encompass wide parts of the *département*. The recomposition of municipal groupings within the *département* instead aims to create more similar territories in terms of area and competencies relevant for spatial development, relating to the idea of *égalité du territoire*. In consequence, negotiations about urban–rural relationships cannot be resolved within the more or less homogeneous municipal groupings themselves, but are shifted to another institutional layer, that of much softer cooperation between municipal groupings.

2.2.3 Coordination of public policies beyond the *métropole*

Given the relatively small size of the city of Nantes and of the *métropole*, a second scale of cooperation has developed in parallel to the strong municipal grouping: that of the bipolar metropolitan region of Nantes Saint-Nazaire. It has become widely accepted as a natural area of reference in the thinking of territorial actors (Fritsch 2006, 27) and has been institutionalised gradually in the form of the Pôle métropolitain Nantes Saint-Nazaire. In addition to this, a range of other soft forms of coordination between the *métropole* and adjoining territories as well as the région exist: the Inter-SCoT dialogue, reciprocity deals, a second *pôle métropolitain* in the form of a city network, and a territorial conference at the scale of the région.

2.2.3.1 Pôle métropolitain Nantes Saint-Nazaire – strong imaginary, but light institution / “le projet avant l’institution”

The *pôle métropolitain* Nantes Saint-Nazaire is based on a partnership between the two cities Nantes and Saint-Nazaire. It evokes the spatial imaginary of the estuary of the river Loire as an area with strong interdependencies. The metropolisation of Nantes and its ambition to be an economic and cultural hub of European relevance is conceptualised at the scale of the Nantes Saint-Nazaire estuary (Fritsch 2007, 118; Devisme 2009, 12;

Gravari-Barbas 2009, 287; Masboungi 2012). Nantes defines itself as a harbour city, but the harbour has moved to the river mouth and both cities need each other to have a critical mass in terms of inhabitants and economic activities to reach a metropolitan dimension in national and European competition. Besides economic considerations, the vulnerable river delta has put ecological questions at the heart of metropolitan cooperation (Masboungi 2012, 30).

The construction of the large territory has taken place in parallel to the strengthening of the municipal grouping of Nantes Métropole, both driven by Nantes' mayor Ayrault, though the *pôle métropolitain* is much weaker in terms of functions and resources. Symbolic acts and cultural events such as the art festival *Estuaire* between 2007 and 2012 have been used to construct a collective imaginary that was meant to be shared not only by decision-makers, business leaders and planning professionals but also by the general public (Gravari-Barbas 2009, 288). An important step towards metropolitan cooperation has been a territorial dialogue in the form of "conférences métropolitaines" held at irregular intervals between 1999 and 2011. It has had an open format including politicians, civil society actors and experts. The dialogue contributed to a common identity within the city-region and served to advance projects of common interest (Ouvrard 2016, 91).

The first step in formalising the dialogue was the creation of the planning association *Syndicat Mixte du SCoT* in 2003 and the development of the first regional plan SCoT approved in 2007. The association was transformed into a "pôle métropolitain" in July 2012, keeping its perimeter and members as well as its internal structure (Bariol-Mathais 2017, 48). The new name was intended to add to its visibility, but the continuity of the institution was high. The change of status became possible by national legislation (see 2.1.1.) and made it possible to adopt additional tasks beyond regional planning, including an operational dimension. This confirmed the existing practice as the syndicate had had the ambition to play an active part in implementing the SCoT since 2008 and had been launching studies to prepare operational projects with the support of the urban development company SAMOA (see 2.2.1). After becoming a *pôle métropolitain*, this became an official task and the way to debate and decide about operational projects changed from a one by one basis to a voted four-year action programme. However, the main task has remained regional planning, i.e. the SCoT, and the pôle clearly concentrates on topics with a strong link to land use, landscape and urban design.

The *pôle métropolitain* is an interface structure between existing municipal groupings and thus is dependent on the resources and political will of its five members for implementation. As the former mayor Ayrault puts it (2012, 173), it was more important for him to develop a shared territorial project and to commit to it than to build a new institutional layer. According to the annual report of 2016, its budget amounts to about 1.1 M€, financed by its members (thereof 75% Nantes Métropole) as well as additional funding

from national programmes. Its office is composed of a small team of four employees. Its president is the mayor of Nantes and the deliberative bodies are constituted of representatives of each municipality.

According to the interviewees, the *pôle métropolitain* is mainly valued as a space for regular exchange, providing opportunities for meetings and coordination between decision-makers. The elected representatives of the municipal groupings are used to working together on issues of territorial development such as commercial development and interrelations due to their monthly meetings. The institution is also used for a joint positioning towards the region, e.g. for the SRADDET or towards the state. It seeks to mobilise funding from the national or EU level by preparing joint proposals, e.g. for the national label *EcoCité*. *EcoCité* is one of several programs launched by the French state with the aim of influencing urban agendas via competitive mechanisms rather than large amounts of funding (Demazière and Sykes 2021). The *pôle* conducts feasibility studies, e.g. concerning urban development around train stations, and has organised a landscape planning competition focused on the topic of water, with six sites spread across the territory. Its role is mainly to initiate projects, take care of the conceptual aspects and ensure consistency as part of an overall strategy as well as deal with communication and marketing, whereas the realisation is done by the municipal groupings or the concerned municipalities themselves (Bariol-Mathais 2017, 50). The municipalities between the two large groupings Nantes Métropole and CARENE particularly benefit from the project support and the know-how partly transferred from experience gained within Nantes' Urban Development Company SAMOA.

The governance arrangement is well established and valued by the local actors because it produces a benefit for its members without excessive costs in terms of additional administrative structures. However, its success is dependent on the consent of the two mayors of Nantes and Saint-Nazaire as the main drivers. The generational change in the two cities has caused a less dynamic phase for the *pôle métropolitain*, because the new mayors elected in 2014 concentrated first on their own cities and municipal groupings.

2.2.3.2 *Overcoming boundaries – Instruments of soft coordination with variable geographies*

In contrast to the bipolar space of Nantes, the following arrangements correspond to a more selective inter-territorial cooperation seeking to address issues beyond the boundaries of the *pôle métropolitain*.

- Inter-SCoT dialogue – Coordination of regional plans

The eight planning associations within the Département Loire-Atlantique are maintaining a dialogue, though without a regular frequency or any kind of formalisation. They do not have the same rhythm in preparing their SCoTs,

meaning that some planning associations such as Nantes Saint-Nazaire had already approved their second generation of SCoT in 2016 whereas others had just started the process at that time or had recently approved their first regional plan. Furthermore, they do not use the same cartographic language or definitions, leading to high heterogeneity. The purpose of the dialogue is to avoid incompatibility and direct competition, e.g. concerning industrial sites. Meetings are focussed on topics with relevance to the scale of the entire territory, such as risks of flooding. Additionally, each planning association involves the neighbouring associations when developing a new regional plan.

The Inter-SCoT dialogue was initially driven by the *département*, which has withdrawn from the task due to changes of responsibilities between territorial layers (see 2.1.2). The Agence d'Urbanisme de la Région Nantaise (AURAN), which is working with several planning associations to support the development of the SCoT, has partly stepped in by taking the initiative to produce an overview of the orientations of the SCoT. This “Panorama des SCoT” (AURAN 2017) is meant to share information about the objectives in each plan, e.g. concerning the number of housing units and density. All in all, the coordination is rather loose and depends on occasions.

- Contrat de réciprocité with PETR (pôle d'équilibre territorial rural) du Pays de Retz – urban–rural relations

The reciprocity deals (*contrat de réciprocité*) are intended to be an instrument of mutual agreement between rural, peri-urban and urban territories and were launched by the interministerial committee of rurality in 2015, followed by an experimental phase in four territories, thereof only two (Brest and Toulouse) had actually agreed on a contract by 2018 (Bigay et al. 2018, 30). Nantes was not part of the experimental phase, but adopted the instrument afterwards.

One of the weaknesses of the Pôle métropolitain Nantes Saint-Nazaire is that it does not include the south bank of the river Loire, because no political consensus has been reached, either at the time of the creation of the SCoT perimeter, or in 2012 when transforming it into a *pôle métropolitain*. The seaside has a recreational function for Nantes, whereas Nantes provides jobs for the inhabitants of the Pays du Retz, leading to commuting activities. Instead of changing the institutional perimeters, the decision has been to conclude contracts about collaboration. Nantes Métropole and the PETR du Pays de Retz signed their first contract in April 2019 after one year of preparation, with four topics of cooperation: food provision, mobility, economy and tourism. Concrete projects will be, among others, traffic lanes dedicated to non-polluting vehicles and cars with several passengers, implemented in 2021. Further steps would be a contract between the agglomeration of Saint-Nazaire and the Pays du Retz as well as closer coordination between the two SCoTs.

- Espace métropolitain Loire-Bretagne – city network focussing on competitiveness

The “Espace métropolitain Loire-Bretagne” has the legal form of a *pôle métropolitain* and consists of three métropoles (Brest, Nantes and Rennes) as well as two CAs (Angers and Saint-Nazaire), thus regrouping the largest agglomerations of north-western France in a city network with a rotating presidency. Initially, all five were cities with a socialist mayor, but this changed in Angers after 2014 and has had an impact on the cooperation with the other cities. The idea of a city network had already been discussed since the 1990s, but the historically difficult relation between the main cities Rennes and Nantes hampered stable cooperation. For decades they had been either turning their backs on each other or competing for influence instead of seeking to complement each other (Renard 2008, 115–124).

The pôle was created in 2012 and addresses the topics of accessibility, higher education and research as well as economic development (Bariol-Mathais 2017, 120). Due to the distance between the cities, the focus is entirely different from the other *pôle métropolitain* where Nantes is a member. Instead of dealing with spatial planning or urban–rural relationships, it is a strategic alliance focussed on competitiveness and promotion of the territory at national and international scales (Bigay et al. 2018, 62). Examples of joint efforts are campaigning for better high-speed train connections and a joint presentation at an international real estate exhibition. Infrastructure alliances have lately been emerging on a much larger spatial scale than that of a city-region, as also observable elsewhere in Europe (Feiertag et al. 2020, 161).

- Vertical coordination – the new role of the *région*

In searching for potential mediating institutions for an inter-territorial balancing of interests, the region is seen as the most likely candidate rather than the *département* or national government (Bigay et al. 2018, 31). The region has become competent in spatial planning and has thus also become the host of a vertical territorial dialogue. This dialogue takes place on one hand as part of the development process of the planning document SRADDET and on the other hand due to a new instrument of territorial conferences (*Conférence territoriale de l'action publique* CTAP) introduced by the MAPTAM law.

During the development of the SRADDET, the Région Pays de la Loire first contacted the planning associations of SCoT, as there had been few thematic overlaps before. A consultation with each of the planning associations took place and a joint statement by all planning associations of the region was produced, formulating their expectations. Presentations in each *département* took place in 2017, but the territorial dialogue was opened up and intensified in 2019 after the cancellation of the airport

project Notre-Dame-des-Landes (see 2.2.1) with a process called “my region in 2050”.

The territorial conferences of the Région Pays de la Loire had its first session in February 2015. The CTAP are mandatory and include representatives of the region, the *départements* and the municipal groupings. Each EPCI with at least 300,000 inhabitants has its own seat whereas the smaller ones share one representative per *département*. According to the law, their purpose is to debate and give an opinion. However, the instrument has been criticised for being too formalised and heavy, and thus not inviting open debate (Acar and Reix 2017, 5).

2.3 Lyon: powerful institution with a (too) small perimeter

Lyon is located in the south-east of France and is the third largest French city in terms of inhabitants. It is situated on a north-south transport axis to the Mediterranean Sea (Marseille) and connected to Paris with a high-speed train (TGV) with two hours’ travel time. This line was the first high-speed connection in France and was already inaugurated in 1981. Lyon has a strong industrial basis with large companies. Historically, the beginning of the industrial production was related to silk production, later on developing towards textile production in general, chemistry and mechanics and in the 20th century, as well as automotive, metallurgy and petrochemical industries (Galimberti 2015, 93).

The centre of the city-region is formed by Lyon and the adjacent city of Villeurbanne. Both cities together have roughly 650,000 inhabitants. The other municipalities within the city-regional institution Métropole de Lyon are significantly smaller and part of a continuous urban fabric. Thirteen of them have between 20,000 and 61,000 inhabitants, 21 between 5,000 and 20,000 and 24 municipalities have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants. The agglomeration is “marked by historical segregation between its western (residential, affluent, composed of single-family homes) and eastern (industrial, working-class, surrounded by large housing estates) suburbs” (Rousseau 2015, 624) and a high social homogeneity of its western suburbs. The agglomeration of Lyon is part of a wider metropolitan region including the city of Saint-Étienne as the second urban centre and several medium-sized cities such as Vienne and Villefranche-sur-Saône.

The following key characteristics concerning metropolitan governance and planning will be highlighted in this chapter:

- Since 2015, the strong city-regional jurisdiction Métropole de Lyon with additional responsibilities has been replacing the municipal grouping created in the 1960s;
- International competitiveness as an important driver for the mayors of Lyon and presidents of the inter-municipal grouping since the 1990s, becoming apparent in urban development projects, city marketing and efforts towards more powerful forms of city-regional governance;

- Unusually long tradition of inter-municipal land use planning within the *métropole*;
- Steady urban extension as well as increased commuting distances, in contrast with the almost stable institutional perimeter of the city-region for half a century;
- Several governance arrangements for the wider metro region beyond the Métropole de Lyon, but with a low degree of institutionalisation.

In this section, we will analyse governance and planning in the metropolitan region of Lyon. We first examine the Métropole de Lyon covering the urban core of the metropolitan region (2.3.1). Second, we will elucidate institutional borders, planning perimeters and functional interrelations in the metropolitan region (2.3.2) and investigate different soft governance arrangements within the wider metropolitan area, including regional planning associations (2.3.3).

2.3.1 *The institution: Métropole de Lyon*

Lyon has the most integrated metropolitan governance arrangement of all French city-regions and is the only one with the status of a jurisdiction. Its special status is fixed by national law, but was negotiated by powerful local actors. Compared to the other 21 *métropoles* existing since 2018, Lyon is one of the largest in terms of inhabitants (third largest) and has more member municipalities than the median (fifth rank of 22). However, the *métropole* is only in the middle field concerning the area (10th largest) covering a territory similar to the *métropoles* Grenoble or Nantes. The area covered by the Métropole de Lyon is considerably smaller than the *métropoles* Saint-Étienne, Rennes and Rouen despite the fact that each of them has fewer than 500,000 inhabitants (see Table 2.1).

2.3.1.1 *Long-standing inter-municipal cooperation and planning*

The city-region of Lyon was among the first city-regions in France where a strong municipal grouping with responsibilities in spatial planning was created based on the need to think in terms of city-regions (Parnet 2016, 242). Inter-municipal cooperation in the city-region of Lyon started long before it adopted the status of *métropole*. Lyon is one of four city-regions that were obliged by national law to create a *communauté urbaine* in the 1960s with a perimeter defined by the state. The Communauté Urbaine de Lyon (COURLY) was created in January 1969, two years later than the other CUs of Lille, Bordeaux and Strasbourg because departmental boundaries had to be altered (Bariol-Mathais 2015, 27; see 2.3.2). Even prior to this imposed creation of a municipal grouping, Lyon had already had associations for joint service provision for water supply, electricity and public transport since the 1920s (Gardon and Meillerand 2007, 11). The early start of inter-municipal cooperation at the beginning of the 20th century

is unique among French metropolitan regions. This early accumulation of experiences of cooperation has led to the emergence of a politically significant multi-communal territory (Aguiar Mol 2015, 128). By targeting topics such as urban transport, social housing and internationalisation, the CU became a veritable metropolitan institution in the 1980s.

In 1991, the COURLY was renamed “Grand Lyon” (Bariol-Mathais 2015, 27). The key role of the CU was enhanced by the revision of the strategic planning document *schéma directeur* with the major participation of the economic actors. Its title “Lyon 2010, un projet d’agglomération pour une métropole européenne” underlined the focus on international competitiveness. During the terms of office of the two mayors Michel Noir (1989–1995) and Raymond Barre (1995–2001), economic development was a dominant concern, combined with city branding, emblematic urban projects (Cité internationale designed by Renzo Piano, congress hall) and traffic projects (metro line extension, northern ring road) (Aguiar Mol 2015, 129–132). Later on, the idea of the economic competitiveness of the city at the global scale centred on expanding the service sector also included a strategy of residential densification of the suburbs due to the scarcity of land within the boundaries of the métropole (Rousseau 2015, 624–626).

The ADERLY economic development agency was created as early as 1974 (Frébault and Sozzi 2010, 44; Galimberti 2015, 104). It was set up with the aim of promoting Lyon and to attract foreign investors (Ben Mabrouk and Jouve 2002, 92). ALDERLY also addressed issues of metropolisation and internationalisation and included public, private and semi-public actors (Aguiar Mol 2015, 129; Galimberti 2015, 108). Since 2015, it is co-financed by the *métropole*, but was steered in the first 15 years by the chamber of commerce and industry as the operator without the involvement of COURLY on the operational side. The early focus on competitiveness and economic development of the COURLY was not supported by the industrial sector at that time, but instead regarded with suspicion, because the economic policy of the president and mayor of Lyon Michel Noir focussed on the service sector as an element of urban modernity and considered industrial buildings to be harmful to the quality of life in urban areas, wishing to relocate them to the countryside outside the CU (Ben Mabrouk and Jouve 2002, 101).

Whereas the COURLY integrated more policy fields step-by-step, its territorial dimension remained unchanged over decades. Minor extensions occurred between 2007 and 2014, when four small municipalities successively joined the CU at their request (Fitria 2016, 172–173). Two of them were motivated by a difficult financial situation whereas the other two joined due to joint interests concerning opposition against a highway project; they saw a strategic advantage in joining the large municipal grouping with regard to negotiations with the state services. The new member municipalities were incorporated into the SCoT strategic planning document, but the extension had only minor effects on the municipal grouping due to their small number of inhabitants. When Lyon was a municipal grouping with a

voluntary character it was possible to add single municipalities in case of agreement of the potential new member and Grand Lyon, but any extension has been made much more complicated since 2015 by the new jurisdictional status of the *métropole* because a national law would be needed (Galimberti et al. 2014, 201; Fitria 2016, 269). Further voluntary extensions are unlikely, because the representation of the municipalities has been altered since 2020, making it less attractive for smaller municipalities to ask for admission (Fitria 2016, 276). The *métropole* itself is not actively pursuing the integration of individual municipalities as changing its territory would only bring strategic advantages in the case of a substantial enlargement. Therefore, the current perimeter of the *métropole* has become rigid and could only be enlarged by state intervention. If such a law were passed (which is not a current preoccupation of the government), it would most likely only be prepared to annex a significant number of municipalities.

Lyon is a forerunner when it comes to spatial planning at a city-regional scale, both within the perimeter of the CU and beyond (see 2.3.3). Even before the creation of the CU, strategic plans for the metropolitan region were prepared in the 1960s, covering a vast territory (*Plan d'urbanisme directeur* and *Plan d'Aménagement et d'Orientation Générale* PADOG; see Bariol-Mathais 2015, 32; Gardon and Meillerand 2007, 14; Verhage et al. 2007, 86). Since its creation, the municipal grouping itself has developed a range of strategic spatial plans (SDAU 1978, schéma directeur 1992, SCoT 2010, modified in 2017). An inter-municipal planning association, the SEPAL, was first created in 1985, but dissolved in 1992 after finalisation of the plan and only reopened in 2003. Since 2001, municipal groupings have been legally obliged to keep their planning associations after finalisation of a plan; thus the planning associations can monitor and adapt their regional plans. Local land use plans have been developed for several municipalities since 1980, organised in five sub-territories, and the first inter-municipal land use plan PLUi covering the entire territory came into force as early as 2005. Even today, the two other municipal groupings within the regional planning area of Lyon still have separate municipal land use plans for each of their member municipalities. This long-standing tradition of inter-municipal land use planning is unusual in France.

The city-region is considered in the literature as a forerunner of city-regional governance in the French context, both concerning service provision and planning (Aguiar Mol 2015, 50; Galimberti et al. 2014, 191; Bariol-Mathais 2015). The organisation itself emphasises the linear character of its institutional history since the 1960s, interpreting it as a logical progression. This smooth narrative of the *métropole* can partially be questioned according to Parnet (2016, 246) as it overlooks the question of the adequate perimeter (see 2.3.2) and sweeps conflicts with smaller municipalities, rural territories and the *région* under the carpet. Anyhow, the transformation of the former CU into a *métropole* certainly means a continuation and further integration of a long-established institution rather than a discontinuity.

2.3.1.2 *Special status of métropole fixed by national law*

The transformation of the *communauté urbaine* Grand Lyon into the *métropole* was a turning point because of its special status. It led to substantially more functions, budget and staff as well as a direct election of the metropolitan council. The national law MAPTAM from January 2014 describes the general rules for the *métropole* and foresees specific tailor-made rules for the three largest in terms of population (Geppert 2017, 226): the capital Paris (art. 12–14), Aix-Marseille (art. 40–42) and Lyon (art. 26–39). Lyon is the only one that has become a full local self-government (*collectivité territoriale à statut particulier*) instead of only a legal public person (*établissement public*) like all other *métropoles* (Hertzog 2018, 150). Hence, the new jurisdiction, in terms of functions is a combination of the competencies of the *département* that have been entirely transferred and the former municipal grouping CU. The additional responsibilities have also led to additional financial resources and the transfer of staff from the departmental administration. Geppert (2017, 237) describes the Métropole de Lyon as a “powerful entity” with “full control over its territory”.

The making of a tailor-made status appears “in very different contexts: the crystallisation of a solid collaboration in Lyon, the authoritarian intervention of the national government in the conflict-ridden area of Aix-Marseille, a compromise between the numerous players of the Paris region” (Geppert 2017, 237). In the case of Lyon, the initiative came from the local level, driven forward by an alliance of Gérard Collomb, the mayor of Lyon and president of the municipal grouping at that time, and Michel Mercier, president of the council of the Département Rhône (Conseil Général du Rhône) via informal negotiations at the beginning of the parliamentary process. The first draft of the law assigned the status of EPCI to Grand Lyon like to the other city-regions (Parnet 2016, 252). Rather than a top-down intervention of the state, “two prominent local politicians who dominated the local scene” (Parnet 2016, 260) used the opportunity of the legislative process. The other municipalities of the Grand Lyon grouping were not involved in the decision-making process (Galimberti et al. 2014, 192). The *métropole* has been cut out of the Département Rhône, but the *département* continues to exist and to carry out its functions for the rest its territory. This was a win-win situation that both suited the *métropole*, which was strengthened, as well as the *département*, which became socially more homogeneous, slightly better off than the core city and got rid of responsibilities in social welfare for the urban area as well as the costly Confluence Museum (Geppert 2017, 238; Galimberti et al. 2014, 192). In the case of Lyon, the national legislative process created a window of political opportunity for an institutional solution that fitted the specific geographical and demographic situation of this particular city-region (Hertzog 2018, 151).

A mayor difference compared to the former status as CU as well as compared to the other “*métropoles de droit commun*” is the direct election of

its councillors, carried out for the first time in 2020.²⁰ This changes the role of municipalities and the representation of the smaller ones. It also means a change in leadership from one super-president to two leading figures because the double role of mayor and president of the *métropole* is not allowed in this case. This concentration of power had been a frequent practice in Lyon for decades. The first president of the COURLY was the mayor of Lyon at that time, Louis Pradel²¹ (Bariol-Mathais 2015, 27), followed by Francisque Collomb, Michel Noir, Raymond Barre and Gérard Collomb. Most of them have also been influential on the national level like many mayors of large cities in France (“Grand Elus”, see also Thoenig 2006, 55), providing them with additional power via shorter circuits to decision-making in Paris (Mallon et al. 2010, 88–92). Noir, Barre and Collomb have all been ministers at some point in their career. However, in the case of Gérard Collomb, becoming minister of the interior in May 2017 marks the end of its hegemony in Lyon as he ceased to be mayor and president of the *métropole* and could not restore this position after his return. He continued to be a councillor throughout all this time in both the municipal and metropolitan councils, as well as president of the SEPAL planning association, and was re-elected mayor of Lyon in November 2018 by the municipal council, but had to cede the position of mayor and failed to become the first directly elected president of the *métropole* in June 2020. The positions of president of the *métropole* and mayor of Lyon have been conquered by two members of the Green Party, Bruno Bernard and Grégory Doucet. The Green Party (Europe Ecologie-Les Verts) had an unprecedented success at the municipal elections in 2020 in many large cities such as Bordeaux, Strasbourg and Tours.

2.3.1.3 Extensive functions of the *Métropole de Lyon*

The functions of the *Métropole de Lyon* are more extensive than in any other French *métropole*, because they include all functions of the *département* along with many former municipal functions. The decades since the creation of the COURLY have been marked by a steady increase of functions, a model of concentration that is likely to have reached its limits due to a risk of sluggishness and reduced acceptance by the municipalities (Galimberti et al. 2014, 192–193). Due to its status as full local self-government, the *métropole* has the right to act in any kind of policy field (*clause de compétence générale*), but does not necessarily have the interest to do so. As one example from the field of housing policy, the *métropole* has not claimed the competence for the accommodation of the homeless, but rather leaves this task to the state.

Regarding production functions, the *Métropole de Lyon* is competent in the following policies:

- Economic development;
- Marketing and tourism;

- Major events and equipment for transport, telecommunications, sports and culture (e.g. the Confluence Museum, the Gallo-Roman Museum Lugdunum).

Regarding social reproduction functions, the *Métropole de Lyon* is competent in the following policies:

- Housing policy and Social Housing including personal aid;
- Public transport (via the public transport association Sytral);
- Public space and roads (except roads of national importance; planning and construction, maintenance);
- Town planning and urban development (SCoT, PLUi, ZAC);
- Schools (*collèges*);
- Environmental protection;
- Energy (distribution of electricity, gas and heat; advancement of renewable energies and energy efficiency; climate plan);
- Waste collection and treatment as well as water distribution and wastewater treatment;
- Social services (services for families; financial support for low-income households);
- Fire and rescue services.

In the field of town planning and urban mobility, almost all former municipal functions are carried out at the metropolitan level. Concerning public transport in the wider metropolitan area, a high interdependence with the Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (responsible for regional trains) as well as to some extent with the surrounding *départements* and municipal groupings exists due to shared responsibilities, and thus necessitates agreements and steering mechanisms for common action (Idt et al. 2012, 226). The mayors sign building permits, but planning instruments as well as projects of urban renewal are the responsibility of the *métropole*. The municipalities are still responsible for street lighting and the maintenance of green spaces. As mentioned above, inter-municipal planning was introduced long before the creation of the *métropole*, since the early days of the CU (Gardon and Meillerand 2007, 216). It has been one of the vehicles to create a sense of belonging to the same metropolitan territory among the member municipalities (Galimberti et al. 2014, 196). Urban development projects were linked to economic development and attractiveness of the city: “the priority given to the tertiary sector in Lyon was mainly organised around a series of major real estate operations in the town centre” (Ben Mabrouk and Jouve 2002, 102). Vast property developments for business with high quality public spaces and architecture, which were the joint responsibility of the COURLY and the chamber of commerce and industry, were seen as projects of metropolitan interest (Ben Mabrouk and Jouve 2002, 103). The connection of urban planning, economic development and metropolitan policies has been

pursued in projects such as Confluence on the southern part of the peninsula where the river Rhône and Saône flow together, or the refurbishment of the Part Dieu business district in the making.

Compared to the former municipal grouping of the CU, social reproduction functions have been strengthened, in particular by adding social policies. This is a field where the metropolitan institution did not have much experience before (Galimberti et al. 2014, 192). The additional responsibilities also concern the field of housing policies. The former CU already had a strategic programme for housing (PLH), but the personal aid directly paid to the households had been administered by the *département*. A large number of civil servants working in this field were transferred to the administration of the *métropole*. The important place social policy takes now in terms of manpower is in contrast with the competitive agenda that has been driving the institutional development since the 1990s up to today (Galimberti et al. 2014, 193–196; Carpenter and Verhage 2014, 63). However, even the benefit seen by President Collomb in integrating the reproduction functions of the *département* was driven by a logic of competitiveness, because the metropolitan institution has become more powerful and autonomous by gaining full control of the territory without interference from other layers of government. As one interviewee put it, the unique status of Lyon also creates the opportunity to spread the image of the *Métropole de Lyon* as a strong metropolitan government. Whether the changed responsibilities will influence the agenda in the long run remains to be seen, but this was not perceptible in the first years of the *métropole*.

2.3.1.4 Substantially enlarged administration of the *métropole*

The *Métropole de Lyon* has a larger administration than any other French *métropole* and even slightly exceeds the staff of the city of Lyon (Demazière et al. 2022). At the time of the creation of the *métropole* in January 2015 it had about 8,700 employees, of which 4,800 civil servants were from the former CU Grand Lyon and a large number were transferred from the Département Rhône. This means that the change in status introduced by the MAPTAM law has also brought a considerable change for the administration of the *Métropole de Lyon*. The restructuring of the administration took time and was still ongoing in 2018. The two parts were largely working in separate divisions – and to some extent in different buildings – in their respective policy fields with the same staff and working culture as before.

For the contact with the citizens regarding social assistance, the *métropole* has inherited 18 deconcentrated units from the Département Rhône spread over the territory that have been renamed “Maisons de la Métropole”. They provide services e.g. for the disabled, elderly, families or households facing housing difficulties.

The *métropole* already had another kind of territorial sub-unit introduced following deliberation by the metropolitan council in 2002, the nine

conférences territoriales. Their main purpose is to organise the regular information flow between the mayors within those sub-territories and the metropolitan administration by a monthly meeting with the vice-presidents of the *métropole*. It is not a decision-making level, but allows discussion of aspects related to that territory in more detail than would be possible in the metropolitan council or the conference of all 59 mayors. Therefore, it is an important forum for opinion making, bridging the municipalities and the *métropole*. In addition, the responsibilities within the administration of the *métropole* are organised according to these sub-areas and the coordination between sectoral policies within these spaces. However, decentralised administrative units of the *métropole* based outside Lyon do not exist. The definition of the nine sub-territories (*bassins de vie*) is based on a mix of geographic characteristics, strong functional interrelation, and political habits of working together. They are also meant to break down the metropolitan policy to the specifics of the different areas and are picked up in strategic documents as relevant units for spatial planning. The SCoT strategic city-regional plan makes specifications on that territorial level instead of the scale of single municipalities, e.g. concerning the target for housing units to be built. The PLU-H inter-municipal land use plan adopted in 2019 also uses these sub-territories. It makes specifications on three scales: the entire *métropole*, the *bassins de vie* and each municipality. In the previous PLUi of 2005, only the two levels of the metropolis and municipality were used, as the focus was on a common orientation for the entire *métropole*.

Although the mayors of Lyon have for a long time also been presidents of the grouping, the two administrations of the city and the municipal grouping have always been separate entities with different heads of administration, unlike in Nantes. Mixed teams with civil servants from *métropole* and city only exist for specific projects with shared responsibilities. Pooled services where the *métropole* carries out tasks for the municipalities are rare in Lyon. One example of such a service is to check if building permits can be approved for smaller municipalities lacking their own know-how in that domain. However, some groups of municipalities have created their own pooled services to prepare building permits rather than rely on the metropolitan administration. Large investments of the *métropole* in the municipalities are negotiated with each municipality and fixed in a multi-annual investment programme (PPI). The separation of the two administrations is also manifested spatially as the town hall of the city of Lyon is located in the old centre on the peninsula of the two rivers Rhône and Saône, whereas the administration of the *métropole* is located in the eastern part of Lyon in the office district Part Dieu. This separation is amplified by the direct election of the municipal council. Because both are full local self-governments, it is no longer possible to be mayor and president of the *métropole* at the same time. President Bruno Bernard, elected in 2020, is also the first president not to be part of the city council of Lyon at the same time.

2.3.1.5 Direct election of the metropolitan council leading to a lower political relevance of the municipalities

After decades of each metropolitan councillor automatically having the double function of municipal councillor of one of the 59 member municipalities, this tie has been changed with the direct election of the municipal councils with separate election lists. Each party has to constitute a list with alternation of women and men. In each constituency, the list with the majority (either an absolute majority in the first round or a simple majority in the second round) obtains half of the seats, whereas the other half is divided proportionally between lists with at least 5% of the votes, including the winning list. Decisions in the council are taken with a majority vote.

Between 1983 and 2020, each member municipality was represented by at least one seat in the metropolitan council. Beforehand, a demographic threshold of 15,000 inhabitants was required to obtain a delegate, which was not reached by 41 out of 55 municipalities, leading to a political dominance of the core city obtained by its demographic weight. The number of councillors of the core city was reduced from half to one-third in 1983 (Galimberti et al. 2014, 197). The changed composition of the councils had become possible due to a modification of national laws (Fitria 2016, 140–141).

At the time of creation of the *métropole* in January 2015, the 165 councillors of the CU elected in March 2014 were automatically transformed into councillors of the *métropole*. Since the first direct election in June 2020, democratic representation has again been tied to demographic weight rather than to municipalities as basic units of representation. Representatives are now elected in 14 constituencies (see Figure 2.7). The new metropolitan council is composed of the slightly reduced number of 150 councillors with seven to 17 councillors from each constituency, depending on their demographic weight. Most constituencies are composed of several municipalities or of several districts (*arrondissements*) of the city of Lyon. The largest constituency in terms of area, “Val de Saône” in the north, corresponds to 25 municipalities, whereas the city of Villeurbanne forms its own constituency (see Figure 2.7).

The delimitation of the constituencies is similar to the nine sub-territorial units (e.g. Plateau Nord, Rhône Amont, Porte des Alpes, Portes du Sud)²² used in strategic documents and for regular meetings (*conférences territoriales*), but gives more importance to demographic weight. Accordingly, the conférence territoriale “Lyon Villeurbanne” corresponds to seven electoral constituencies, whereas by contrast the constituency “Val de Saône” consists of two territorial conferences. The representation of smaller municipalities is changed compared to the former regime. The small municipalities of the new circumscription Val de Saône has lost the most seats, as they are represented by 14 councillors instead of 26 formerly, but they are still slightly overrepresented in terms of demographic weight. The city of Lyon

Lyon-Villeurbanne	
1 Lyon-Ouest	<div></div>
2 Lyon-Sud	<div></div>
3 Lyon-Centre	<div></div>
4 Lyon-Est	<div></div>
5 Lyon-Nord	<div></div>
6 Lyon-Sud-Est	<div></div>
7 Villeurbanne	<div></div>

- Constituencies
- Municipalities
- Seats in the metropolitan council per constituency

Figure 2.7 Constituencies for direct election of the metropolitan council 2021
Concept: P. Feiertag Cartography: F. Gela

is represented with a similar proportion to before, with about one-third of the seats (55 out of 150 councillors).

The mayors are still involved in the governance of the *métropole*, but with a reduced role within the council and the executive *bureau*. The “bureau” composed of the president and his vice-presidents is the main place for decision-making (Galimberti et al. 2014, 198). Within the new council, only 24 out of 150 councillors are mayors. However, the mayors of the 14 cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants except Lyon and Saint-Genis-Laval are all part of the metropolitan council. The left-wing mayors of the three largest cities Villeurbanne, Vénissieux and Vaulx-en-Velin adjacent to Lyon are also vice-presidents of the *métropole* (being in charge of culture, combatting discrimination and territorial equality) and thus maintain a direct influence on metropolitan policies. Historically, a seat as vice-president has always been guaranteed to the second largest city Villeurbanne, but for decades it has been common practice to exclude the municipalities run by opposition parties (Fitria 2016, 144). The mayors of the medium-sized cities Vaulx-en-Velin and Vénissieux were first vice-presidents in 2001 and 2008 respectively, despite the fact that their communist mayors were still part of the opposition in the metropolitan council (Galimberti et al. 2014, 197–198). Compared to previous election periods, the proportion of mayors among vice-presidents was much reduced in 2020 with three out of 23. Seventeen out of the 23 new vice-presidents are members of the Green Party, none of them being a mayor. Thus, the choice of vice-presidents is mainly based on the political party affiliation, but also takes gender and territorial representation into account. The vice-presidents have been elected in 13 different constituencies (all but Lyon-Nord).

2.3.2 *Spatial relations within the wider metropolitan area of Lyon*

How to define the metropolitan region of Lyon is ambiguous. There is no single, dominant conception of the territory; many coexist. This is perfectly illustrated by the book *l'expérience métropolitaine lyonnaise* (Bariol-Mathais 2015, 11), starting with six different answers on how to imagine the territorial dimension of the metropolitan region: as institutional territory (*métropole* or *pôle métropolitain*), as territory for strategic planning (Inter-SCoT or DTA) or as statistically defined area (*aire métropolitaine lyonnaise* or *aire urbaine de Lyon*) (see Figure 2.8). Out of those territorial definitions, the *Métropole de Lyon* is by far the smallest one and only covers the core of the metropolitan region.

2.3.2.1 *Morphological and functional definitions: unité urbaine, aire urbaine and aire métropolitaine*

The *métropole* and *pôle métropolitain* institutionalised territories as well as the SCoT and DTA territories for strategic planning are significantly smaller than the statistically defined *aire métropolitaine* (see Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8 Spatial definition of the metropolitan region of Lyon © Urbalyon, 2015

The two informal arrangements of Inter-SCoT (formed of several SCoT) and the former Région Urbaine de Lyon (RUL) covered a similar territory, almost corresponding to the *aire métropolitaine*. The metropolitan area (*aire métropolitaine*) visualised in Figure 2.8 corresponds to 1,039 municipalities with about 3.4 Mio inhabitants and an area of 13,445 km², roughly forming a square with sides 160 km in length (Bariol-Mathais 2015, 10). It is composed of several urban areas (*aire urbaine*) with strong interlinkage. Urban areas are calculated separately for each urban centre providing at least 10,000 jobs according to the national statistical institute INSEE on the basis of commuter relations between centres.²³ According to this definition, the urban area of Lyon is formed by 498 municipalities with 2.3 million inhabitants and an area of 6,012 km² and the neighbouring urban area of Saint-Étienne encompasses 117 municipalities with 0.5 million inhabitants and an area of 1,689 km² (INSEE, data from 16 June 2020). Those areas of strong interrelation have been substantially growing in the last decades; in the case of the urban area of Lyon by about 200 municipalities since 1999 (Fitria and Charmes 2014).

A second statistical definition by INSEE concerns the urban form, the urban unit (*unité urbaine*) meaning the built-up area without interruptions of more than 200 metres.²⁴ Even this much narrower definition of the urban agglomeration of Lyon would be substantially larger than the institution *Métropole de Lyon*. It corresponds to 128 municipalities and extends in the northern direction along the river Rhône even beyond the city of Villefranche-sur-Saône. Ben Mabrouk and Jouve (2002, 104) describe a “growing unsuitability of the territory of the Lyon urban community” since the 1970s. Due to topographic reasons, the plains east of the river Rhône have been the main direction of extension for centuries and have a peri-urban character, whereas the hilly landscape towards the west has prevented continuous urbanisation (Dugua 2015, 288).

2.3.2.2 High fragmentation of institutional perimeters

The *Métropole de Lyon* includes 59 municipalities with 1.38 million inhabitants (1/2019; thereof 0.5 million in the city of Lyon) and an area of 533 km² (see Figure 2.9). Its territory has been very stable over decades: the COURLY was founded with 55 member municipalities and kept its boundaries for 37 years. Since 2007, only the river Rhône connected the territory in the South. A strip of land along the river was conceded to the *métropole* in 2013 to formally fulfil the criterion of territorial continuity required by the law RCT (Fitria 2016, 254–61). Since the change to a *métropole*, the perimeter has not been altered and is unlikely to be extended in the near future.

Lyon is part of the Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, one of the enlarged French regions created by amalgamation of two regions in 2016

Figure 2.9 Métropole de Lyon 2021 Concept: P. Feiertag Cartography: F. Gela

Table 2.6 Lyon in the multilevel system

<i>Level</i>	<i>Type of institution</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Composed of</i>
Région	Territorial Authority	Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes	12 départements
Métropole with status of département	Territorial Authority	Métropole de Lyon	59 municipalities
Municipality	Territorial Authority	Ville de Lyon	

(see Table 2.6). The new boundaries of the super-region do not correspond to the shape of the urban system. Instead, three urban networks with strong internal links are discernible: Clermont-Ferrand, Lyon and Grenoble (Desjardins and Geppert 2020, 128–129). All of them are organised as *métropoles* (see Table 2.1), just like Saint-Étienne which is part of the urban network of Lyon. In addition, the north-eastern border region is part of the cross-border urban network of Geneva (Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes 2020, 12).

As has been mentioned before, the Métropole de Lyon is the only *métropole* that has the function of a *département* at the same time, and has been cut out of its former *département*, Rhône. The *département* never formed a pertinent space for city-regional coordination of policies, but instead contributed to the institutional fragmentation despite continued adaptation of its borders (Boino 2007, 43). The functional city-region is divided into three *départements*: Ain, Isère and Rhône, or even four with Saint-Étienne located in the Département Loire. Historically, this administrative separation was deliberately chosen in 1793 to weaken the influence of the city of Lyon after an uproar. The Département Rhône has been enlarged three times (1852, 1967 and 1971) towards the east because of the extension of the urban agglomeration of Lyon. The original boundary was the river Rhône that runs through the city from north to south. The enlargement in 1967 was closely linked to the creation of the CU because its territory would otherwise have covered municipalities from three *départements*. To avoid this, the national government choose to shift the departmental boundaries and attached six municipalities of the Département Ain and 23 of the Département Isère to Rhône, though not all of them became part of COURLY in 1969. This shift of boundaries acknowledged the extensive urbanisation towards the east on the left bank of the river Rhône that had already taken place. The third enlargement of the Département Rhône involved only one municipality, Colombier Saugnieu, and was made to incorporate the area of the future airport Lyon-Satolas, later renamed Lyon Saint-Exupéry (Bariol-Mathais 2015, 26–27).

The municipal boundaries of the city of Lyon itself are rather narrow. The administrative territory was enlarged in the middle of the 19th century

but could not keep pace with its urban extension. At the beginning of the 20th century, the attempt to incorporate the city of Villeurbanne located in the north-east of Lyon, mostly within the first ring road (boulevard périphérique) failed. Afterwards, the first attempts at inter-municipal cooperation were undertaken as an alternative to annexation (Bariol-Mathais 2015, 24, 28).

The *Métropole de Lyon* is surrounded by small peri-urban *communautés de communes*. They were founded during the 1990s by municipalities with similar socioeconomic characteristics with the intent to prevent incorporation into Greater Lyon (Carpenter and Verhage 2014, 60). The main reasons to reject incorporation despite the advantage of better services were a good fiscal situation, the lack of visibility of small municipalities within the large métropole and most notably the lack of identification with the political project of Grand Lyon. Rather than seeing themselves as part of a metropolis of European rank, municipalities such as Millery seek to preserve a rural character and also to prevent the pressure to build social housing (Fitria and Charmes 2014). The existing structure of inter-municipal groupings thus contributes little to the solidarity between different territories – rich and poor, urban and peri-urban – intended by the legislator (Boino 2007, 49; Rousseau 2015, 623). This is still true despite the general reorganisation of inter-municipal groupings brought about by law and the *schéma départemental de coopération intercommunale (SDCI)* (see 2.1.4). The state services had proposed in the SDCI 2011 to add two municipalities (Jons and Millery) to Greater Lyon due to territorial discontinuities, but this was never put into practice because of the opposition of those municipalities. Greater Lyon also objected to it as the municipal grouping did not wish to integrate new municipalities against their will (Fitria and Charmes 2014). There were some dynamics regarding the merger of municipal groupings in the wider metropolitan area between 2011 and 2017, but the first ring around Lyon is still organised as CCs, many of them with unchanged perimeters. Within the functional aire métropolitaine lyonnaise (see Figure 2.8), two *communautés d'agglomération* with a larger area than each of the two *métropoles* Lyon and Saint-Étienne were created in January 2017: the CA du Bassin de Bourg-en-Bresse in the North-East (merger of seven EPCIs with 75 municipalities and 1,300km²) and Loire Forez agglomération around Montbrison in the South-West with 88 municipalities (merger of four EPCIs). None of them is a member of the soft *pôle métropolitain* (see 2.3.3). One incentive to create larger groupings is a better visibility within the enlarged Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes. The municipal groupings are direct interlocutors of the *région*. The *région* concludes co-financing contracts with each of them based on a local development strategy and project propositions for any kind of investment of more than 60,000 € (apart from roads and sewage).

The municipal groupings (CA and CU) of the larger cities in the immediate surroundings of the Métropole de Lyon are organised within the soft

cooperation space *pôle métropolitain*, forming a city network (see Figure 2.2 and 2.3.3). With about two million inhabitants, it is by far the largest *pôle métropolitain* in France and the only one including more than one *métropole* (Bariol-Mathais 2017, 35). Several other pôles organised as networks instead of a continuous space exist, but most of them have larger distances between the cities than in the case of Lyon (e.g. Loire-Bretagne, Strasbourg-Mulhouse or Centre-Franche-Comté).

All in all, institutional perimeters of territorial authorities have not been in line with the morphological and functional territory of the city-region for more than a century. This fragmentation has not been reduced by the emergence of municipal groupings. This also applies for the spatial dimension of the much weaker institution *pôle métropolitain* (see 2.3.3). The creation of the *métropole*, meaning a concentration of functions without enlargement of its perimeter rather aggravates the divide. According to Geppert (2017, 238), there is no entity that could ensure solidarity between a dynamic urban core area and a suburban residential periphery at the fringes of the agglomeration. Dugua (2015, 792) argues that overcoming the inter-territorial battle and opening up to a larger diversity of stakeholders beyond the public actors might eventually happen in the future, triggered by the pressure of an economic crisis or by a renewal of elected officials as heads of the main institutions.

2.3.2.3 *Perimeters for regional planning*

During the 1960s, state initiatives for strategic spatial planning covered a large metropolitan area: the *plan d'aménagement et d'orientation générale* (PADOG) developed by the Ministry of Construction and the Schéma d'Aménagement de la Métropole Lyon-St Étienne – Grenoble (OREAM 1971). However, the introduction of the SDAU planning instrument in 1967 led to “a shift in scale from the level of the metropolitan area to the level of the agglomerations” (Verhage et al. 2007, 86). The inter-municipal *communauté urbaine* was created in the same period and took over the task of strategic planning, though for a smaller perimeter (Bariol-Mathais 2015, 35–39). The development took ten years in the agglomeration of Lyon and was completed in 1978, but other parts of the metropolitan area did not succeed in producing an SDAU. Thus spatial planning at the level of the larger metropolitan area disappeared at that time (Verhage et al. 2007, 86). The state launched the development of another city-regional plan, the directive territoriale d'aménagement (DTA; see 2.3.3) at the end of the 1990s. Its perimeter was fixed based on morphological definitions and corresponded to the *aires urbaines* of Lyon, Saint-Étienne and Bourgoin Jallieu/ Nord-Isère (see Figure 2.8). The east of Lyon was seen as an important development area, whereas the more rural western side towards the city of Roanne was not included (Dugua 2015, 670). The DTA was smaller than the space covered by the RUL and not coherent with SCoT-boundaries defined shortly

after by the local actors themselves: it cuts across eight of ten affected SCoTs (Préfecture de Région Rhône-Alpes 2006, 12).

Today's *SCoT de l'agglomération lyonnaise* has a limited perimeter and does not correspond to the metropolitan region (Aguiar Mol 2015, 310). It includes two small municipal groupings in the south-east of Lyon, CC de l'Est Lyonnais with 40,000 inhabitants and CC du Pays de l'Ozon with 25,000 inhabitants (see Figure 2.9). This area has particular relevance for spatial development because the airport Saint-Exupéry is located there and encourages important economic activities in its surroundings (Fitria and Charmes 2014). Since a minor extension in 2016, the SCoT covers 74 municipalities with an area of 756 km². Two small municipalities have been added because they had joined the municipal grouping of Lyon. This extension, which is insignificant in terms of demographic weight (6,200 inhabitants), does not increase the coherence of the perimeter. The informal Inter-SCoT dialogue (see 2.3.3.) first covered nine SCoT territories, i.e. the ring directly adjacent to Lyon and was later enlarged towards the west; today it encompasses 13 SCoT territories (Dugua 2015, 317; Verhage et al. 2007, 87) with 914 communes, 3.1 million inhabitants and an area of 10 400 km². Since 2004, it has also covered the agglomeration of Saint-Étienne, and since 2006 the medium-sized city of Roanne. The rural space in-between (SCoT Loire Centre and Mont du Lyonnais) was integrated in 2011 (Dugua 2015, 317; see Figure 2.10). Cooperation on this spatial scale is not entirely new, as it is similar to the association Région Urbaine de Lyon (RUL) created in 1989 (see 2.3.3.). The RUL has treated questions of spatial development and produced a charter for planning and development, but does not possess a formal planning instrument.

2.3.3 Coordination of public policies beyond the métropole

The inability of traditional institutional perimeters to handle the reality of metropolitan dynamics (Dugua 2015, 282) has led to the creation of several additional soft spaces with different perimeters. Three other bodies are relevant for metropolitan politics: the RUL, the Inter-SCoT and the *pôle métropolitain* (Aguiar Mol 2015, 138). The *Métropole de Lyon* is a powerful actor present in all of them. Furthermore, the state and the *région* intervene in this strategic territory of high national relevance.

2.3.3.1 Regional planning: Inter-SCoT, DTA and SRADDET

Regional planning at a metropolitan scale has a long tradition in the metro region of Lyon, although without institutionalised planning association at that scale (see 2.3.1 and 2.3.2). As the SCoT planning document only covers the core of the metropolitan region, its potential to bring coherence into metropolitan policies is limited. It is complemented by three other processes of regional planning that have taken place in the last two decades. All three

Figure 2.10 Institutional organisation within the Inter-SCoT area of Lyon © Dugua, Source: Dugua 2015, 309)

cover the wider metropolitan region of Lyon, though with different perimeters, at different times and piloted by different actors (see Table 2.7). The DTA as an instrument for areas of national interest was launched by the state and developed between 1998 and 2007; the SRADDET is a new planning instrument of the *région* first developed between 2016 and 2020; and the Inter-SCoT is a continuous dialogue between inter-municipal planning associations started in the 2000s. All three are binding for the SCoT de l'agglomération lyonnaise: DTA and SRADDET in legal terms as part of hierarchical vertical coordination and the Inter-SCoT due to a self-binding commitment as part of vertical coordination between bodies of local self-government.

The Inter-SCoT dialogue in the region of Lyon is an informal process, but is more intense and engaging than in most other French city-regions due to the necessity induced by the small size of the SCoT de l'agglomération lyonnaise (see Figure 2.9) compared to the functional area of interdependence (Interviews; Dugua 2015, 318). However, its governance arrangement has remained weak. The Inter-SCoT dialogue started in parallel to the development of the first generation of SCoT and was initiated in 2002 by the

Table 2.7 Layers of planning documents in the city-region of Lyon

<i>Planning document</i>	<i>Year of approval</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Area covered</i>
SRADDET	2020	Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes	Région
Inter-SCoT	<i>Since 2002</i>	Informal dialogue supported by agences d'urbanisme	13 SCoT
DTA	2006	State	382 municipalities
SCoT de l'agglomération lyonnaise	2010, updated in 2017	Syndicat de SCoT	3 EPCIs (with 74 municipalities)
PLUi including housing programme PLH	2019	Métropole de Lyon	Métropole (with 59 municipalities)

Agence d'Urbanisme pour le développement de l'agglomération lyonnaise (UrbaLyon) after the creation of a large SCoT for the entire metro region had failed (Aguiar Mol 2015, 142; Boino 2007, 55; see also 2.3.2). Even two decades later, there is no political will to reduce the number of SCoTs. The leading role of the president of UrbaLyon was crucial for convincing the municipal groupings around Lyon to participate in this less obligating, flexible form of coordination, because the agency was seen as neutral and valued due to its know-how (Aguiar Mol 2015, 205). For the project leaders of the first generation of SCoT, the possibility to exchange with other syndicats de SCoT about the practices that had to be established was a high incentive to engage in the dialogue (Aguiar Mol 2015, 188). The two *agences d'urbanisme* of Lyon and Saint-Étienne have produced over 50 studies on the scale of the metropolitan region as part of the Inter-SCoT dialogue as well as indicators for monitoring of residential development, transport, green and blue infrastructure as well as commercial development (Bariol-Mathais 2015, 48; Verhage et al. 2007, 87; Dugua 2015, 317). An important outcome is that the exchange has led to a common chapter at the beginning of each SCoT, introducing the main principles of the development for the entire metropolitan region.²⁵ The topics treated on the scale of the entire metro region were centrality and transport, housing and urban forms, economic development as well as agriculture and environment (Dugua 2015, 368–382). The Inter-SCoT itself has no legal quality, but the content becomes legally binding once it is integrated into the SCoT of its members (Aguiar Mol 2015, 157). The common chapter also includes a schematic map showing development axes and the main green spaces (see Figure 2.11).

The Inter-SCoT is a useful platform for exchange and consultation, but with some restrictions. A real coordination of spatial policies is made difficult by the fact that the development of the SCoT has not been synchronised since the beginning: whereas the first SCoT in the metropolitan region was already approved in 2003, the SCoT for the core area was launched as last one and only approved in 2010 (Boino 2007, 56; SEPAL 2010). This time

Chapitre commun inter-Scot, axes de développement

Figure 2.11 Map development axes from the common chapter of the Inter-SCoT de l'aire métropolitaine lyonnaise

lag has persisted in the updating process. Secondly, one of the reasons for its success is its voluntary character, but it does not allow to treat highly conflictual topics (Aguiar Mol 2015, 322; Dugua 2015, 319). The Inter-SCoT remains an informal dialogue without any decision-making power. A formalised governance arrangement was pushed on several occasions by

some SCoT presidents, but rejected both by Grand Lyon and many of the peripheral SCoT associations (Dugua 2015, 394). The Inter-SCoT is an expert dialogue between planners of the planning associations “syndicat de SCoT” and the two *agences d’urbanisme*, but also an arena for exchange of the elected representatives of the member EPCIs. The planners responsible for the 13 SCoTs meet at six-week intervals, share know-how and discuss common problems (Interviews; Aguiar Mol 2015, 168–169). The presidents of the EPCI meet once or twice a year to decide the missions to be developed for the following year, but also to discuss a specific topic relevant to metropolitan planning (Dugua 2015, 317). This personal contact has been helpful to build trust and facilitates other forms of informal cooperation within the larger metropolitan region such as the *pôle métropolitain* (Aguiar Mol 2015, 319). These meetings are one of the rare occasions where the influential political representatives of the core cities meet face to face with the presidents of small municipal groupings in the periphery of the metropolitan region (Dugua 2015, 318). At the beginning of the dialogue, the smaller municipal groupings mistrusted the dominant Lyon (Fitria 2016, 99) and feared losing power, but working together has helped to acknowledge common interests and to build a climate of confidence within this arena characterised by low political visibility (Aguiar Mol 2015, 173–174). The Inter-SCoT dialogue enables the local actors to reason and act on a metropolitan scale (Aguiar Mol 2015, 186). The Inter-SCoT dialogue was partly triggered by the development of the binding directive territoriale d’aménagement (DTA) for the *aire métropolitaine lyonnaise* by the state to keep a say in the process of defining the spatial strategy of the metropolitan area (Dugua 2015, 316). Today, a strong motivation for the Inter-SCoT dialogue is to express common points of view, e.g. concerning railway connections or the SRADDET and to produce agreements on a unified position towards investors, e.g. concerning large-scale commercial developments.

Lyon is one of six territories of national interest covered by a regional plan established by the state, the DTA. The metropolitan region of Lyon was chosen because of its importance for the national economy, but also because of the high institutional fragmentation. According to the DTA,

the implementation of real “governance” for this metropolitan territory requires strong action by the state, in its own areas of competence but also as a partner of the local authorities which are responsible but which, locked within their own limits, cannot meet the requirements of regional or national interest. The initiatives observed are still too slow and not sufficiently binding for the coordination of public policies (own translation,²⁶ Préfecture de Région Rhône-Alpes 2006, 11).

The process started in 1998 with a preparatory analysis and the document came into force in January 2007 (Bariol-Mathais 2015, 40; Dugua 2015, 315). It formulates the state’s priorities in the medium and long term, in

particular regarding large-scale infrastructure such as highways, high-speed rail connections, harbours and intermodal hubs (Carpenter and Verhage 2014, 61; Bariol-Mathais 2015, 42). Its main impact was to keep potential sites for infrastructure free from other land uses (Dugua 2015, 691). In the area surrounding the airport, building restrictions are related to noise protection, expansion plans of the airport as well as a multimodal platform and a planned high-speed connection to Turin. A modification was made between 2013 and 2015 to allow for additional sites for cargo and economic activity zones. Today the content of the DTA is partly outdated because infrastructure projects such as a new highway bypassing Lyon in the west have been rejected. This creates a paradoxical situation because the DTA continues to be formally binding for the SRADDET and SCoT planning documents. They therefore have to integrate infrastructure projects programmed 15 years ago even though all actors agree that they will never come about. Thus, the DTA has mainly become an inconvenient constraint in the eyes of local actors rather than an instrument that helps to structure the future development of the metro region.

Although the state is not developing regional plans anymore, the *régions* have had the duty to develop a strategic document for their entire territory since 2015, the SRADDET (schéma régional d'aménagement, de développement durable et d'égalité des territoires). In the case of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, the objective of the region was to define a unified, coherent vision of the new regional territory created by the amalgamation of two regions. The development process of the SRADDET included a territorial dialogue in each *département* as well as thematic consultations, both at the beginning and after drafting the document. For both the participation process and the document, the title "Ambition Territoires 2030" was chosen as it was believed to sound less technocratic and be easier to communicate than "SRADDET". The planning document entered into force in April 2020 and is binding for the already existing SCoT, but is not likely to cause modifications. It defines general principles concerning territorial development, transport, climate, air and energy, biodiversity and waste management, but no quantitative aims concerning land consumption, densification or reservation of agricultural land. Territorialised specifications are only made with a low level of precision: it contains a list of infrastructure projects that the *région* is willing to co-finance such as high-speed rail connections, and indicates ecological corridors and biodiversity reservoirs schematically. Thus, the *région* defines a frame, but its impact on land use planning is low in the first generation of SRADDET.

2.3.3.2 *The région urbaine de Lyon (RUL) and its dissolution*

The association Région Urbaine de Lyon (RUL) was "a permanent forum for dialogue and debate, with the aim of providing a clearer vision of the challenges facing the metropolitan area of Lyon and Saint-Étienne, proposing

strategy plans for development and planning, and being a catalyst for coordinated action by both local authorities and local stakeholders” (Bideau 2003, 108). It was created in 1989 and dissolved in April 2015. The association was based on the voluntary action of members to address issues of metropolitan development and transcend administrative boundaries within an area close to the functional metropolitan region. According to Aguiar Mol (2015, 141), it was the only arena where all actors of the metropolitan region came together. Other authors refer to it as a unique institutional solution that did not exist in any other metropolitan area in France (Bideau 2003, 108; Verhage et al. 2007, 87). What made it so special apart from its early creation and its perimeter was the horizontal as well as vertical coordination across different layers of the state. The association has brought together the *départements*, the *région* as well as the largest municipal groupings of the metro region. Its founding members were the three *départements* Ain, Rhône and Isère as well as the Communauté Urbaine de Lyon. Two years later, it was enlarged towards Saint-Étienne with the fourth *département* Loire, though without the municipal grouping of Saint-Étienne. The Région Rhône-Alpes became a member in 1996 and held the co-presidency from 2002 together with the president of Grand Lyon. In the same year, the other EPCIs representing the urban centres of the metropolitan region became associated members (Bideau 2003, 108; Boino 2007, 54; Aguiar Mol 2015, 141). Thus, Grand Lyon, and the mayor of Lyon as its president, had a key role within the RUL and was far more influential in agenda setting than the other municipalities and municipal groupings of the metro region.

The RUL had some similarity to the Inter-SCoT dialogue existing in parallel for about ten years. Both were soft, dialogue-oriented forms of metropolitan cooperation with a similar perimeter, and both had the role of producing knowledge and joint strategies. They involved slightly different actors and topics, though with overlaps (Aguiar Mol 2015, 191). The work of the RUL was coordinated by a small team of four employees. The core activity of the RUL was an annual forum as a basis for producing common ideas and developing propositions that were then validated by the members. Each year, another topic was addressed: 1997 logistics, 1998 sustainable development, 1999 metropolitan functions, 2000 peri-urban areas, 2002 leisure, etc. (Bideau 2003, 108–109).

The main merit of the RUL was to reach consensus about some questions and to develop a common vision for spatial development of the metropolitan space despite a very fragmented institutional landscape (Bideau 2003, 108; Boino 2007, 54). According to its former director, it was a place for open dialogue, because of low media exposure. In the annual conferences the members agreed on a charter for planning and development (*Charte d'aménagement et de développement* 1994) as well as several strategies (e.g. *schéma logistique* in 1997). During the term of office of Raymond Barre, comprehensive planning processes were regarded as too heavy and time-consuming and the activities were turned towards specific sites, e.g.

in the logistics sector (Aguiar Mol 2015, 131). One of the successes of the RUL has been the establishment of a partnership between the public transport companies of the metro region in 2000 (Bideau 2003, 108–109, Boino 2007, 54). Thus the RUL contributed to multimodal pricing, a web tool for public transport route planning on the perimeter of the RUL, and the creation of a logistics cluster (Dugua 2015, 310). Although it has been an incubator for some projects, the main activities of the RUL remained reflection, dialogue and networking. Activities in the last years of its existence included the topics of economic development, intermodal transport, logistics and the metropolitan dimension of tourism (Aguiar Mol 2015, 141–142). Today, intermodal transport is the responsibility of the *région*, whereas the *pôle métropolitain* pursues the work regarding tourism.

Despite positive acknowledgements in the literature (Bideau 2003; Verhage et al. 2007; Boino 2007; Aguiar Mol 2015), some shortcomings have to be mentioned to explain the disappearance of the RUL. The outcome in terms of concrete project implementation was rather limited and slow. Like any other form of soft governance, the RUL did not possess any decision-making power (Aguiar Mol 2015, 198) and its low formalisation caused fragility and a lack of democratic legitimacy (Boino 2007, 54). In addition, the boundaries of the *départements* remained very present (Aguiar Mol 2015, 183; Dugua 2015, 310), and political conflicts between the actors persisted (Aguiar Mol 2015, 130). A certain amount of mistrust and distance from the presidents of the intercommunal bodies (Aguiar Mol 2015, 142) as well as rivalries between Grand Lyon and the *région* about metropolitan leadership (Dugua 2015, 310) complicated the process. The RUL also lacked good relations with the local economic sphere. Most large companies with industrial plants in the metro region had their headquarters in Paris and were involved very little in local politics whereas the chamber of commerce and industry mainly supported the interests of small and medium-sized businesses (Ben Mabrouk and Jouve 2002, 101). Thus, despite its long-standing existence as part of metro governance in Lyon, the RUL was called into question by the emergence of other metropolitan institutions. Although it coexisted with the Inter-SCoT dialogue, it was dissolved in favour of the *pôle métropolitain* due to a unilateral decision of the mayor of Lyon not to support it anymore. Two years after the formalisation of the *pôle métropolitain* as an association, its members withdrew from the RUL on the initiative of Gérard Collomb and thus caused its dissolution in November 2014 as it made no sense to pursue it without Lyon (Dugua 2015, 311). Thus, the RUL ceased to exist at the moment Grand Lyon became a *métropole*.

2.3.3.3 *The Pôle métropolitain as alternative to the RUL*

The *pôle métropolitain* is slightly more formalised than the former RUL and the Inter-SCoT dialogue because it has a legal form defined by national law (see 2.1.1). However, it remains a light form of cooperation based on

dialogue and voluntary action of the members, with all the advantages and disadvantages of soft governance arrangements. With a headquarters with six employees and a budget of 1.8 Mio € (i.e. about 0.05% of the budget of the Métropole de Lyon), it does not have significantly more capacities than the former RUL. Creating a new organisation instead of formalising the governance of the Inter-SCoT or using the long-standing RUL for metropolitan projects was a unilateral choice of Grand Lyon, justified by the argument to be more action-oriented instead of focussed on reflection and strategy formulation. The Inter-SCoT is portrayed as complementary (Dugua 2015, 394), restricted to reflections on spatial planning within the SCoT procedures and with the main value of a regular exchange between planners, whereas the *pôle* is a more political arena and totally free in the definition of its topics and actions, as long as a consensus among its members can be reached. Compared to the RUL, the crucial difference is the circle of actors since the new association is only formed of municipal groupings representing the urban centres of the metropolitan region (see Figure 2.2). This reduction to horizontal cooperation without the *région*, the *départements* and the state was seen as an advantage by the cities and can be interpreted as one of the aims of the institutional change (Aguiar Mol 2015, 187). It reflects fundamental changes in the multilayer system in the three decades since the creation of the RUL with the rise of the largest municipal groupings and the marginalisation of the *départements* (see 2.1), but means that a shared forum with the *région* has disappeared, despite mutual fields of action such as intermodal transport, economic development and regional planning (SRADDET).

The aspiration behind the *pôle métropolitain* was to create a more potent organisation that would be able to advance concrete projects quicker and be more politically visible. The driving idea behind the *pôle* was to enhance the competitiveness of the metropolitan region at a European scale. This idea was mainly related to the symbolism of having more weight due to a higher number of inhabitants within this larger area as compared to the *métropole* (Interviews; Dugua 2015, 313). Its fields of action are not so different from the agenda of the RUL. The initial topics formulated in a first cooperation agreement signed in 2010 were the economy, culture, transport and spatial development (Dugua 2015, 312). Concrete actions that were implemented until 2018 mainly concerned tourism (booking destinations within the entire region in each tourism office), marketing (joint presentations at real estate fairs) and regional food cycles (use of local products for large events) as well as two sites of particular relevance: the airport Saint-Exupéry and the Valley of the river Gier between Saint-Étienne and Lyon. In the field of transport, some ideas about reduction of car traffic in the centre of Lyon by creating park and ride car parks with carpooling services as well as ferry transport on the river Rhône have been proposed, but the implementation of joint solutions has been difficult.

The airport was initially not part of the *pôle*, which is called illogical by Carpenter and Verhage (2014, 60). The association was officially created by

prefectoral decree in April 2012 with four members, the municipal groupings of Lyon, Saint-Étienne, Vienne and Bourgoin Jallieu (see Figure 2.8). The patchworked territory acknowledges the role of the large urban EPCI as key actors due to shifts of responsibility in the past decade, but also poses problems because the topics addressed at the metropolitan scale are not only restricted to these territories. One obvious example is urban agriculture and regional consumer cycles, as production areas are to a large part located in those municipalities that are not members of the *pôle*. In 2016, after the dissolution of the RUL, Villefranche in the north of Lyon and the CC de l'Est lyonnais with the airport joined the *pôle*.

The airport is the symbol of the difficulty of the various bodies of metropolitan governance in making the link between strategies on the scale of the large territory and local actions (Dugua and Trotta 2012). Since 2016, the *pôle métropolitain* has taken over the responsibility to coordinate the development of activity zones in the institutionally highly fragmented area around the airport, cutting across three *départements* and four SCoTs. The process includes only three of the six members of the *pôle*, but a wide range of other actors such as state services, EPCIs and SCoTs covered by the study area, *départements*, *région*, chambers and economic development agencies. The urgency of coordinated action in this area had already been recognised by the Inter-SCoT in 2010. As a first step the UrbaLyon had been mandated to carry out a survey as the basis for a joint strategy initially piloted by the state, also leading to a modification of the DTA. It was under discussion to create a new association for the Saint-Exupéry plain to implement the strategy, but the task was instead entrusted to the *pôle métropolitain* (Dugua 2015, 440–448).

The mode of operation of the *pôle métropolitain* is incremental, i.e. based on the preparation and initiation of innovative projects that would add to overall goals of metropolitan development. It is a place for experimentation and dissemination of good practice (Bariol-Mathais 2017, 119) as well as dialogue between the elected representatives of the members. Each of the six municipal groupings provides one vice-president and sends members to the council composed of 88 members (thereof 43 *Métropole de Lyon*). The crucial element of governance is to bring the presidents of the six municipal groupings together. Their meetings take place every second month and are prepared by a meeting of their heads of administration with the director of the *pôle*. The head office has the means to initiate processes by bringing actors together and financing smaller studies, but larger investments have to be financed by each of the members and thus must be deliberated by their democratic bodies. The *pôle* has already raised funds to a smaller extent, but is not made for this and does not have the capacity for EU funding applications.

The *pôle métropolitain* launched promising projects in its first years, but entered a phase of lower activity between 2015 and 2018. The lower interest of the members was caused by a fundamental restructuring within all

of the municipal groupings themselves as well as political change after the municipal election of 2014 with new mayors. Conflicts of interest persist despite the seemingly more heterogeneous circle of actors as compared to the RUL, but can be addressed. The voluntary status and light structure is a precondition for its existence and allows for flexibility, but is seen by most interviewees as a step in the right direction rather than as an entirely satisfactory solution of metropolitan governance. Concerning future perspectives, the conceptions range from an enlarged territory of the pôle, i.e. more coherent soft space, to a much larger *métropole*, i.e. replacement by a hard institution. Thus, rather than conducting debates on its form, it seems more auspicious to concentrate on concrete projects with joint benefits that can be launched within the given institutional frame.

2.3.3.4 Saint-Étienne – second hub of the metropolitan region or a metropolis in its own right?

Saint-Étienne is the core city of a municipal grouping that acquired the status of *métropole* in 2018. It is one of the largest French *métropoles* in terms of area, but has only about one-third of the population of the *Métropole de Lyon* (see Table 2.1). The centres of the two *métropoles* are only about 50 km away from each other and their borders now almost touch each other since the municipality of Givors joined the *Métropole de Lyon* (see Figure 2.10). The two cities are part of one urban network with strong internal links (Desjardins and Geppert 2020, 129). Saint-Étienne is the second largest centre whereas the others are medium-sized cities (Vienne, Bourgoin Jallieu and Villefranche-sur-Saône).

The state-led regional plan PADOG from the 1960s interpreted Lyon and Saint-Étienne as two city-regions (*régions urbaines*) that are both part of the metropolitan region of Lyon (*aire métropolitaine de Lyon*) (Bariol-Mathais 2015, 33). The DTA calls for a multipolar urban development and also describes Saint-Étienne as a separate agglomeration (*agglomération de Saint-Étienne*) within the metropolitan region of Lyon (Préfecture de Région Rhône-Alpes 2006, 15). It can be argued that the subsystem of Saint-Étienne is more coherent in terms of planning than the one of Lyon because Saint-Étienne is part of the SCoT Sud Loire covering a vast area of 116 municipalities. The agglomeration of Saint-Étienne has been part of the three soft networks on the metropolitan level, RUL, Inter-SCoT and *pôle métropolitain*. However, it was not a founding member of the RUL or the Inter-SCoT. In both cases its territory was soon included in the considerations due to the strong functional interrelation, but Saint-Étienne was first invited only as an observer (Boino 2007, 54–56). Within the governance of the *pôle métropolitain*, the Saint-Étienne Métropole has a more equitable role, at least symbolically: according to the statutes, the presidency rotates every three years between Lyon and Saint-Étienne and its headquarters is located in-between the two centres. The ADERLY economic development agency

has extended its radius of action to the municipal groupings of Saint-Étienne and Capi in 2015 (Bariol-Mathais 2017, 117). Furthermore, the universities of Saint-Étienne and Lyon have started an alliance within a national initiative for excellence. All in all, competitiveness functions are carried out at a larger scale including Lyon and Saint-Étienne, whereas services for the population are provided by each of the *métropoles*.

Regarding the terminology, most actors refer to the urban or metropolitan region of Lyon. However, in the context of the Inter-SCoT-dialogue, documents refer to the “aire métropolitaine Lyon – Saint Étienne”, emphasising a bipolar character. The *pôle métropolitain* has been named only “pôle métropolitain” without referring to Lyon in its name and thus avoiding the question of the relevance of the agglomeration of Saint-Étienne in the partnership.

2.4 Conclusion: recent changes of city-regional governance in France

In the chapter on French metropolitan governance and planning, two *métropoles* created in January 2015 have been the main objects of investigation. The *Métropole de Lyon* has a special status as full local self-government, whereas Nantes is one of the “ordinary” *métropoles* organised as a legal public body (EPCI). The main differences between the two cases are that the *Métropole de Lyon* fulfils functions of the *département* and has had a directly elected assembly since 2020. Lyon also has a longer history of inter-municipal cooperation and regional planning, whereas the main integration process in Nantes took place in the 2000s. In both cases, the mayors of the core city have had a key role in governance of the metropolitan region in the last two decades, both within the *métropole* and beyond. However, this concentration of mayoral power ended in Lyon after 2020, as the *métropole* became an independent layer of governance.

In terms of a functional definition of the metropolitan region, i.e. *aire urbaine* defined by commuter sheds, Lyon is significantly larger. However, the institutionalised space of the two *métropoles* is almost the same with an area of a little more than 500 km². With regard to city-regional planning, Lyon even has a smaller SCoT than Nantes (compensated by a more committed Inter-SCoT dialogue including the surrounding planning associations). In Nantes, the wider metropolitan area of Nantes – Saint-Nazaire forms a second, albeit weak, level of metropolitan governance (*pôle métropolitain* responsible for SCoT) composed of several EPCIs. With regard to vertical cooperation, actors from different levels responsible for different territories meet and collaborate within the SAMOA development agency with the concrete outcome of the Île de Nantes regeneration scheme. In Lyon, coordinated action from a multitude of actors is needed for the area around the airport Saint-Exupéry located outside the *métropole*; this task has been delegated to the *pôle métropolitain* after preparatory analysis by state services.

The case of Nantes shows that the existing instruments create capacities to act despite persistent institutional fragmentation of the metropolitan region. Lyon has succeeded in establishing one of the most powerful city-regional governments in Europe (Galimberti et al. 2014, 192) for the core of the metropolitan region. In France, it is an experimental case that receives much attention and is often seen as the most advanced, most exemplary model of metropolitan government. The full impact of its transformation will only become assessable in the years to come, namely the impact of direct elections, the dissociation of the mayor of Lyon and the president of the *métropole* as well as the political shift to the Green Party in 2020. On the wider scale of the large functional urban region, the metropolitan region of Lyon is still a highly fragmented space. It has a rich, long-standing tradition of metropolitan dialogue, though the definition of metropolitan space remains fluid and coordinated action is split into several arenas with low degrees of institutionalisation. Their fragility and dependence on the goodwill of the *métropole* is shown by the dissolution of the RUL. Strengthening the *métropole* institution has rather intensified the “fronts of the inter-territorial battle” in the Lyon metropolitan area (Dugua 2015, 395) and the realisation of concrete projects with a multitude of actors, interests and rivalries remains cumbersome. For the field of public transport Idt et al. (2012) argue that collective action can be reached even without a shared vision or the existence of common interests, if actors assume their interdependence and if steering mechanisms for inter-institutional cooperation are able to manage the competition between territorial administrations.

This comparative section is organised according to the four dimensions of institutions, functions, ideas and space that form the analytical framework of the book. It synthesises the three previous sections on national territorial reforms and the two in depth case studies of Nantes and Lyon, and interprets on this basis recent changes of city-regional governance in France.

2.4.1 Institutions

Métropoles have become a powerful layer above the municipalities and are key institutions for metropolitan governance. They are the result of many decades of inter-municipal cooperation. The new status granted by the national government is not particularly exclusive, given the number of 22 *métropoles* since 2018. Whether the status of *métropole* came with important changes or not depends greatly on the individual city-region and its history of inter-municipal cooperation. Regarding the two cases of Nantes and Lyon, the impact of the MAPTAM law has been quite different: in the case of Nantes, the transformation was minor, whereas it triggered great institutional change in Lyon. This was primarily related to Lyon’s special status, i.e. to the transfer of all departmental responsibilities within its territory and the direct election of its council. The two *métropoles* were preceded by a *CU* and already possessed most of the municipal responsibilities prescribed

by the MAPTAM law. This does not apply to all French *métropoles*, e.g. Grenoble.

The national laws set the framework for the *métropoles*, such as mandatory responsibilities and rules for political representation. Therefore, a similar type of metropolitan institution exists in all French city-regions. Nonetheless, we can observe some heterogeneity and variation. On one hand, tailor-made rules for some *métropoles* such as Lyon have already become part of the legislative process. On the other hand, specific local arrangements are possible within the framework of the national law such as in the case of Nantes (pooled administration with deconcentrated units, additional responsibilities, key role of the local development agency, SAMOA).

Both *métropoles* have established sub-units regrouping several municipalities or city-quarters of the core city, although the national law does not include them. These are called “pôles de proximité” in Nantes and “conférences territoriales” or “bassin de vie” in Lyon. In the case of Lyon, their outline is largely consistent with the boundaries of the new electoral constituencies of the *métropole*. The idea behind them is to create spaces with similar characteristics and issues. An advantage is that those spaces are more alike in size than the municipalities and partly overcome the dichotomy between a large core and small peripheral units. They do not form an official decision-making level, but are used in strategic documents (e.g. for diagnosis and formulation of the development strategy “projet territorial” within the land use plan PLUi/PLUm)²⁷ and for coordination of concrete questions regarding the implementation of public policies in the particular area (interface between *métropole* and municipalities). Both in Nantes and Lyon, this intermediary level for consultation guarantees regular communication among the mayors within those sub-territories and the heads of the metropolitan executive. In Nantes, the *pôles de proximité* also correspond to deconcentrated units of the metropolitan administration, and their establishment was one founding principle of the CU. In neither of the two *métropoles* are they used for contact with the citizens, neither for consultation nor for administrative procedures. The municipalities remain the main interface between the local administration and the citizens. For example, the citizen participation during the preparation of inter-municipal land use plans took place in each municipality individually and was jointly organised by the municipal administration and the *métropole*.

Municipalities also remain the basic unit for democratic representation in the *métropoles*, with the exception of Lyon. Direct election without a simultaneous mandate in a municipal council was much discussed but never implemented in the national legislative process. In the case of Lyon, the transformation into a jurisdiction with directly elected council has reshaped the relationship between the Métropole de Lyon and the municipalities within its perimeter. They are no longer members of a voluntary municipal grouping. Instead, the *métropole*, which fulfils many functions of local self-government and raises its own taxes has become a layer of

territorial government without asking its former members for their consent. Direct elections strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the *métropole* and match the high influence of the political decisions of the metropolitan council on living conditions in the agglomeration. At the same time, the status of the municipalities and their mayors within the decision-making process has changed, causing internal conflicts between the *métropole* and the municipalities. Representation of interests is especially an issue for the small municipalities in the north-west, run by mayors of parties that are in the opposition in the current metropolitan council and have also lost all seats as vice-presidents of the *métropole*.

Whether Lyon will remain a single case or is a forerunner of the future reorganisation of the multilevel system will be seen in the long run. Extending the institutional arrangements to other large city-regions has been favoured by president Macron among others, but is opposed by many *métropoles* such as Nantes. Whether it would really increase their problem-solving capacities or rather add to hyperintegrated bodies that collapse under their own weight (Demazière et al. 2022) has to be scrutinised. The social services responsibilities of the *départements* are heavy in terms of budget and staff, but the exercise of these responsibilities is largely framed by national regulations and therefore has few additional possibilities to shape policy (Galimberti et al. 2014, 200). The benefit of the proposed reorganisation also highly depends on the boundaries of the *départements*. If they cut across the metro region and are thus hampering city-regional coordination of policies as was the case in Lyon, or are almost identical to the territory of the *métropole*, as in Aix-Marseille-Provence, it makes sense to merge *métropole* and *département*.

When analysing the spatial relations it becomes apparent that territorial coordination beyond the borders of the *métropole* is needed to address shared issues. This is already done by a range of soft territorial alliances, using different instruments, partially introduced by law (CGET 2019, 11). Municipal groupings are the main actors for territorial coordination as they negotiate shared strategies and common projects between each other. This has the advantage that the number of interlocutors is significantly lower than in case of negotiations between municipalities. In addition, the dialogue is more balanced than it would be when a small suburban municipality with 2,000 inhabitants negotiates with a city. However, important asymmetries in size, responsibilities, resources and political weight remain. The restructuring of municipal groupings around the *métropoles* has been seeking to amend this partially but has in the short term led to stagnation of inter-territorial cooperation because of new positioning, internal reorganisation and construction of a common territorial project within the EPCI in both case study regions. A discontinuity in leadership in the largest cities (Nantes and Saint-Nazaire as well as Lyon and Saint-Étienne) has also slowed down soft cooperation, as cooperation is largely built upon personal contact and trust among the presidents of the most influential municipal groupings.

The institutional form of *pôle métropolitain* (PM) has far from the same importance as the *métropoles* nor the same attention in national discourses. They remain difficult to grasp for many due to their heterogeneity in terms of fields of action (freely defined on the basis of a common interest) and territorial coverage (either continuous or discontinuous, with the possibility to overlap with other *pôles métropolitains*), and appear weak due to their very small budget compared to that of *métropoles* as well as the lack of exclusive responsibilities. The instrument PM has been picked up both in Lyon and in Nantes with the aim of formalising inter-municipal cooperation beyond the *métropole*, but is only one of several mechanisms for soft coordination. Those *pôles métropolitains* have in common that they were created with the expectation of being an action-oriented format that would facilitate joint projects. Both are devices for horizontal cooperation between EPCIs with rather small headquarters. The regular meeting of the presidents of EPCIs is their key governance mechanism. Their cooperation space is more polycentric than the *métropoles* themselves and a step towards cooperation among equals with the second largest cities. However, major differences exist between the pôles. Whereas the PM Nantes Saint-Nazaire covers a continuous area, both the *pôle métropolitain* of Lyon and the second pôle of Nantes, PM Loire-Bretagne are organised as city networks with the EPCIs of the largest centres. The fields of action defined as common interests as well as the type of projects are different as well. In Lyon, the pôle has been an alternative replacing an existing forum, whereas the PM Nantes Saint-Nazaire represents a deepening of an existing association and the PM Loire-Bretagne is an entirely new format.

2.4.2 *Functions*

All 22 French *métropoles* perform a wide range of functions and form the local level of self-government together with the municipalities. Most of their functions have been transferred from the member municipalities. Fulfilling functions at the inter-municipal level takes place as an alternative to the forced merger of municipalities. Today, the *métropoles* fulfil more functions than the cities themselves. This is in particular true for the field of spatial planning as the responsibilities both for land use planning and large urban projects have been transferred to the level of the *métropole*. The administration of the *métropoles* in some cases such as Lyon or Bordeaux even exceeds the staff of the administration of their core city (Demazière et al. 2022). This shift of functions has not happened overnight, but was a gradual process over several decades. In Lyon, this process started three decades earlier than in Nantes due to the creation of a CU in 1969. In addition, the *Métropole de Lyon* has performed all functions of the *département* since 2016. In Nantes, the process of delegating municipal tasks to the inter-municipal administration has not ended yet, but took place recently mainly in the form of individual agreements between municipalities and the *métropole*. Unlike Lyon,

the administrations of the *Métropole de Nantes* and of the city of Nantes have become deeply entwined, forming one pooled administration with joint departments. The functions of the *métropole* and of the city of Nantes are carried out under the same head. Deliberation takes place in separate councils for municipal or metropolitan competencies. However, important overlaps exist there as well, because each metropolitan councillor has to be a member of one of the municipal councils of the 24 member municipalities and it is common practice that the mayor of Nantes is president of the *métropole*.

Social reproduction functions have been the starting point of inter-municipal cooperation, initially in the form of single-purpose associations for technical services such as water supply, waste treatment and energy supply. Those functions have been absorbed by the *métropoles* of Lyon and Nantes. Both are also responsible for urban planning, strategies for housing and transport, building and maintaining roads and public spaces as well as for environmental protection. Public transport is also under the responsibility of the *métropole* but is carried out by a transport company (Sytral in the case of Lyon, Semitan in the case of Nantes) with majority ownership of the *métropole*. In the case of Nantes, the *métropole* has almost no functions regarding social policy and health; those services are divided between the *département* and the municipalities. In Lyon, since 2015, substantial social functions, including financial support for low-income households, have changed the functional profile. Social assistance is organised in a decentralised way with buildings in different quarters of Lyon and other municipalities (Maison de la Métropole). In all French *métropoles*, substantial parts of the services of general interest for the citizens are today provided by the *métropole*.

With regard to production functions, the *métropoles* are responsible for economic development, marketing and tourism as well as large projects and events of city-regional relevance. The individual municipalities cannot provide production functions alone due to their small size. Municipalities join forces when addressing investors and visitors in order to have a better chance of attracting attention and promoting their city-region. In the case of Lyon, the CU started activities in the field of economic development at an early stage. At the same time, even the *métropoles* are small in a European comparison with other city-regional governments. Therefore, production functions are in part addressed in wider networks such as *pôle métropolitains* and joint business development agencies. Functions related to economic competitiveness are partially shared with the *région*. *Métropoles* have the right to deviate from regional strategies concerning economic development. However, a main lever of influence is the co-financing of projects, as enhancing the production functions is often related to extensive investments that cannot be financed by the local level alone.

Functions of soft institutions on the scale of the wider metropolitan region concern both social reproduction and production. Regarding the

pôles métropolitains, the focus lies more on production functions in the case of Lyon, e.g. the joint representation of the city-region at real estate shows. However, the topics of joint interest defined by the members are not limited to production functions. One of the topics treated successfully is regional food cycles. In Nantes, given the responsibility for strategic planning, the focus on the Pôle métropolitain Nantes Saint-Nazaire is more on the coordination of land use in the city-region. This task touches both upon production functions (e.g. sites for industry, business and logistics) as well as reproduction (e.g. landscape protection). Projects for landscape design launched by the pôle via a design competition rather concern local recreation and can therefore be attributed to the social reproduction function. However, the pôle also uses the image of a green sustainable city-region for marketing purposes, e.g. by applying for a national label (EcoCité). Thus, the ideas of sustainability and attractiveness both for citizens and externals are linked together. The second Pôle métropolitain Loire-Bretagne, which consists of a city network, more exclusively targets competitiveness with the common interests of accessibility by high-speed rail, university cooperation and joint marketing at real estate shows.

2.4.3 *Ideas*

In both the cases of Lyon and Nantes, the idea of competitiveness of city-regions on a European scale is central to metropolitan policy. It becomes manifest on several spatial scales: one being the *métropole*, but also at the larger scale of the metropolitan region beyond its institutional boundaries as well as on the smaller scale of specific places within the city-region with symbolic value for the image of the metropolis (i.e. Lyon Confluence and Île de Nantes). The idea of European competitiveness prompted the mayors of the core cities to act long before the *métropole* was invented as an institutional form by the French government. In Lyon, an orientation towards competitiveness goes back to the 1990s and guided the actions of the successive mayors Noir, Barre and Collomb. However, the recent election of the summer of 2020 might mean a reorientation of priorities; the Green Party has won both positions of mayor of Lyon and president of the *métropole*, and its political programme stands for sustainability rather than having a growth orientation.

In Nantes, the aspiration to transform the city into a metropolis of European importance started a decade later and is mainly attributed to the long-term mayor and first president of the CU Jean-Marc Ayrault. He is also seen as the driving force behind inter-municipal cooperation such as the creation of the CU, support of the national legislation concerning *métropoles* (as prime minister during the development of the MAPTAM law), rapprochement with the mayor of the former rival city Saint-Nazaire, creation of the planning association for the SCoT including both cities and later on transformation into a *pôle métropolitain*. In the competition with

other cities, Nantes has been successfully branded as a sustainable, liveable city, e.g. as the first French city that has reintroduced the tramway as a transport system. The self-understanding and image combine attractiveness, participation and sustainability (Griggs et al. 2018, 15). Ayrault's successor, Johanna Rolland, is pursuing the political legacy with regard to inter-municipal cooperation, but with an even greater focus on the quality of life for citizens in all city quarters beyond showcase projects. The ideas of proximity to the citizens, participation and welfare have gained importance.

In both city-regions, competitiveness has been an argument to justify the step-by-step integration of the municipal grouping towards a strong institution (*métropole*) and to claim for the integration of policy fields related to the production function. This logic corresponds to the metropolitan reform position (see Chapter 1). In Nantes, the creation of the CU was a major step towards a stronger inter-municipal institution. In Lyon, the *métropole* has started early activities regarding economic development and has broadened the functions of the municipal grouping. Both cities have used strategies of festivalisation, i.e. culture and big events to change the image of the city-region (not only marketing campaigns of the economic development agencies).

Due to the logic of a "critical mass" needed in comparison to other European city-regions, competitiveness has also been a reason for interpreting and describing the metropolitan region as a larger space, beyond the *métropole* itself. This is obvious in the case of Nantes as the city itself is not among the large cities of Europe in terms of inhabitants. Rather than size, the positioning of the city-region is justified by quality of life, good economic development and innovation. The imaginary of a bipolar metropolitan region Nantes Saint-Nazaire has been cultivated in parallel to the consolidation of the inter-municipal grouping Nantes Métropole. Still, the institution Pôle métropolitain Nantes Saint-Nazaire contributes to social reproduction rather than production functions, with the key focus on regional planning, water and landscape. Although Lyon is the third largest French city (after Paris and Marseille), the idea of a critical mass in terms of inhabitants is very present in the mind of local actors. Due to the French urban system with a huge gap between Paris and all other cities as well as narrow administrative boundaries of the core cities, the demographic size of French cities is much lower than the demographic size of the European cities with similar importance that they wish to be compared with (Megerle 2008, 26). However, by presenting benchmarking numbers of the metropolitan region for the *pôle métropolitain* or even the entire *aire métropolitaine*, this critical mass in quantitative rankings is attained.

The competitiveness strategies of both city-regions are closely related to large urban projects. Thus, metropolitan policy focussed on competitiveness and city branding is manifested within the city via high quality urban design, (star)architecture and place-making. According to Pinson (2009), urban projects such as the Île de Nantes enable the European cities of second

rank (beyond global cities such as Paris, between 300,000 and three million inhabitants) to position themselves in a more competitive environment. “Ils [les projets urbains] sont l’occasion de la définition de stratégies de développement économique, de la redécouverte et de la mise en valeur d’avantages compétitifs. L’occasion aussi de doter les villes des aménités et des équipements censés y attirer les activités économiques et les classes sociales les plus valorisées dans le capitalisme globalisé” (Pinson 2009, 404). The close interrelation of the economic development strategy and urban development was already observable in Lyon at an early stage. The promotion of the tertiary sector was pursued through the construction of attractive business districts. Given its size, Lyon has several sites implementing urban projects with strategic relevance for the city-region, recently Confluence in the southern part of the peninsula, along with the old city centre and the refurbishment of the second central district Part Dieu. In Nantes, the emblematic project Île de Nantes is closely related to creating favourable conditions for creative industry. The SAMOA development agency had from the beginning a double role of developing the site and promoting the economy. The innovative approach of flexible development via a constantly evolving master plan, temporary use (Dietrich and Dahl 2016), art projects as well as favourable conditions for the creative industry has been actively promoted in international networks.

In order to avoid a distorted perspective, it has to be stressed that competitiveness is certainly not the only idea guiding the emergence of inter-municipal *métropoles*. Just like in the national discourse related to the territorial reforms (laws RCT and MAPTAM), efficiency has been an important justification for transferring more and more functions from the municipalities to the inter-municipal level. The idea behind this is that the administration of the *métropole* can provide a higher quality of service at lower costs as compared to a multitude of very small municipalities or a large number of single-purpose associations. This logic is also driving the merger of the municipal administration of the city of Nantes with the inter-municipal administration of the *métropole*, resulting in joint heads of administration responsible for both jointly used central services as well as the continued pooling of municipal tasks.

2.4.4 *Space*

French city-regions are institutionally fragmented. None of the three layers of territorial government *région*, *département* and municipality corresponds to the functional space of city-regions. Municipalities are for the most part very small, also in the first and second ring around large cities, and urbanisation expands way beyond the administrative borders of the core cities. The boundaries of *départements* were defined in the 18th century and in part cut across contemporary city-regions. *Régions* in turn are much bigger territories than city-regions and have recently been enlarged. This fragmentation

is in part addressed by the strengthening of inter-municipal cooperation. However, the *métropoles* only cover the urban core of the metropolitan regions, especially in the case of the larger ones in terms of inhabitants (see Table 2.1). This applies for both case study regions Lyon and Nantes, but is more pronounced in Lyon. With regard to boundaries of municipal groupings, there was dynamic change in the 2010s regarding the ring of small CCs around the *métropole* as well as regarding municipalities without municipal groupings. By contrast, the perimeter of the *métropole* and the previous CU has been rather stable (see 2.1.4). What is more, a voluntary accession of further municipalities has become even less likely after the creation of *métropoles*, as the two case studies show.

The spatial definition of metropolitan regions is contested and remains blurred. The term “metropolitan region” (literally translated “*région métropolitaine*”) is rarely used in French. Instead, authors speak of “*agglomération lyonnaise/nantaise*”, “*région urbaine*”, “*aire urbaine/ métropolitaine*”, “*territoire métropolitain*” or even the plural “*territoires métropolitains*” referring to the co-existence and evolution of several institutionalised perimeters for planning and soft cooperation (e.g. used by Bariol-Mathais 2015, 45).²⁸ What is more, they use these terms in parallel. Among a sample of academic publications in the French language about the two city-regions Nantes and Lyon (sample composed of five PhD and two book chapters: Aguiar Mol 2015; Boino 2007; Dugua 2015; Fitria 2016; Galimberti 2015; Fritsch 2007 and Ouvrard 2016), all authors used each of the terms “*agglomération*”, “*région urbaine*”, “*aire urbaine*” and “*territoire métropolitain*” in their publication, with the only exception being Arie Fitria who did not speak of “*territoire métropolitain*”. Apart from Deborah Galimberti (speaking as often of “*région urbaine*”), all have in common that “*agglomération*” is the by far most used appellation. This multifaceted use of terms shows the complexity and fuzziness of describing the spatial dimension of French metro regions. The terms have different connotations and in part refer to a different perimeter defined by spatial analysis (*aire urbaine/ métropolitaine*, see 2.2.2 and 2.3.2) or institutions (*territoire(s) métropolitain(s)*). The more general term “city-region” (*région urbaine*) relates to a specific institution and its perimeter – in the case of Lyon, the RUL (see 2.3.3) – whereas agglomeration (*agglomération*) relates to the urban form, but does not have a clear spatial delimitation in either of the two cases Nantes and Lyon. Dugua uses the term “*agglomération*” for the core of the city-region.

Those spatial definitions have in common that the centre of the metro region is clearly denominated and name giving, but that the external boundary is subject to change over time, more precisely to enlargement. In the case of the institutional territories (*métropole*, planning association, *pôle métropolitain*), the perimeter is defined by membership, but can be extended. In the case of the functional definitions, they are calculated based on statistical definitions, but change when they are reviewed due to ongoing urbanisation and longer commuter distances. The blurriness of the fringe is even more

evident when superimposing the various coexistent spatial definitions. Thus, the French metropolitan regions have a clear core and maybe a number of medium-sized cities where most citizens, politicians and scientists would agree that they are part of the metropolitan region. However, for the peri-urban and rural municipalities between and at the fringes, no shared definition exists, whether they are part of the metro region or not. What is more, the exact spatial delimitation does not play any role because the metropolitan region is not a container space with a clear inside and outside.

Rather than as territories with explicit boundaries, the spatial dimension is conceptualised as a network of places with several layers. This is true both from the national perspective and from the local perspective. From the national perspective, *métropoles* are dots on the map (see Figure 2.3), linked by the high-speed rail network (TGV). From the local perspective, metropolitan regions are either a network of urban centres or a network of places with relevance for metropolitan functions. This can be the case due to their gateway functions (e.g. having an airport or central train station), symbolic functions related to the image of the city-region (e.g. iconic buildings), decision-making role (e.g. public administration or headquarters) or innovation (e.g. having universities) (for more examples see Blotevogel and Schmitt 2006, 62). When representing the metropolitan region visually, this is done by pictures of places, not by showing boundaries.

Admittedly, jurisdictions have a clearly defined territory, which is constitutive for democratic representation, accountability and financing of public services. This is also valid in the case of the *métropole* as the dominant (most powerful and most recognised) institution in French metropolitan regions. Their budget stems from the taxes paid by the citizens within their boundaries and their political executive is elected in the member municipalities. Nevertheless, their perimeter is not constitutive of the way the spatial dimension of the metropolitan region is conceptualised, not even for themselves. Although a voluntary enlargement was not possible in the past, local actors acknowledge the functional interdependencies stretching way beyond the institutional territory. In their development strategies, they take into account interdependencies, strategic places outside their territory as well as the additional weight of an enlarged definition in benchmarking. They also act outside the restricted territory of the *métropole*. In fact, the president of the *métropole* is the only inevitable actor in all forums concerned with the future of the metropolitan region. He or she in turn has a range of different partners and instruments at his or her disposal to pursue the interests of the core territory. Thus, policy-making beyond territorial boundaries i.e. despite institutional fragmentation, is possible but highly complex due to the multitude of actors. Furthermore, it is restricted to consensus finding and thus contingent on steering mechanisms and the possibility of creating win-win situations.

Key foundations for city-regional cooperation are shared knowledge about the spatial development of the entire area and a shared vision of the desired future development. Regional planning seeks to create common

spatial knowledge and a shared vision, and in both case study regions is done on a larger scale than the territory of the *métropole*. Instruments of regional planning are adding to coherent spatial development in those regions with high development pressure. However, the success in limiting sprawl depends on the extent to which municipal groupings adhere to self-limitation in their SCoT and PLUi. The Inter-SCoT is purely voluntary; the first generation of SRADDET essentially fixes general principles of development and the state withdraws from the task of coordinating spatial development. Beyond the regulatory impact within the formal planning system, regular spatial observation and cartographic representation as well as forums to discuss the spatial dynamics of the wider metro region have an effect on the mental map of local actors. If members of municipal and metropolitan councils regularly meet within the committees of planning associations (*syndicat de SCoT* and Inter-SCoT dialogue) or other associations targeting the spatial development (Lyon: formerly RUL, today *pôle métropolitain*; Nantes: SAMOA), their own spatial positioning (Williams 1996, 97) within the metropolitan region is likely to change. The shared conception of the spatial development is even more pronounced between planners working in planning departments of the EPCIs as well as the *syndicats de SCoT*. The publicly financed *agences d'urbanisme*²⁹ have an important supporting role in that regard (Ouvrard 2016; Bendjador 2007).

Notes

- 1 All *Districts* were transformed into *communautés* after 1999 and do not exist anymore. Their maximum number was 324 in 1995 (Hertzog 2018, 137).
- 2 With the exception of four geographically isolated municipalities located on an island.
- 3 Aix-Marseille-Provence did not participate because cooperation is mainly established within the *métropole* itself given the large size of the recently created territory.
- 4 In three cases, the *pôle* is responsible for the regional plan *schéma de cohérence territoriale* (SCoT), namely in Nantes Saint-Nazaire, Pays de Brest and Loire Angers. In one case, it corresponds to the cooperation area of several SCoT (Inter-SCoT), namely Le Mans – Sarthe (Bariol-Mathais 2017).
- 5 “je suis convaincu que la dynamique doit venir des territoires eux-mêmes. Des métropoles imposées par l’Etat, depuis Paris, c’est l’assurance de polémiques inutiles et c’est la certitude de l’échec.”
- 6 “il y a quelque anomalie à ce que les établissements publics de coopération intercommunale (EPCI), dont certains exercent une compétence quasi générale, demeurent issus du suffrage indirect, alors que les dépenses qu’ils exposent équivalent à celles des régions.”
- 7 This exception was designed to include Strasbourg.
- 8 This applies to cities that lost the status of regional capital in 2016, when the number of regions was reduced from 22 to 13: Metz (former capital of the region Lorraine) and Clermont-Ferrand (former capital of the region Auvergne).
- 9 Alpes Maritimes adopted by decree 2.12.2003, Bassins Miniers Nord-Lorrains 2.8.2005, Estuaire de la Seine 10.7.2006, Estuaire de la Loire 17.7.2006, Aire métropolitaine lyonnaise 9.1.2007, Bouches du Rhône 10.5.2007.

- 10 In France, being mayor of a large city is an important power base for a national political career. Since 1958, only four prime ministers out of 22 have not been mayor before heading the national government (Demazière and Sykes 2021).
- 11 Criteria: the lower the density of population and the lower the tax income per inhabitant, the higher the basic subsidy; additional funds are given for places of higher centrality, islands, the coast and UNESCO heritage sites.
- 12 Nantes Métropole (2017). Retrieved from: <https://www.nantesmetropole.fr/institution-metropolitaine/institution/l-organisation-22934.kjsp>, accessed 14 March 2018, last update 12 June 2017.
- 13 With one exception: the mayor of Rezé was president in the intermediary phase when Ayrault became prime minister in 2012 until the next election in April 2014. He retired afterwards and announced in September 2013 that he would not be a candidate in the next elections, leaving the floor to Johanna Rolland.
- 14 On 1 January 2021, data from INSEE (*population totale*).
- 15 Three EPCI cross-departmental borders, namely CAP Atlantique and Redon Agglomération in the north and the CC du Pays d'Ancenis in the east.
- 16 On 1 January 2021 (*population totale*), data on composition of EPCI from DGCL.
- 17 Definition INSEE see www.insee.fr/en/metadonnees/definition/c1501 (30 July 2019).
- 18 Definition INSEE see www.insee.fr/en/metadonnees/definition/c2070 (30 July 2019).
- 19 see <https://www.insee.fr/fr/metadonnees/cog/aire-urbaine/AU2010008-nantes> (30 July 2019).
- 20 The first round of municipal elections took place on 15 March 2020 despite the Corona pandemic, but the second round needed in all constituencies without an absolute majority was postponed to 28 June 2020.
- 21 Mayor of Lyon from 1957 to 1976.
- 22 Only one municipality west of Lyon, Sainte-Foy-lès-Lyon, is attributed differently. It is part of the southern conférence territoriale "Lônes et Coteaux du Rhône", but is attributed to the circonscription "Ouest", otherwise identical to the conférence territoriale "Val d'Yzeron".
- 23 Definition INSEE see www.insee.fr/en/metadonnees/definition/c2070 (30 July 2019).
- 24 Definition INSEE see www.insee.fr/en/metadonnees/definition/c1501 (30 July 2019).
- 25 First version in 2006, updated in 2013 (Dugua 2015, 394).
- 26 "La mise en oeuvre d'une réelle 'gouvernance' pour ce territoire métropolitain exige une action forte de l'Etat, dans ses compétences propres mais aussi en tant que partenaire de collectivités responsables mais qui, chacune enfermée dans ses seules limites, ne sauraient répondre aux exigences de l'intérêt régional ou national. Les initiatives constatées demeurent trop lentes et trop peu contraignantes pour que la coordination des politiques publiques mises en oeuvre par des acteurs dont les intérêts individuels sont parfois contradictoires soit à la hauteur des enjeux et des ambitions de la métropole."
- 27 In the city-region of Nantes, the inter-municipal land use plan has been called "Plan local d'urbanisme métropolitain (PLUm)" instead of "Plan local d'urbanisme intercommunal (PLUi)" to highlight the aspect of being a joint plan for the *métropole* with a shared vision for the development of the entire metropolitan territory.
- 28 Map "Les territoires métropolitains lyonnais, 2000–2006" showing the perimeter of the DTA regional plan and three different spatial definitions of the RUL
- 29 *Agences d'urbanisme* have been created since the 1960s with the mission to provide services regarding spatial analysis and development of formal planning

instruments to municipalities and municipal groupings within a large city-regional area. Thus, they are involved in many planning procedures in metro regions (Kuhlmann et al. 2011, 162). They are co-financed by municipal groupings, cities, départements, the région, the state, planning associations and semi-public partners such as transport companies or chambers of commerce. In 2019, 49 agencies existed in France and all *métropoles* had an *agence d'urbanisme* at their disposal. With regard to the two case study regions, both *agences d'urbanisme* UrbaLyon and AURAN were founded in 1978. Both cover much larger areas than the *métropoles* with their work, and their perimeter of intervention has greatly evolved since the year 2000 (FNAU 2012, 4, map *périmètres statutaires des agences d'urbanisme*). With regard to the wider metropolitan region, a second agency exists in both cases: the Agence d'Urbanisme de la région de Saint-Nazaire (ADDRN) and the Agence d'Urbanisme de la Région Stéphanoise (EPURES). Today, those agencies cooperate and produce joint spatial analysis for the larger space of their joint territories.

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- Loi No. 2000-1208 Du (13 décembre 2000) relative à la solidarité et au renouvellement urbains (Loi SRU).
- Loi No. 2010-788 du du (12 juillet 2010) loi portant engagement national pour l'environnement (Loi Grenelle II).
- Loi No. 2010-1563 Du (16 décembre 2010) de réforme des collectivités territoriales (Loi RCT).
- Loi No. 2014-58 Du (27 janvier 2014) de modernisation de l'action publique territoriale et d'affirmation des métropoles (Loi MAPTAM).
- Loi No. 2014-366 Du (24 mars 2014) pour l'accès au logement et un urbanisme rénové (Loi ALUR).
- Loi No. 2015-29 Du (16 janvier 2015) relative à la délimitation des régions, aux élections régionales et départementales et modifiant le calendrier électoral.
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