6 Conclusion

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6.1 The three countries in a European context

City-regionalism is a global phenomenon. Most states and subnational governments still struggle to find appropriate governance mechanisms to solve issues of sprawl, overstrained mobility infrastructure, protection of green spaces, management of climate-related risks and spatial allocation of affordable housing (Rosan 2016; Zimmermann 2018; Miller et al. 2018). As our empirical study is bound to three western European states, this section seeks to put our results into an international context. Are the trends that we observed also recognisable in other parts of the world? With regard to the coverage of this section, time, language and the page limit of this book are the restrictions.

The countries and cases chosen for this section are Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, the UK, Poland, Denmark and Norway. This selection presents a requisite variety of ways of dealing with city-regional problems in federal, non-federal and regionalised states as well as in small states and large states with and without national policy frames for metropolitan governance. We also considered those states where novel ways of dealing with city-regions emerged, i.e. the combined authorities in England and the use of contracting in Norway. Still, the exceptionality of France, Italy and Germany stands out as there are only a few states where there is a critical mass of cases of city-regional governance. In many states only a few exceptional cases exist, usually the capital city-regions or the largest agglomeration.

6.1.1 *The Netherlands*

Specific governance arrangements for city-regions used to be an ongoing topic in the Netherlands but a more stable establishment of city-regions suffered from the unclear – if not competitive – relationship of eventual city-regional institutions with the provinces. In the city-regions of the country, the *Randstad Regio* in particular, forms of cooperation experienced some drawbacks and during the 1990s, continuous efforts were made to address the governance issues at the metropolitan level by the state (Janssen-Jansen 2011).

In the mid-1990s, attempts to establish city-provinces as formal, legal entities to replace individual city administrations (i.e. to turn adjacent cities into one singular administrative body) failed due to the resistance of citizens and local governments (failed referendum in Rotterdam). In 2006, a national law came into force and introduced eight weaker city-regions that were defined as WRG-plus regions (partly called *Stadsregios*) (Spaans et al. 2019). Thus in 2006, the cooperative arrangements in major Dutch urban areas received permanent juridical status “as obligatory cooperation associations between the core cities and their immediate periphery” (Janssen-Jansen 2011, 264). These city-regions were supposed to act as a fourth layer of government and were important actors in the area of public transport for which they received a considerable budget from the national government. Most of the WRG-plus regions covered only parts of provinces in terms of territory but represented large parts of the population and economic power. Later on, the city-regions were also responsible in the areas of spatial planning, economic affairs and environment (Janssen-Jansen 2011). The responsibility for the binding structure plans did not last very long as the Dutch Spatial Planning Act of 2008 took away the planning responsibilities (Janssen-Jansen 2011, Spaans et al. 2019). There was also criticism because of a lack of legitimacy since the WRG-plus regions were managerial bodies without elected councils. As a result, in January 2015 the eight WRG-plus regions were abolished and the responsibilities shared between the municipalities and the provinces. The central government hoped this would increase flexibility in the lower tiers of governance because the municipalities would be able to opt for the best form of cooperation. So in terms of governance, city-regions as administrative bodies ceased to exist in the Netherlands but exceptions were made for two provinces: South Holland and North Holland. In South Holland the former WRG-plus city-regions Rotterdam and The Hague merged and the new city-regional body Metropolitan Region Rotterdam The Hague (MRDH) came into being. MRDH has two main functions: public transport and economic development, the former being more relevant (not least in terms of the budget). The MRDH was the result of a political power play between the province of South Holland on the one hand and the cities of Rotterdam and The Hague on the other hand. The mayors of Rotterdam and The Hague wanted to keep control of the funding for public transport tasks. The new law only stated that the transport authority should cover the geographical area of the metropolitan region Rotterdam and The Hague and the exact details were left to the municipalities and the provinces. Twenty-four municipalities are members of the MRDH.

In the Amsterdam area, the arrangement took a different shape (Schipper and Gerrits 2015). After the dissolution of the WRG-plus region, a special purpose body took over the function of the transport authority (TAA). TAA covers parts of the province (15 municipalities). In addition, in a more voluntary and informal manner and as a follow-up of the North Wing Conference, the *Metropoolregio Amsterdam* came into being in 2017. This

is an association of 32 municipalities, two provinces and the TAA, largely being a platform for consultation on issues such as economic development.

Metropolitan government has lost its appeal in the Netherlands. Instead, there is a preference (and need) for flexible, project-based and sectoral cooperation. This is not to say that inter-municipal cooperation is not well established in the Netherlands. Like in Germany or France, inter-municipal cooperation is the preferred solution for efficient and effective provision of public services on a smaller territorial scale. According to Klok et al. (2018) who identified 779 IMCs in the Netherlands, these forms of cooperation have developed organically and on average have 16 member municipalities.

6.1.2 Portugal

Portugal experienced a number of reforms changing the status of local government and the inter-institutional relationships of cities, regions and central government (Teles 2016). Fiscal consolidation pressures, amalgamation of local governments and inter-municipal cooperation as well as decentralisation are high on the agenda. The largest metropolitan areas, Lisbon and Porto, received special treatment but these attempts have been evaluated as inconsequential (Rayle and Zegras 2013).

In 1991, the Portuguese national government created an intermediate scale for metropolitan governance (law 44/1991). This law defined the metropolitan areas in terms of their size and legal status (Pereira and Nunes da Silva 2008, 115; Rayle and Zegras 2013, 872). Apart from the capital city of Lisbon, which is embedded into a metropolitan area (Área Metropolitana de Lisboa = AML), also the second largest city of Portugal, Oporto, is part of a larger metropolitan region (Área Metropolitana do Porto = AMP). Since its foundation, the legal framework has been adjusted and changed several times (Oliveira and Breda-Vázquez 2015, 15). In 2008, law 46/2008 introduced some significant changes, again only targeting AML and AMP. The new law defined these two metropolitan areas as obligatory entities, territorially congruent with the European NUTS III regions (AML 2016, 20; Oliveira and Breda-Vázquez 2011, 72). In the case of Lisbon, the AML consisted and still consists of the two NUTS III regions Grande Lisboa and Península de Setúbal (cf. *ibid.*). The AMP on the other side was made up of Grande Porto and Entre Douro e Vouga region and parts of Tâmega until 2015 and now corresponds with the eponymous NUTS III region AMP.

The AML is composed of 18 municipalities of the Lisbon and Tagus Valley Region and had a population of about 3 million inhabitants in 2014 (Balsas 2017, 85). The AMP initially only consisted of nine municipalities in the urban core of the Greater Oporto region (Law 44/1991). Over time several neighbouring entities have joined the metropolitan area (Balsas 2020). Today the AMP integrates 17 municipalities in the north-western part of mainland Portugal (Website AMP I; Balsas 2017, 85). All in all, it includes

an area of about 2,040 km² with ca. 2 million inhabitants in 2014 (Website AMP II; Balsas 2017, 89).

With regard to the institutional set-up, from 1991 until 2013 there was a dual structure in place: a council, indirectly elected by the councillors of the municipalities (18 in Lisbon, 17 in Porto) and an executive body, composed of the mayors. This arrangement changed in 2013 when the executive body of mayors became the council while it was decided that the new metropolitan executive commission would be elected by the councillors. The candidates, however, are proposed by the mayors. So, this new arrangement is under strong local leadership. The direct election of the metropolitan councils has been under discussion for a longer period but has been postponed several times due to tactical reasons and constitutional concerns.

In terms of functions, the metropolitan bodies would be responsible for a range of supra-municipal services and central government investments (including EU funds) but the mayors of the constituent municipalities have refused so far to delegate these functions. The most recent change happened in the course of the introduction of a law on public finances in 2018. This law implemented a decentralisation strategy that also encourages inter-municipal cooperation and the consolidation of the two metropolitan areas in the functional realm of social services, tourism and public transport. This law made a great difference and led to more integrated metropolitan policy-making. Hence, the responsibility for the EU funds and transport changed the situation greatly. There is now also a consultative body composed of public and private actors.

6.1.3 *Spain*

Much of the academic work on Metropolitan Governance in Spain focuses on the Barcelona metropolitan area and in fact the governance arrangement of this region is the one with the highest degree of institutionalisation, though having experienced turbulent times (Tomàs 2017b). There are, however, other cases such as Valencia and Vigo that are worth considering. In principle, the possibility to create *Áreas Metropolitanas* has been included in the national law since 1985. However, according to the law the regional governments are “responsible for creating, modifying and abolishing metropolitan areas by their own Statutes of Autonomy” (Tomàs 2017b, 246) and these regions have been very reluctant to give power to city-regions, especially so soon after gaining their status of autonomy. On the contrary, the regions have used their responsibility regarding metropolitan governance to abolish former metropolitan institutions (*Corporaciones metropolitanas*) inherited from the Franco regime in the case of Madrid, Bilbao, Barcelona and Valencia, and have replaced them with several sectoral agencies covering different spaces (Barcelona, Bilbao, Valencia) or assumed by the regional government in case of Madrid (Hildenbrand Scheid 2017, 71; Tomàs 2017b). The former metropolitan governments

were mostly abolished in the 1980s (Corporation of Greater Bilbao 1980, Commission for Planning and Coordination of the Madrid metropolitan area 1983, Barcelona Metropolitan Corporation 1987). In the case of Valencia, a multi-purpose metropolitan authority persisted as the Gran Valencia Metropolitan Corporation was first transformed into the *Consell Metropolità de l'Horta* responsible for transport and spatial planning, water and sewage in 1986 and was only abolished in 1999 (Tomàs 2017b, 248). The capital region Madrid is a specific case, because (a) the city was enlarged via annexations (between 1948 and 1954) to a size equivalent to the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, and (b) because the regional government of Madrid does not have supra-municipal entities (neither diputaciones provinciales nor comarcas) and its spatial outline is similar to the city-region (Tomàs 2017b, 248).

There is no national policy of metropolitan reforms and the central government has not given any incentives to create metropolitan governments either (Medir et al. 2018, 137). However, austerity measures support the amalgamation of local government and inter-municipal cooperation in general.

Barcelona searched for a long time for an appropriate arrangement. In the 1980s, the existing metropolitan government was weakened due to political conflicts between the regional government and the local governments of the Barcelona city-region (1987). Key functions (metropolitan transport, waste management) were organised in single-purpose associations. During the 2000s, however, the metropolitan initiative experienced a revival and as a result of a strategic planning process a new inter-municipal consortium was founded in 2009.

In addition to the strategic plan, the municipalities of the metropolitan area decided voluntarily in 2009 to create the Consortium of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, which joined together the three existing metropolitan entities so as to prepare the institutional transition to the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona. (Tomàs 2017a, 325)

The *Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona* (AMB) was established in 2011 and has a broad portfolio of functions, both in terms of strategic functions and of joint service provision. Its functions include territorial planning and urbanism, public transport and mobility, housing policies, environment, economic development and social cohesion as well as international relations (Tomàs 2017b, 247; Geróházi und Tosics 2018, 13). However, the metropolitan authority shares its implementation powers with local and regional governments. Social reproduction functions such as social housing, education and culture have remained the responsibility of the region and the municipalities (Tomàs 2017a, 331). On the other hand, production functions such as economic development strategies or strategic projects have so far been handled by the City of Barcelona, voluntary mechanisms of

inter-municipal cooperation or the regional government of Catalonia rather than by the metropolitan authority (Tomàs 2017a, 329–330).

Still, the AMB is the metropolitan institution with the greatest degree of institutionalisation in Spain. It can be classified as a metropolitan government, but does not fully correspond to the ideal model of the metropolitan reform school, because “it is indirectly elected, has little fiscal autonomy and its responsibilities are not exclusive but shared both by local and regional governments” (Tomàs 2017b, 247).

The definition of the city-region of Barcelona is elastic, meaning that three different definitions of what is considered the Barcelona urban region coexist: (1) the province of Barcelona (7,728 km²), (2) the metropolitan region (3,239 km²) and (3) the metropolitan area (634 km²). Each of them corresponds to a different conception of the territory, is formed by different institutions and supported by different actors (Tomàs 2017a, 320–327).

In Vigo, the process of installing a metropolitan authority came to a standstill. In Valencia, a recent initiative launched a discussion process on the future constitution of the city-region in autumn 2020. Currently, service provision at a metropolitan scale takes place in the form of three sectoral agencies with variable geometries: the Metropolitan Water Services (formed by 51 municipalities), Metropolitan Waste Treatment (formed by 45 municipalities) and the Public Metropolitan Transport Association (60 municipalities). The latter entity has developed the Metropolitan Plan of Transport of Valencia, including integrated fare management and administrative services. It collaborates with other transport agencies (Railways of the *Generalitat Valenciana* and Municipal Transport Companies) and the Valencian Metropolitan Mobility Authority. The three agencies are governed by indirectly elected representatives of the municipalities, according to their population. The current situation is summed up in the following quote:

In short, today the metropolitan area of Valencia is institutionally organised by sectoral agencies covering a different number of municipalities. The metropolitan dimension is recognised and metropolitan agencies manage some essential metropolitan services (transport, waste, water). However, a common understanding of the metropolitan reality does not exist, since each agency covers a different territory. Moreover, the relationship between the City of Valencia and some of the metropolitan municipalities has been characterised by political conflicts, which has not helped to build a shared metropolitan vision. (Tomàs 2017b, 248)

6.1.4 *The UK (England)*

The most recent change with regard to metropolitan policies in England was the introduction of the option of combined authorities in 2011 (Shaw and Tewdwr-Jones 2017; Sykes and Nurse 2021). Metropolitan councils

existed in the larger agglomerations (Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Greater London, etc.) until they were abolished by central government in 1986. They were replaced by sector-specific collaboration for policies such as public transport, sewage, waste management and metropolitan police. The city-regional scale has not been addressed since then as either larger (the regions until 2011) or smaller scales were at stake (i.e. the Local Economic Partnerships post-2011, which were much smaller and limited to inter-municipal cooperation for economic development).

The growth strategy for the north (the Northern Way) included some prescriptions for city-regions but the resonance was rather weak (Sykes and Nurse 2021). This void has been partly filled by voluntary collaboration, and the Manchester city-region is a much discussed case in this regard (AGMA – Association of greater Manchester Authorities). In fact, the Manchester case is seen as a role model for what followed when central government introduced the combined authorities.

The combined authorities are a new type of intervention, a sort of place-specific central–local arrangement. In terms of territory, the existing combined authorities differ in size and do not necessarily cover a functional urban region, as the composition of municipalities is the result of political negotiations and opportunities. As a result of negotiations between central government and the municipalities involved, the portfolio of tasks differs and as a legal entity they are responsible for tasks such as public transport, economic development, health and urban regeneration.¹ The negotiations between central government and the combined authorities were in part problematic as the government rejected proposals of some combined authorities. So, there is great difference between Manchester where local leaders were able to design the process in a very favourable way and the others where this was less the case. The establishment of a combined authority implies additional funding. At the same time local governments had to face large budget cuts in many other areas (Sykes and Nurse 2021). Hence, the combined authorities are seen by many observers as part of a national austerity agenda (Hambleton 2016; Shaw and Tewdwr-Jones 2017; Sykes and Nurse 2021). The implementation differs greatly between the city-regions (see Lowndes and Lempriere 2018 for the West Midlands and Greater Manchester; see Sykes and Nurse 2021 for Liverpool). There are currently ten combined authorities in place. They were established in 2011 (Greater Manchester), 2014 (Liverpool, North East Combined Authority, West Yorkshire, Sheffield City-Region), 2016 (West Midlands/Birmingham, Tees Valley), 2017 (West of England, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough) and one more in 2018 (North of Tyne).

Combined authorities – as a result of the so-called devolution deals in 2016 – usually have a directly elected metropolitan mayor but these were elected stepwise (2017: Manchester, Liverpool, Tees Valley, West of England, West Midlands; Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016). Sheffield followed in 2018 and the North East Combined Authority is still pending.

6.1.5 *Norway*

The debate on city-regions in Norway largely focuses on the Oslo metropolitan area (Hanssen 2021a; ESPON Spima 2018). There are some inter-municipal arrangements in place and one innovative and facilitating instrument was contracting between central government and local governments in order to give incentives for collaboration. These contracts were initially made in the field of public transport in the 1980s but were subsequently used for other policies as well (Hanssen 2021a, 138–139). Today, they are formulated in a more comprehensive way and are called Urban Growth Agreements.

In Norway, it was the need to coordinate the efforts and investments in metropolitan areas that spurred the emergence of a new multi-level governance contractual management tool. These are called “Urban Growth Agreements”, and they coordinate the land use measures of the local government with the large transport investments of regional and national authorities. These contracts/agreements are now one of the main incentive arrangements for multi-level coordination between national, county and municipal authorities on transport and land use policies for the larger urban regions.

(Hanssen 2021a, 138)

In the Oslo city-region, collaboration largely affects the core city of Oslo, the county municipality of Oslo and the county of Akershus. In fact an amalgamation was debated in the late 1990s but never accomplished. As a result, a number of multi-level collaborative arrangements exist but a certain degree of fragmentation is still in place as most of these arrangements are sector-specific.

In 2004, a voluntary arrangement of Oslo and Akershus emerged (The Oslo Region Alliance). Today the alliance consists of five county municipalities and 78 municipalities and its main purpose is marketing and competitiveness.

6.1.6 *Denmark*

As in Norway, the metropolitan governance discourse in Denmark primarily concerns the capital city-region: the Greater Copenhagen Area (region Hovedstaden). Despite the widely recognised need for metropolitan governance, metropolitan authorities in the Greater Copenhagen Area never had a stable position because of a lack of acceptance both by local authorities and the central government (Andersen et al. 2002, 43). On one hand, the affluent suburban districts in the north and north-west with conservative majorities rejected a metropolitan reform that would reduce their independence from socio-democratic Copenhagen. On the other hand, central government

and the counties did not support a strong metropolitan government due to the dominant political and economic power of such a unit (Andersen et al. 2002, 48).

The Greater Copenhagen Council (Hovedstadsrådet 1974–1989) was the first formalised attempt to coordinate activities at the metropolitan level, but had limited powers (Galland und Enemark 2015, 346; Andersen et al. 2002, 43). Its construction was similar to the pre-existing voluntary planning association Regional Planning Council (Egnsplanrådet), but with a formal status (Andersen et al. 2002, 48). In addition, it gained responsibilities beyond regional planning, notably public transport, environmental issues and public hospitals. The council was composed of mayors as well as representatives of the counties. It was financially dependent on contributions of the counties and municipalities (Andersen et al. 2002, 49). Due to the lack of direct elections and of its own financial resources, it remained a weak institution limited to consensus finding between the local authorities. As a second element, a special equalisation scheme for the metropolitan area was introduced on top of the already existing financial equalisation mechanisms for the whole of Denmark. However, the new council-controlled public transport company for Greater Copenhagen greatly improved public transport. The council also had greater regional planning powers than its predecessor and could put some pressure on local planning (Andersen et al. 2002, 49). Despite these successes, the council was abolished in 1989. Its responsibilities were transferred to the counties or to independent single-purpose organisations (the Regional Statistic Office and the Regional Transport Company, Hovedstadens trafikselskab) (Andersen et al. 2002, 49). The abolition of Greater Copenhagen Council led to the creation of a multitude of organisational forms, some of which covered the same area as the former Greater Copenhagen Council (Andersen et al. 2002, 50).

The next wave of formalised city-regional governance came rather late compared to other European countries due to a lack of consensus both at the national and the local levels. Debates about the best form of metropolitan governance took place throughout the 1990s but remained fruitless (Mouritzen 2011, 58; Andersen et al. 2002, 51). During that time, three counties, together with Copenhagen and Frederiksberg municipalities, continued their collaboration on regional planning (Geróházi und Tosics 2018, 39).

A new metropolitan authority was then created in July 2000, the Metropolitan Council of Greater Copenhagen (Hovedstadens Udviklingsråd, HUR). It had different objectives than the former Greater Copenhagen Council, with much more emphasis on competitiveness and economic development instead of services of general interest (Andersen et al. 2002, 44). Part of the motivation to create this new body was “to manage the complex coordination and development challenges faced by the Øresund area during and after the opening of the Øresund Bridge in July 2000” (Geróházi und Tosics 2018, 37). Its tasks were regional planning, transport planning, the operation

of busses and of some local train lines, the coordination of economic development, tourism and culture (mostly theatres²) as well as cooperation across the Øresund (Andersen et al. 2002, 51). The HUR did have five members: the counties of Copenhagen, Frederiksborg and Roskilde and the municipalities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg. Decision-making took place in a board of 11 politicians appointed by the members (Andersen et al. 2002, 51). Just like the preceding bodies, it was a rather weak metropolitan authority without its own financial resources or direct democratic legitimation. It was abolished in 2007 in the course of a wider local government reform in Denmark. Although the reform established regions as formal jurisdictions, this step did not result in a strong institution at the metropolitan level. Quite the opposite, it led to splitting up of functions due to the inadequate size of the region for regional planning, regional transport and economic development.

Regional planning had been carried out at the metropolitan level by the Metropolitan Council of Greater Copenhagen up to 2007, when responsibility for the regional plan covering the capital region shifted to the national level. The newly created five regions do not have responsibility for a binding regional plan in other parts of Denmark either, only for economic development plans. The responsibility for Greater Copenhagen's regional plan was first assigned to the Ministry of the Environment and moved to the Ministry of Economy after the 2015 election (Geróházi und Tosics 2018, 39). Since then, three versions of the *fingerplan* have been adopted: in 2007, 2013 (both by the Ministry of Environment) and 2019 (by the Ministry of Economy). Since the introduction of the Planning act of 2012, the plan has become a national planning directive, thus strengthening its legal power (Geróházi und Tosics 2018, 39).

Apart from this, social reproduction functions are the responsibility of the municipalities. Inter-municipal cooperation for technical services such as fire protection, waste disposal, water supply, energy, electricity and gas and for schools and culture as well as specialised social services does exist in Denmark. Single-purpose associations (*kommunalt fællesskab*) for these purposes were frequently formed in the 1990s (Henning 2001, 37), but were much reduced by municipal mergers in 2007.

Public transport is operated on a regional level and jointly steered by the municipalities, the regions and the state. The Greater Copenhagen Area does not have a strong metropolitan authority that bundles functions and power. The region has a jurisdictional status with a directly elected council, but with very limited functions. A range of other organisations carries out tasks of city-regional coordination at the same scale or beyond. In addition, the central state intervenes in the capital region due to its high relevance.

6.1.7 *Poland*

In Poland, there was no clear national priority to enforce metropolitan governance for quite a long time. Some weaker and largely voluntary forms of

cooperation exist in several city-regions, the more established ones being Upper Silesia (Katowice), Poznan, Szczecin and the so-called Tri-City (Gdansk, Sopot, Gdynia) on the Baltic coast (Krukowska and Lackowska 2017). All these came into being in the 2000s (Katowice in 2007) but were not very powerful.

On a national level, the Act on Metropolitan Associations (2015) gave a legal framework for metropolitan initiatives but there was no obligation to use the format of metropolitan associations in that period. At least the existing law made clear that inter-municipal cooperation in city-regions was possible and that there were legal formats for this. Nevertheless, in Upper Silesia, Poznan and to a slightly lesser degree in the Szczecin agglomeration, bottom-up initiatives emerged in the period 2000–2010. The Poznan Metropolis Association has been active since 2011 (from 2007 to 2011 the name of the organisation was Poznan Agglomeration Council) (Mikula and Kaczmarek (2017). Szczecin Metropolitan Area Association, founded on the basis of the Local Governments Association for Regional Cooperation operating in 2005–2009, has been active since 2009.

The Katowice city-region is an outstanding case because of its stronger institutionalisation. Katowice established a Metropolitan Joint Committee in 2007 but the major change came about in 2017 when the Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia and Dąbrowa Basin, shortened to “Metropolis GZM” (MGZM) was founded based on the Metropolitan Act approved by the state government. It is an association of several cities and towns (41) with 2.3 million inhabitants (50% of the Voivodship). MGZM has a certain degree of operational autonomy and financing and manages a solidarity fund. Its main responsibilities are public transport, waste management, economic development, voluntary master plans and IT services.

City-regional cooperation in the Tri-City area was more cumbersome, mainly because of the competitive orientations of local leaders of the three cities. The Metropolitan Council of the Gdansk Bay came into being in 2003. It is an informal forum of mayors and local leaders, with the three cities Gdansk, Sopot and Gdynia being the main actors. On the initiative of the Council, the Metropolitan Association of Gdansk Bay was established in 2006. In 2011, however, two new organisations were established: the Gdansk Metropolitan Area Association founded by Gdansk, and the Metropolitan Forum of Mayors NORDA founded by Gdynia.

The situation changed in the EU funding period 2014–2020 when the Polish government made the use of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) obligatory in the 17 city-regions of the capital cities of voivodships. Though being an episode bound to the ERDF funding period, it caused a vivid period of metropolitan cooperation with diverse outcomes (Krukowska and Lackowska 2017). It was more successful in those city-regions with some previous experience of inter-municipal collaboration but in some city-regions the ITI co-existed next to established city-regional bodies (i.e. Katowice). In terms of size, the national government made a suggestion

(varying between five and 50 municipalities in the case of Warsaw), but in the course of ITI implementation the boundaries were changed due to local initiatives (usually they got larger).

In the Tri-City region, the obligatory use of ITI had a major institutional impact but did not result in a territorially coherent arrangement. In 2015, a new institution for the implementation of ITI Integrated Territorial Investment was created: the Metropolitan Area Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot incorporated the former Gdansk Metropolitan Area, whereas NORDA remained a separate body.

6.2 City-regions and the consolidation state: what drives reforms and what are the results in terms of institutions, spatial relationships and functions?

In a contribution to a book entitled “The Future of Regional Policy”, Andrés Rodríguez-Pose critically discusses the question whether we observe a rise of the city-region as a relevant political and/or economic scale or not (Rodríguez-Pose 2009). There are in fact good reasons for the establishment of city-regions as cross-municipal cooperation promises higher effectiveness of public policies, innovative solutions for all kinds of problems and supports economic agglomeration effects. Institutionalised city-regions may also have a balancing effect with regard to social and territorial disparities as well as fiscal imbalances between municipalities (Kübler and Rochat 2018). Parochial attitudes of local governments or “defensive localism” (Barron and Frug 2005) instead are rather seen as costly and dysfunctional.

According to the empirical results of this book, the assumption of the rise of city-regions as political or economic scale is half true and half wrong. In any case, we can state that the rise of city-regions as it is described in a number of publications is not backed by our results. In the recent period we have seen a number of reforms targeting the city-regional level in many states – not only in Europe – but this does not constitute a new wave of metropolitan reforms following a coherent set of ideas. At least if we consider the conventional wisdom of periodisation that argues that the rise of metropolitan governments in the late 1960s/early 1970s was followed by a cross-national trend of abolishing metropolitan councils in the mid 1980s and the new regionalism in the 1990s, the current situation is more diverse. Although some examples mentioned in this book may indicate a revival of the metropolitan reform model (France, Italy, to a limited degree Spain), the broader picture shows a collection of disparate and opportunistic practices. Interventions of national governments are sometimes half-hearted, and sometimes clearly show centralistic patterns.

In France and Italy, but also in Poland and Portugal, there were clear attempts of the national governments to support city-regions, although the initiatives in many states are fragile (if not temporary) or concentrate on the biggest agglomeration of the country (Portugal). In England, the evaluation

of the combined authorities is rather difficult as the whole process is characterised as “disorganised” (Shaw and Tewdwr-Jones 2017) and driven by a mixed-motive of austerity measures and a pro-development agenda. The use of the notion city-region is less common in England and there are great differences between the realised combined authorities (Lowndes and Lempriere 2018; Sykes and Nurse 2021). In fact, the practice of city-regional governance in some states requires new notions.

Institutionalised city-regions or regional authorities do perform functions related to the international competitiveness of the city-region and engage in the external representation and marketing of the city-region in partnership with the (still important) core city. In France, economic development and competitiveness is relevant – in particular for the local leaders who try to implement flagship projects and infrastructures and use city-regional institutions as a vehicle to promote this. The joint external representation of the core city and the city-region is either secured by a double leadership of the mayor of the core city (Bologna) or with joint shareholdings such as in the case of the agency for tourism and regional marketing in Stuttgart. However, city-regional agendas are much broader and range from climate change and affordable housing to sustainable mobility issues, digitisation and urban regeneration. In principle, we see a greater concern for public policies, services of general interest (such as planning, sustainable transport) and the recognition of peripheries. On the national level the agenda is more balanced: effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector and fiscal consolidation go hand in hand with other motives such as the relaunch of the economy following a recession. In particular, the reforms in Italy and France are mostly driven by austerity goals and the quest for higher efficiency in the public sector and less by the idea of turning the city-regions into engines of the economy (the latter is in particular true for Italy). The consolidation state (Streeck 2017) may open windows of opportunity for the stronger political and institutional integration of city-regions in terms of governance. Austerity policies may initiate reforms but leave the new entities more or less alone. Hence, the results differ: in Italy the city-regional level has been hollowed out and equipped with a questionable system of political representation. In France, *métropoles* such as Lyon are definitely a highly relevant layer for public policies but are limited in terms of territory. In the majority of states, city-regions are the weakest level in the multi-level system of governance.

Greater territorial coherence still is an issue in most of the European city-regions but often this is not the core driver for reforms. In France, the city-regions are a genuine layer of public policies but they are on average too small. The management of territorial interdependencies is difficult and unsolved in Lyon. Territorial fragmentation continues to exist beyond the boundaries of the *métropole* and in some cases this is a cause for conflicts. As contemporary metropolisation processes concern vast territories (Cardoso and Meijers 2021), the metropolitan scale is well above the scale of municipalities, meaning

that their amalgamation cannot solve the metropolitan question anymore (in contrast to the beginning of the 20th century, e.g. Groß-Berlin). The creation of a metropolitan government either means to add one more level to the multi-level system (as the planned Dutch city-provinces in the 1990s) or to suppress another one (as the provinces in Italy or the counties in Denmark). Thus, the metropolitan reforms are related to the fate of the second tier of local government, i.e. provinces, counties, *départements* or *Landkreise*. Abolishing the second tier of local government has been discussed in several European countries. The main argument is that these entities – created in the 19th century (French *départements*, Spanish provinces, Italian provinces, Denmark) – are seen as outdated due to their limited spatial dimension. The Napoleonic logic of uniform administrative subunits of the state that are of similar size does not correspond to contemporary patterns of mobility and metropolisation. However, putting the second tier of local government into question causes much resistance (Italy, France). In Spain, the region of Catalunya would like to replace the provinces by *veguerias*, but there is disagreement of the central state wishing to preserve a similar administrative structure in all regions. Denmark is one of the rare examples where the second tier of local government has been entirely eliminated. The new regions in Denmark are much larger but less relevant in terms of functions. This was politically possible due to the consent of local authorities and their umbrella organisations; it was secured with the argument to increase local autonomy as part of the functions of the counties was shifted to the enlarged municipalities. The following quote gives an appropriate summary:

Elements that are more intangible, related to political culture and to the attitudes and values of local representatives towards metropolitan governance, influence the final model. For example, in some countries there is a greater tradition of institutionalizing metropolitan cooperation through the creation of new structures (such as in France), whilst in others reforms move towards the reduction of the number of structures (such as in Denmark).

(Tomàs 2017b, 245)

Coping with existing administrative boundaries and institutional fragmentation in city-regions is still a major challenge. In more theoretical terms we see the two competing principles for the design of institutional solutions:

- a) higher effectiveness of sectoral cooperation (single-purpose organisations or issue-based cooperation); and
- b) territorial integration and representation (multi-purpose organisations for one territory).

The latter one seems still to be very present in the mindsets of the actors involved in metropolitan reform processes. Our results show, however, that

this institutional idea does not work well in any case. The much-appraised combination of variable geometry of governance and multi-scaled arrangements is a compromise that combines an organisational core with additional issue-based forms cooperation on different territorial scales. Though being an appealing idea, these kinds of arrangements are rare. The two German cases represented in this book are in a way following this idea with Stuttgart being a case of stronger territorial integration and Frankfurt representing the second principle of a variety of sectoral cooperation on different scales. Some are stronger attached to the core region (i.e. the planning authority FrankfurtRheinMain), others less and the board of the region is seen as the integrating mechanism.

A new pattern is certainly the close cooperation of core cities and city-regional authorities observable in France (Nantes) and Italy (Bologna). The emergence of territorial subunits within city-regions such as the *pôles de proximité*, *zone omogenee*, *unioni di comuni* is a specific pattern for France and Italy.

A striking insight is the neglect of addressing issues of territorial representation in many cases. The introduction of the direct election of regional councils is usually justified by referring to the bundle of functions. As soon as a critical mass of (local government) functions is transferred to a city-regional authority, the direct election of the regional council is inevitable. The introduction of the directly elected metropolitan mayor follows the argument of greater visibility and leadership. Both arguments tend to miss the role of citizens and city-regional citizenship for metropolitan governance (Lidström and Schaap 2018; Strebel and Kübler 2021). The body of work on city-regional citizenship is still small but at least indicates that citizens do not necessarily think local or ignore what is happening beyond the border of their jurisdiction.

6.2.1 *The impact of national role models*

National role models for metropolitan reforms have a considerable influence and this is visible in England (Greater Manchester), France (Lyon) and – to a lesser degree – in Spain (Barcelona). Sometimes the institutional design of these role models is the result of direct negotiations between local political leaders and central government. In Italy, it's less appropriate to speak of a national role model although Bologna is a widely considered case. France and Italy are the two states that implemented nationwide reforms that more or less prescribed a uniform solution and both states clearly show the fallacies of implementing nationwide institutional models. During the implementation adjustments were made in order to meet the requirements of a variety of local contexts. In Germany, the heterogeneity of models is high and depends on local conditions and preferences of the state governments at the time of creation. Stuttgart Region is one of the cases that is much cited internationally as a role model for metropolitan governance.

But within Germany, it is not necessarily the blueprint for other regional authorities.

Only some of the European states actually have a critical mass of cases of city-regional governance. This applies to France, Italy and Germany and also to England and Poland. Whether there is more than one institutionalised city-region depends on the urban system and on the area, but also on the historic evolution of the intermediary territorial authorities. In Spain, there is a high number of functional city-regions. Nevertheless, due to historic reasons related to the autonomy of regions after the Franco regime, there is so far only one fully developed metropolitan authority. In the Nordic countries, the capitals are by far the dominant city-regions and receive a specific treatment. To strengthen their role and autonomy is ambivalent from a national perspective. On one hand, they are the main engines for the national economy. On the other hand, internal migration towards the capital region threatens territorial cohesion within the country. Thus, Finland currently seeks to support a network of the largest finnish cities (the six cities strategy Aika 6, an open innovation platform for Helsinki, Oulu, Espoo, Tampere, Turku, Vantaa) rather than creating a powerful metropolitan authority for Helsinki region (Anttiroiko 2016; Raunio et al. 2016).

6.2.2 *Asymmetric treatment*

In countries where strengthening of city-regions is part of a national reform, the debate about what power shall be given to city-regions is related to the fundamental question of the equal treatment of territories. City-regions gaining more autonomy and access to more resources than rural regions and small and medium sized towns may cause distribution conflicts and trigger the wish of adjacent municipalities to become part of the city-region in institutional terms (as has happened in Frankfurt-Rhein Main in 2021 and was suggested by one municipality in Florence). The dominant justification to strengthen metropolitan governments has recently been global economic competitiveness both of the city-regions and of the national economy. This triggers conflicts, including the accusation of pursuing neoliberal policy and to neglect the aims of equal living conditions and cohesion. The question behind is: are strong metropolitan governments only an advantage for the city-region or for the entire country? These conflicts are visible in France (Faburel 2018; Bourdin and Torre 2020) and, to a lesser degree, in Germany (European Metropolitan Regions). In reaction, the political attention turned towards the fate of small and medium sized cities. There are distributional conflicts within city-region as well as between city-regions and left-over spaces. In Italy, the budgets of the remaining provinces have been cut considerably due to austerity measures and have therefore much less possibilities to act than the CM.

6.2.3 Institutional models

With regard to institutional trends there are certainly no uniform models observable but we can identify basically two trends. In some European states there is a very flexible way of dealing with city-regions, i.e. making place-specific deals or giving specific treatment to some city-regions but not all (Netherlands, England, Portugal, Spain). Multi-level contracts for project financing between the state and city-regional authorities are used as steering mechanism in Norway (Hanssen 2021b), but also in France (including the *région*) and England. This steering mechanism is absent in Germany. These place-specific deals and arrangements are not in line with the new regionalism but rather represent a mix of more control of city-regions by upper-level governments and flexible cooperation. Certainly, these arrangements are easier to abolish if no longer wanted.

In other states, the metropolitan reform idea is still prevalent but implemented in a light way. The metropolitan reform model implies a strong metropolitan authority with its own competences, direct election of a council and own taxes. This model is not fully realised but still seen as an ideal in France, Italy and recent initiatives in Spain. However, the organisational autonomy (in terms of politics and financing) is not as high as the ideal model prescribes.

There are also differences between regional, unitary and federal states. In many states laws creating (or abolishing) city-regional authorities have to pass the national parliament (France, Denmark), the federal states level (Germany) or the government of regions (Spain) (the latter with a high degree of autonomy). In Italy, the national framework law required a concretisation by the regional governments which explains some of the variation. In Germany, only small changes and incremental adjustments happened over the last decade. In contrast we see much more dynamic in centralised and non-federal European countries. Still, each country has its own specific trajectory, and national framework conditions seem to matter a lot regarding the power and shape of metropolitan governance arrangements. The success of metropolitan governance and sometimes also the opportunity to create a strong institution depends on a consensus of local actors and the support of a shared strategy for territorial development as visible in often cited cases such as Barcelona. However, purely voluntary inter-municipal agreements have their limitations.

Notes

- 1 <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/devolution/devolution-online-hub/devolution-explained/devolution-register> (7 June 2021)
- 2 The Copenhagen Theatre Cooperation (*Det Storkøbenhavnske Teaterfællesskab*) was financed by the five members of the HUR as well as the central state (Henning 2001, 38). It was abolished in 2005.

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