

# 1. Cities as political objects

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The metropolis<sup>1</sup> is at the heart of territorial reform in several European countries. The Conservative government in the UK was elected in 2015 on a platform which included city devolution and the promise to create a ‘northern powerhouse’ to counter-balance London (see Chapter 2). In Germany, tensions between the capital city, Berlin, and the rich state governments are never far from the surface. In Italy, as Francesca Artoli demonstrates in Chapter 7, a far-reaching metropolitan reform has recently been adopted as the latest attempt to reform and restructure the complex mosaic of Italian sub-national governance. In Spain, tensions between central government and the ‘national region’ of Catalonia are played out in the competition between Barcelona and Madrid (see Chapter 4). France is no exception to this rule. An important territorial reform enacted on 16 December 2010 provided the legal form for the creation of a new local government category, the *métropole* (available, in principle, to cities with at least 500,000 inhabitants in their extended urban areas). These provisions were extended in a separate law on city governments, enacted on 27 January 2014. In the case of France, as in Italy, these reforms addressed a long-standing problem of communal fragmentation and of the weakness of citywide structures, notwithstanding an active metropolitan policy since the 1960s (see Chapters 9 and 12).

One of the key questions addressed in this book is: how are administrative and political forms designed to capture the sociological reality represented by the city? A set of potential conflicts lurk behind this central question. These include: spatial competition between the city centre and the outlying suburbs, or between specific neighbourhoods; social complexity and the question of social cohesion; and the impact of specific sectoral policies (such as the location of social housing or transport policy). Apparently technical choices can hide more complex sociological and partisan considerations. Institutional and distributive logics can reflect deeper class choices (for example, in the case of social segregation between groups in neighbourhoods, housing choices, or the consequences of local-level tax autonomy). Institutional choices can also

mask partisan ones: is it in the interest of the party dominating the city centre to associate itself with suburbs controlled by a different party? The same questions are raised across Europe, hence the comparative focus adopted in this book.

## THE METROPOLIS: AN ANALYTICAL CATEGORY AT THE HEART OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

The metropolis is, in essence, a multi-disciplinary research object. For a long time confined to the field of urban studies, geography and regional economics, the city has become a key object of attention for political scientists since the 1990s. In the ensuing section we address the utility of accounts based on globalisation for understanding processes of metropolitanisation and internationalisation. Subsequently, we return to the historical roots of debates over metropolitanisation, and then we present a framework of analysis for studying cities. The introductory chapter concludes by setting out the three-part organisation of the book.

### **The City as a By-Product of Globalisation?**

Identifying the metropolitan area as a new phenomenon arising as a consequence of economic globalisation and the competition between cities, regions and city-regions is a recurrent theme in the literature. From this perspective, metropolitanisation is a product of a post-Fordist transition that has transformed cities into spaces of economic competition. From a structural perspective, cities are engaged in a zero-sum competition whereby only the strongest will be able to adapt to new global incentives. Broad economic trends produce agglomeration effects, which shape the structure of cities and create a clear hierarchy between them. Economic geography is reshaping public policy, as governments view processes of economic competitiveness through the focus of cities. Economic globalisation has produced new concentrations of wealth, challenging (and in some case overhauling) hierarchies between states, cities and regions.

This territorial competition between cities has been accentuated by the concentration of economic activities in the metropolitan city-regions. Economic globalisation provides new resources to those cities and regions that are able to incarnate this new modernity in the context of international competition. Interpreting places as flows (Taylor, 2013; Amin, 2004), some economists and geographers concentrate on the agglomeration effects of knowledge and wealth creation in cities; on

renewed and redefined relations between cities and states; and on the non-hierarchical, networked nature of relationships between cities.

Such analyses provide macro-accounts that sometimes reason in terms of historical necessity. Given the new relations between economics (the driving force) and politics (the poor cousin), and the role of market transactions in international regulation, cities are more or less constrained to adopt strategies based on internationalisation. This movement is occasionally described in terms of political and economic convergence, even when the writers in this tradition challenge deterministic convergence theories (Savitch and Kantor, 2002).

Metropolitanisation is presented as an imperative, a historical necessity that imposes its logic even on the largest cities. The impact of globalisation spills over into medium- and smaller-sized cities as well, calling on the latter to perform specific niches. The signs of globalisation are present everywhere, in all types and sizes of cities. This strong interpretation is especially favoured by certain urban planners and geographers (for example Davezies, 2008). The paradigm of territorial attractiveness has supplanted that of spatial planning. The management of tensions between the winners and losers in the process of territorial rescaling has become a major preoccupation of central governments as well as of local and regional authorities. Investments are attracted towards those cities and regions that already have high levels of social and economic capital, rather than former industrial and urban zones with cheap labour costs. Even European Union (EU) urban and regional policy has shifted from a territorial solidarity logic to one emphasising competitiveness and the necessary supply-side adaptation of former industrial regions (Halpern and Le Galès, 2013).

### **Internationalisation and Actor Strategies**

While broadly remaining at a macro-sociological level, certain writers emphasise the strategic capacity of cities to respond to neo-liberal challenges. Brenner (2004), for example, demonstrates how European states have adapted to the post-Fordist transition and to economic globalisation by making metropolises the key actors of competitiveness. The role of internationalisation is central in such accounts. For the team of geographers around Brenner – and especially for the Globalization and World Cities Research Network (GaWC) created at the UK's University of Loughborough in 1998 – the external relationships of cities are not an optional extra, but part of a new *raison d'être* (Taylor, 2004). One response to the potentially devastating effects of territorial competition is

that cities join territorial networks of like-minded cities. In today's world, connected cities are a key part of the new world economy (Taylor et al., 2007).

All the same, this thesis of the convergence of international metropolises is not without its critics. One cross-disciplinary group – Cities as International and Transnational Actors (CITTA) – brought together sociologists, economists and geographers in a network sponsored by the European Science Foundation (ESF), which existed from 2003 to 2005. On the basis of their comparisons of ten cities – Amsterdam, Zurich, Birmingham, Budapest, Madrid, Manchester; Montreal, Paris, Rome and Vilnius – these researchers identified differentiated strategies that varied according to the specific contexts of each individual city. The CITTA group identified several independent variables that could explain variations in the urban agendas of the different cities, including the economic structure of any given city; its urban society; the nature and style of intergovernmental relations; the broader geo-political context; and city histories (Lefèvre and d'Albergo, 2007). Taken together, these variables could explain the 'varieties of glocalisation' (van der Heiden and Terhorst, 2007) that were observed in the fieldwork.

The main lesson we draw from these debates between economists and geographers relates to the importance of the actor at the centre of urban interactions. The blind spot of macro-sociological readings is that they underplay the political mobilisation by groups within cities, working to ensure the adoption of an internationalisation strategy. If, on the other hand, internationalisation is understood as 'the fruit of a local strategy bringing together institutions from the public sphere as well as from civil society' (Pinson and Vion, 2000, p. 85), then the city can be usefully interpreted as a collective actor which is able to mobilise an identity and defend its own strategies.

### **Cities at the Centre of Actor Strategies**

Understanding the city as a political object requires us to move beyond structural macro-sociological accounts (whereby the city merely reacts to external forces and adapts to globalisation). The added value of this volume is to surpass the insights of structural urban sociology on the one hand, and post-modernist reflections on the city (Davidson and Martin, 2014) on the other; to view cities as political objects, with plural histories, essentially contested political, legal and administrative boundaries, developing their political and policy-making capacity in the context of multi-level and market pressures. Fully cognisant of broader global

trends (Brenner, 2004; Le Galès, 2012), the volume treats cities as actors involved in processes of governance, policy and construction.

The main questions addressed by the chapters combine empirics and theoretical development. What is the appropriate model of city government? One of the main objectives of the creation of *métropoles* in France and *città metropolitana* in Italy, or the debates over city-regions in the UK, is to invent a new political and administrative authority capable of responding to urban challenges. The ensuing section demonstrates that such a quest is not new. Are institutional innovations from other times and places of relevance when considering contemporary debates? Understanding city relationships might occur through mapping trans-urban networks; but it might also be captured in specific places, where one can observe domestic organisational learning, and the circulation of knowledge between politicians, officials, think tanks, university experts and representatives of associations. If city governance is understood in terms of rescaling, which levels of government are the losers and what might their reactions be? What are the alternative spatial and mental maps, specifically the question of whether cities, localities and regions are partners or rivals?

To sum up, these questions arise at the historical juncture of a new, globalised economy. With globalisation, goods, capital and services flow across borders with far greater alacrity than previously. The speed of global change has left cities to play catch-up; the political and administrative structures of cities have not kept pace with the rapidity of global change. Our argument, however, is that the linkage between cities and globalisation is only one possible linkage and represents one historical movement. But we need to look back much further in order to capture the origins of the metropolis and the first signs of interest in cities by political scientists.

## THE METROPOLIS AS A POLITICAL OBJECT: BRINGING HISTORY BACK IN

If cities have become a legitimate object for political scientists, such was not always the case. In those western European countries where political science became institutionalised in the aftermath of the Second World War, the state was the central object of analysis. But there is a longer tradition of urban history and urban sociology that predates the post-1945 period. Urban politics and sociology looks back to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An action-centred, reformist tradition emerged in late nineteenth century America which looked to the

city as an administrative object, and which studied the effects of urbanisation and urban transformation on political institutions.

Studying the city helps to break the state-centric focus of much political science. The city was viewed not only as an interesting scientific object, but also as a space/place where reforms could be imagined and undertaken. The city was framed as a part-scientific, part-prescriptive object – as a space for progressive reform. From around 1910 onwards, the city provided a focus for the new administrative sciences to engage in urban experiments (Galand, 1957; Herson, 1957; Payre, 2007). More than the city, *stricto sensu*, these early analysts were interested in the large city, or the metropolis. And their interest went well beyond the formal institutional structure of cities to incorporate the roles they performed and the value they generated. As it emerged historically, metropolitanisation was understood as a process of knowledge production and of municipal reform. The city as cause mobilised elected politicians, administrators and university researchers, all united in the objective of defining a form of administrative action that could provide a government for the city. Metropolitanisation represented an early example of rescaling, which provoked opposition as well as advocacy. In the ensuing section, a historical detour is necessary in order to demonstrate the place that the metropolitan question was able to play in a burgeoning political science.

### **Act 1: The Birth of the Metropolis and the Role of Public Services as Levers of Integration**

Narrating the history of metropolitanisation would fall well beyond the limits of this introductory chapter. Citywide structures have adopted varying forms in particular periods and in specific places. A good starting point is that of the United States, where urban action committees were formed in several cities in the early twentieth century: using technical arguments about the best forms of service delivery, these committees eventually provided the basis to create metropolitan-wide governments. The process was marked by a set of locally defined critical junctures: the role of international experts was of particular importance in determining whether cities would involve themselves in international ventures.

Depending on context, the metropolis as a political and administrative object was consolidated either by the creation of a new administrative authority or by the slow emergence of a metropolitan government after years of governing particular services by ad hoc specialised agencies, with control for specific services. One of the most emblematic examples was that of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ),

created in 1921 in order to manage the common interests of those regions. The policy problem had centred on increasing congestion in the Port of New York: management of that congestion framed port reform as part of a broader agenda of managing the urban space. The PANYNJ was the first unified authority with responsibility for managing the waterways, rail and road systems, and it soon began planning new tunnels and bridges (Jackson, 1984). The process of reform was thus a technical one: it involved the creation of ad hoc agencies, based on technical expertise, and focused on the delivery of a specific public service. The key actors at the heart of the emerging metropolises were public works engineers (joined later by city planners).

Critical events (such as earthquakes or, more mundanely, traffic flows or housing supply) provided policy entrepreneurs with opportunities to transform ad hoc arrangements into more integrated city governments. This process or mechanism was a trans-national one which could involve forms of policy learning and institutional transfer. The best examples are probably in post-war Germany and in Japan. Thus Tokyo was one of the leading cities involved in municipal experiments, eventually leading to far-reaching municipal reform. Charles Beard, one of the directors of the Municipal Research Bureau of New York, visited Tokyo in 1922 and assisted in the creation of the Tokyo Institute for Municipal Research. After the earthquake of 1923, Beard was conferred the responsibility for making recommendations about the administrative reorganisation of the city. Two decades later, in 1943, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government was created (Vogel, 2001). After the war, the city would remain governed by a strong metropolitan-wide government, though the governor was henceforth directly elected.

The process of transnational dialogue continued into the 1960s. This time, London School of Economics (LSE) professor William Robson was invited by the leaders of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government to undertake a study on the future administration of the metropolis, which was published by the city's Institute for Urban Studies. In this report, Robson advocated ending the ambiguity of Tokyo's status both as a prefecture and a unified municipal council. Tokyo's city leaders used this report to criticise the national government and its enduring taste for centralisation (Rix, 1974). The eventual solution was that of an enhanced centralisation of the metropolitan authority within the context of a city-region. The activism of Charles Beard and William Robson, to take these two examples, exemplifies a more general trend whereby ideas and models circulate trans-nationally. The role of university researchers as advocates of the metropolitan cause should be noted accordingly.

## **Act 2: The Metropolis as a Transnational Cause**

The second birth of the metropolis corresponded to a form of transnational transfer in the 1930s. The young science of public administration centred its interest on the transferability of models from the 1930s onwards – and its European and American advocates engaged in a sustained transatlantic conversation. In his *The Metropolitan Problem: American Ideas* (1962), Luther Gulick – the director of the National Institute of Public Administration of New York – identified the role performed by technical committees in the process of metropolitanisation. Such citywide committees were vigorously opposed by the defenders of local autonomy because these committees seemed to be opposed to the very principle of local self-government. They were ad hoc committees, and hence challenged the legitimacy of the general-purpose local authorities. They were criticised for being undemocratic and unaccountable. As they were sectoral bodies, they were closed to outside influences. These questions of accountability, of democratic legitimacy and of political effectiveness combined to present a formidable challenge to these new citywide committees.

These questions were not without foundation. Following from Gulick, British reformers such as William Robson contributed to transnational reflection on the nature of the metropolis and its necessary reform at the citywide level. Robson, Professor of Public Administration at the LSE (where he created the Greater London Group), was a firm advocate of the metropolitan cause. In 1966, he insisted on the advantages of technical committees over democratic political councils. These technical committees ‘cannot be objected to on political grounds, as they do not threaten the existence of established local authorities’. Although they were ‘not perceived of as leveraging new reforms’, their influence was considerable (Robson, 1966, p. 45). Robson was one of the leading university reformers of his generation to participate in the international debate on metropolitanisation, and his monograph *The Government and Misgovernment of London* (1939) became a standard reference on the subject (Fry, 1999).

In reformist circles, debates on reforming public administration became intertwined with those of metropolitanisation. The literature from this period is both prescriptive and analytical. One of the most prolific writers was Charles Merriam, another university professor who was an active urban reformer. In his academic writings, Merriam was above all interested in the question of metropolitan government (Merriam, 1929). He published his opus, *The Government of the Metropolitan Region of Chicago*, in 1933. According to Merriam, political and administrative reorganisation was the only solution to the problems of urban growth:

What we are witnessing here is in no sense a question that is limited to Chicago, but, indeed, one that faces all cities and city-regions in the United States. These city-regions account for one-half of the population of the country. The same questions are raised everywhere where large urban cities have emerged and have spread across the open countryside. (Merriam, 1933, p. 6)

Merriam proposed a citywide structure, based on a powerful urban government, as one of the solutions to the problem of Chicago (Merriam, 1933, p. 31). He was directly linked to a transnational reformist movement that began to take form just before the outbreak of the First World War. These urban reformers looked for administrative solutions to the problems of urban centres. Their key preoccupation was to avoid administrative duplication and dispersion. Another reformer, William Anderson, had earlier on set out clear reformist principles in a major work published in 1925. Each city/city-region should be regulated by a single level of local authority composed of a small number of elected councillors. Only a small number of individuals should comprise the electorate for these city governments. The principle of the separation of powers should be abandoned in favour of efficient government.

These reformers looked to a neutral, expert local authority, to be run by administrators on the lines of effective public administration. The reformers insisted on the primacy of administration over and above the elected principle. Administrative tasks needed to be undertaken by qualified and well-trained staff. A city chief executive should ultimately be responsible for all public service delivery.

Recently, several works have been published on the birth of a transnational community dedicated to administrative reform and to municipal reform in particular. The early administrative congresses of administrative sciences must be evoked, an important part of which were devoted to urban municipal activity. This question of local government was ultimately dealt with in a rather classic way, distinguishing between three levels of government: local, national and international. After 1910, the question of urban government disappeared from the agenda of international public administration conferences; but it found a home in the International Congress of Cities (ICC), created in 1913. The first congress debated the subject of the organisation of municipal government and affairs and urban planning. Amongst the questions were those of the relationship between city centres and their outlying suburbs.

The ambition of these early conferences was clearly to understand the city as an economic, social and political entity. This approach reappeared on the agenda after the Second World War. At the ICC's Paris congress in

1925, the *rapporteur général* was Henri Sellier, an urban planner who was particularly engaged in the campaign in favour of a Grand Paris. The political crusade in favour of more integrated forms of citywide government had crossed the Atlantic and become a trans-national cause amongst its supporters. Urban planners, engineers and university researchers began to share a common scientific language and references to a shared set of techniques.

### **Act 3: The Metropolis as a Policy Problem**

The third act in the slow process of the emergence of the metropolis could be dated to the 1960s: from an administrative challenge, the metropolis began to be considered as a policy problem. In December 1961, two US political scientists (Vincent Ostrom and Robert Warren) and an economist (Charles Tiebout) published an article on metropolitan government and its reform in the *American Political Science Review* (Ostrom et al., 1961). Their research object was the problem of metropolitan government. What was the nature of this problem? A wealth of literature had been produced since the beginning of the century that had insisted upon urban fragmentation as being a problem to be resolved. Framed in terms of fragmentation, the only logical response to the problem was the creation of a unitary local authority, controlled by a small number of elected politicians but steered by a 'neutral' administration headed by a chief executive.

But Ostrom et al. were not convinced that fragmentation was by itself a problem. They drew a distinction between two types of reform: 'consolidatory' reform, which represented the spirit of the times and advocated a tighter, more integrated 'central' local government; and 'decentralising' reform, which defended the existence of neighbourhood districts and a tighter control of local communities over the activities of ad hoc agencies. Decentralisation could bring back public control over important public services. According to Ostrom et al., consolidatory reform, which had guided a good part of the literature in public administration, was failing. It produced irresponsible and inefficient local authorities. It was as much a failure politically (there was no real bipartisan buy-in) as it was intellectually. This key article had the merit of identifying the importance of debates on the metropolis and its government. Metropolitan reforms mask a broader political debate between 'consolidatory' social democrats and 'decentralising' neo-liberals. This question is still at the core of debates at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries.

All the same, it is necessary to qualify this partisan opposition. Contrary to the expectation of modernist reformers of the 1930s, reforming metropolitan structures has not proved to be a satisfactory response to identical problems faced by cities all over the world. Reform needs to be considered as the product of specific urban configurations (Négrier, 2005). In any case, the metropolitan problem is not simply one of ensuring more effective service delivery. Other equally pressing problems have emerged on the urban agenda – including controlling urban sprawl, the environment, spatial planning and equality (Médard, 1969). One of the objectives of creating a metropolis was indeed to create a new political and administrative authority able to respond to urban problems across the whole city and its region. The response of reformers was to create a public authority that would be able to regulate market forces; this question of the linkage between structures and the relationship between social and economic policy remains highly pertinent. For modernist reformers, a strong central authority ought to be able to regulate urbanisation and city growth.

Rather than conforming to the rational schemes of the early modernist reformers, the process of metropolitanisation has always had a political dimension. For reformers, strengthening citywide structures is perceived as a counterweight to traditions of communal autonomy. A zero-sum game is generally experienced whereby strong urban governments impose centralised services on unwilling municipal authorities. Councilors representing small, usually richer, communes will resist attempts at fiscal harmonisation or the convergence of public services across the city area. Decentralists have often used arguments based on autonomy to resist the encroaching of urban governments onto ‘their’ territory (and to defend existing bases of local taxation). In administrations everywhere, local communal fiscal autonomy is the most powerful weapon to resist encroaching urbanisation.

Since it emerged onto the political agenda, metropolitanisation has taken varied forms. The democratic legitimacy of metropolitan governments was the subject of debate throughout the twentieth century, and this continues today. The studies of the first half of the twentieth century called above all for the strengthening of metropolitan governments. On occasion urban reformers advocated technocratic forms of government as the best solution, to the detriment of directly elected councils. They feared leaving the responsibility for managing large cities to elected politicians. This fear was particularly visible in France, notably in relation to the *Grand Paris*. Such fears were first expressed in the 1930s, but they were even more forcefully articulated in the 1960s.

This historical detour, via the three births of metropolitanisation, has allowed us to identify a number of debates that underpin the question of the metropolis. First is the varying historical goodness of fit between different forms of political, economic and social organisations. Taking as their object the metropolis, several writers have questioned whether any administrative form can capture the complexity of the urban reality. The city is a social, economic and historical reality. Metropolitan government might give a form to that reality, but the boundaries of urban governance are particularly fuzzy.

Second, closely linked, lies the relationship between space and politics. The size of metropolitan government and the principles underpinning its organisation are at the heart of many controversies. There are winners and losers from the choice of specific institutional forms. There are fierce, ultimately inconclusive debates about the appropriate size of a metropolitan council. There are also distributional conflicts between city centres and outlying suburbs. Who should pay for common services and who should have responsibility for raising taxes?

Third, the relationship between public policies and political accountability is a constant factor in exchanges over metropolitanisation. These debates can be traced back to the interwar period. They postulate several alternatives around the theme of technical expertise versus political accountability. A distrust of the motivations of politicians and their ability to make choices in the common good characterised the interwar exchanges. Since the 1960s, there has been a swing back of the pendulum; democratic criticisms of excessive centralisation and technical domination have challenged the most rational models.

Finally, the role of citizens has emerged more strongly as time has gone on. There was a reaction against the excessive technocracy of the interwar and early post-war schemas. There has also been resistance to the clientelistic practices of politicians and the role of well-entrenched parties in excluding citizens. The place of the citizen at the heart of the modern metropolis has been framed in part in terms of new participatory democracy; it has also been enhanced by new technological developments and the evolution of the 'smart city'.

## THE METROPOLIS AS A POLITICAL OBJECT: BRINGING POLITICAL CAPACITY BACK IN

One of the core themes of the ensuing section is the reflection in terms of political capacity. We start from the observation that, if cities are presented with similar challenges, they do not have the same capacity to

cope with, or even make sense of, external challenges – or, indeed, to regulate internal pressures. Cities do not have the same ability to construct themselves as collective actors (Le Galès, 2012). The concept of territorial political capacity has been developed since the mid-2000s as a mixed-methods framework for comparing cities and regions across Europe (Cole, 2006; Pasquier, 2012). Comparing city governments involves combining material and constructed variables (economic dynamism, formal legal competencies, fiscal autonomy and capacity, the party system, city visions and traditions, forms of urban political leadership, urban coalitions and narratives of the city’s common good). The framework outlined here combines hard and soft variables: potential indicators of political capacity sometimes require quantitative data, sometimes mobilise qualitative evidence and sometimes require both. As presented in this chapter, territorial political capacity is a composite framework that draws on a mixed-methods approach (Table 1.1). Bringing together material, mixed and constructed indicators is intended to offer a more subtle and nuanced reading of cities as individual places, as well as to draw comparisons between types of place.

*Table 1.1 Metropolitan political capacity*

	Material	Constructed
Institutional resources	Metropolitan-wide authority? Directly elected mayor? Fields of policy intervention?	Decentralised or consolidatory city visions?
Economic resources	GDP in relation to state and EU average	Perceptions of urban hierarchy
Political leadership	Longevity of urban leadership Control of metropolitan level over other local authorities	Transformational style? Transactional style?
Styles of intergovernmental relations	Consensual city–central state linkage? Conflictual city–central state linkage?	Territorial reception of historical relationships
Territorial networks	Cohesive urban regime? Novel forms of assemblage?	Symbolic, instrumental or organic basis of collaboration
Territorial narrative	Configuration of actors	Dominant narrative? Rival discursive coalitions?

## **Institutional Resources**

In theory, mapping the institutional capacity of the metropolis ought to be a fairly straightforward exercise. Institutional resources can, to an extent, be read as formal criteria, of which the most important are: general legal and constitutional rules (for example, does there exist a principle of free administration, is there a single metropolis-wide unitary authority or a pattern of shared competencies?); the extent of policy intervention (the right to develop policy in transport, economic development, health, roads, and so on); the degree of fiscal autonomy and metropolitan-wide tax varying capacity and the existence of effective administrative staff. To this list might be added: the rules governing the functioning of a metropolitan authority – the electoral system, the role of a directly elected mayor or chief executive, the status of administrative staff and the internal governance rules (by committee or by executive officer, for example). Finally, partisan variables might enhance inter-institutional cooperation (or, alternatively, undermine cohesion). Hence the operation of the party system, the political congruence or competition between the city centre and the outlying districts, and the political complexion of local government associations can all be considered in terms of broad institutional resources.

For the purposes of comparison, these variables might be illustrated by contrasting the Anglo-French pair (Cole and John, 2001). The classic comparison between English and French cities has centred on the mode of political leadership, contrasting the elected mayor in France with the chief executive and officer-dominated local authorities in England (John and Cole, 1998). Vested with visible local political leadership, with links into central government (*cumul des mandats*), French mayors were more effective than the rotating leadership of councillors in English cities. At least as significant as the formal mode of political leadership are the contrasting legal principles: the general competency (*compétence générale*) that is characteristic of French local authorities gives substance to local public policies in French cities, while the strict *ultra vires* provisions have traditionally confined English cities to a narrow service delivery role. The existence of effective administrative staff might be an indicator of effective capacity – but the large, service-driven authorities in English cities demonstrate that there is no necessary correlation.

## **Economic Resources**

Economic dynamism – and, more generally, economic well-being – are fundamental concerns for understanding the political capacity of a city.

The stronger cities of the European continent are also those that enjoy a significant level of economic growth (London/UK, Munich/Bavaria, Barcelona/Catalonia, Lyon/Rhône-Alpes, Milan/Italy). Such cities and city-regions often demand greater stand-alone fiscal autonomy, resent welfare transfers to poorer places and sometimes advocate enhanced territorial autonomy. Material capacity might also relate to a city's economic capacity to generate its own tax revenues; influence fiscal decisions by the national government; shape the terms of fiscal equalisation between territories; and access ample, low-cost market credit (Dyson, 2015).

Metropolitanisation is usually associated with a strong material capacity, which can be understood in terms of a presence in industry and the sciences; by the existence of superior tertiary functions (for example, research and technology or financial services); or by the location of company headquarters. The distance between the metropolis and other cities opens debates about the fiscal capacity and material hierarchy between the capital city and the others. It can also create tension over fiscal capacity, financial solidarity and transfers and the financing of metropolitan functions that benefit much broader catchment areas (Braun and Trein, 2014).

In sum, rank and power in the informal hierarchy of cities is strongly influenced by the fiscal and material capacity of cities. It is also manifested in variable forms of political leadership.

### **Political Leadership**

Political leadership attracts sustained attention in urban studies (Borraz and John, 2004; Bäck et al., 2008; Smith and Sorbets, 2003; Pinson, 2009). In earlier work, we demonstrated that city leaders were capable of building more autonomous political spaces, developing a favourable *rapport de force* with the central state and engaging in proactive strategies of territorial promotion in national, European and global arenas (Cole and John, 2001). To study urban political leadership signifies embracing at least one of three levels of analysis.

First, the micro-level invites attention on the role of individual urban entrepreneurs. The micro-level will usually refer to the capacity for mobilisation of individuals: media attention focuses upon Ken Livingstone or Boris Johnson (mayors of London since 2000); on the mayors of other large cities, such as Gérard Collomb in Lyon or Anne Hidalgo in Paris; or on prominent leaders of devolved governments (Artur Mas in Catalonia or Alex Salmond in Scotland). Traditionally, if we use the distinction made by J.M. Burns (1978), city bosses were symbols of a

form of *transactional* leadership, based on tight control of city machines (exemplified by Mayor Daley in Chicago), rather than *transformational* leaders able to sustain a coherent vision of the greater good of the city.

Second, the meso-level of analysis places urban political leadership in a relational context whereby the city leaders operate within an actor-based system. We might identify national trajectories of political leadership: in the long term, the practice of *cumul des mandats* has had a key impact in fostering the interests of specific French cities. With the partial exception of the case of London, English cities very rarely have an identifiable political leadership with linkages to central government. In the French case, metropolitan pathways provide recognised political opportunities for ambitious politicians (former premier Alain Juppé in Bordeaux, former minister Martine Aubry in Lille and so on). The case of Matteo Renzi, the former mayor of Florence turned Italian premier, demonstrates that such opportunities are not limited to France. Finally, city leaders operate within a macro-level context where systemic, economic, legal and European constraints necessarily weigh on their freedom of manoeuvre. Here the debate over the metropolis comes into its own. The city leader of an important metropolis such as Paris or London, or the president of a German *Land* is invariably a first-rank actor in their own right.

But does the absence of territorial political leadership damage the cohesion of metropolitan action? Though it is logically impossible to deduce whether this is the case, the great English cities (Birmingham, Manchester) might have suffered from the lack of clear identification with a citywide authority and the mobilising capacity of a French mayor.

### **Urban Regimes and Assemblages**

If practices and norms are produced by interaction, then networks must be key to understanding territorial dynamics. But which levels of sub-national authority are at the centre of territorial interactions? Are local and regional authorities able to federate interactions within territorial policy communities? Or do powerful professional interests (business and trade unions in particular) look beyond the sub-national level?

Urban regimes were first developed by Clarence Stone in his *Regime Politics* (1989). Stone is interested in the capacity for action of local authorities. Political capacity is understood as ‘the capacity to take decisions and to mobilise resources to enable their implementation’. Political efficacy is measured in terms of the capacity to ensure the cooperation of governmental and non-governmental actors, and to mobilise private resources. The urban regime corresponds to one of those

'informal arrangements whereby public authorities and interests act together in order to take and implement decisions'. Urban regime theory emphasised long-term coalitions as being a fundamental part of urban governance.

In *Regime Politics*, Stone identified a long-term coalition between business leaders and democratic politicians. In an extension of the urban regime concept to European cities, Stoker and Mossberger (1994) identified three distinctive types of regime:

1. the instrumental, prevalent in US cities, whereby political and business actors traded resources in their mutual interest;
2. the organic, characterised by very close civic relations between local mayors, economic interests and associations (the regional capitals in French cities);
3. the symbolic, where declarations of common purpose between governmental and non-governmental actors were intended to raise the profile of cities undergoing deep economic restructuring or political instability.

With this rather less stringent definition, urban regimes have been identified in a number of European cities, such as Leeds and Lille (John and Cole, 1998), Manchester (Harding et al., 2010) and Turin (Pinson, 2009).

### City Visions and Narratives

The legal framework of each country and the sharing of competencies between the central, regional and local scales of governance tell us little about the internal praxis of city life. Interpreting place assumes understanding territories as being more than individual units of analysis; rather they are communities with shared memories, common inter-subjective meanings and, perhaps, a territorial action repertoire. However, the hypothesis of an urban 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) or of a precise, city-based territorial action repertoire (Tilly, 1984) is easier to enunciate than to demonstrate. The key to this particular enigma lies in undertaking careful socio-historic monographies of specific places, or by capturing representations (as induced from qualitative data analysis) synchronically using programmes such as NVivo or Atlas-ti.

Earlier in the chapter, we traced key historical junctures in the emergence of the modern metropolis. We need to understand the multiple uses of history – which might also be declined in terms of regional/national/sectoral histories – or, indeed, the history of a specific decision.

Identity markers are sometimes expressed in historically rooted opposition between rival cities: in Dowling's chapter in this volume, the rivalry between Madrid and Barcelona emerges as a structuring variable of contemporary Spanish politics. The natural rivalry between the economic (Barcelona) and political (Madrid) capitals is superposed upon the bitter memories of the Spanish Civil War, when Spain's two leading cities were on opposing sides. The prospect of Catalan independence continues to fracture the two cities. Lesser rivalries can be identified in terms of capital and second cities (for example Rome/Milan, Manchester/Birmingham, Lyon/Marseille).

### **Inter-Governmental Relations and Multi-Level Dynamics**

The institutional and material capacity of a metropolis can produce tensions with other cities, localities and regions, or even with the central state itself. Comparative studies have illustrated the regular occurrence of tensions between the capital city and the central government. From the perspective of the latter, it is sometimes imperative to redistribute the added value created by the capital city through solidarity transfers to less well-endowed places. But governments cannot ignore the specific claims of their capital cities, especially when these combine political and economic forms of territorial leadership (Paris, London, Madrid) and/or they can pretend to be world cities (London, New York, Tokyo, Toronto, Paris) that exercise global control and command functions.

In their work on world cities, Clark and Moonen (2015) reveal the existence of embedded tensions between world-class cities (however defined) and central governments in regimes that vary from the highly centralised (Seoul and South Korean) to the liberal, federal US model (where New York threatens to overpower all other cities and challenge the federal government in some important respects). Nowhere is such tension more acute than in London, where the capital city appeared to have outgrown its host state. The complex relationship between the city of Paris and the French central government provides another example of tension (witness the conflict between Mayor Hidalgo and Finance Minister Macron over Sunday trading).

Cities are also relevant in terms of debates on the changing scales of European governance. Since the mid-1980s, Europe and the European Union (EU) have become a relevant space modifying the potential resources of urban actors and their representation of their action within a multi-level context. Europeanisation has substantially modified the logic of city-based actors. On the one hand, the EU figures prominently as a regulator (via competition policy or environmental regulation). On the

other, the EU can provide resources for city action (through specific programmes such as the Urban Agenda or via often generous structural funds); can contribute to the vision of the city as a European and international actor; and can provide the incentive for the development of urban networks. There is a clear link with debates on capacity: cities do not have the same ability or resources to be physically present in Brussels to lobby for their interest. Large metropolises are able to organise themselves directly, but medium-sized cities are more likely to be represented via a professional/local government association.

Understanding cities as political objects is informed by material data (levels of GDP, living standards, levels of investment and so on) and by hard institutional variables. But it is imperative to take into account less tangible indicators such as city models, narratives and traditions, the configuration of institutions and networks (or assemblages), and city styles and collective action repertoires. Comparing city governments, in short, involves combining material and constructed variables: economic dynamism, formal legal competencies, fiscal autonomy and capacity, the party system, city visions and traditions, forms of urban political leadership, urban coalitions, and narratives of the city's common good. The framework allows a heuristically useful theoretical mix that facilitates the understanding of how actors construct their political actions over time; how accepted ways of operating influence forms of collective action; and how actors can continue to be mobilised by discourses and practices which might be unsuitable to changing circumstances.

## THE BOOK

The objective of this book is to reconstitute the historical, political and spatial diversity of processes of metropolitanisation. Reintroducing the political dimension into this process, we distance ourselves from general works that identify metropolitanisation as a uniquely contemporary phenomenon. We also reject the idea that metropolitanisation is a mainly technical response to an overwhelming external necessity. Metropolitanisation involves a process of rescaling, certainly; but it is best read as a political process that is likely to be resisted by powerful interests. The process of rescaling is a long-term phenomenon: the chapters in this volume are highly sensitive to the socio-historical dynamics involved in the development of more integrated metropolitan areas.

The more we drill down into the dynamics of cities as political actors, the more we are confronted with the polysemic reality of the concept of metropolitanisation. There are several meanings of the word. Rather than

foreclosing serious academic endeavour, however, the essentially contested nature of metropolitanisation provides an invitation to confront several levels of analysis. Rather than a one-size-fits-all process, the book identifies distinct forms and pathways of metropolitanisation:

- The role of the metropolis in the political arena is a recurrent concern. Does the appeal to the larger metropolis (or city-region) make sense in terms of electoral strategies, or political careers? Has the process of rescaling also changed the nature of the political game? Has attention shifted from neighbourhoods to city-regions, for example; and have political actors scaled up their strategies accordingly?
- The role of the metropolitan-level authority as an interface between organisations emerges as a second core issue. The paradigm of territorial competition is sometimes presented in terms of a zero-sum logic whereby one level and set of actors win out at the expense of another. In the context of deep rivalry between urban centres, cities compete with each other. But such accounts sometimes elude the variable capacity of cities to act as interfaces between the social and political forces they claim to articulate. Do metropolises succeed only where they are embedded in deeper territorial networks? Is their success dependent upon their ability to mediate the demands of lower-level local authorities that have also been strengthened in the course of three decades?
- How the metropolitan area is legitimised or not provides a third angle of investigation. Do local politicians produce a coherent narrative of the metropolis, for example, as the logical consequence of rescaling; or does the emergence of the city as a political object create new forms of resistance, from specific neighbourhoods, social groups or political parties? Do parties themselves take firm positions on levels of local government or do they prefer to avoid these structural questions that are not perceived to be electorally rewarding?
- Fourth, what is the role of citizens in these varied metropolitan arenas? Is there evidence of citizen resistance? Do controversies spill into the public sphere? Are citizens mobilised for or against the perception that local affairs are 'moving up' to the metropolitan area?
- Finally, do metropolitan authorities produce qualitatively different types of public policy? Is there evidence that policy outputs are improved by moving up to the metropolitan scale? Or do successful outcomes depend on the quality of the assemblages that are

constructed in specific places (that might or might not crystallise at the metropolitan level)?

In order to address these questions, the book is divided into three parts. In Part I, 'Capital City Dynamics', two chapters map the historical development of processes of metropolitanisation in the two leading European capital cities – Paris and London – and a third chapter narrates the case of contested capital dynamics between Barcelona and Madrid in Spain.

Ian Gordon's chapter on the Greater London metropolis proposes a panoramic overview of the historical evolution of capital cities. London is probably the case that offers the longest timescape, as the process of metropolitan agglomeration has spanned more than 150 years. The case of London is that of an extended urban agglomeration – with its particular mix of social tensions and inequalities, economic wealth creation and rival political interests. In addition to narrating the complex history of how London has been governed since the mid-nineteenth century, Gordon's chapter provides the keys for understanding how economic, social and institutional conflicts can interact to structure a particular mode of metropolitan governance.

In Chapter 3, Pauline Prat focuses on Paris and the Paris region, in the main envisioned by its various actors as a form of political organisation alongside if not against the state. Adopting a socio-historical approach, Prat identifies three key moments when city-based actors challenged the state: the interwar period; the decade of the 1960s; and the period opening with the election of Sarkozy as president of the Republic in 2007. Nonetheless, the author concludes that explanations using politics as the principal variable are wide of the mark: the political dimension does not explain the long-term process of metropolitanisation, which is rooted in broader socio-economic pressures.

In Chapter 4, Andrew Dowling presents and compares the two largest Spanish metropolises, Barcelona and Madrid. Both cities have distinctive spatial dynamics: the highly dense city of Barcelona is formed by a polycentric urban model, while Madrid more closely represents the model of concentration in a 'great centre'. While the comparative position of the Catalan capital Barcelona has been eroded since the 1970s, Madrid has grown in cultural, political and economic importance, and has become firmly embedded as the country's finance capital. This chapter concludes by situating the political and economic competition between Barcelona and Madrid in the broader context of state fragmentation and potential Catalan exit.

Part II is concerned with cities as political and administrative categories. If the city is not, *stricto sensu*, a legal category, processes of metropolitanisation represent a challenge in terms of political and administrative organisation. The chapters in Part II address the contemporary and historical reforms that have underpinned the emergence of city government structures in several European countries. Using the lens of metropolitanisation, the chapters present cases of decentralisation, of neighbourhood democracy, of city devolution and of institutional creativity, while at the same time displaying modes of differentiation between countries and institutional competition between rival territorial levels within countries.

The question of the legal framework of cities, addressed in Chapter 5 by Jacques Caillosse, is a complex one. The economic, social and political forces driving metropolitanisation usually precede efforts at legal categorisation. Concentrating on the French case, Caillosse revisits various contexts of the legal categorisation of cities – from early attempts to provide a legal framework in the 1960s to the most recent laws (of 2010 and 2014). The chapter concludes that the law is a social construction of a particular kind, made of words, notions and categories that give a particular representation of collective relationships. By finally endorsing the notion of the *métropole*, French administrative law has recognised the emergence of metropolises, and acknowledged the need for legal differentiation between France's various types of local government.

In his study of post-war Rotterdam in Chapter 6, Stefan Couperus presents the case of a city with a decentralised practice of metropolitan government and a form of neighbourhood democracy. Couperus describes a centripetal movement that invites us to understand the city in terms of the aggregation of dense governance networks based on vibrant neighbourhoods. The gradual calling into question of the key role performed by the neighbourhood councils has signalled the end of a highly original form of decentralised city governance, and condemned one version of the city as a political actor (localist) in favour of another (metropolitan).

In Chapter 7, Francesca Artioli explains the case of Italy. She examines the transformation of urban policies there since the end of the Second World War. By urban policies, the chapter refers to the construction of the city as a political actor *and* to the identification of the city as a particular object for policies. Urban policies have experienced problems of coordination, effectiveness, resources and legitimacy. Italian cities often change without and beyond public policies. This unsolved urban question in Italy has to be understood considering the ongoing confrontation between the functioning of a state with a centralising original

structure but limited effectiveness and pressures to invent responses to both democratic challenges and urban problems.

In Chapter 8, Hubert Heinelt and Karsten Zimmermann consider the case of Germany, where urban policies are mainly dealt with at the sub-national (federal state) rather than at the national (federal) level. Though a national urban policy has slowly developed in Germany, cities appear as incomplete political actors. Local governments, even in the larger cities, do not have much input into deciding on urban policies, at either the national or federal state levels. On the other hand, armed with the constitutional guarantee of local self-government, some block grant funding, and a degree of local fiscal autonomy, they pursue their own particular urban policies.

In Chapter 9, Stéphane Cadiou drills deeper into the French law of 16 December 2010 that provided for the creation of metropolitan cities. He provides a detailed case study of the French city of Nice, the only one to have obtained metropolitan status under the terms of the 2010 law. Cadiou explains the case of Nice by local dynamics and competition: local actors defended their patch, and were determined to avoid being associated with neighbouring cities considered to be rivals. If the Nice metropolis provided a new set of institutional opportunities for the actors concerned, there was very little debate within civil society.

In Part III, cities are observed in action in a comparative public policy perspective. Metropolitanisation has been associated with a strengthening of the action capacity of cities, which have developed new competencies in fields, *inter alia*, such as economic development, environmental policy, culture and transport. Adopting either a policy field or a comparative approach (or a mixture of the two), the chapters here investigate public policies and/or new institutional relationships that exemplify the rescaling of territorial governance via metropolitan institutions, networks and assemblages.

In Chapter 10, Clément Pin and Déborah Galimberti explore the variety of processes of metropolitanisation by adopting a comparative and sectoral approach. Drawing on the cases of Milan and Paris, they demonstrate that metropolitanisation need not take an institutional form; it can also be understood in terms of specific public policy programmes. Taking innovation policy as the field of investigation, the authors illustrate the distinctive ways in which actors frame metropolitanisation and give substance to the metropolis. The chapter also identifies a gap between strong metropolitan networks in the field of innovation policy and the weaker metropolitan consciousness on the part of political actors and structures.

In Chapter 11, Maxime Huré deals with the case of urban bicycles, an example of the successful diffusion of an urban experiment in most European cities. Drawing on the specific case of Brussels, the chapter asks deeper questions about the linkages between city-wide structures and municipal councils, the lobbying of private market players and the private provision of public goods. If rescaling favours metropolis-wide bicycle solutions, municipal government retains a strong veto power over private actors.

In Chapter 12, Christophe Parnet compares two very different experiences of metropolitanisation in France: the cases of Lyon and Aix-Marseille. Parnet drills into the formulation and implementation of the metropolitan cities law (MAPTAM) of January 2014. If the 2014 law has strengthened metropolitan dynamics, it has been accompanied by locally mediated compromises. Conceptually, Parnet proposes a framework whereby territorial configurations need to be taken into account in order to understand why metropolises take the form they do in specific places. Decentralisation in France is interpreted in terms of differentiated processes that are well exemplified by rival discourses of the integrated endogenous metropolis in Lyon and the persistence of place-based rivalry in Aix-Marseille.

Finally, in Chapter 13, Juliet Carpenter compares urban regeneration policies in France and the United Kingdom in general, and in Lyon (Vaulx-en-Velin) and Birmingham (Longbridge) in particular. The chapter makes very good use of assemblage theory, understood as a 'composition of diverse elements into some form of provisional socio-spatial formation' (Anderson and MacFarlane, 2011, p. 124), as a conceptual tool for comparing urban regeneration strategies in the UK and France. She concludes that many of the differences between the two cases relate to the differences in cultural and institutional contexts, which are played out in the process of assembling the two urban regeneration sites. In the UK, there is a more inclusive planning process which is more willing to open up involvement to different stakeholders and embraces participatory democracy more readily than in France. By contrast, in France, there is greater political leadership behind projects, where political figures take on the role of champion for a development.

The chapters in this book demonstrate that cities, indeed, are at the heart of contemporary reflections on new modes of regulation in a context of increasing economic and political interdependency. City governance provides a multi-disciplinary research object that interests human geographers, economists, political scientists, urban planners and historians. The ambition of this book is two-fold: to interpret the variety of processes of metropolitanisation at work over the past few decades;

and to understand the various conceptual and theoretical approaches that the social sciences – and the political sciences in particular – have adopted to explain this phenomenon. This double ambition is addressed mainly by revisiting recent reforms in several European countries that construct the city as a political and legal object and place it at the centre of processes of governance.

Cities are understood primarily as subjects. The cities studied in this volume have usually developed their own forms of governance, with tailored institutions, a large policy-making capability and sometimes a new democratic legitimacy. They are also understood as objects of public policy, the intended targets of the development of European-level or national urban policies. As the cases of Italy, Germany and France demonstrate, moreover, cities can change without explicit public policies being adopted, as the result of macro-level socio-spatial dynamics. The ensuing volume thus accommodates plural approaches drawn from a variety of European countries and metropolitan settings. If variation is in the nature of comparative politics, the chapters in this volume all share a converging interest in political dynamics in and around cities, and this cohesion provides the underlying rationale for and interest in ‘Cities as Political Objects’.

## NOTE

1. Throughout this book, the term ‘metropolis’ is used to signify the general metropolitan area. A metropolitan council is referred to by its place-specific name (for example, *métropole* in France or *citta metropolitana* in Italy). Following the Oxford dictionary, the term ‘metropolitanisation’ is used to refer to metropolis-wide phenomena.

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