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Master Thesis

Metropolitan Regions: Enablers of a European Cohesion Policy

A Case Study in Local Governance

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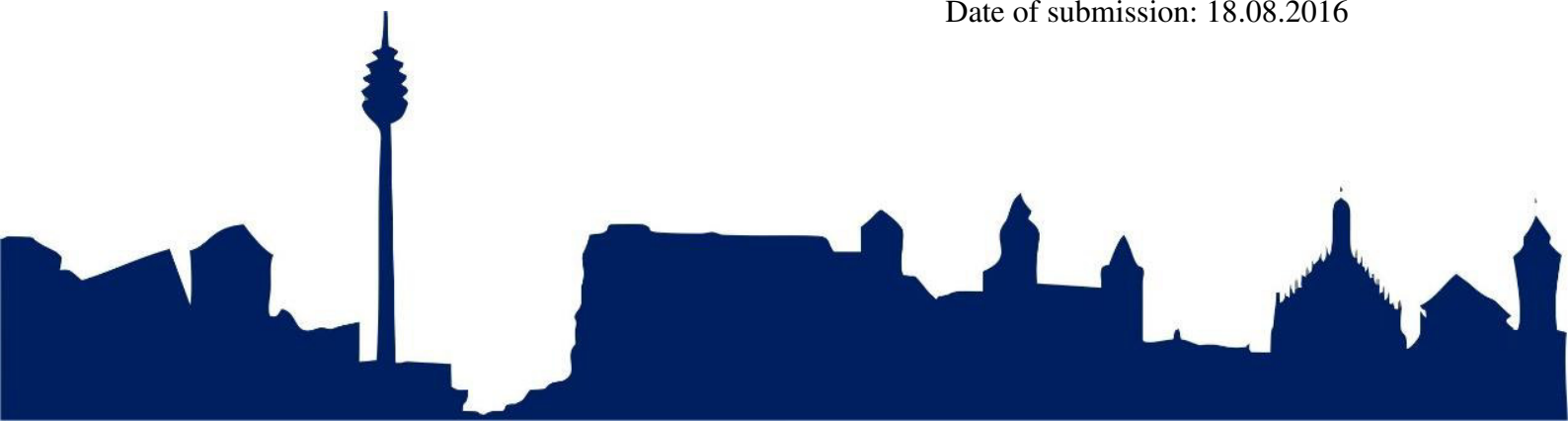Second Supervisor: **Prof. Dr. Günther Ammon**

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Master of Arts in Development Economics and International Studies
Matriculation number: 21864859
Date of submission: 18.08.2016

Abstract

This thesis sets out to investigate the functions and governance structures of metropolitan regions in Europe with the aim of assessing to what extent these forms of local partnerships are prepared to provide both legitimate and effective solutions to Europe's pressing problems. The process of European integration, for the most part, was driven forward without the involvement of local authorities. In the light of contemporary challenges such as rising levels of socio-economic inequality, which are closely related to the Great Recession and resulting austerity policies, the local level has considerably gained importance when it comes to addressing the impact of the crisis. The related challenges do not only affect the objective of the EU cohesion policy to decrease territorial disparities, but are also closely connected to the rising Euroscepticism across Europe and questions regarding Europe's identity and the EU's future prospects. The thesis demonstrates that metropolitan regions can make an important contribution in this context that is generally underestimated. The case of the European Metropolitan Region of Nuremberg presents a particularly good example of local governance. The conclusion suggest that the EU will have to reconsider the role of local actors towards a more prominent and active one within the multi-level governance system in order not to further jeopardise its internal cohesion and credibility on the global stage.

Keywords: metropolitan regions; cohesion policy; socio-economic inequalities; European integration; European public sphere; Europeanisation; multi-level governance; local governance; rural-urban partnerships; European Metropolitan Region of Nuremberg; case study

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List of Abbreviations

CoR	Committee of the Regions
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EC	European Commission
ECOFIN	Economic and Financial Affairs Council
e.g.	exempli gratia (for example)
EMR	European Metropolitan Region
EMN	European Metropolitan Region of Nuremberg
EPG	European Public Good
EPS	European Public Sphere
ESM	European Social Model
et al.	et alii (and others)
EU	European Union
HWK	Chamber of Crafts
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IAB	Institute for Employment Research
IHK	Chamber of Industry and Commerce
IKM	Initiativkreises Europäische Metropolregionen in Deutschland
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LRA	Local and Regional Authorities
MKRO	Ministerkonferenz für Raumordnung
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
p.	page
pp.	pages
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PPS	Purchasing Power Standards
SGP	Stability and Growth Pact
WaBe	Mission Statement Sustainable Growth and Employment

Introduction

"Political order is increasingly differentiated [...]. Territory, as a constituent element of political order, is always, more or less, contested and in flux. There is no definite spatial fix, but territory remains central to the distribution of power, resources, citizenship, and representation."

(Keating, 2013, p. 194)

The idea of a Europe of the Regions in which the local level would take on a more active and prominent role, was especially prominent in the 90s, but since then has lost much of its momentum (Keating, 2013). However, since the impact of the Great Recession and resulting austerity policies was especially pronounced at the local level, both cities and metropolitan regions have significantly gained importance when it comes to dealing with the impact of the crisis (Donalda et al., 2014). This is mainly due to the fact that citizens demand more inclusive and resilient economies. Socio-economic inequalities have been increasing for many years and exacerbated during the economic crisis – especially within and between cities across Europe (OECD, 2014). Notably, these disparities and the increase in international competitive pressure has led local politicians as well as private and civic actors to come up with new forms of local partnerships and corresponding governance structures. Metropolitan regions in terms of relatively flexible forms of cooperation between rural and urban areas, involving both public and private actors, are an example of such partnerships. The debate on the role of (metropolitan) regions is closely related to the EU cohesion policy, which is in particular aimed at the local level. The objective is to reduce socio-economic disparities and promote a more equitable development across Europe (European Commission, 2014). However, for many Europeans, the EU's attempt to decrease territorial inequalities has, despite decades of increasing (economic) integration, not led to a considerable improvement in their socio-economic situation. High levels of unemployment, especially among Europe's youth, have led to a sustained loss of confidence in EU institutions and has given a new boost to the Eurosceptics.

The aim of this thesis is threefold: 1) to make an inventory of the problems that Europe is currently facing, 2) to go down to the local level and to assess both key functions and governance structures of metropolitan regions in Europe and, finally, 3) to relate local approaches to the respective challenges at the European (global) level. The central research question is if local stakeholders are able to find both effective and legitimate solutions to Europe's pressing problems and whether it might be advisable to shift the focus further to the local level. On top of that, it will be discussed in what sense metropolitan regions can contribute to an improved representativeness of EU institutions and foster both the debate on the necessity of a European identity and the future prospects of the Union. The case study of the European Metropolitan

Region of Nuremberg (EMN) is especially interesting for two reasons: First, the EMN pursues a holistic approach that more or less relates to all five dimensions of the crisis. Second, OECD and other scholars see in the EMN a particularly successful example of local governance (Bege, 2010; Blatter & Knieling, 2009; OECD, 2013). A closer examination of a European metropolitan region furthermore helps to make statements as to how concrete projects and local governance structures do indeed provide adequate solutions for the contemporary challenges. This seems necessary with respect to the question as to what extent metropolitan regions are enablers of a European cohesion policy.

The research method includes both written and oral sources. An extensive literature review is primarily based on the results of a project on the reconstitution of democracy in Europe (RECON)[1] and a wide range of further literature. Furthermore, official documents such as treaties, charters and mission statements are taken into account – in particular in order to assess whether there is a discrepancy between the political rhetoric and reality both at the European and the local level. With regard to the case study, it needs to be noted that the available written sources do not fully reflect the circumstances under which the partnership was formed. In such cases, oral history can provide important complementary insights and enhance the credibility of other sources. It also helps to better understand the content of written statements and allows for an analysis of the consistency between official documents (Gardini, 2012, pp. 107-110) and the perception of the political representatives of the EMN. Seven interviews were conducted, of which five were with key representatives of the EMN. These people have been or are in a 'privileged position' as they not only hold valuable insights to the relevant aspects, but also, due to their position, are able to speak for the whole EMN. In addition, they (used to) have the same function within the EMN, which makes it possible to distinguish differences and commonalities regarding the same issues (Gardini, 2012, p. 117).

The thesis is structured as follows: First, an overview over Europe's contemporary challenges is given. The overview serves to, on the one hand, highlight the relevance of the topic and, on the other hand, lay the groundwork for the discussion as to whether it might be more effective to shift the focus further to the local level. Second, the different functions and governance structures of metropolitan regions in Europe will be assessed. Third, the case study of the EMN is used to present a particularly well-managed form of local governance. The conclusion summarizes the key arguments and raises questions regarding the future role and challenges of both the European and the local level.

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[1] The RECON project was a comprehensive and multidisciplinary research project (2007-11). The central research question was which form of democracy could be reconstituted in Europe. For this purpose, a variety of studies on, among others, the state of representative democracy, a European identity were carried out (RECON, 2011).

1. Europe's status quo and future prospects

In the following, an inventory of the problems that Europe is currently facing will shed a light on the *interdependence* of the issues at stake. The aim of this part is *not* to provide a comprehensive description of the causes and consequences of the circumstances that led to Europe's current situation, but rather to ask and analyse how the different dimensions of Europe's ongoing crises are connected. The complexity of the situation requires a complex analytical approach that aims to understand the issues at stake from different angles, while at the same time highlighting their interconnectedness. This seems reasonable since a solution to these problems can only be sustainable if it is not limited to certain aspects, while (deliberately) neglecting other relevant layers (Tsoukalis, 2015).

1.1 Europe's recent economic crisis

The first part of this chapter gives an overview over three economic narratives regarding the factors that triggered the economic crisis.[2] The reason for this approach is that throughout the crisis, narratives have been a powerful tool to criticise and justify a great number of far-reaching political decisions. The second part will concentrate on the fact that that economic inequalities, which exacerbated during the crisis, do not primarily exist between countries, but much rather between rural and urban as well as peripheral and central regions or within a given (metropolitan) region.

(1) According to the European Commission (EC), the problems started with the US subprime mortgage crisis. Europe was strongly affected by this since European banks were heavily invested in respective financial products. Another concern was the high level of current account deficits and public debt in some European countries, which according to the EC had above all to do with two things: a lack of both fiscal discipline and *(*cost*)* competitiveness (European Commission, 2014). While the former refers to countries that have not sticked to the rules that were agreed on in the Stability and Growth Pact (SPG), the latter refers to countries that did not keep up with structural reforms, particularly in the labour market.[3]

(2) In a second scenario, it were, on the other hand, primarily European banks that, in the search for higher returns, for many years have been channelling capital flows towards peripheral countries in Southern Europe (Lane, 2012). The underlying cause has to do with an

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[2] Narratives can be loosely defined as stories that provide us information about the author's subjective opinion of a given situation, including his or her underlying values. Certain circumstances, connections or experiences are deliberately included and excluded, respectively (Feldman et al., 2004, pp. 147-149).

[3] In 1998, the EU Member States agreed to implement the SGP states in order to guarantee balanced fiscal policies in the EU. The current version states a budget deficits of more than 3 % of GDP is to be avoided and that public debt should be kept below 60 % of GDP (European Commission, 2016).

'*overaccumulation*' of capital due to saturated markets in central Europe (Overbeek, 2012). In contrast to the first narrative, the current account deficits occurred as a consequence of an over-supply of cheap credit and a lack of *technological* (non-price*)* competitiveness. It is argued that economic integration has only led to a weak technological convergence and the persistence of these *structural asymmetries* represents Europe's fundamental problem (Botta, 2014; Storm & Naastepad, 2015).
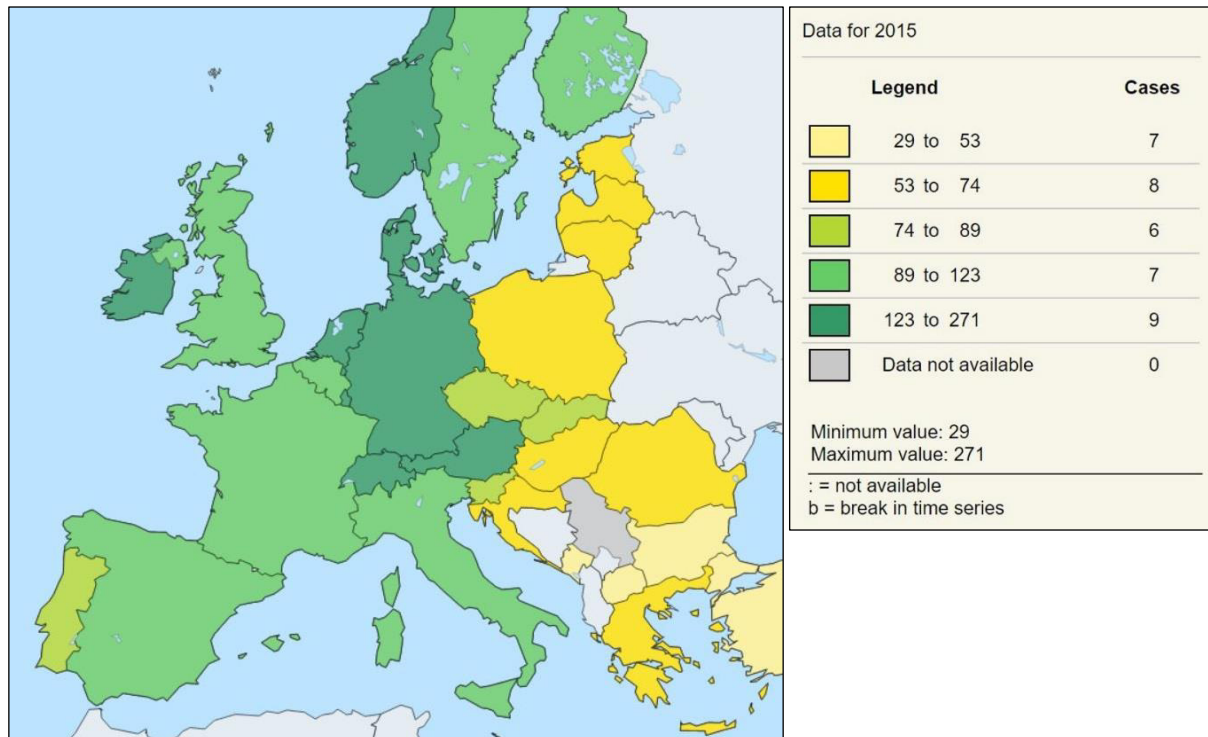
(3) Yet another explanation puts the focus on the *EU's governance model* and the current design of the monetary union. Both macroeconomic imbalances and short-term (liquidity) shocks would have needed to be addressed in a coordinated manner. However, in the absence of a European government such a coordinated approach was never likely to happen (Collignon, 2012; Jabko, 2015; Parsons & Matthijs, 2015). A shift towards *intergovernmentalism* increased the appearance of respective *collective action problems* and thereby decreased the likelihood of effective as well as legitimate solutions.[4] One essential characteristic of intergovernmentalism is unanimity, which in case of a *veto* is likely to imply that necessary steps are taken too late and do not go far enough. Apart from that there is the problem of *enforcement* and *compliance*, which can be seen in many areas (e.g. the adoption and implementation of the European Treaties) (Fabbrini, 2013, pp. 1017-1022). It is not possible here to portray further narratives, but the selection of three different perspectives hints at how narratives can be (mis)used.

Turning to the second part, the impact of the crisis meant that the process of economic convergence among *European countries* slowed down, came to a standstill or even reversed. The findings differ, depending on the investigation period and the countries that were involved in the studies. In the decades before the crisis, a number of studies found convergence rates between one and five percent.[5] What is striking is that despite the increasing integration of economies into the single market, the economic development continues to vary considerably among Member States (Figure 1). In 2007, so before the crisis, per capita GDP (euros in purchasing power standards) in Portugal and the Czech Republic amounted to 79 and 81 percent of the EU-28 average, while in Poland and Hungary it was even less with 53 and 61 percent, respectively (eurostat, 2015).

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[4] In the end of 2008, it was the *European Council* – so primarily the heads of state or government of the Member States – that took responsibility for the arrangement of immediate measures and for the first time the *European Commission* only provided assistance by coordinating the respective measures or just adopted decisions that had already had been made (European Commission, 2009, pp. 5-6, 57).The conclusions of the European Council of December 2010 reveal further details regarding the increased use of the intergovernmental method with respect to economic governance (European Council, 2011).

[5] For a good overview of respective studies see Dauderstädt (2014, p. 20).

Figure 1
Map of the EU based on GDP per capita in purchasing power standards (EU28 = 100)

Data for 2015

Legend		Cases
	29 to 53	7
	53 to 74	8
	74 to 89	6
	89 to 123	7
	123 to 271	9
	Data not available	0

Minimum value: 29
Maximum value: 271

: = not available
b = break in time series

Source: eurostat. (2016). GDP per capita in PPS.

In order to analyse *regional patterns* Dauderstädt (2014) divided the EU-28 countries in three different groups depending on the real per capita income in purchasing power parity (PPP). The "rich north west" includes the founding members and the Member States of the enlargements in 1972 and 1995, whereas the "poorer southern periphery" consists of Greece, Portugal and Spain. In 2007, there already existed a difference of 10,592 euros (PPP)[6] in per capita income between the two regions. Looking at the period 2007-2012, the southern peripheral countries were the ones worst affected by the crisis, with a fall in GDP per capita of 7.6% (Dauderstädt, 2014, pp. 11-12). Further studies confirm that already existing *regional disparities* became much greater in recent years and have been further reinforced by the crisis, whereby *peripheral* and *rural* areas were often more strongly affected (European Union, 2015, pp. 29-42; OECD, 2014, pp. 28-31; Parsons & Matthijs, 2015, p. 16).

What makes the metropolitan (city) level particular relevant is the fact that it is the on the *local level* where people in their daily lives see what it means to be rich or poor (or something in between) (Abrahamson, 2014, pp. 142-149). In many European cities, socio-economic inequalities have increased as a result of the economic crisis and the implementation of austerity policies (Cucca & Ranci, 2015, pp. 2-5; Donalda et al., 2014, p. 4; OECD, 2014, pp. 204-205).

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[6] Calculated by the author based on the data presented by Dauderstädt (2014).

Tammaru et al. (2016) show that this trend becomes especially visible in the residential segregation that is primarily based on varying employment and income opportunities. The development of rising socio-economic segregation has already been apparent in the time before the crisis and affects almost all of Europe. Next to aspects such as the welfare system in a given country, *globalisation* was identified as the most common *structural factor* as a driver of segregation. In accordance with these findings, Ballas et al. (2014) suggest that considering the spatial dimension it might make more sense to think of Europe as a *"continent of regions and cities"*. By mapping Europe based on population and GDP per capita in purchasing power standards (PPS), they demonstrate that socio-economic inequalities can rather be found at the local level *within* countries instead of between them (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Map of Europe based on population and GDP per capita in PPS (data from the Eurostat Regional Yearbook 2013)
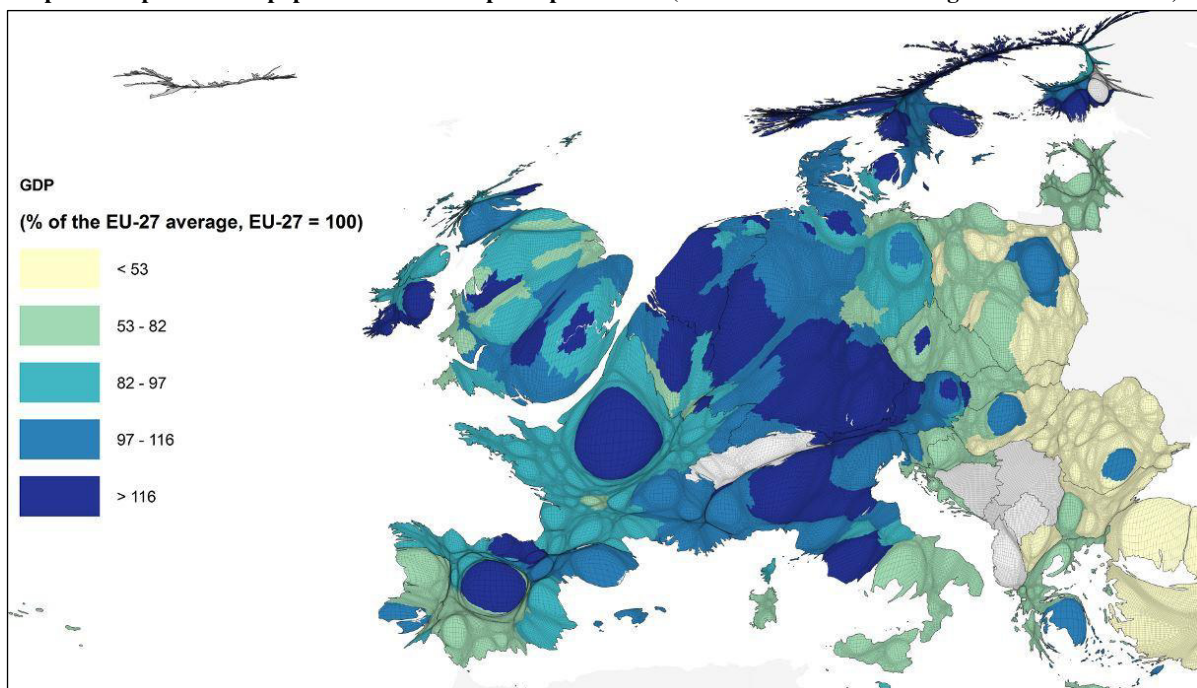
Source: Ballas et al. (2014). The Social Atlas of Europe.

1.2 Europe's social crisis

The following chapter aims to connect Europe's economic crisis with its social consequences and to show how both aspects are at the same time tightly interwoven with the political dimension. Before taking a closer look at concrete consequences of the economic crisis, it is however important to first briefly reflect on what the often cited European social model (ESM) actually stands for. Within academia there is no consensus regarding its concrete features. This arises above all from the fact, that the ESM is primarily a political concept that considerably varies among Member States (Keating & McCrone, 2013). Despite these differences, there are certain

attributes that the different perceptions share. These include a more or less clear distinction from the Anglo-Saxon model, which incorporates less public health and welfare benefits as well as weaker labour protection and rights, among other things (Hermann & Mahnkopf, 2010). Furthermore, there is a wide agreement that the ESM and corresponding institutions are to a great extent based on a common set of values and respective normative judgements (Jepsen & Pascual, 2005). Europe's recent social development is closely connected to the first narrative of the economic crisis, according to which it was primarily the lack of fiscal discipline and (cost) competitiveness that led to the problems. The economic crisis and subsequent (social) reforms had above all three major social consequences:

(1) It led to a situation in which the already existing uneven development among Europe's regions was reinforced or even worsened. Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain were among the countries that were hit hardest. Between 2008 and 2013Q1 the unemployment rate increased by 18.9, 5.1, 9.1 and 15.1 percent, respectively. By the first quarter of 2013, the unemployment rate (youth unemployment in %) reached a level of 26.6 (60.1), 11.9 (39.2), 17.6 (40.6) and 26.5 (55.7) percent, respectively (Storm & Naastepad, 2015, p. 3). Since mid-2013, unemployment figures have gradually improved (eurostat, 2016). In accordance with the results of the previous chapter the scale of unemployment partially varied considerably *within* countries (Milio, et al., 2014). These conclusions were supported by further studies, which found that both poverty and social exclusion can in particular be found at the local level (European Commission, 2013; European Union, 2015).

(2) Looking ahead, it becomes apparent that in the long run the social dimension of Europe will look quite different from what it used to be. In a comprehensive report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the authors identified six main pillars that are associated with the ESM. According to the study, all of them affected by the politics of austerity. Respective measures include: (a) a restriction of workers' rights, including collective bargaining, the right to strike and significant wage cuts, (b) a further flexibilization of labour markets as well as a (c) dismantling of social protection such as unemployment benefits or pensions. Further aspects include (d) the questioning of the principle of social dialogue and far-reaching adjustments in (e) the public sector. Changes in the public sector involve the outsourcing of government activities (in particular through privatization), budget, job and wage cuts, among other (Hermann, 2014; Vaughan-Whitehead, 2015). Some observers argue that these *supply-side orientated* reforms are part of a broader *neoliberal agenda* that aims to further increase the share of the private sector within the global economy.[7] This already has been affecting the

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[7] Neoliberal policies generally include a cutback of the welfare state, (economic) deregulation and the promotion of market-based solutions (Ostry & Loungani, 2016).

global power structure in terms of a shift away from public and towards private interests (Donalda et al., 2014; Hermann, 2014; Husson, 2012; Lapavitsas, et al., 2010; Storm & Naastepad, 2015; Vaughan-Whitehead, 2015).

(3) An initially less tangible effect has to do with the fact that the loss of employment not only means that people have to deal with the loss of income (material loss). Lasting unemployment profoundly changes people's daily lives and thus their way of thinking, their trust and solidarity within their social environment and towards other social groups as well as the trust in the government. Komp et al. (2013) stress the importance to consider the linkages between the economic crisis and its consequences for society in order to understand corresponding changes in the political realm. The rise in socio-economic inequalities between and within European countries has caused that people started looking for someone to blame. Especially (far) right-wing parties and groups have been successfully taking advantage of this, mostly by blaming foreigners, immigrants or other minorities (Komp, et al., 2013; Kunzmann, 2010).

1.3   The political dimension: A matter of a disconnected constituency

In what follows, it will first be shown how the political crisis articulates itself. Based on this, two reasons that impede both a balanced *representation* of relevant stakeholders in the EU and the emergence of a common European position, will be briefly discussed: First, the influence of special interest groups and secondly, the absence of a *European public sphere*.

The crisis has clearly shown that, considering the global interdependencies, Europe's fragmented polity does not seem to be able to provide sustainable solutions. The increasing *'Euroscepticism'* can be explained by the fact that the EU is increasingly no longer perceived as a problem solver, but rather as an institution that is not only (partially) responsible for the current circumstances, but also contributes to a worsening of the situation (Parsons & Matthijs, 2015; Schmidt, 2015; Stiglitz et al., 2014). As a consequence several movements have emerged and (new), mostly right-wing parties have gained support that reject the course of action taken by the EU. These parties mostly demand less Europe or even an exit from the EU. Current examples include the electoral successes of the AfD in Germany, FN in France, UKIP in the UK and FPÖ in Austria, among others (Aisch et al., 2016; Usherwood & Startin, 2013). On June 23, 2016, the UK hold a referendum on the EU membership and voted to leave the Union. It was the first country to take this step and, at the time of writing, it is still impossible to say which further consequences this will have for Europe. The result of the referendum also reflects the deep socio-economic inequalities within the country. In Inner London the average GDP per capita was 325% above the EU-28 average and five times higher as in West Wales and the Valleys in 2013 (European Union, 2015, p. 125). While in In Inner London the vast majority

voted to remain in the Union, 52.5% of the people in Wales voted to leave the EU. Also predominantly rural areas such as East Anglia voted to leave (The Electoral Commission, 2016). These profound changes in Europe's political landscape can be described as the *symptoms* of the citizens' discontent. The underlying *structural causes* have above all to do with the fact that for an increasing number of citizens the EU has for quite some time now not been delivering on its promise to create more equitable living conditions across Europe, as seen in Chapter 1.1 (European Union, 2007, p. 11).

A further reason for the citizens' discontent can be found in the current state of *representative democracy* in the EU, which is increasingly characterized by a *disconnected constituency*.[8] This means that a growing number of European citizens has lost *trust* in the EU institutions, since they do not see their interests being represented. The EU is based on a combination of different modes of representation that involve both the intergovernmental and the supranational (community) method (Lord & Pollak, 2010). The former reflects the interests of individual Member States, rather than a general European interest and provides that the European Parliament only has an advisory function. The supranational method, on the other hand, implies that the European Commission and Parliament along with the Council form some sort of European consensus. The Commission alone initiates legislation that is then reviewed for adoption by the Parliament and Council (Ponzano, 2011). This makes the Commission probably the most important target for any special interest group, since they have an interest in shaping the discussion regarding legislative proposals right from the beginning. Regarding *access* to EU institutions, relevant information is a key factor. The demand for information is determined by the EU institutions' need to assess policy proposals and the impact of new legislation (Chalmers, 2013). With regard to the *success* factors of lobbying, the available *'material resources'* of the interest group play a crucial role. The necessity of having sufficient funds has in particular to do with the complexity of EU institutions and the mechanisms of consultation.[9] This gives well-funded lobby groups a considerable advantage over those who lack the necessary means, especially civil society organizations (CSOs) such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and trade unions (Klüver, 2012). The consequences can be seen in the supply-side orientation of economic and social reforms. With regard to the efficiency-legitimacy trade-

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[8] There are many forms of representative democracy that can be distinguished from each other, depending on who has power, authority and sovereignty, the scope of decision-making power as well as to what extent transparency, accountability and a system of checks and balances are ensured (Lord & Pollak, 2010). However, in its core, it is based on freedom of opinion, regular free and fair elections, and the temporarily authorisation of power by the electorate to the representatives (Alonso, Keane, & Merkel, 2011).

[9] For a detailed analyses of the mechanisms of consultation and their relation to both the EU's input and output legitimacy see Schmidt (2013).

off, an improved *representativeness*, by restoring the link between the electorate and the representatives, seems to be preferable over a further democratization of EU institutions. Accordingly, citizens should be able to expect and anticipate certain (re)actions of their European representatives in Brussels (Alonso et al., 2011; Guérot, 2016, pp. 87-88).

Despite the inclusion of new, relevant stakeholders in the consultation process, the efficiency of EU governance has not considerably increased. This has to do with the fact that especially civil society actors are often not able to pool their interests, with corresponds with a high degree of preference heterogeneity (Liebert & Trenz, 2008, p. 17). Both has to do with the absence of a *European public sphere* (EPS). The following remarks will lean on a concept of a public sphere that can be characterized by: (a) an ongoing process of interdisciplinary communication (across languages and cultures) that (b) nowadays primarily takes place in the media with (c) the aim of generating a public opinion, hence enabling (political) will formation (Trenz, 2008). Studies provide mixed evidence regarding the existence of an EPS, there is, however, an increasing consensus with respect to its emergence. This becomes apparent from both the *"Europeanisation of national public spheres and the politicisation of European integration"* (Liebert, 2012, p. 19). The European Parliament election campaigns (2009) are an example for the former. A discourse analysis revealed that references to European problems and solutions exceeded debates on national issues (Liebert, 2012, pp. 16-18). An example for the latter would be that Europe's status quo and the future development of the Union are increasingly being debated in the public. Either of these aspects is crucial to overcoming Europe's political crisis of a disconnected constituency, since both processes contribute to restoring the link between citizens and their representatives (Risse, 2015, pp. 141-153).

1.4 Europe's identity: Between political rhetoric and reality

Following, it will be briefly considered whether Europe has an identity that is being perceived as such both internally and externally and how Europe's low profile on the global stage can be explained.

The absence of an EPS suggests that a European identity so far does not exist. Without having established an EPS in the first place, which goes beyond the overlap of national public spheres, the discussion regarding what could account for a European identity remains fragmented. However, as Liebert (2012) reminds us, an EPS is emerging and thus the evolution of a European identity is more than just an abstract vision. When speaking about a European identity, one has to ask oneself whether identity involves for instance (a) a common set of values, (b) a shared culture, (c) a joint legal basis or a combination of these aspects. Furthermore, the

question should be posed whether a European identity and national identities are mutually exclusive or can exist next to each other (together with further identities). As part of the RECON project, the results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses have shown that a collective European identity does not exist. Rather, there exist different, often contradicting, identity patterns that consist of distinct underlying factors. These include: (1) *'cosmopolitan factors'* that assign gender equality, universal human rights and the EU as a promoter of democracy a prominent role; (2) *'national-traditional' factors* that are built around conservative values, national pride and respective symbols; and (3) *'multi-level' factors* where despite some reservations the European project is generally supported and both a sense of belonging to a nation and to Europe can coexist (Skully e al., 2012, pp. 131-141). Góra et al. (2009) are sceptical about this notion and believe that, whether one imagines the EU primarily as a *'confederation of sovereign democratic states'* or as a *'European multinational federal democratic state'*, in both cases there exists a zero-sum relationship between the different underlying identity patterns. By this the authors mean that the coexistence of national identities is in itself likely to lead to disagreements when it comes to European decisions. Additionally, it is assumed that any form of European identity would imply a (partial) abandonment of national identities, hence the zero-sum relationship. A concluding study found that European and national identities are, however, *not* mutually exclusive and can indeed exist next to each other, in a sort of supplementary relationship (Skully et al., 2012, pp. 143-145). This is in accordance with a comprehensive study of the European integration and its effects on European citizens by Risse, who came to the conclusion that:

> *"[I]ndividuals hold multiple social identities"* and that *"people can feel a sense of belonging to Europe, their nation-state, their gender, and so forth."* (Risse, 2010, pp. 39-40)

For Risse (Risse, 2010, p. 40) these are just different *"imagined communities"*, a term that was also used by Hurrell (2007, p. 242) in pretty much the same context. Questions regarding a regional identity have, in this context, a lot to do with the (political) rhetoric that is used to describe the respective community. Hurrell (2007, pp. 249-252) suggests that Europe should focus on its own *internal perception* of what it means to be part of the EU. Various official statements provide information regarding the EU's self-image. Both the *Declaration on European Identity* (1973) and the *Maastricht Treaty* (1992) recognize a common foreign and security policy as a basis for a common identity. Further indications can be found in the *'Copenhagen Criteria'* that define which requirements candidate countries have to fulfil before they can join the Union. These include stable democratic institutions that guarantee compliance with the rule of law, human rights as well as a well-established market economy, among other things

(European Council, 1993). Considering that organisations such as the *International Labour Office* has based its labour standards to a large extent on the principles and values that the EU promotes in its treaties and has incorporated into law (ILO, 2014), Europe might indeed serve as a 'counterpoint' to other forms of capitalism (Hurrell, 2007, p. 249). In this context Hurrell (2007) stresses that if Europe, or any region, seeks to increase its influence on the global stage, it is of crucial importance that the *internal image* is also reflected in *external measures*. However, today the EU is maybe more than ever running the risk of undermining its credibility, as can be seen in the current refugee situation. The current UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi (2016), and the international organisation Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) have, for instance, expressed great criticism with regard to the EU-Turkey Agreement. In an open letter, the MSF writes:

"The "EU-Turkey deal" effectively outsources caring for these people to Turkey in exchange for, amongst other things, a multi-billion euro financial aid package. In an era of the greatest displacement of humanity in decades, this is a historic abdication of your moral and legal responsibilities." (MSF, 2016)

In a press release that was published on June 17 2016, the organisation has even declared that, in order to express its opposition to the EU's policies, it will no longer accept funds from the EU and its Member States (MSF, 2016).

1.5   The different perceptions of Europe's vision

The aim of this chapter is threefold: To give a brief overview of selected visions for Europe; to point out some of their weaknesses and to briefly outline a 'vision' that takes better account of the local dimension. The scholars of the RECON project used three different models in order to analyse which from of democracy would be adequate for what kind of Europe. The first model is based on the idea that only the nation-state can provide citizenship rights and secure democracy. According to this the EU is seen as a *confederation* of autonomous states. The second model imagines the EU as a *federal system* where legislative and judicial power as well as executive powers are partly transferred to a supranational level. The third model, on the other hand, is described as a *"regional-cosmopolitan model"*, in which civil and social rights are granted *independently* of the membership of a polity and hence a particular territory. The idea corresponds to the claimed universality of human rights (Olsen, 2011, pp. 3-5).

In Chapter 1.3, it has been shown that as a consequence of the socio-economic development in the EU, a number of political parties calls for a (re)strengthening of the nation-state (model 1). This idea finds for instance approval in countries like the UK and France or in the countries of the eastward enlargement of the EU (RECON, 2011, p. 21). The latter include the

so-called *'Visegrad Group'* that consists of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. *Smith* (2012, p. 4), however, argues that the crises has clearly shown that, considering the global interdependencies, a fragmented European polity will not be able to provide sustainable solutions. This is in line with the view of Jaques Delors (2013) who affirms that for these reasons an enhanced cooperation among Member States, instead of placing (economic) competition above everything else, must be achieved. Otherwise the Union runs the risk of further jeopardising its internal cohesion as well as its credibility on the global stage. Looking at the "*Blueprint for a deep and genuine economic and monetary union*" (European Commission, 2012), the European Commission seems to be well aware of both the problems of the institutional framework and the necessity to act together in a globalized world. The Commission stresses the urgency of a further deepening of the economic union that needs to be accompanied by a financial, fiscal and political union. Proponents of this vision of Europe are usually in favour of a *federal-type system* (model 2). In the recently published *Five Presidents' Report on Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union* (European Commission, 2016), this intention was strongly reaffirmed. Critics, however, argue that the Commission's proposal is too one-dimensional since it is overwhelmingly focused on economic issues (Mayer, 2015). Mayer (2015, p. 4) also points out that the Commission's report is based on the assumption of the *"existence of an objective economic truth"*.[10] This belief is reflected in the *rules-based* economic framework, as it is known from the *politics of austerity* with their logic of "there is no alternative".

Certainly there always have been and will be alternatives. Collignon (2009; 2013; 2015) has outlined an approach within the RECON framework that adds a twist to the debate on the future of Europe. His concept of a *European Republic* more or less corresponds to the *cosmopolitan model* (model 3).[11] According to Collignon, an even more centralistic structure of the EU would not correspond to the people's needs. In a "*republican version of federalism*" (Collignon, 2009, p. 572), a European *representative* government would draw its legitimacy from the provision of *European public goods* (EPGs) that are based on common interests. Collignon (2009, pp. 535-41) distinguishes between *inclusive* and *exclusive* public goods. The former would neither require the provision nor the intervention of a European government. This is because it can be assumed that these would be voluntarily provided and that cooperation would result from clearly identifiable benefits. Examples are the Schengen Agreement as well as the single market and currency, among other things. Exclusive public goods, on the other

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[10] Translated by the author.

[11] A survey among NGO's, economic interest groups and political parties of three old (France, Germany, UK) and three new (Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland) Member States revealed that *"by far the most widely shared normative idea was that of a transnational community of democracies"* (Liebert, 2011, p. 115) – so model 3.

hand, come with negative externalities and should hence be jointly provided. A typical example is environmental pollution that does not stop at national borders and hence requires European and global solutions, respectively. The underlying EPG could be called 'climate stability'.[12] Here it becomes clear again why a European public sphere is so important. The provision of EPGs requires, in a first step, that the European citizens start again debating about the sense and purpose of the European project (Collignon, 2009, pp. 548-550). Such a debate has above all to take place in the local communities, since they are in most cases responsible for the implementation of EU policies. This assigns metropolitan regions, which account for 60% of the European population (METREX, 2014), a prominent role.

In any event, even though there is a broad range of different visions for Europe, they also share commonalities. Thus, despite the disagreement there still is an overall convergence towards increased cooperation among the Member States and the people of the Union (Gardini, 2014, pp. 161-162).

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[12] This clear distinction between *inclusive* and *exclusive* public goods is what distinguishes the republican approach from a federal system. The latter usually seeks to create a federal state that would provide *both* types of public goods. For a detailed description of possible EPGs see Collignon (2011). Further useful indications are given by Inge Kaul (2013) who has presented a definition of so-called *global public goods*, including *"global climate stability, international financial stability and the institutional architecture of international trade and finance"*, among other things.

2. Functions and Governance Structures of Metropolitan Regions in Europe

In Chapter 1.1 and 1.2, it could be seen that the consequences of the economic crisis became in particular apparent at the *local level*. This stems particularly from the increasing interdependence between the local level and the global economy. In this respect, the (financial) crisis presents a good example of what Martin (2011) describes as *'glocalisation'*. By this the author means that as a consequence of globalisation, local markets are increasingly being integrated into international markets. This makes them ever more dependent on the decisions by global (institutional) actors. However, at the same time local developments can have huge effects on the global economy, as in the case of the Lehman collapse. In what follows, we will see that a greater involvement of local actors will not only be necessary to address the economic and social components of the global crisis, but also to improve the representativeness in Brussels as well as to foster both the discussion about Europe's identity and the future design of the Union.

The following remarks will be primarily based on a definition presented by Knieling and Matern (2008, p. 3), who describe metropolitan regions as more or less loose networks of cooperating public and private stakeholders. A metropolitan region usually includes one or several urban cores as well as rural areas that are to a varying extent all interconnected. Moreover, metropolitan regions can generally be characterized by three main interrelated functions: (1) a decision and control function, (2) a gateway function and (3) an innovation and competition function. The former implies that important political institutions and major economic actors are located in the metropolitan region. The gateway function means that metropolitan regions hold a key position in the international transport and communication infrastructure. The third function refers to knowledge exchange and the ability to come up with innovative solutions. The latter involves products or processes as well as social and cultural aspects (Blotevogel & Danielzyk, 2009, pp. 25-27).

2.1 Local partnerships as an answer to rising socio-economic inequalities

As already mentioned above, the EU pursues a so-called cohesion policy with the objective to diminish regional disparities. This chapter looks at reasons why policies that are decided at EU or the national level are frequently inadequate and shows why this makes metropolitan regions an important field of action. The former has to do with that fact that policies are usually based on average values that do not capture the *location specific particularities*. Especially when it comes to providing public services such as welfare benefits, the local level plays a crucial role since it is closest to the citizen's needs and preferences. In order to ensure an *effective* delivery

of public services, several requirements seem to be of particular importance: (a) The involvement and coordination of key stakeholders; (b) a clear assignment of financial responsibilities, (c) equal access to respective services and (d) the existence of a national framework (Andreotti et al., 2012, pp. 1931-1933). Thus it is highly recommended to further shift the focus on the local sphere when it comes to addressing the different aspects of the crises. Such a shift should primarily include that local governance bodies are given more resources and competencies in order to effectively tackle current and future problems (OECD, 2014, pp. 26-27).

Considering the interdependencies of the different dimensions of the crisis, it seems necessary that (metropolitan) regions purse an *integrated approach*. This means that economic and social, but also environmental issues should be equally addressed. (OECD, 2014, pp. 26-27). *Metropolitan regions* provide excellent examples for such an integrated approach since they commonly intend to take into account all relevant *functional relationships* in a given territory (Figure 3). These include: (a) demographic linkages in terms of migration and commuting pattern (between rural and urban areas), (b) economic and innovation activities in form of local economic cycles and intraregional research projects as well as (c) the delivery of public services (such as education, health care and welfare provisions). Further functional relationships entail (d) the provision of pubic goods like access to clean water and air and (e) an appropriate governance structure that facilitates cooperation among key stakeholders (OECD, 2013, pp. 22-24).

Figure 3
Rural-urban partnerships within functional regions
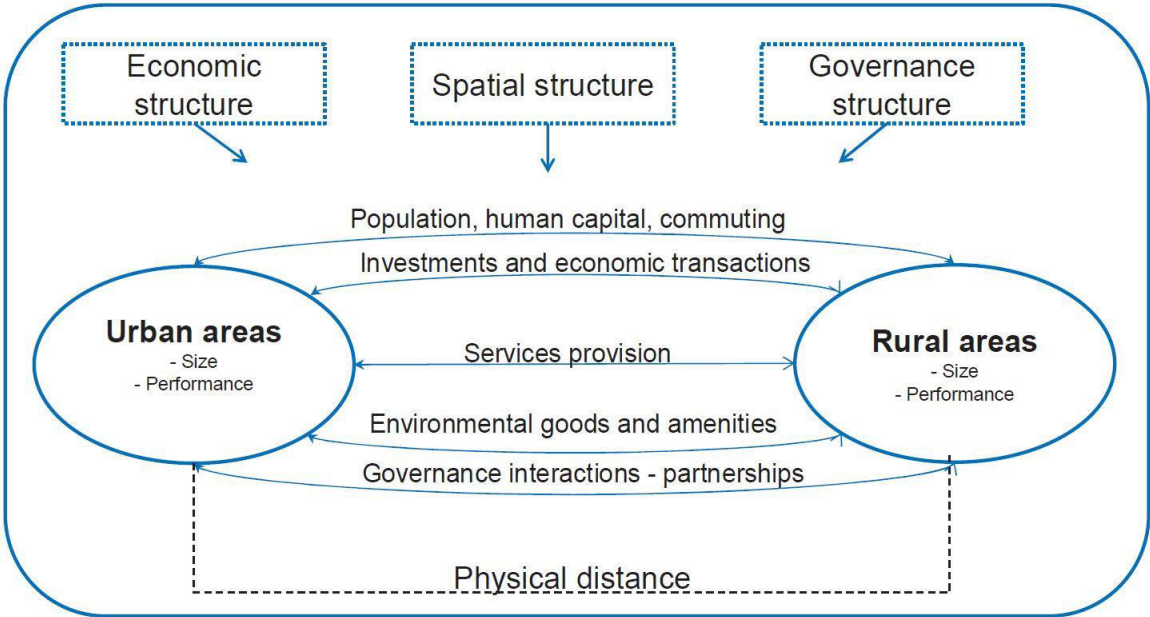
Source: OECD. (2013). Rural-Urban Partnerships, p. 23.

Considering the interconnectedness of these factors, local *rural-urban partnerships* constitute an appropriate framework to address the associated challenges. Making use of local natural and social resources, not only leads to more resilient (local) economies, but also is a crucial step towards more sustainable practices (Hudson, 2005). This is confirmed by a comprehensive report by the OECD (2013) that is based on an analysis of regional data and 11 case studies. Rural-urban partnerships are primarily designed to overcome negative implications of the fragmentation of land and responsibilities. These include *less* positive spill-over effects (e.g. knowledge transfer), a fragmented infrastructure that comes with higher transportation costs and a higher vulnerability of ecosystem, among other things. Examples of well-established partnerships are given by the Forlì-Cesena region (Italy), the Rennes Métropole (France), the BrabantStad partnership (Netherlands) as well as the EMN (Germany). They are characterized by a rather strong territorial identity and a more or less holistic approach meaning that the rationale behind the partnership is multidimensional. In the case of the Forlì-Cesena region, the Rennes Métropole and the EMN, the partnership is further facilitated by a more or less pronounced culture of cooperation that already existed before (OECD, 2013). Taken together, these approaches enable a more equitable access to social and economic opportunities. However, there does not exist a blueprint for how these issues should be approached. As Cassiers and Kesteloot (2012, p. 1919) remind us, socio-spatial inequalities cannot simply be described by the distinction between rich and poor, central and peripheral or rural and urban areas. Such a differentiation mostly does not adequately reflect the actual circumstances that people are experiencing, since the real picture is far more complex. This is why in the end cities and metropolitan regions need to individually identify how to best address respective challenges (Cucca & Ranci, 2015, pp. 31-35).

2.2   Cities and metropolitan regions as intermediaries between the electorate and EU representatives

Considering that the EU is increasingly no longer perceived as a problem solver and that a growing number of European citizens does not see their interests being represented at the EU level, it becomes crucial to restore the link between the European citizens and the people who are supposedly representing them (Majone, 2010, pp. 51-54). The chapter tries to assess the role of cities and metropolitan regions as intermediaries in the process of policy formulation and implementation. Moreover, it will be briefly shown that related initiatives are a sort of preliminary step to an EPS.

Restoring the link between the electorate and the representatives has, among other things, to do with *proximity* and *trust*. As could be seen in the previous chapter, proximity helps to effectively address location-specific requirements. The level of trust in authorities is a closely

related aspect that is crucial in order to ensure that citizens' needs and preferences are met in an efficient and effective manner. In this context, a government' trustworthiness means that it will act in accordance with citizens' preferences and underlying values, such as fairness. Citizens should thus be able to expect and anticipate government actions. Compared to other levels of government, local authorities have a clear advantage when it comes to building trust within their community, since they usually maintain close contact with the citizens (OECD, 2013). A survey on the topic showed that trust towards local and regional authorities (50%) is slightly higher than in EU authorities (47%) and significantly higher than in national governments or parliaments (34%) (CoR, 2009). During the course of the economic crisis, the level of trust in EU institutions, however, has fallen to 33% in 2012 (Raube et al., 2013, p. 18). Trust at the local level, on the other hand, is most often highest compared to other levels of government (OECD, 2013, p. 34).

In order to restore confidence, an open and transparent communication strategy becomes key. Given the growing Euroscepticism, the EU is in great need to better communicate how regions across Europe benefit from the EU memberships, especially with regard to the cohesion policy that account for about one third of the EU budget (European Union, 2014). A study on the communication activities at the local level showed that local and regional authorities (LRAs) already communicate information on EU funded projects and cooperation activities between different levels of government. This needs to be further enhanced in order to restore confidence in the EU institutions (Raube et al., 2013). Regarding this, it is likewise important that local authorities are early on included in the policy formulation so that EU provisions correspond to local contexts. There is a variety of institutions and initiatives through which cities and (metropolitan) regions voice their concerns, pass on their interests to EU institutions and aggregate their preferences. On the European level, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) provides a platform for 350 regional and locally elected representatives who are engaged in expressing local and regional perspectives. The CoR was created in 1994 with the core objective to bring the EU closer to the European citizens (CoR, 2016). METREX, a network of about 50 European metropolitan regions, primarily organizes knowledge exchange activities in order to enhance the effectiveness of strategic decisions at the metropolitan level. METREX advocates a stronger consideration of metropolitan regions within the EU and furthermore seeks to increase the political influence of metropolitan areas in European policy-making (METREX, 2010, pp. 2-8). EUROCITIES is a network that is especially designed for cities. The network brings together more than 130 of Europe's largest cities and above all stresses the importance of cities when it comes to effective EU policy making. EUROCITIES aims to achieve that the local level is not only consulted but actively engaged in the shaping of policies. In this context

it is argued that cities act as mediators between EU strategies and the local level, which improves the *representativeness* of EU institutions (EUROCITIES, 2015). In Germany, the eleven existing European Metropolitan Regions furthermore joined together in an initiative called Initiativkreis Europäische Metropolregionen in Deutschland (IKM). The IKM bundles interests and passes them on to national and European regional development authorities. The IKM is moreover actively involved in transnational opinion formation, in shaping the EU's cohesion policy as well as in concrete EU projects (IKM, 2016). METREX, EUROCITIES and IKM are also networked together.

Considering the clear intermediary function, the high degree of networking of these initiatives as well as the adoption of joint positions, it can be argued that they together constitute a sort of infant version of an EPS. In Chapter 1.3, it was stated that a public sphere aims to generate public opinions. Examples of a common understanding across Europe can, for instance, be found with respect to the ongoing discussion about the reception and integration of refugees. While national politicians mostly fail to agree on a common strategy, European cities do not only voice their concerns regarding the approach of the EU and the Member States, but also present concrete recommendations that would rapidly improve the situation. In the Integrating Cities Charter, EUROCITIES and the undersigned Mayors, respectively, acknowledge the diverse benefits, whether to the economy, the social or cultural life, that migrants bring to European cities. In the Charter, the Mayors plead for *"equal chance(s) of a life in safety and dignity"* for all residents (EUROCITIES, 2010). In a recent joint statement on asylum in cities, EUROCITIES (2015, p. 1) moreover criticizes the *"increased securitisation of European external borders"*, which has fatal consequences for refugees on the way to Europe, with many people losing their lives. Recommendations include the provision of sufficient funds by the EU, so that cities are able to receive and integrate refugees as quickly as possible. Furthermore, asylum seekers should be entitled to equal access to the labour market (EUROCITIES, 2016).

2.3   Metropolitan regions: Place for a reinterpretation of the EU's original intentions?

In the following, two related questions are going to be discussed: First, why Europe should reflect on the ideas on which the community was originally built. Second, why metropolitan regions are in particular well designed for a reinterpretation of the EU's original intention.

In Chapter 1.4, it was discussed that a discrepancy between the EU's internal image and external measures bears the risk of undermining the credibility of the Union. Hurrell (2007, pp. 249-252) already noted about a decade ago the gap between the EU's rhetoric, which emphasizes the great significance of human rights, and the migration and asylum policies at the time. Regarding the current refugee situation, many European cities are heavily engaged in an

intensive exchange of best practices regarding how to communicate and coordinate the challenge of organizing the living together of the people coming to Europe and the local communities (EUROCITIES, 2016). The EU, on the other hand, has recently mostly been bickering on the adoption and implementation of relocation quotas, which were agreed upon in late 2015. Only 481 of the 160,000 refugees who are to be relocated had been relocated by mid-February 2016 (Zeit Online, 2016). A look at the number of "formal pledges" – an indication on how quickly the relocation is to be carried out by the Member States – is likewise sobering. By mid-May 2016 the total number of formal pledges merely amounted to 5,736 which corresponds to about 3.6% of the total amount (European Commission, 2016, p. 3). In this context, Schimmelfennig (2015) stresses that it is not so much the EU that fails to come up with joint actions, but much rather the individual Member States that deny solidarity.

In a study by the Pew Research Center that was published in June 2016, the authors examined the major reasons behind the current dissatisfaction towards the EU. They found that two major reasons are how the EU responded to the *economic crisis* and how it is handling the ongoing the refugee situation. The survey includes 10 EU Member States that account for 80% of the EU-28 population. Only 51% of the respondents answered that they hold a favourable view of the Union (Pew Research Center, 2016, p. 2). However, it seems that the majority of the people does not want to give up the European project – they just want a *different* Europe, a Europe that is built on the values underlying the original intention (Fioramonti, 2012). Recalling the intention of those who decisively shaped the European integration, it was considered to be absolutely crucial to overcome the nation-state. For this reason, the aim of people like Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet was to organize a community beyond the nation-state. The idea was to create institutions that would connect the European people as well as to build a community of solidarity and responsibility.

Metropolitan regions often see themselves as communities of responsibility. They bring people together who are already in a (functional) relationship to each other and try to find ways to ensure equal living conditions for all residents. Thereby, metropolitan regions illustrate how a reinterpretation of these objectives can be found on the local level. While it is true that there can be many reasons to form a metropolitan region, and often it was the pressure of global competition that triggered new forms of cooperation, respective initiatives usually also entail social, political and cultural aspects that are considered to be just as important. Moreover, metropolitan regions rarely think in national borders. Quite the contrary, they act within *local communities* and build *transnational networks* that formulate their interests without (so much) considering national preferences (Harrison & Growe, 2014). There are further reasons why metropolitan regions are a good place for a reinterpretation of the EU's original intentions. Especially

to be emphasised is the fact that the trend towards a higher degree of autonomy of local communities has been evident for several decades now. In the course of European integration, national competencies have been gradually shifted to the European level. Along with this development, there was the urge to become more engaged in the political process at the local level. Seen from a culture-anthropological perspective, this tendency corresponds to the original fabric of Europe during the time before the *creation* of modern nation-states. It was the missing link between the European citizens, on the one hand, and the newly created supranational institutions, on the other hand, that triggered respective dynamics at the local level (Ammon, 1994, pp. 84, 91-95). As previously mentioned, a disconnected electorate and the lacking (political) proximity are also amongst the current challenges that Europe has to deal with. Considering the integrated approach and the political importance of cities and metropolitan regions, Harrison and Growe (2014, p. 22) believe that European Metropolitan Regions are indeed *"important sites for fostering new postnational identities, social cohesion and political mobilization"*.

An important prerequisite for such a transformation towards a higher autonomy of metropolitan regions seems to be a shift in power towards the local level. However, for the moment cities and metropolitan regions only have few possibilities to fulfil the role of locally embedded actors while at the same time being more actively involved in international affairs. Nevertheless, there are various examples that show that the change in power structures is emerging (Attwell, 2014).[13]

2.4   Institutional frameworks of metropolitan regions

The following chapter is divided into two subsections. First of all, there is the question how governance is understood within a metropolitan context. Secondly, a review of existing metropolitan governance structures will be given.

Urbanization still leads to a concentration of economic activities as well as social and environmental issues in cities and metropolitan regions. Considering the wide range of responsibilities that are increasingly located at the local level, good *metropolitan governance* becomes essential (Knieling & Matern, 2008, pp. 3-4). According to Blatter and Knieling (2009, pp. 234-237), (metropolitan) governance can, despite the multitude of different conceptual approaches, be characterized by three main features: (1) a set of rules, (2) a form of cooperation that enhances both legitimacy and effectivity, and (3) corresponding structures and methods that en-

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[13] Examples can be found in the Chicago-Mexico City Global Cities Economic Partnership that was launched in 2013, joint climate protection measures or the fact that cities increasingly join forces at the global level as in the case of the C40 networks and United Cities and Local Governments, the World Association of Major Metropolises etc. (Attwell, 2014; Peirce et al., 2013, pp. 40-45).

sure that all relevant issues are addressed in a coordinated manner. Cooperation at the metropolitan level usually involves all important stakeholders, including public, private and civil society actors. Steering mechanisms are often based on the interplay of competition and cooperation among stakeholders, whereby cooperation within a given metropolitan region usually prevails. The emergence of new forms of governance has primarily to do with the fact that existing administrative boundaries often do no longer correspond to the *functional relationships* among the different stakeholders. In order to effectively coordinate local answers to global challenges, it becomes necessary to set up formal or informal institutions (Andersson, 2015, pp. 13-16). Setting up formal institutions does, however, in most cases not imply the establishment of a new government level. On the contrary, metropolitan governance bodies usually distinguish themselves through *"governance without government"* (Rhodes, 1997). This means that they generally consist of self-regulating networks with clear strategic aims. These networks are normally based on a high degree of *voluntariness* and *openness*. This is mainly due to the fact that the functional relationships are subject to change, which might make it necessary to adapt the existing institutional framework. The specific form of the governance structure depends on the underlying functions the metropolitan region intends to assume.

While the specific governance framework is subject to political and social choices, it usually, more or less, corresponds with one of the following four approaches: (1) *Informal/soft coordination* where cooperation between a number of cities tends to be limited to the sharing of information and advice. (2) *Inter-municipal authorities* are formed if local authorities decide to cooperate in one or more specific areas in terms of sharing associated costs and responsibilities. (3) In the case of *supra-municipal authorities*, a new government level gets established. The metropolitan government is either directly elected or consists of higher level government representatives. (4) Yet another option is to transfer competences from higher or lower political levels to *"metropolitan cities"* that due to their (population) size go beyond common administrative boundaries (OECD, 2014, pp. 80-81).

In regions that have a clear focus on *rural-urban partnerships*, governance structures are modified accordingly. In the above mentioned OECD study on rural-urban partnerships (Chapter 2.1), the authors differentiate between four different frameworks, whereby two, (a) and (b), are more or less equivalent to the first two just mentioned governance approaches. (a) *Explicit rural-urban partnerships without delegated functions* imply a rather informal and loose form of cooperation. In a first step it is often necessary to build trust and establish (work) relationships that have not existed before. Considering the explicit intention to cooperate, there are several advantages, including the possibility to pursue a holistic approach, a joint appearance as well as good participation opportunities for private and civic actors. Both the EMN and the

BrabantStad partnership provide an example for such an institutional framework. (b) *Explicit partnerships with delegated functions* are more institutionalized, which usually means less autonomy for individual municipalities, since both responsibilities and competencies are shared among the involved parties. However, a higher degree of formalization often comes with the benefit of better access to (financial) resources. The Rennes Métropole presents an example of such a case. (c) *Implicit partnerships without delegated functions*, on the other hand, represent the simplest way to be involved in some sort of partnership. Since none of the local actors has the intention to establish a platform for cooperation (despite the existence of functional relationships), such partnerships have fewer resources, are less coordinated and do not adopt a strategic approach as in the former two cases. In the case of (c), (location) competition predominates over cooperative aspects. Examples can be found in the region Beira Interior Sul (Portugal) and Prague-Central Bohemia (Czech Republic). (d) *Implicit partnerships with delegated functions* distinguish themselves through either informal or formal structures, a rather bottom-up approach and initiatives that are more or less coordinated. Examples are the regions Extremadura (Spain) and Forlì-Cesena (Italy), whereby the latter is due to its well-established culture of cooperation better able to address intra-regional (socio-economic) disparities (OECD, 2013). Independently from the final shape, the *political leaders* who are involved in the creation of a metropolitan region and corresponding governance bodies play an important role. In cases where they act as intermediaries between the different stakeholders and are able to build consensus, cooperation and the creation of adequate governance structures is considerably facilitated (Heinelt & Zimmermann, 2011, pp. 1187-88).

2.5 Multi-level governance as a key instrument to manage diverse stakeholder interests

The chapter is structured as followed: First, it explores the question of the variety of governance models. The second part is concerned with the characteristics of multi-level governance, which has been identified as a key instrument to manage the diverse stakeholder interests.

The diversity of different governance concepts has above all to do with two contrary positions within academia: On the one hand, there are proponents of *polycentric* governance structures and, on the other hand, there are those who advocate a *centrist* approach. The former argue that informal cooperation between local governments and other stakeholders is both an effective and legitimate way to provide public goods and improve the living conditions across the region. One important reason behind this assumption is that lower levels of government better represent the interests of the citizens and are closer to the real problems. Proponents of a centrist approach, however, point out that social and economic relationships often go beyond (historical) administrative boundaries. It is assumed that fragmentation is likely to lead to an

increase in socio-economic inequalities. Hence, it is argued that local government bodies should rather consolidate in order to better reflect the actual circumstances. Up to today it is still not clear which approach seems to be more suitable for the governance of metropolitan regions (Ahrend et al., 2014, pp. 3-6). In the majority of the cases, metropolitan regions are organized through informal channels and a relatively loose governance structure. Nevertheless, it is not possible to clearly determine whether these are forms of a polycentric or centrist approach. This is due to the fact that it is possible to interpret metropolitan governance bodies as the beginning of a (further) consolidation. Then again, metropolitan governance can also be understood as the result of a more or less spontaneously emerged form of informal cooperation between public and private stakeholders that decided to jointly address relevant issues within their community (Ahrend et al., 2014, pp. 20-21).[14] Knieling and Matern (2008, p. 8) additionally point to the historically related differences in culture, spatial planning, the governmental system, etc. and stress the significance that these factors have on local governance decisions.

Despite the great variety of different governance models, there is a broad agreement that *multi-level governance* is essential for effective cooperation in metropolitan regions. Due to the variety of stakeholders (including higher and lower level governments) and the multiplicity of interests, it becomes crucial that relevant issues are handled in a coordinated manner. In doing so, metropolitan regions play an important role as intermediaries between the different parties. On the one hand, they have to deal with private and civic actors as well as authorities at the county and municipal level and, on the other hand, they are in contact with the state and federal (national) governments as well as with EU and other international institutions. For a federal state system the interplay between the different levels is illustrated in Figure 4.[15]

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[14] For brief overview of representatives of both positions see Ahrend et al. (2014, p. 5).
[15] Translated by the author.

Figure 4
Multi-level governance in metropolitan regions
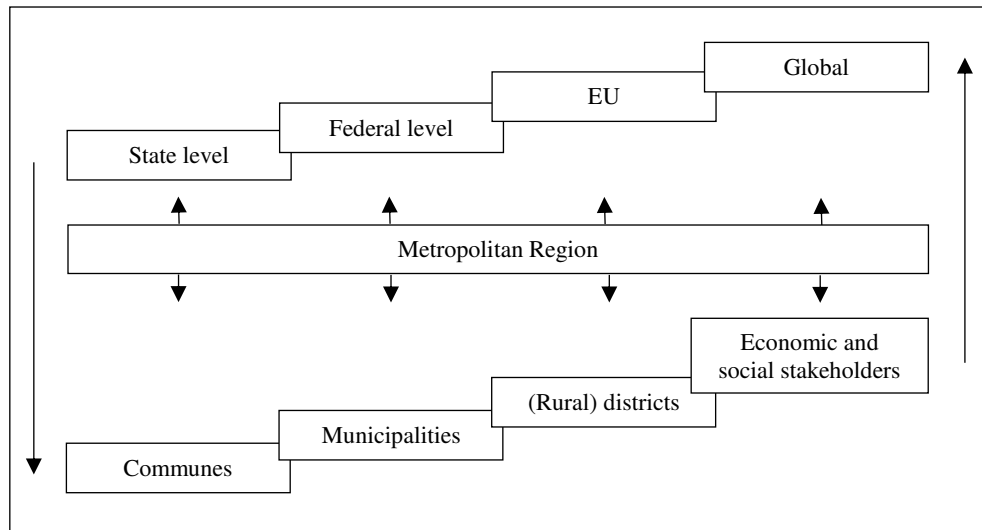
A coordinated interplay of *horizontal* and *vertical* governance mechanisms is intended to prevent that local governance methods stand in opposition to measures that are taken at other levels. Depending on the situation a *bottom-up* or *top-down* approach might be more adequate or a combination of both. At the same time, it needs be determined whether there exists an overlap or competition between different (governance) structures. This also helps to decide which issues are best addressed at existing government levels and where it would make sense to assign certain functions to metropolitan governance bodies. Furthermore, multi-level governance aims at ensuring that: (a) cooperative behaviour prevails over competition aspects, (b) economies of scale are reaped (e.g. in the provision of public goods), (c) primary objectives are being met (e.g. macroeconomic targets or environmental goals). Furthermore, (d) transactions costs that stem from the complex interdependencies between the various stakeholders are to be kept to the minimum possible (Charbit & Michalun, 2009, pp. 14-15).

As initially mentioned, there are several challenges that come with the multi-level governance framework: a) The *information gap* means that local authorities tend to have an information advantage when it comes to assessing the people's needs, preferences as well as the issues that the area faces. In contrast to EU officials and national governments, they usually also have better knowledge of the costs associated with the implementation of (local) policies and the provision of public services. b) The *capacity gap* implies that especially newly created governance bodies often lack the financial resources, the infrastructure and skilled labour that are needed to effectively accomplish the entrusted tasks. c) The *fiscal gap* describes the difference between the revenue and expenditure of the respective governance level, while the d) *policy gap* entails that policies taken at different levels stand in opposition to one another. The e)

administrative gap probably becomes most evident within metropolitan region, where municipal governments and respective administrative boundaries often do no longer match the socio-economic relationships of the area (Charbit & Michalun, 2009, pp. 20-23).

3. The European Metropolitan Region of Nuremberg: Its strategic relevance and governance structure

The EMN is one out of eleven *European Metropolitan Regions* (ERMs) in Germany and was founded in 2005. It encompasses 21,800 m², has about 3.5 million inhabitants and generates a GDP of around 118 billion euros (EMN, 2016). The metropolitan region consists of 23 administrative districts and 11 self-administrating cities (Figure 5). While for the core cities the yearly financial contribution amounts to 15 cents, the so-called "metropolitan net" pays 10 cents per citizen (EMN, 2014). There are several reasons why the EMN is particular well-suited as a case study. According to the above-mentioned OECD study on rural-urban partnerships (OECD, 2013, pp. 217-233), the EMN convinces with its holistic approach and clear strategic goals (functions) as well as with its governance structure. The partnership provides a good balance between legitimacy and efficiency and is aligned to the socio-economic structure of the area. Furthermore, it is based on a historically developed culture of cooperation and since its beginning organized as a *polycentric rural-urban partnership*.

Figure 5
Map of the European Metropolitan Region of Nuremberg
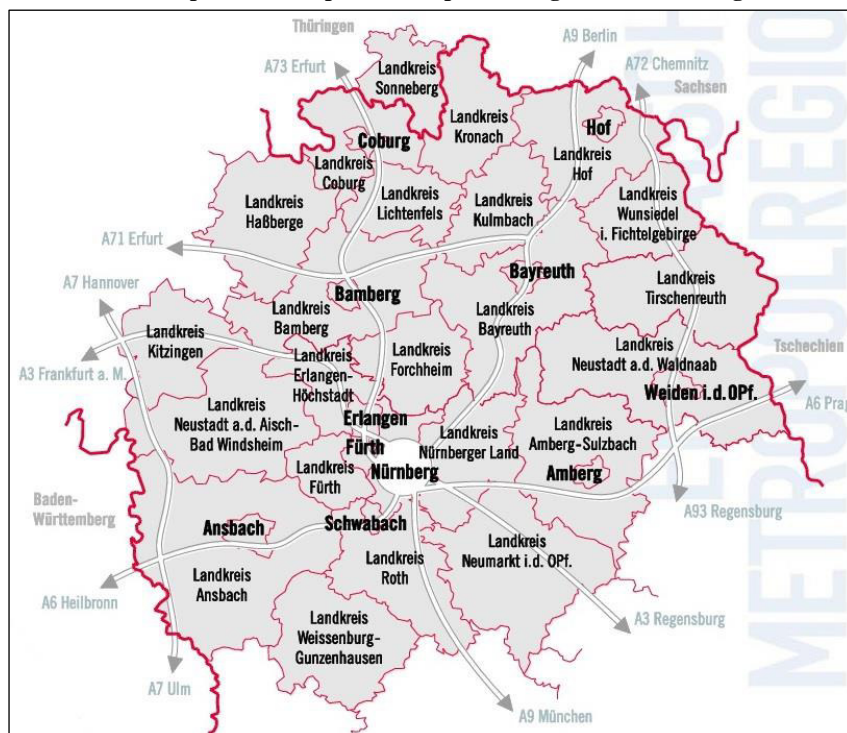
Source: EMN. (2016). Daten und Fakten.

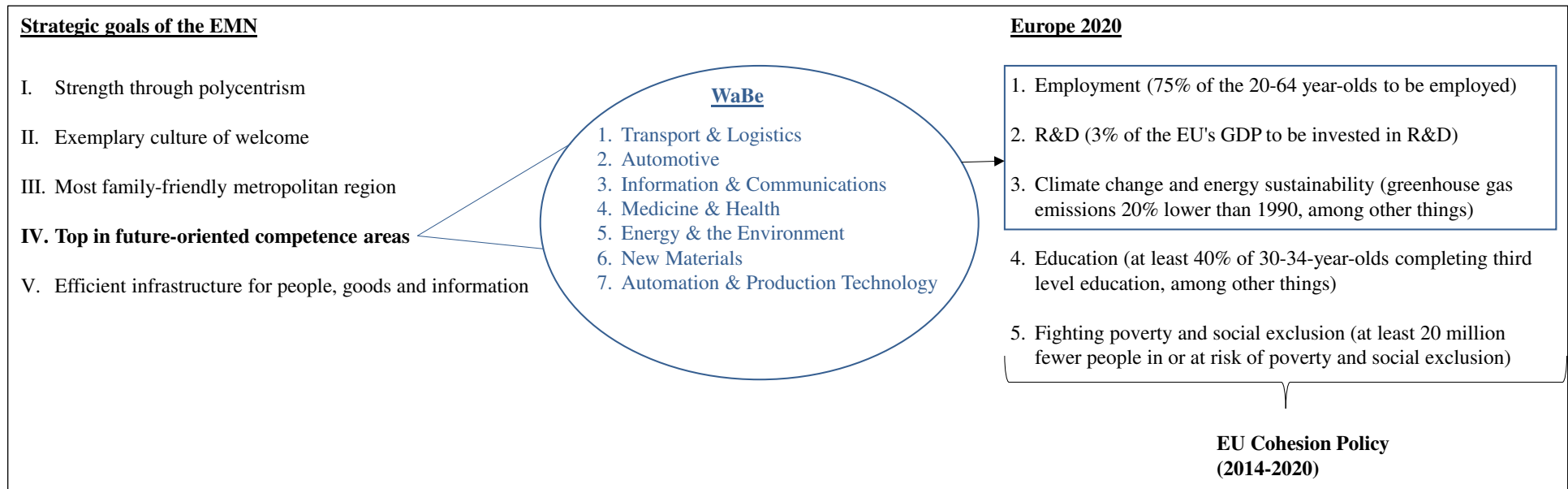## 3.1 Social and economic development within and beyond local boundaries

In the following, two aspects will be examined: First, the foundation of the region's social and economic goals and its long-term strategy. Second, whether the EMN is internally (within the

region) an important point of reference for the citizens. This would imply that the EMN addresses issues that were previously primarily taken up by the individual cities or the state of Bavaria.

Ulrich Maly, since 2002 Lord Mayor of Nuremberg and first Political Chairman of the EMN (2005-2011), explains that the social and economic development is based on rural-urban partnerships and corresponds to existing functional relationships that go beyond administrative boundaries (e.g. the city of Nuremberg). Hence, it applies that *"form follows functions"*, which implies that the *"external borders"* of the EMN are flexible. This means that changed conditions or new functional relationships might lead to members leaving or new members entering the partnership. Due to its polycentric structure, the EMN is moreover able to ensure that l*ocation specific* problems identified and addressed at an early stage (interview with Ulrich Maly, 2016). A possible disadvantage is that functional and consequently varying borders might affect the stability and continuity of the alliance. For this reason, both a *vision* and a *strategic focus* are crucial in order to give a clear orientation and to avoid overlapping and contrary structures and initiatives (OECD, 2006, p. 134). The EMN' vision is to be *"A Home for Creative Minds"*. The underlying objective is to become *"the preferred home region for talented and dedicated people from all over the world"* (Standecker, 2014, p. 21). In order to make this vision reality, the EMN pursues several strategic goals that include: 1) Strength through polycentrism, (2) Exemplary culture of welcome, (3) Most family-friendly metropolitan region, (4) Top in future-oriented competence areas and (5) Efficient infrastructure for people, goods and information (EMN, 2015, p. 13). The fourth goal entails the *Mission Statement Sustainable Growth and Employment* (WaBe), which aims at promoting the region's fields of competence and hence increasing its international competitiveness. [16] Agreed targets correspond to the continuing megatrends (such as globalization, demographic change and scarcity of natural resources) (EMN, 2010, pp. 149-150). At the same time they are in accordance with several Europe 2020 objectives that encompass the fields of employment, research and development, climate change, education as well as poverty and social exclusion (European Commission, 2016). Considering that the EU cohesion policies are currently aligned to these objectives (European Commission, 2014, p. 2), the EMN thus makes an important contribution to their implementation on the local level (Figure 6).

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[16] Transport & logistics; automotive; information & communications; medicine & health; energy & the environment; new materials; automation & production technology.

Figure 6
The Strategic goals of the EMN in the context of the EU cohesion policy (2014-2020)

Strategic goals of the EMN

I.   Strength through polycentrism

II. Exemplary culture of welcome

III. Most family-friendly metropolitan region

IV. Top in future-oriented competence areas

V.   Efficient infrastructure for people, goods and information

WaBe

1. Transport & Logistics
2. Automotive
3. Information & Communications
4. Medicine & Health
5. Energy & the Environment
6. New Materials
7. Automation & Production Technology

Europe 2020

1. Employment (75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed)

2. R&D (3% of the EU's GDP to be invested in R&D)

3. Climate change and energy sustainability (greenhouse gas emissions 20% lower than 1990, among other things)

4. Education (at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education, among other things)

5. Fighting poverty and social exclusion (at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion)

EU Cohesion Policy
(2014-2020)

Source: Own illustration.

Examples that indicate that the EMN has become an important institution of reference for the citizens can be found in activities that were previously the responsibility of the county administration, as in the case of the *Alliance for Professionals.* The alliance is based on a co-operation between the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) Nuremberg and the Regional Directorate of the Federal Employment Agency. The objectives, among others, include meeting the need for skilled workers, the better inclusion of people with special needs and a quick integration of refugees into the labour market (IHK Nürnberg, 2016). The success of these kind of initiatives can be seen in various examples. Regarding the labour market situation, the number of unemployed fell by 4.6 percent in the EMN, whereas the decline in the whole federal state of Bavaria was only 3.1 percent in 2015 (Kugler & Litz, 2016). The Future Atlas Regions (2016) by the Prognos AG provides further evidence for the success of the cooperation. The study is based on 29 socio-economic indicators and ranks all 402 districts and district-free cities of Germany according to their future opportunities. The cities were classified into eight groups, from 1 (best chances) to 8 (very high risks). The city of Erlangen ranks 6th in the overall ranking and 13 of the 34 districts and district-free cities of the EMN are in the first three groups (Prognos AG, 2016).

An indication for the *external recognition* of the EMN is that the OECD with respect to the study on rural-urban partnerships specifically decided to look at metropolitan regions instead of merely analysing typical administrative boundaries (e.g. federal states or counties). Similar applies for global actors from the private sector such as Siemens. The company has numerous locations around the world, including several sites in the EMN. Despite the global presence, Siemens highlights that it is the EMN where the company's "heart" beats and where it has its roots (Siemens, 2016). These cases indicate that external actors recognize the EMN as an increasingly important actor within the region as compared to the city or state government.

3.2   Projects and their relation to the challenges that Europe is facing

The first section showed that independently from the narrative on the causes of the crisis, many European regions were not or only insufficiently prepared for the economic and social consequences. The aim of this chapter is to determine whether the EMN pursues projects that correspond directly to the challenges that Europe is facing.

The initiative *'Original Regional'* was launched in 1997 and aims at promoting local economic cycles. The umbrella brand consist of 27 regional initiatives and about 1.500 partners (Marketingverein Metropolregion Nürnberg, 2016). Participating producers can use the brand to market their products and services as something originally from the region, provided they

comply with a variety of quality criteria. The focus lies on agricultural products by local farmers. For the economy this means that the purchasing power stays within the region, whereby jobs can be preserved and newly created. This makes the region less dependent on decisions by global actors and more *resilient* to (external) shocks. Furthermore, producers can quickly adapt themselves to changing consumer needs and municipalities enjoy a higher tax base (EMN, 2010, p. 30). The latter makes the districts and district-free cities of the EMN better able to cope with economic shocks. Apart from the economic aspects, *Original Regional* brings additional benefits. The initiative was also specifically intended preserve the unique *cultural landscape* and to foster a metropolitan *identity* (BBSR, 2016). According to Ammon (1994, pp. 92-93), this sort of *cultural awareness* is essential for any economic development. Already during the eighties and nineties, it could occasionally be observed that local economies can help people to overcome their feeling of disconnectedness, whether in political, economic or social terms. Similar trends can be found around the world, which shows that the underlying idea has not lost in importance, but is rather experiencing an upswing.

The project *'Zukunftscoaches'* was launched in December 2012 (EMN, 2013, pp. 7-8). It addresses labour market issues with a focus on the consequences of demographic change. The network organizes workshops, conferences, a broad range of qualification measures as well as the exchange of experiences and best practices between different public institutions (for instance with the *Alliance for Professionals*) and private actors. Target groups are young people, employers and employees, (long-term) unemployed and migrants, among others. The network can rely on the expertise and experiences of the local IHKs and Chambers of Crafts (HWKs), the Institute for Employment Research (IAB), the Regional Directorate of the Federal Employment Agency as well as a variety of thematically similar projects and initiatives. Individual projects are largely organized in a decentralized manner in order to capture the location specific issues and challenges. In 16 different locations across the EMN, so-called *Zukunftscoaches* develop activities that are particular designed to meet the needs of local stakeholders. At the same time, two central Zukunftscoaches in the office of the EMN have been organizing the exchange of experiences and reviewed to what extent it was possible to expand successful activities to the whole metropolitan region (EMN, 2014, pp. 2-7).[17]

Patricia Schläger-Zirlik, a long-time Project Manager at the Office of the EMN, points out that both projects, *Original Regional* and *Zukunftscoaches*, are examples which demonstrate that the EMN is not only about "win-win" situations, but rather about projects that are based on a 'solidarity' model. This means that projects are oftentimes financed by all members together

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[17] The two central Zukunftscoaches were not continued beyond the funding period (12/2012-06/2015). The tasks are now partly taken over by the Transferagentur kommunales Bildungsmanagement. For further information see http://www.transferagentur-bayern.de/.

even though some are likely to benefit more than others. In the case of *Original Regional*, it is above all the agricultural producers in rural areas that (economically) benefit from the initiative. In the case of *Zukunftscoaches*, it is especially the 16 locations that have their own *Zukunftscoach* that gain from the project. How come that solidarity seems to be particularly evident in the EMN? First, it is essential to make the objectives and the added value for the region tangible and clearly communicate the benefits to the citizens. Likewise, it useful to address issues that more or less affect everyone, albeit to a lesser extent or at a later time. Early on, members learned that what matters for a well-functioning cooperation is to look beyond the normal administrative boundaries. In this context, it has helped that the partnership at the beginning focused on projects with a broad consensus right from the start. This helped the members to learn how to cooperate together and to build trust (interview with Patricia Schläger-Zirlik, 2016).

3.3 The Europeanisation of local institutions: Between active and passive involvement

Turning to the political dimension, it was shown that representative democracy in the EU is increasingly characterized by a *disconnected constituency.* Considering that the integration process has become ever more complex, obscure and distant from the citizens, two things become crucial: First, to make EU institutions more tangible and to clearly communicate the advantages from EU membership. Second, to increasingly pass on local needs and preferences to the European level. Accordingly, the chapter deals with the question to what extent the 'Europeanisation' of local institutions addresses these issues and to what extent this process can be observed in the EMN.

Europeanisation can be described as a process that captures the *"institutional adaption and change"* (Zonneveld et al, 2012, p. 143) that results from European integration and EU policies, respectively. Corresponding institutional changes affect all levels of the EU's multi-level governance system. Changes can be attributed to both *exogenous* and *endogenous* factors. The former refers, for instance, to the dependence of external resources. Consequently, national and sub-national planning and policy structures might have to adjust to EU requirements in order to become eligible for funding. The latter means that local and other domestic levels define for themselves and advice EU institutions on how corresponding changes are to be implemented within a given (socio-economic, political, cultural or spatial) context. This interplay of top-down and bottom-up processes is also reflected in the EU cohesion policy. Since the objective of a more equitable development across Europe is rather abstract, it is important to adequately communicate and break down overall targets to the regional and local level, where about 70% of EU legislation is implemented (EUROCITIES, 2015).

In the EMN, the *Office of European Issues Nuremberg* has the function to make European decisions transparent and comprehensible. The range of responsibilities include: a) the evaluation and disclosure of information regarding EU policies, b) the European-wide municipal exchange of experiences, c) voicing local interests and needs to the EU level and d) the provision and exchange of information regarding EU funding programmes (Wirtschaftsreferent der Stadt Nürnberg, 2014). With respect to the latter, the project *Zukunftscoaches*, since it is partly financed by the European Social Fund, presents a good example where abstract European values and corresponding objectives are turned into something tangible – the inclusion of marginalised groups into the local labour market. Barbara Sterl, Head of the Office of European Issues, notes that regarding the mediation of local interests, there is a variety of relevant issues regarding both the EU cohesion policy and European politics in general. With regard to the former, cities are working to see that EU programmes are designed to meet local needs. For the EMN and especially Nuremberg, the revitalization of (industrial) wasteland, the qualification of long-term unemployed and the energy-efficient refurbishment of existing builds, to name but a few, is of great interest. With respect to European policy, the prime objective is to co-design (legal) guidelines, for example air quality guidelines, so that specific goals can actually be accomplished. A common problem is that local authorities simply do not have the instruments to reach the targets that are formulated in Brussels. This is why it becomes crucial that experiences at the local level are at an early stage introduced into the policy formulation process at EU level. In order to restore faith in its problem-solving capacities, the EU is thus well-advised to listen to the local level (interview with Barbara Sterl, 2016). Therefore, the above-stated issue of complexity of the European integration is approached by acknowledging the differences across Europe and promoting spatially dependent solutions, while at the same time providing a European framework that gives direction. The mediation of local interest often takes place in close cooperation with networks of cities or metropolitan regions, especially with EUROCITIES and METREX. According to Zonneveld et al. (2012, p. 141), the Europeanisation of local institutions also indicates that in the future *"regions may play a role in constituting a transnational polity"*, in which the constituencies are not only better *represented* at the European level, but also better *connected* among themselves.

3.4   Key institutions and corresponding functions

This chapter sets out to describe and analyse the governance structure of the EMN. First, an overview over key institutions and their functions will be given. At the same time, several issues regarding the legitimacy and effectiveness of the governance structure will be investigated. The core idea is to evaluate if and why the EMN is particular well-managed.
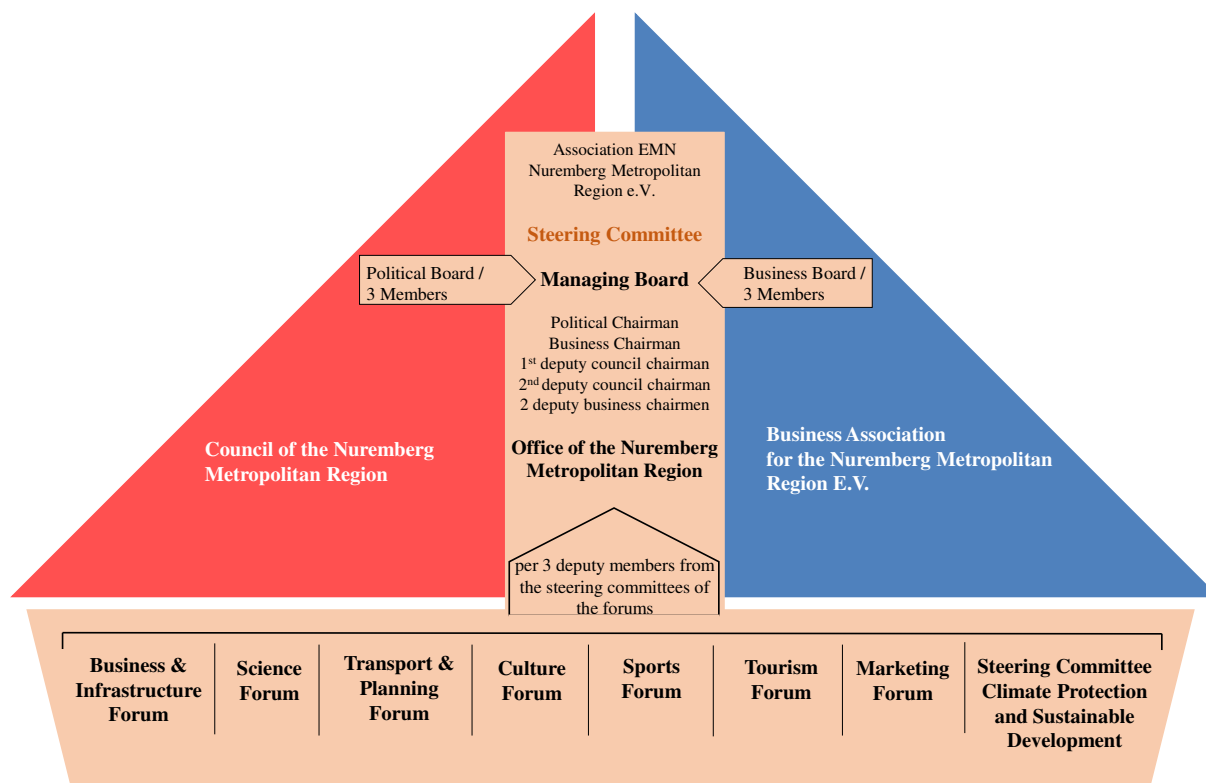
The EMN emerged as a *sui generis* association, meaning that it emerged by itself, prompted by a joint commitment from local politicians. At the beginning they saw themselves, however, confronted with several reservations, involving the political enforceability, a possible dominance of the (big) cities and the supposed contradiction between the term metropolitan regions and rural areas (Standecker, 2007, pp. 49-51). The former primarily refers to the initial resistance of the Bavarian *Regierungsbezirke* (administrative districts) and the state of Bavaria as there was the perception that Bavaria defines itself by the Munich Metropolitan Region. The latter means that especially smaller cities and rural areas suspected that the city of Nuremberg intended to expand its sphere of influence in the region and that it were going to be primarily urban areas that would benefit from the cooperation. The interviews repeatedly revealed that due to very good *personal relationships* that either already existed or emerged during the exploratory discussions and first common projects, it was possible to overcome these initial reservations very quickly. According to Gerd Geismann, former Deputy Chairman of the EMN, there was another important point that clearly facilitated the foundation of the EMN – the historical *sense of belonging* of the people and a corresponding *culture of cooperation* (interview with Gerd Geismann, 2016). The relations between Sulzbach (that belong to the EMN) and Nuremberg, for instance, date back to the 16th century (Mayerhofer, 2000, pp. 127-128).

In order to evaluate the resulting governance structure of the EMN, several issues are of relevance: a) the openness towards relevant stakeholders, b) the room for public-public and public-private partnerships and c) whether the metropolitan region provides an effective institutional infrastructure to address the local challenges (Knieling, 2014, pp. 36-37). In the case of the EMN, the *Council of the Metropolitan Region* is the most important decision-making body. The citizens are represented by 57 mayors and district administrators who sit in the Council. The council is responsible for the internal will-formation and has the budgetary power. A three-member *Political Board* represents the EMN both internally and externally (EMN, 2014). The *Business Association for Nuremberg Metropolitan Region* was founded in 2012 in order to better integrate the private sector. The association has likewise a three-member *Business Board* and consists of about 150 companies, universities, research institutes as well as the local IHKs and HWKs. The financial contributions more or less equal those of the 34 member cities and districts. Siegfried Balleis, who succeeded Ulrich Maly as Political Chairman, explains that the companies were primarily hoping that the more attractive the region, the easier it will be to hold and attract qualified staff. The EMN, on the other hand, could strengthen its financial basis. A resulting shift towards private interests cannot be observed. Respective changes in the governance structure went very smoothly, since the involved parties already knew each other (interview with Siegfried Balleis, 2016). A slightly different picture is presented by Günther Denzler,

former Deputy Chairman of Ulrich Maly, according to whom formalities (e.g. regarding the new governance structure) suddenly became more important than contents – at least in the early stages (interview with Günther Denzler, 2016). While projects are jointly discussed, the final decision regarding which projects are funded and to which amount stays with the Council – it applies the *primacy of politics*. Projects are initially discussed in the seven *Expert Forums*[18], where about 400 experts develop, in a consensual approach, project ideas for the metropolitan region. This contributes decisively to an effective implementation of projects (OECD, 2013, p. 226), increases participation opportunities and gives the EMN a *grass-roots character*. Andreas Starke, the current Deputy Chairman of the Council, highlights that due to well-established *personal relationships* and a high level of *trust*, the EMN was able to create an environment in which the idea of cooperation prevails over the idea of competition. In his view, partnerships start in people's minds, meaning that the personal commitment to cooperation has to be evident – independently from party affiliations and governance structures. In the *Steering Committee*, topics and concrete project ideas that were developed in the expert forums are jointly discussed and then presented to the Council where they are put to the vote. The Committee consists of three representatives from the Council and the Business Association, who together make up the *Management Board*, and three to four representatives of each of the Expert Forums. Since projects are developed bottom-up and then finally discussed in a relatively small group, the EMN has managed to provide a high degree of legitimacy without sacrificing effectiveness (interview with Andreas Starke, 2016). Last but not least, the *Office of the EMN* coordinates the different projects, the exchange of information and serves as a mediator between the different stakeholders and government levels. Thereby it is ensured that there does not exist and overlap or competition between different (governance) structures and that activities do not stand in opposition with measures taken at other levels. The governance structure of the EMN corresponds to the framework of "*Explicit rural-urban partnerships without delegated functions*" (see Chapter 2.4). The model is summarized in Figure 7.

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[18] Business and infrastructure, Science, Transport and planning, Culture, Sport, Tourism, Marketing. An additional steering group deals with topics related to climate protection and sustainable development.

Figure 7
Governance structure of the European Metropolitan Region Nuremberg

Association EMN Nuremberg Metropolitan Region e.V.

Steering Committee

Political Board / 3 Members

Managing Board

Business Board / 3 Members

Political Chairman
Business Chairman
1st deputy council chairman
2nd deputy council chairman
2 deputy business chairmen

Council of the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region

Office of the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region

Business Association for the Nuremberg Metropolitan Region E.V.

per 3 deputy members from the steering committees of the forums

| Business & Infrastructure Forum | Science Forum | Transport & Planning Forum | Culture Forum | Sports Forum | Tourism Forum | Marketing Forum | Steering Committee Climate Protection and Sustainable Development |

Source: Own illustration. Adapted from EMN. (2015). One Out of Eleven, p. 16.

3.5   Guiding premises and their accordance with EU objectives

Despite the diversity of the districts and cities of the EMN in terms of their location (urban, suburban, rural) and size, there is a broad agreement regarding the guiding premises of the partnership. The aim of this chapter is to assess as to how they contribute to an effective functioning of the partnership and if they are accordance with EU objectives.

The interviews showed that the premises that were specified in the Charta of the EMN (2005) are still widely supported and considered essential for a well-functioning cooperation. Characterizing for the EMN is firstly the *voluntary commitment*. Ulrich Maly believes that the fact that the partnership was initiated on the local level and *not* the result of a top-down decision, led to a whole different culture of cooperation. A possible fluctuation (when members enter or leave the EMN) that stems from the voluntary nature is considered to be part of the political process. Both stability and continuity are largely ensured by the perceived benefits of the partnership that are reflected in the immense information flows and corresponding knowledge gain in the public administration that emerged from the cooperation. However, the majors and district administrators have always convince their city or county council anew that the membership in the EMN is a mutually beneficial relationship – good and strong arguments are of decisive importance. Andreas Starke stated that especially newly elected representatives have first to

discover the advantages that the partnership brings to both their electoral district and the metropolitan region. In this context, Siegfried Balleis pointed out that those who (perceive that they) do not equally benefit from the cooperation, have to be proactively involved. This means that those at the centre of the EMN have a sort of commitment to ensure that benefits are fairly spread to make the cooperation work. Here the principle *"strengthening strength"* applies, according to which members are asked to contribute their respective competencies. For peripheral rural areas this could be the production of high-quality food, while the predominantly urban areas might have more experience in the marketing of products and services (as in the case of the project *Original Regional*). Another important aspect is the principle of *subsidiarity*. The principle provides that the EMN does not deal with tasks that are already (lawfully) assigned to another institution. This means that the EMN can especially address those issues that so far have not been assigned to anybody else, which applies in particular to future challenges. The principle *Openness and dynamism* ensures that the EMN is able to adapt to a (constantly) changing environment. It also reflects the EMN's self-image of a *"net with strong knots",* which describes the strong *polycentric structure*. Furthermore, the EMN pursues a *consensual approach*. This begins in the Expert Forums and goes all the way up to the Steering Committee and Council. For Andreas Starke, this is essential to overcome political boundaries. Ulrich Maly likewise stresses that in the case of majority voting, the partnership would likely lose the full commitment of those who would not see their interests represented. The *democratic core* constitutes another key principle of the EMN that is embodied in final decision-making power of the Council. Last but not least, the premise of *equal terms* provides that all member cities and districts have an equal say in decisions – it applies *"one voice, one vote"*. This has contributed immensely to the elimination of prejudices and reservations. For Günther Denzler, an important related advantage lies in the fact that this has allowed the region to overcome 'local egoisms' and to create a sense of belonging (identity).

With the strategic goals (especially the WaBe model) and the underlying premises in mind, it becomes clear that the EMN's focus on intra-regional cooperation that aims at promoting equal living conditions (EMN, 2007), is in accordance with EU objectives – in particular with regard to the EU cohesion policy.

3.6   The EMN: A possible role model for higher or lower political levels?

As shown in the preceding chapters, the EMN provides a particular good example for a case study. Based on these findings, the central question of this chapter is to what extent it might be possible to consider the governance structure of the EMN and derive (policy) recommendations for the EU level or lower political levels, with a strong focus on the former. Regarding this several approaches will be contrasted with each other.

Recalling, for instance, the *Five President's Report*, the EU aims at further deepening the economic and monetary union, while at the time taking further steps towards a political union. The predominantly economic orientation does not come as a surprise, since from its beginning European integration has above all been about *"capitalism and trade"* (Gardini, 2014, p. 164). Of course Europe has always been more than just a huge economic bloc. Nevertheless, the recent crisis shows that economic and national interests are still overwhelmingly predominant. For the EMN, increasing its global competitiveness is also a central concern. However, in contrast to the EU, it has been able to create an environment in which cooperation prevails over competition. So what could the EU learn from local government arrangements as in the case of the EMN? The political actors and other stakeholder in the EMN have realised that the economic and social situation do not permit that one gets lost in (party) political conflicts. With this in mind, they have been able to successfully overcome local egoisms and moved beyond parochialism. On the other hand, the EU, due to its distance to the citizens, often lacks the ability to develop effective and practical solutions that meet local needs. As can be seen with regard to how the financial crisis has been handled and currently the refugee situation, proposed solutions are regularly overshadowed by national interests. Thus, so-called solutions come often too late and are too short-sighted (Parsons & Matthijs, 2015, pp. 16-18). In this context, it is also the narrow definition of competencies and the enormous complexity of EU institutions and regulations that make it very difficult to come up with comprehensive solutions. Instead, and in particular against the background of the euro's sovereign debt crisis, the political leaders in Brussels *"have become obsessed with rules, numbers, and pacts"* (Schmidt, 2015, p. 2). The EMN, on the other hand, manages to address issues such as climate and demographic change in an effective manner, without intervening and imposing obligations upon its members. This certainly does not mean that this sort of arrangement would also work at the European level. As indicated in the last part of Chapter 1.5, European (global) problems require European (global) solutions that most likely would not be viable without binding regulations. This being said, the EU might need to rethink where it intervenes and where responsibility should rest with local actors. Enhanced local autonomy might be necessary in order to increase support for the European project. In any case, as stressed by Ulrich Maly, the EU is well-advised to build upon

the experiences and expertise of local authorities. Local politicians find narratives that make the necessity and success of political actions tangible for the citizens. What lacks between the local and the European level is the sort of (emotional) connection – a convincing narrative of where Europe is coming from and where it is heading – that is needed to gain sufficient support for the (abstract) European project. Accordingly, the EU should start reconsider its communication strategy regarding its ongoing and future objectives. However, apart from this, Ulrich Maly does not believe that the EMN can serve as a role model for the EU. Rather, the premises of the EMN, such as the voluntary commitment and subsidiarity, are inspired by German federalism and principles of the EU. Moreover, tackling disparities in Europe as a whole is significantly more complex than in a metropolitan region. Territorial cohesion at the European level is thus considerably more difficult since it requires far greater distribution mechanisms. Günther Denzler neither believes that paying more attention to the premises of the EMN will solve the EU's problems, as they differ substantially in the magnitude of the challenges and tasks that they are facing. In the end, every (government) level has to define for itself which governance structure is most adequate. A distinct feature of metropolitan regions in Germany is, however, their polycentric structure that, more or less, covers the whole federal territory. In this way, it is possible to ensure a more equitable development that is not limited to specific regions (MKRO, 2016).

Briefly turning to lower political levels, it likewise applies that one has to look beyond administrative boundaries and that cooperation is often more important than (location) competition. If possible, a holistic approach, with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, should be pursued. Due to the lack of available funds this is often very difficult, especially at the communal level. That is where (local) partnerships using pooled resources come into play. The EMN demonstrates that the involvement with higher-level institutions does not necessarily entail a consolidation of existing structures and a transfer of competencies to higher levels. Lower political levels should therefore be encouraged to engage in networking and partnership activities.

Conclusion

> *"[W]e can and must allow ourselves to think about the future as we would like to see it. We can allow ourselves, for the first time, to develop a clear vision of the kind of political entity we would like to create in Europe; indeed, it is even our duty to develop a convincing narrative for Europe – and then to hope that, if it becomes popular, it will gain some political weight."*
>
> (Guérot, 2015)

Since the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2008, a feeling of 'outrage' (Hessel, 2011) has swept across Europe. In particular, high levels of unemployment meant that many Europeans lost faith in the EU's capability to deal with global challenges – especially increasing socio-economic inequalities. The EU is certainly unique in its kind as it takes responsibility of a broad range of public goods (e.g. the Schengen area and the common market), without having created a central state (Liebert & Trenz, 2008, p. 2). Be that as it may, considering rising territorial disparities, the dismantling of Europe's social model, the increasing Euroscepticism as well as the growing feeling of disconnectedness between European citizens and EU representatives, it seems that many of the supposedly core elements of European integration have gotten lost in the process. Europe is thus in strong need to find viable solutions in order to not further jeopardise the idea of a cohesive European society. Independently from the future design of the Union, for its continuation it is essential, now more than ever, to make the benefits of European integration visible time and again (Kielmansegg, 2015, p. 162). In this context it is important to communicate and break down EU targets to the regional and local level at which about 70% of EU legislation is implemented (EUROCITIES, 2015). At the same time, the local level needs to be involved in the formulation of policies at an early stage in order ensure that they match the existing local needs.

This is where metropolitan regions can significantly contribute to a successful implementation of agreed objectives, as shown in Chapter 2 and 3. This applies in particular to the EU cohesion policy. The reason for this is that metropolitan regions are small enough to identify problem- and solution-oriented approaches that correspond to local conditions, while being big enough to have a European and global perspective, respectively. This notion of *"engage local, think global"* (Boik et al., 2015) has, especially in the light of contemporary global challenges, gained importance. This has to do with the fact that local and global are increasingly intertwined. The first part of the thesis revealed that the interconnectedness of the global economy has led to a situation, in which (local) developments in one part of the world can have profound impacts on people's lives on the other part of the world. A recent example of such is given by the Great Recession, which started with the US subprime mortgage crisis and not only triggered

a social crisis in many cities and regions across Europe, but also led to major changes in Europe's political landscape. As was demonstrated, metropolitan regions are able to provide viable solutions to the respective challenges. By fostering local partnerships, metropolitan regions are able to: a) create more inclusive and resilient economies, b) decrease socio-economic inequalities, c) increase trust in EU institutions, and improve the representativeness at EU level. d) Furthermore, it became apparent that by connecting people within and beyond a given community or region, metropolitan regions provide an appealing reinterpretation of the original European ideas of a transnational community based on human solidarity. If and when the nation-state will disappear one day remains an open question. What is certain is that political space changes over time and that the local level, in terms of cities and metropolitan regions, increasingly seeks to be recognised as a *"primary point of reference"* (Keating, 2013, p. 194). Thus, it is also possible to deduce policy relevant considerations from the thesis – that is to say a new institutional design for Europe. The observations and analysis of the current situation indicate that such an institutional shift should involve a more active and prominent role of the local level within the global political economy. Regarding institutional changes at the European level, Collignon's considerations with regard to the creation of a *European Republic* seem to be an appealing starting point (Collignon, 2013).

The third part of the thesis was devoted to the question as to why the EMN seems to be so well-managed. The analysis of both written and oral resources revealed that the interaction of different factors contributes to the fact that the EMN is able to provide both effective and legitimate solutions to a number of pressing issues. Through the analysis, it was possible to identify several key elements that are deemed essential for a well-functioning partnership: 1) High commitment of political leaders, who were willing to take responsibility beyond their administrative boundaries as well as very good personal relationships among the different actors has considerable facilitated the cooperation from its beginning. 2) The underlying key principle has always been that all partners meet on equal terms. 3) Moreover, the partnership is based on historical precedents that comes along with a more or less established culture of cooperation and regional identity. 4) Furthermore, the governance structure is in line with the polycentric landscape of rural and urban areas and based on common vision as well as clear strategic goals. 5) Last but not least, the EMN presents a holistic approach and uses its endogenous potential by fostering local economic cycles, among other things.

The experiences of the past should remind us that a fragmented Europe of nation-states cannot be a viable solution for the challenges that the world is facing. The future of Europe is uncertain – what is certain is that Europe needs both *"idealism and pragmatism simultaneously"* (Fioramonti, 2016).

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