



# The Europeanization of metropolitan regions from below: Comparing the European engagement of two archetypical metropolises

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## Abstract

Since the early 2000s, the Europeanization of metropolitan regions from below takes place in a political process with variable geometry and differential intensity. While ‘the metropolitan’ as a political label and research topic has witnessed an impressive upswing in Europe, a concrete understanding of the Europeanization of metropolitan regions is still missing. This article highlights and explains the Europeanization of metropolitan regions in Europe as particular subnational authorities of which only a small group of forerunners recently develop the capacity to act at a European scale. The Europeanization of metropolitan regions is conceptualized as a political process from below, going beyond the initial definition of Europeanization as domestic impact. Thereby, the article lays particular focus on ‘where’ and ‘when’ the European dimension of metropolitan regions is produced. Moreover, the analysis puts the emerging European engagement of metropolitan regions into a larger perspective by discussing it in the context of the increasing international agency of cities. The article questions, first, how a European dimension has developed in metropolitan policies and, second, what modes of engagement contribute to the metropolitan regions’ increasing Europeanization. Empirically, the metropolitan regions of Lyon and Stuttgart present examples of Europeanized metropolises with an exceptional engagement. Comparing modes of engagement in these two metropolitan regions allows understanding the particular characteristics contributing to the formation of an archetype of Europeanized metropolis.

## Keywords

European engagement, Europeanization, metropolitan regions, multi-level governance, transnational networks

## Introduction

For quite some time now, European integration and its economic, political and territorial effects are claimed to be drivers of changes in urban policies. Already in the late 1990s, Brenner (1999: 444) situates the rescaling of urban regions in the geopolitical context of European integration. Similarly, Le Galès (2002: 98) names the European

Union (EU) as a political opening for cities and regions, allowing for a redefinition of hierarchical relations.

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Meanwhile, cities, and particularly metropolitan regions, have constituted an international agency (Oosterlynck et al., 2019). In this article, I argue that the emergence of metropolitan regions as European actors presents an exceptional case in two perspectives. First, metropolitan regions present a particular case of subnational authorities emerging in the multi-scalar policy of Europe. ‘The metropolitan’ as a political label and research topic has witnessed an impressive upswing. The appraisal of metropolitan regions as hubs of economic flows, drivers of social transformation and territorial entities for inter-municipal cooperation – provocatively framed as the metropolitan revolution (Katz and Bradley, 2013) – contributed to metropolitan regions becoming a promising form of flexible governance arrangements in a new regional world – being subject of (complementary) territorial and relational governance approaches (Harrison and Growe, 2014). International organizations, in fact, claim that we are progressing towards a metropolitan century resulting from urbanization processes, understood as population growth in urban areas (OECD, 2015). This seeming triumph of the metropolitan region or, critically framed, the metropolitan fever (Leber and Kunzmann, 2006), is accompanied by the institutionalization and professionalization of metropolitan policies. In several EU member states ‘the metropolis is at the heart of territorial reform’ (Cole and Payre, 2016: 1). Some member states, such as France and Germany, introduced metropolitan regions as a new spatial scale in national policies already in the mid-2000s referring explicitly to European integration and the importance of metropolitan regions for European territorial development (Fricke, 2017).

Second, a variety of activities emerged which contribute to establishing new linkages between metropolitan and European policy arenas. As Le Galès (2002: 110–111) puts it:

We have a ‘variable-geometry’ Europe within which cities and regions sometimes become actors or systems of action. The EU is also being built from below, by social and political actors in regions and cities: constructing, resisting, righting, and adapting to new rules, opportunities, and constraints.

In the meantime, selected metropolitan regions intensified European strategies and engagement. Claims about the relevance of Europe for metropolitan

regions range from presenting a symbolic metaphor in strategic plans (Healey, 1998) to developing an adaptational impact leading to the Europeanization of metropolitan policies. One can widely accept that ‘the dynamics of structural economic change associated with European integration impact on metropolitan regions in a complex variety of ways’ (Wilks-Heeg et al., 2003: 21). More recently, metropolitan issues appeared on Brussels’ policy agenda despite the lack of formal competences for metropolitan policies with a supranational scale (Chilla, 2012; Wiechmann, 2009). Thereby, metropolitan regions entertaining transnational relations appear to become Europeanized political actors. However, a concrete understanding of the Europeanization of metropolitan regions is still missing.

In this article, I address the Europeanization of metropolitan regions as a political process in which metropolitan actors develop the capacity to act at a European scale. The aim of the article is to put the emerging European engagement of metropolitan regions into a larger perspective by discussing it in the context of two complementary strands of academic theorizing. First, the analysis builds on an understanding of Europeanization as a political process ‘bottom up’ (Le Galès, 2002: 7) or ‘from below’ (Benz and Eberlein, 1999: 331). In this perspective, the Europeanization of metropolitan regions takes place through iterative policy exchange between political contexts, going beyond the initial definition of Europeanization as domestic impact. Second, the article considers conceptualizations of cities’ and regions’ international activities labelled as subnational foreign policy. This is in line with conceptualization of cities as international or global political actors (Herrschel and Newman, 2017; Oosterlynck et al., 2019) and focuses on their political capacity and agency.

This theoretical argument is empirically demonstrated by comparing the Europeanization of two metropolitan regions, namely, Lyon in France and Stuttgart in Germany, which represent archetypes of Europeanized metropolises. Situated in distinct national contexts, both metropolises are forerunners compared with other metropolitan regions in their national context and in Europe. Lyon and Stuttgart both have a long tradition of cooperation between the city centre and the surrounding municipalities

which contributed to the establishment of an exceptionally formalized governance organization. In particular, both metropolises are archetypical with regard to their continuous and intensive European and international engagement. Empirically, the article explores the ways in which the two metropolitan regions are Europeanized by questioning, first, how a European dimension has developed in their policies and, second, what activities contribute to the metropolitan regions' increasing political engagement in EU policymaking and networks. Thereby, the first part of the empirical analysis is about the changing significance of Europe, focusing on the relevance of and references to Europe in policies at a metropolitan scale. The second part of the analysis carves out practices and processes which contribute to explaining the overall positioning of metropolitan regions as European actors.

The following section critically reviews dichotomous conceptualizations of Europeanization and suggests considering post-positivist approaches for overcoming topographical concepts of subnational authorities as territorial containers. Building on debates on the international agency of cities and subnational foreign policy, the next section then specifies modes that contribute to the Europeanization process via institutional linkages, engagement in networks, funding, metaphors and discourse. The empirical section first gives a diachronic overview of the evolving European dimension of metropolitan policies in Lyon and Stuttgart and then compares practices and socio-political processes contributing to the metropolises' Europeanization. The conclusion reflects the significance of the comparison of two archetypical metropolises for Europeanization theories.

### **Beyond conceptualizations of Europeanization 'from below'**

This analysis on the European engagement of metropolitan regions takes debates on Europeanization as a starting point. Europeanization studies initially focused on 'response[s] to the policies of the EU' (Featherstone, 2003: 3) and thus mainly on the domestic impact of EU regulations, directives or funding (Radaelli, 2003: 30) as well as the adaptation of public policies and institutions. Europeanization studies of

subnational authorities took a particular interest in the various effects, directions and initiators of policy transfer (Fleurke and Willemse, 2007; Hamedinger and Wolffhardt, 2010; Huggins, 2018; Marshall, 2005; Pflieger, 2014). Complementarily, the concept of multi-level governance focused on the positioning of subnational entities as governmental levels in the EU (Benz and Eberlein, 1999).

Scholars studying the Europeanization of subnational authorities recurrently conceptualized it as a process with regard to the direction – vertical and horizontal – and with regard to the initiator of policy transfer. Vertical Europeanization is supposed to take place due to (hierarchical) exchange, adaptational pressure or regulatory authority between governmental levels (for instance between the EU and subnational authorities). Horizontal Europeanization refers to linkages among authorities located at the same governmental tier which lead to policy change due to inspiration or competition (Radaelli, 2003: 41). Benz and Eberlein (1999: 331) also include horizontal processes within subnational entities consisting of different units. With regard to its initiator or driving force, scholars accordingly categorised Europeanization as bottom-up (from below) and top-down (from above). From the perspective of cities, Marshall (2005: 273) describes download Europeanization as an impact on local government and governance through the involvement in EU funding, partnerships and networks. Complementary to that he defines upload and 'crossload' Europeanization as the 'dissemination of local practices to the supra-national level, and thus to other cities via transnational networks' (Marshall, 2005: 273). For their analysis of transnational municipal networks among local authorities, Kern and Bulkeley (2009: 312) combine both dimensions of Europeanization. In fact, dichotomous conceptualizations of Europeanization are helpful for analysing the extent to which cities have become both passive policy-takers and active policymakers (Schultze, 2003).

However, the conceptual clarity of dichotomous typologies of Europeanization comes along with a number of limitations linked to their positivist and linear assumptions (for a detailed critique see Barbehön, 2016; Luukkonen, 2017). From a social-constructivist standpoint, these orthodox understandings of Europeanization are based on the 'ontological premise that the EU is an objective reality' (Barbehön, 2016:

161). In addition, such conceptualizations are also limited by positivist assumptions about the temporal linearity of policy transfer as a successive process. For overcoming the shortcomings of positivist-linear conceptualizations of the Europeanization of subnational authorities and their policies, we need to consider the complexity and dynamics of underlying socio-political processes. Moreover, orthodox conceptualizations of Europeanization omit to explain how the relationship between the supranational and local sphere has changed (for a more detailed investigation on this question see Guderjan and Miles, 2016) and why particular subnational entities have developed more intensive European engagement than others. Hence, a new, alternative understanding of Europeanization needs to comprise a ‘variety of phenomena and processes related to the transformations of the modes of governance and policy-making within and between European polities’ (Luukkonen, 2017: 259).

In Europeanization studies, we moreover need to pay attention to ‘where’ political knowledge and beliefs are produced, not only in geopolitical terms (Kuus, 2011: 276), but also in terms of spatial scales and how they change over time. Orthodox Europeanization studies are rooted in political science, so their unit of analysis is conventionally defined by political-administrative governmental tiers as territorial containers. This conception of space and time as objective leads to ‘topographical depictions of “wheres” and “whens”’ (Luukkonen, 2017: 260). With regard to the widespread dominance of container thinking among policymakers, however, we should not discard topographical Europeanization concepts prematurely. Instead, the following analysis builds on a combinatory understanding of Europeanization which makes it possible to consider the extent to which the objective conceptions of time and space have contributed to pinpointing ‘the material connections between the essential power centres and remarkable events involved in the Europeanization process’ (Luukkonen, 2017: 260).

In order to understand how European integration, and notably European policies and programmes, affect metropolitan regions, I argue that we have to focus on the change of policies and concrete activities of metropolitan regions, understanding Europeanization as adaptation from below and as a circular, iterative

socio-political process. In concrete terms, this analysis of Europeanization adopts an inside-out research strategy by starting from the events and choices made ‘at the hub of the problem’ (Radaelli, 2003: 51), instead of starting from ideal types of Europeanization mechanisms (among many others see Knill and Lehmkuhl, 1999). Consequently, this entails that Europeanization of metropolitan regions is expressed by various practices contributing to the emergence of a European dimension in metropolitan policies. I argue that practices of international engagement – subnational foreign policy – contribute to specifying and explaining the Europeanization of metropolitan regions. The subsequent section thus complements theoretical lenses on Europeanization with conceptualizations of concrete modes of European engagement identified in previous studies on the emergences of regions and cities as European actors.

### **Metropolitan foreign policy and modes of European engagement**

Metropolitan regions’ European engagement presents a particular form of international activity or foreign policy of subnational authorities. Moreover, the Europeanization of metropolitan regions is a particular case of the internationalization of cities which gained momentum in the context of European integration; however, it is not a new phenomenon. Prior to the Westphalian consensus and the formation of national states, large cities have been economically and politically connected, in Northern Europe, notably, via the Hanse. After the Second World War, cities increasingly engaged in transnational activities, such as bilateral partnerships and town-twinning contributing to the development of paradiplomacy (Soldatos and Michelmann, 1992). The development of new forms of engagement during the 1990s appears to be related to the emergence of cities as global actors (Herrschel and Newman, 2017; Osterlink et al. 2019). Urban foreign policy (Van der Heiden, 2010) and more concretely, cities’ international strategies comprise ‘a wide-ranging repertoire of actions’ (d’Albergo and Lefèvre, 2007: 317) targeted at international and supranational organizations as well as at establishing transnational relationships between cities. I argue that the modes of European engagement of metropolitan

regions are comparable to the activities of other sub-national authorities such as cities or regions. Metropolitan regions' repertoire of political activities targeted at EU institutions or linked to European policies comprise in particular the establishment of institutional linkages, networks, financial incentives and symbolic influence.

### *Institutional linkages*

Since the 1990s, representational offices have contributed to positioning individual regions and cities in the EU policymaking arena (Greenwood, 2011; Herrschel and Newman, 2017; Tatham, 2018). Greenwood (2011) identifies over 200 representational offices of regions and other subnational authorities in Brussels. Moreover, Tatham (2018) shows the increasing influence of regional offices as political actors in supranational policymaking. Often, the establishment of a unit for international relations in the cities' domestic administrations presents a complementary element of an explicit urban foreign policy (Herrschel and Newman, 2017: 160). Seeing cities as international actors, Herrschel and Newman (2017: 92) argue that strong economic, marketing and institutional capacity of individual cities favour the establishment of offices in Brussels or international units. From a Europeanization perspective, the establishment of such voluntary institutional units is an indicator of 'changing domestic opportunity structures' (Knill and Lehmkuhl, 1999: 3) and institutional adaptation (Benz and Eberlein, 1999).

The establishment of institutional units situated between subnational authorities and European institutions can be seen as a key element of metropolitan regions' European engagement, comparable to the offices of cities and regions in Brussels. In the late 1990s, the institutional ties between city-regions and European institutions were rather weak (Benz and Eberlein, 1999: 342). And in the early 2000s, Kunzmann (2002: 343) still recommends the establishment of a common external representation as a key element for the development of a European dimension in (Germany's) metropolitan regions' activities. Recently, the number of metropolitan regions' offices in Brussels increased as an expression of the consolidated links between the metropolitan and the supranational policymaking arena.

### *Transnational networks for lobbying and exchanging ideas*

Another mode of cities' international engagement is their membership in transnational inter-urban networks. Since the 1980s, the number of multipurpose networks between cities and other subnational authorities as a multi-lateral mode of engagement increased importantly (Herrschel and Newman, 2017: 108–109). In the European context, inter-urban networks serve two main purposes. First, networks are important platforms for the exchange of knowledge and transmission of inspiration (Payre, 2010: 262). This goes along with the formation of increasingly selective urban networks, in which internationalized development models or other forms of expertise circulate (Pinson and Vion, 2000). Kern and Bulkeley (2009: 319) name information and communication as part of a network's internal strategy for recruiting and stabilizing members in the absence of other forms of authority.

Second, networks present vehicles for interest representation and lobbying of urban actors at EU institutions. The alignment of cities' interests in flexible and informal groups creates a certain leverage and grants access to Brussels' policymakers (Payre, 2010: 276). Influence on European institutions, cooperation between networks and intermediation are elements of networks' external strategies for successfully intervening in the European policymaking process through events and consultation (Kern and Bulkeley, 2009: 323). Moreover, Huggins (2018: 220) argues that transnational networking takes place with varying intensity or what he calls 'differential engagement' (see also Kern and Bulkeley, 2009: 326–327).

Metropolitan regions are engaged in various European networks. Zimmermann (2020: 111) notes that metropolitan networks present a 'knowledge market . . . with multiple public and hybrid venues for sharing and distributing'. The Eurocities network is a well-researched example of inter-urban and horizontal coordination among secondary cities in Europe, including several metropolitan regions (see also Kübler and Piliutyte, 2007: 367–370; Heinelt and Niederhafner, 2008). Besides, metropolitan regions form specific networks, such as *metropolis*, METREX or the initiative of European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA; see also Zimmermann, 2020).

### *Funding for cooperation and adaptation*

Several studies point out the influence of EU funding on the Europeanization of cities (Fleurke and Willemse, 2007; Marshall, 2005; Pflieger, 2014). Thereby, financial incentives, provided through funding programmes such as the European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) and the former URBAN initiative are assumed to have effects on decision-making and policies. Depending on their status as subnational authorities or inter-municipal associations, metropolitan regions have varying ability to apply for and obtain EU funding. Metropolitan regions in selected EU member states such as Italy and Poland became eligible for EU funding in the ERDF 2014–2020 programming period (see Pagano and Losco, 2016 on the National Operational Programmes for Metropolitan Cities in Italy; see Krukowska and Lackowska, 2017 on the establishment of metropolitan regions in Poland). From a theoretical perspective, the competition for EU funding contributes to the Europeanization of metropolitan regions through negative integration (Knill and Lehmkuhl, 1999).

### *Metaphors in the discourse*

Complementarily, Europeanization of subnational authorities is supposed to take place as a socio-cognitive process via framing integration. Scholars analysed the Europeanization of regions through EU policies as a discursive (Gualini, 2001) and cognitive process (Pasquier, 2007) or as the transnational diffusion of concepts and paradigms (Büttner, 2014). Such social-constructivist perspectives on Europeanization contribute to understanding the differential meaning and relevance of the EU in cities (Barbehön, 2016).

In metropolitan regions, discursive Europeanization becomes visible in two ways. First, ‘Europe’ influences metropolitan policies via the exchange of experiences or the creation of common knowledge through research or statistics. Second, the discursive relevance of Europe becomes visible in metropolitan strategies and policy programmes. In metropolitan strategies, Europe as ‘a powerful image’ (Healey, 1998: 152) appears symbolically relevant for both the internal development of the metropolitan region and its external relationships (Salet, 2007: 10). Thereby, the professionalization of

internal and external information policy in the sense of regional marketing presents a potential field for developing a European dimension in metropolitan regions’ activities (Kunzmann, 2002: 343). The European orientation of metropolitan regions, however, becomes most apparent in the development of an international strategy ‘as a subjective attempt to reach coherence between the goals, available means, and underlying values of a set of activities that urban actors perform outside their national borders’ (d’Albergo and Lefèvre, 2007: 319).

### **Lyon and Stuttgart – Europeanized metropolitan regions**

The Europeanization of the Lyon and Stuttgart metropolitan regions present socio-political processes, involving a particular constellation of modes of European engagement. For analytical purposes, I lay out the key events and activities of Lyon and Stuttgart in a diachronic perspective. Empirically, the analysis is based on research conducted between 2014 and 2017 and takes a new perspective on findings from expert interviews (see the List of Cited Interviews at the end of the article) and document analyses on the European dimension of metropolitan policies (see also Fricke 2020). The adopted methodology engages in a relational comparison (Ward, 2010), which understands metropolitan regions not as self-contained units in a vacuum, but emphasises the embeddedness and interconnectivity of their policies. The analysis of the metropolitan regions’ European engagement includes any city-regional activities implicitly or explicitly oriented toward European policies or contributing to the positioning in the EU and to the establishment of external relations with other metropolitan regions. Overall, the comparison of the European dimension of metropolitan regions builds on an interpretive policy analysis. Such a post-positivist methodology contributes to a context-sensitive understanding of what Europe means in different metropolitan regions and how these concepts are ‘emerging from the field’ (Yanow, 2003: 229–230) by understanding the meaning of concepts as situation- and context-specific. In concrete terms, the comparison of the Europeanization processes focuses on actors, institutions, programs and projects in the two metropolitan regions.

## Metropolitan European engagement à l'exception Lyonnaise

The Lyon metropolis is a twofold exception as a Europeanized metropolitan region in France. First, Lyon is one of the few French cities with veritable cooperation and coordination at a city-regional scale. Despite its exceptional status in the French decentralized state, the French political discourse frames Lyon as the prototype of metropolitan regionalism (Interview 1). However, there is a gap between the general image and the underlying patchwork of Lyon's metropolitan governance. Due to the gradual emergence of city-regional institutions, metropolitan governance in Lyon forms a variable geometry of cooperation. Several informed observers describe Lyon's institutional framework as a 'mille feuille' (Carpenter and Verhage, 2014: 57; Lefèvre, 2014). Even after the formation of the unitary jurisdiction *Grand Lyon Métropole* in 2014–2015 by merging the city-region with the administrative unit of the *département*, the metropolitan jurisdiction is embedded in the politics of the region *Rhone-Alpes-Auvergne* and the larger agglomeration.

Second, Lyon is one of the few French cities with a continuous international orientation in its policies. Starting in the 1960s, Lyon's European engagement developed in four phases. The origins of Lyon's European engagement developed during a period of economic restructuring and de-industrialization. Lyon's economic development agency suggested an internationalization approach instead of following the balancing approach propagated by the national strategy of the *métropoles d'équilibres* (Galimberti, 2015: 109–110). In 1974, the strategy *Lyon Ville Internationale* was supported by the local political and economic elite and therefore formed a 'collective project' (Mazue, 2009: 21). A second phase during the 1980s and early 1990s was characterised by a reinforced internationalization of Lyon's internal and external policies. Internal city-regional planning explicitly involved European references. For instance, the 'LYON 2010' initiative was labelled as 'un projet d'agglomération pour une métropole européenne' (SEPAL et al., 1988). Moreover, Lyon refers to Europe for its external positioning in the 'wider European space', uses the labelling as a 'Eurocity' (Healey, 1998: 141) and Lyon contributed to

establishing the Eurocities network (in 1986; see also Payre, 2010).

The early 2000s mark the beginning of a third phase of Lyon's international engagement. Mayor G Collomb, elected in 2001, launched the ONLY LYON marketing campaign in 2007 which was preceded by the Lyon Top-15-Initiative (2004) aiming at the amelioration of Lyon's positioning in rankings and particularly in the European Cities Monitor. During this phase, the international orientation of Lyon's strategies directly fed into ambitions of positioning the city in the league of (secondary) metropolises in Europe (Bardet and Healy, 2015). Also, Lyon's contribution to the national call for metropolitan cooperation by the Interministerial Delegation of Territorial Planning and Regional Attractiveness (DATAR) refers to the metropolitan region's status as 'une force motrice et attractive à l'échelle euro-régionale.' (Région Urbaine Lyon, 2007: 20).

In a fourth phase, Lyon's European engagement further developed during the institutional reform process (2013–2015). In 2013, a proposal for the merger of the city-region with the *département* suggested renaming the Lyon metropolitan region with the intention to 'créer une métropole européenne qui permettra au Grand Lyon de renforcer son attractivité, de continuer à attirer les entreprises et de rayonner au niveau international' (Grand Lyon, 2013). The prefix 'européenne' for the Lyon metropolitan region was dropped during the negotiations of the legislative process establishing metropolitan regions as a new territorial authority in France. Nevertheless, the institutional reform presented a window of opportunity to put 'de l'Europe dans l'ADN initial de la métropole' (Interview 2). Since 2016, Lyon takes part in the European Metropolitan Authorities initiative.

## European engagement in the Sonderfall Stuttgart metropolitan region

In a similar vein, Stuttgart represents a forerunner of metropolitan cooperation in Germany (Zimmermann, 2011: 189; Zimmermann and Heinelt, 2012: 103–109). Building on previous attempts of city-regional cooperation in a regional planning association from 1974, Stuttgart formally institutionalized a regional

jurisdiction named the Greater Stuttgart Region (*Verband Region Stuttgart* (VRS)) in 1994. The political discourse on the formation of a city-regional entity was filled with references to Europe and the need for international competitiveness. Moreover, the institutional set-up of Stuttgart represents an exceptional case (*Sonderfall*) of metropolitan governance in Germany. In fact, the Greater Stuttgart Region is constituted as a public authority with selected competences and a publicly elected regional assembly.

Stuttgart's European and international engagement developed since the 1990s in three phases and can be attributed to different entities, namely, the Greater Stuttgart Region, the Mayor of the city of Stuttgart, and an initiative of the wider region. First initiatives for European engagement took place in the context of the formation of the Stuttgart Region in 1994. Prominently, the preamble of the legal act of the Baden-Württemberg parliament founding the Greater Stuttgart region explicitly refers to Europe in mentioning the competitiveness of regions in the context of European integration (Landtag Baden-Württemberg, 1994). Second, Mayor Schuster (1997–2013) of the city of Stuttgart developed an internationalization strategy, moving from bilateral partnerships with other cities to the creation of networks (Van der Heiden, 2010: 120). This European engagement of the central city was, for instance, expressed in Schuster's presidency of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) (2010–2013). Parallel to the efforts of the city of Stuttgart, the economic development agency (*Wirtschaftsförderung*) of the Greater Stuttgart Region developed a European strategy (Regionalversammlung Verband Region Stuttgart, 2001), established a representational office in Brussels (2002) and joined the METREX network (2003). A third phase of European engagement can be identified in the context of an initiative for large scale cooperation under the label European Metropolitan Region in the mid-2000s. This initiative also involved the wider agglomeration and used the symbolic reference to Europe established in German national planning strategies at the federal level. Recently, Stuttgart's metropolitan policies put less emphasis on Europe, as the initial euphoria among the participating municipalities has lessened (Interview 3). In 2013 and 2015, nevertheless, the European

engagement was renewed in a *Europa Atlas* and a European strategy.

## Comparing the Europeanization of metropolitan regions

The impact of European integration on Stuttgart and Lyon becomes visible in their increased European engagement and references to Europe in metropolitan policies. The following section compares key European activities and reflects on the socio-political process of Europeanization in Lyon and Stuttgart. The comparison shows that European issues are far from becoming mainstream in metropolitan programmes or strategies.

### *Europeanization as modes of European engagement*

Comparing the European engagement of metropolitan actors in Lyon and Stuttgart reveals several similarities. Based on the framework elaborated above, various modes of engagement contribute to the Europeanization of Lyon and Stuttgart. The establishment of European units and offices in Brussels contributes to the Europeanization of metropolitan regions such as Stuttgart and Lyon. In both metropolitan regions, administrative organizations comprise units responsible for their European and international engagement. In Stuttgart, the number of staff responsible for European activities is rather limited. Due to the limited administrative capacities and the inter-municipal set-up of the region, Stuttgart thus entertains a decentral network of local delegates in the municipalities (*Europabeauftragte*). In Lyon, the professionalization of the metropolitan administration in the mid-2000s allowed the establishment of a section labelled *attractivité & relations internationales*. Moreover, the territorial reform in 2015 opened a window of opportunity for adapting Lyon's administrative structure and mainstreaming European issues in all administrative sections at the metropolitan scale. In both metropolitan regions, European units represent important conveyors translating between metropolitan and European political spheres. In addition, representational offices in Brussels establish institutional links between Europe and metropolitan regions.

In both regions, the representational offices comprise one or two permanent staff members in Brussels. Such permanent location of staff in Brussels contributes to a more targeted and continuous interest representation vis-à-vis EU institutions. In return, both Brussels representations of Lyon and Stuttgart are seen as antennas for gathering information and tracking relevant policy initiatives and calls in advance.

Networks of metropolitan regions aiming at the EU policy arena form a second mode of Europeanization of Lyon and Stuttgart. Metropolitan regions represent a particular type of subnational authority or urban area, and, therefore, metropolitan actors are only occasionally participating in formalized municipal and regional organizations, such as CEMR or the Committee of the Regions (CoR). Alternative and important modes of Europeanization are thus interest groups for large cities, such as Eurocities, and other networks of metropolitan areas, such as METREX. Both networks intend to influence EU policymaking, but, more importantly, both foster exchange with other European cities in working groups or conferences. More recently, a smaller group of politically consolidated metropolitan regions – including Lyon – formed the initiative of European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA and Cittàmetropolitanadi Torino, 2016), which is an interest group with a strong political impetus.

Previous studies often categorise Europeanization via funding and projects as a top-down process. From the perspective of metropolitan actors in Lyon and Stuttgart, EU financing of projects is not necessarily seen as a top-down imposition of themes or conditions. Instead, several interviewees frame the influence of EU funding as a catalyst for innovative ideas and for the exchange of good practices with other regions or cities. Interviewees from both metropolitan regions (Interview 2, Interview 4) claim to only engage in projects that correspond to the regions' interests and when the themes and requirements of the calls for projects suit their own profile. Although the EU sets the broader themes and conditions for funding the projects, the metropolitan actors perceive them as opportunities to launch innovative projects that are profitable and enriching for the local context. To some extent, the biased case selection of two rather experienced and well-funded metropolitan regions impinges on this perception. In Europe we

find only few metropolitan regions with comparable capacities and competences to manage or participate in EU-funded projects. Nevertheless, EU projects remain important indicators of Europeanization from below. Particularly, metropolitan politicians value the received EU funding as a confirmation that the metropolis' European engagement 'is paying off'.

This feeds into another mode of Europeanization via symbols. Metropolitan policies in Lyon and Stuttgart exhibit an important number of metaphorical references to Europe. In particular in Lyon, economic policies, marketing campaigns and large urban development projects refer to Europe as a metaphor. Especially in the late 1990s and early 2000s, such European references often relate to concepts of inter-regional competitiveness.

### *Europeanization as a socio-political process*

Three characteristics of the Europeanization processes identified in Lyon and Stuttgart go beyond the modes of engagement previously studied by scholars on subnational foreign policy. First, in both regions, the increased European engagement is linked to the development of economic policies. As the overview of European engagement above shows, several references to Europe in Lyon's and Stuttgart's metropolitan policies can be found in the context of economic policies addressing the competition with other European cities. In both regions, the intensification of their European engagement in the early 2000s coincides with the emergence of policies fostering economic competitiveness – a shift that aligns well with Brenner's (2003) argument on new metropolitan policies in Europe. Thereby, the opening toward Europe is also an expression of the influence of an economic elite on city-regional policies. Moreover, the metropolises' orientation toward Europe forms part of a broader internationalization strategy.

Second, various metaphors of Europe are mobilized in conflictual situations and for the region's positioning in a system of multi-level governance. The positioning of Stuttgart in the European context serves to some extent as a leverage to strengthen the metropolitan entity inside (vis-à-vis its municipal members and toward surrounding municipalities)

and outside the region (*vis-à-vis* the state of Baden-Württemberg and the national level, see also Van der Heiden, 2010: 127–131). In Lyon, references to Europe similarly form an attempt to strengthen the metropolis in competition with Paris as the national capital. The Europeanization in both metropolitan regions are moreover linked to political dynamics inside the regions (Kübler and Piliutyte, 2007: 357) and to conflicts between the city centre and the surroundings (Kübler and Piliutyte, 2007: 364).

Third, Europeanization processes in both metropolises are linked to the personal interest and sponsorship of political leaders. For instance, Lyon's European engagement has been supported by several mayors and presidents of the central city and the presidents of the metropolitan region, regardless of their party-political orientation. In contrast, in Stuttgart, the international engagement of the central city decreased after a change of mayors in the mid-2010s. This underlines the impact of entrepreneurship on the advancement of an international strategy (Beal and Pinson, 2014; d'Albergo and Lefèvre, 2007: 324).

## **Conclusion: Archetypes of Europeanized metropolises**

In essence, the article systematizes political activities of metropolitan regions directed toward Europe or addressing European issues as modes of European engagement. By conceptualizing Europeanization as a multi-faceted process beyond dichotomies of vertical–horizontal and uploading–downloading, this article contributes to a debate that intends to understand Europeanization as a differential process (Barbehön, 2016; Luukkonen, 2017), which can take place iteratively and involves regressions. This, moreover, empirically demonstrates how European agency is constructed from below (Le Galès, 2002). The analysis of modes of European engagement of Lyon and Stuttgart demonstrates that a refined conceptualization of Europeanization yields a detailed understanding of how policymaking between Europe and metropolitan regions has transformed. This contributes to explaining how the relationship between the supranational and local sphere has changed (Guderjan and Miles, 2016). Comparing the modes of engagement and underlying socio-political processes implies

that the influence of Europe goes beyond a linear domestic impact – which gives insights on situations or ‘when’ Europeanization happens. Moreover, the comparison contributes to understanding ‘where’ Europeanization takes place – at what particular scale, given the multi-layered character and territorial dynamics linked to metropolitan governance. As a result, the comparison reveals the increasing relevance of Europe but also underlines the variation of Europeanization in two metropolitan contexts, Lyon and Stuttgart.

Moreover, the analysis shows that besides well-established territorial jurisdictions such as cities or regions, new and flexible forms of governance such as metropolitan regions have become Europeanized and implicated by European integration. The empirical analysis shows that for understanding shifts in the multi-level polity of Europe – moving beyond (bounded) territorial governance – we need to consider relational approaches embodied through networks and flows of experts and information alongside other socio-spatial configurations of political practices and processes. Overall, Europeanization strategies of metropolitan regions reflect both the territorial context in which they originate and from which they draw their democratic legitimacy, and the networked, relational sphere of European policy-making which they are addressing and trying to compete in. In EU policies, relational policymaking practices are then again rebound into territorial vocabularies by translating them, for instance, into ‘eligibility criteria’ for funding. Such new socio-spatial amalgamations should be considered in further research with a focus on metropolitan regions in the EU, understood, according to Jessop (2016), as a regime of multi-spatial meta-governance.

The comparison explores the complementary meaning of Europe as a metaphor, as a policy arena and as concrete funding opportunities. The comparison of two exceptional cases of Europeanized metropolitan regions makes it possible to draw generalizations to a limited extent. Due to the interpretive–qualitative methodology, the comparison omits to produce causal explanations in a positivist perspective. Nevertheless, the comparison yields important insights on Lyon and Stuttgart as archetypes of Europeanized metropolitan regions in two crucial

ways. First, with regard to the elaborate organization and long tradition of metropolitan governance, Lyon and Stuttgart rather are pioneers exceptional to 'ordinary' metropolitan regions in Europe. Second, regarding their European engagement, Lyon and Stuttgart can be seen as part of a 'small European avant-garde' (Witte, 2011: 279) which is actively involved in European networks and policies. Among politically mobilized metropolitan regions in Europe – such as Amsterdam, Vienna, Oslo, Milan, Turin or Barcelona – the European engagement is far from being part of the core competences. Even in these Europeanized metropolises, Europe is only indirectly or implicitly relevant for metropolitan policies and often plays only a subordinate role at the metropolitan scale. European engagement remains an add-on activity, with underlying trends and depending on visible successes. The place-specific analysis revealed particular driving forces – such as economic restructuring and austerity, local economic interests, political leadership and strategy, and multi-scalar relations to and bargaining with the national state and other regional authorities – that explain Europeanization. In future comparative research, Europeanized cases of metropolises could be contrasted to ordinary – inwardly or nationally oriented – metropolitan regions, in order to explain why particular regions developed a European agency. Overall, this contributes to an innovative perspective on Europeanization, which goes beyond the impact of EU legislation or funding, but understands Europe as a window of opportunity for subnational actors that are becoming more present in a European multi-scalar polity.

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