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Planning and Governance for Resilient Metropolises in Brazil and Germany – Arrangements for Institutional Collective Action

Planejamento e Governança para Metrôpoles Resilientes no Brasil e na Alemanha - Arranjos para Ação Coletiva Institucional

Bessy Thurania ^[a] , Klaus Frey ^[b] 

^[a] Technical University Dortmund & Federal University of ABC, São Bernardo do Campo, SP, Brasil

^[b] Federal University of ABC, São Bernardo do Campo, SP, Brasil

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Abstract

Metropolises are a fundamental characteristic of the 21st century due to the unprecedented urbanization that has seen cities transcend their traditional boundaries. At the heart of the metropolitan question, there is the need for collective decisions and coordinated joint action in a territory characterized by the existence of multiple governments and social actors with different interests, preferences, and resources. Consequently, new institutional arrangements for metropolitan management have continued to evolve aiming to overcome the dilemma of collective action. In this article, we present some principal findings of a study that examines the institutional arrangements of metropolitan governance in the metropolises of Sao Paulo and Belo Horizonte (Brazil), as well as Stuttgart and Hannover (Germany), based on the institutional collective action framework. The research is based on the analysis of the relevant literature, reports, secondary studies, and the conduction of a semi-structured panel interview researchers, revealing varied vertical and horizontal cooperation arrangements, the strengths and weaknesses of their institutional design, and contextual factors that have shaped the governance and planning structures and the possibilities of resilient metropolitan development. The article concludes with some recommendations for the implementation of institutional arrangements at the metropolitan scale for emerging metropolises, particularly in the Global South.

Keywords: Metropolitan Planning. Metropolitan Governance. Institutional Collective Action. Brazil. Germany.

Resumo

As metrópoles são uma característica fundamental do século XXI, devido à urbanização sem precedentes que viu as cidades transcenderem suas fronteiras tradicionais. No coração da questão metropolitana está a necessidade de decisões coletivas e de ações coordenadas em um território marcado pela existência de múltiplos governos e atores sociais com diferentes interesses, preferências e recursos. Consequentemente,

BT is MSc. in Regional Development Planning, e-mail: bessykt@gmail.com

KF is full professor, PhD in Social Science, e-mail: klaus.frey@ufabc.edu.br



novos arranjos institucionais para a gestão metropolitana continuaram a evoluir com o objetivo de superar o dilema da ação coletiva. Neste artigo, apresentamos resultados de um estudo que analisou, em perspectiva comparada, os arranjos institucionais de governança metropolitana nas metrópoles de São Paulo e Belo Horizonte (Brasil), bem como de Stuttgart e Hannover (Alemanha), com base na concepção teórica da Ação Coletiva Institucional. A pesquisa é baseada na análise da literatura relevante, relatórios, estudos secundários e a condução de uma entrevista semiestruturada com pesquisadores especialistas, evidenciando variados arranjos de cooperação vertical e horizontal, os pontos fortes e fracos de seu desenho institucional e os fatores contextuais que moldaram as estruturas de governança e planejamento e condicionam as possibilidades de um desenvolvimento metropolitano resiliente. O artigo conclui com algumas recomendações para a implementação de arranjos institucionais em escala metropolitana para as metrópoles emergentes, particularmente no Sul Global.

Palavras-chave: Planejamento Metropolitana. Governança Metropolitana. Ação Coletiva Institucional. Brasil. Alemanha.

Introduction

Metropolization, or the process of urban areas growing together into larger functional urban units (Metropolis, 2019), will continue to expand in this “metropolitan century” to accommodate the 85% of the world population projected to live in cities by 2100 (OECD, 2015). Driven by technological innovations, core cities and their surrounding municipalities have become intertwined with regard to markets, labour, society and resource flows (Corey et al. 2015).

This growing complexity presents a significant governance challenge for urban governments in keeping up with the required provision of transport, basic services, infrastructure, health and social services which no longer fit their local boundaries. Regional agenda and planning now cover multiple jurisdictions and hence present a challenge in coordinating policies, regulations, finances and investment—a challenge that is further exacerbated by the multiplicity of actors involved.

Achieving an integrated territorial spatial strategy at the regional level depends then, not only on having the necessary policies and instruments but also on the existence of an adequate institutional context and coordination mechanisms. The spatial expansion often occurs faster than the adjustment of the institutional framework for managing these agglomerations, leading to high levels of government fragmentation across metropolitan areas (Resnick, 2020).

In this context, the search for administrative mechanisms and institutional arrangements to better coordinate service delivery across jurisdictional boundaries in metropolitan areas has gained prominence. Different institutional structures have emerged in different parts of the world and vary from formal to informal, vertical to horizontal (Gómez-Álvarez *et al.*, 2017), influenced by several contextual factors such as historical, geographical, socio-political, and economic. At the same time, now more than ever, metropolitan agglomerations are playing a central role in proposing solutions to the complex situations faced in cities such as climate change, natural disasters and economic development (Anderson, 2015).

Against this backdrop, this article seeks to contribute to the subject of effective metropolitan governance as a crucial premise for transformative and sustainable development. Based on multiple case studies from the Global North and Global South, the research seeks to contextualize the dynamics of institution-building for metropolitan coordination, to extract useful insights from these experiences on how to better institutionalize or coordinate metropolitan planning as an opportunity to support resilience at the metropolitan level.

In the next section, the theoretical underpinnings of the study are presented, followed by the materials and methods adopted, while subsequently the findings related to institutional arrangements of

the four cases are presented followed by the analysis and discussion of the challenges and successes of each institutional typology. In the conclusion, some recommendations for the implementation of institutional arrangements at the metropolitan scale are presented.

Theoretical Underpinnings for Metropolitan Cooperation: Institutional Collective Action

Metropolitan governance concerns itself with institutional arrangements, planning processes, policies, rules, mechanisms and tools that guide the functioning of metropolitan areas. It is the process through which actors - both governmental and non-governmental -, collaborate at different levels providing services and urban policy solutions for metropolitan areas (Slack, 2019). These policies together with the agreed institutional arrangements are intended to ensure the effectiveness of metropolitan governance and, thus, stable action coordination of affected municipalities and private actors (Zimmermann, 2017). Biswas & Maurya (2018), refer to different components that make up the governance concept such “as rule of law, democratisation, human rights, robust legal and judicial system, public administration reform, public financial management, decentralisation, enhancement of civil society, anti-corruption, transparency, and accountability” (p.51), components on which the governance ability to coordinate service delivery across municipal boundaries depends (Slack, 2007). Collaborative metropolitan governance, as a mechanism of inter-municipal cooperation, aims at economies of scale, equity with regard to the territorial distribution of resources and general living conditions (Pearson, 2016). At the same time, the possibilities of citizen participation in decision-making and consequently the way governments are accountable to citizens are also impacted by the metropolitan governance structure (Slack, 2007). Different innovative ways have emerged to address this issue through active incorporation of civil society and even direct election of metropolitan representatives as discussed in the case studies.

The theoretical framework of Institutional Collective Action (ICA) (Feiock 2004, 2009, 2013) has become a useful approach for explaining the reasons why local governments establish collaborative arrangements at the metropolitan scale. Institutional Collective Action dilemmas arise when the fragmentation of political authority leads two or more municipalities in a region to make individual decisions that lead to inferior collective outcomes than would be obtained if they acted together (Feiock 2013). The ICA framework explains how and why local governments voluntarily form institutional arrangements and work together in their own interests while providing benefits for the broader region (Farmer, 2008), e.g., in the fields of urban transport, waste or watershed management.

Three types of ICA dilemmas can be distinguished according to the actors involved and the nature of the collective problem they face. A horizontal collective action problem arises if governments are too small to efficiently provide a service for their citizens, or if the provision of the service produces externalities that spill across jurisdictional boundaries. Vertical collective action problems occur when organizations at different levels of government pursue similar policy objectives simultaneously such as in the case of economic or environmental policy. Functional collective action problems are defined by the connectedness of services, policies, and resource systems and by externalities occurring between functional areas, policy arenas and governmental units (Feiock 2009).

From the ICA perspective, collaboration choices are accounted for in terms of the transaction costs and collaboration risks associated with centralization and decentralization (Feiock 2009, 2013; Feiock & Scholz 2010). The framework investigates four general aspects to understand the challenge of collective action dilemmas: first, the nature of the dilemma, identifying its embeddedness in inter-organizational collaborative configurations in which individual incentives of organizations may lead to inappropriate collective outcomes not desired by any of the organizations (Ostrom, 2005; Feiock, 2013); second, the authorities, directly or indirectly involved in the policy arena, with emphasis on established tools and

goals by collective decision-makers (Feiock, 2013); third, the potential risks and uncertainties derived from action and inaction, which are closely connected to transaction costs related to spillover effects between control, efficiency, political representations, and self-determination of organizations (McGinnis, 1999; Feiock, 2009); and lastly, motivational incentives for organizations that indicate the need for regulations and monitoring mechanisms (Feiock, 2013).

The strategic decision to collaborate depends on an assessment with regard to the transaction costs of these agreements being lower than the potential benefits (Feiock 2007, 2009). Transaction costs can be reduced by institutional arrangements that increase the availability of information, reduce obstacles to bargaining and reinforce social capital as a coalescing mechanism to sustain networks and political institutions.

Figure I shows the different integrative mechanisms according to the degree of autonomy the mechanisms afford to local actors. The decision-making costs indicated on the vertical scale include searching for information, negotiating, and bargaining (Williamson, 1979), which usually increase as the levels of complexity and authority associated with integration mechanisms increase (Feiock, 2013). On the other hand, the four integration mechanisms listed on the horizontal axis, assess the autonomy costs incurred in ceding power and legitimacy from local to the higher authorities. Autonomy costs are expected to increase as authority and complexity levels associated with integration mechanisms increase (Kim et al., 2022).

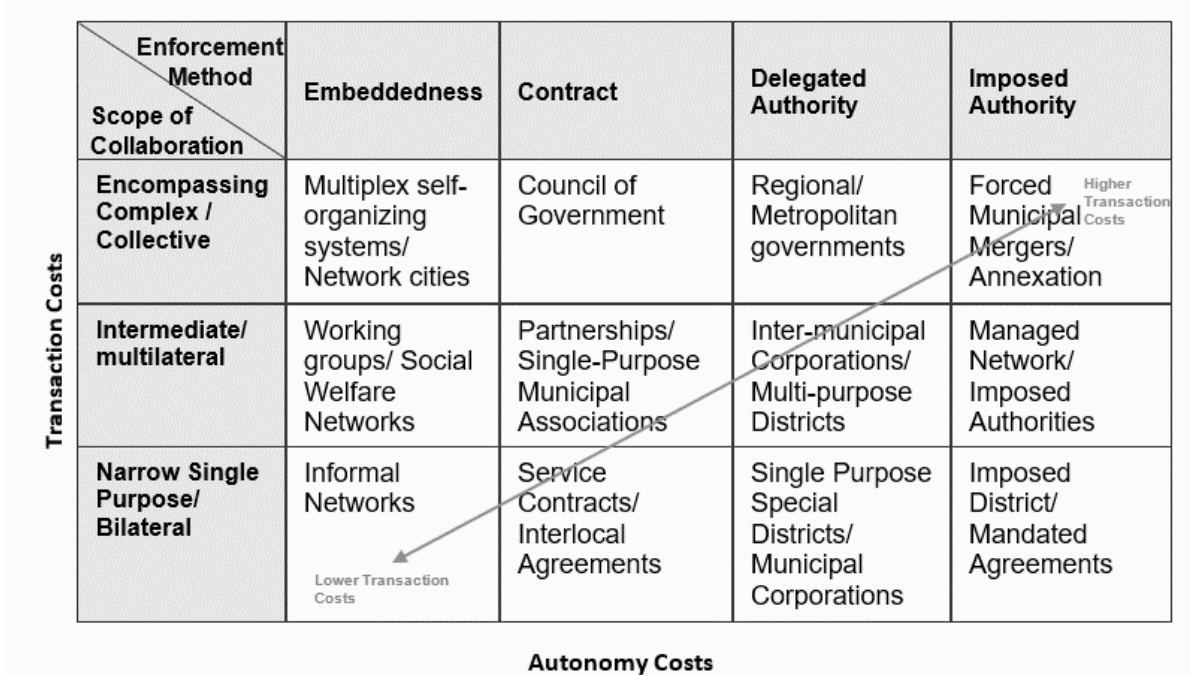


Figure 1 – ICA Integration Mechanisms along levels of Complexity and Authority. Source: Adapted from Feiock (2013), Tavares & Feiock (2018).

Methodology

Given the exploratory nature of this research, a multiple-case study (MCS) was adopted based on a selected sample of existing metropolitan areas in Brazil and Germany. This purposive sampling, widely used in qualitative research, allowed us to select information-rich experiences of metropolitan governance appropriate to shed light on the theoretical underpinnings of our research questions (cf. Yin, 2013).

As metropolitan planning and governance in Brazil and Germany vary considerably, this research attempted to select typical cases that have had central importance in the respective national academic

debates on metropolitan governance, particularly related to innovations in democratic governance. Germany and Brazil in themselves were purposively selected as they represent important federal democracies from the Global North and Global South, respectively; and it is this democratic-federal condition that, under pressure of global economic competition, favoured the variety and diversity of metropolitan governance approaches in both countries. Therefore, the study of metropolitan governance in Germany and Brazil provides diverse and useful theoretical and practice reflections as well as meaningful hypotheses that can guide international practice. Even if it is not a comparative study in the strict sense, the authors adopted a comparative perspective, focusing on selecting only mono-centric metropolitan areas, to keep at least one major background variable constant as this is very characteristic of metropolitan areas in the global south.

The institutional structure of the four cases, the metropolitan areas of Sao Paulo and Belo Horizonte in Brazil, of Stuttgart and Hannover in Germany, were profiled based on a review of documentary information, including administrative documents, academic resources, and published research. The review was based on Cronin et al.'s three-phase concept of traditional literature review: (1) literature search across multiple databases, (2) literature gathering from identified sources and (3) writing and referencing (Cronin et al., 2008). Further, the research was complemented by a semi-structured panel interview with prolific metropolitan researchers- Prof. Dr Karsten Zimmermann, a Professor of European Planning Cultures at Technical University Dortmund – Germany and Prof. Dr Jeroen Klink, a Professor of Economics and Urban Planning at the Federal University of ABC (UFABC)- Brazil- to validate the information gathered from the literature review and documentary analysis, as well as to generate further professional and academic insights.

The Institutional Setting in Four Case Metropolises

Brazil

As a response to the rapid urbanization process in the 1950s and 1960s, the Brazilian military regime established nine metropolitan regions (including São Paulo and Belo Horizonte) by the Complementary Law No. 14, 1973 to provide possibilities for municipalities to jointly deliver services of common interest (Araújo et al., 2016). After the military regime, new regulations introduced by the 1988 Constitution brought new actors and processes to the arena of metropolitan governance. However, the Constitution did not provide a national framework for metropolitan governance but rather left this mandate to the states (The World Bank, 2015). Similarly, the subsequent federal laws such as the City Statute of 2001 only emphasized municipal planning responsibilities, maintaining metropolitan governance “in a political, institutional, and administrative vacuum” (Souza, 2007, p 238). Nevertheless, according to Arretche (2013), the existing metropolitan regions in Brazil vary in terms of institutional design, but most tend to rely on an advisory or consultative board, a deliberation council, and a metropolitan fund.

With the fragility of metropolitan governance, other legal instruments have come up, such as the Law of Public Consortia (in 2005), which provided a legal framework for inter-municipal cooperation to carry out actions of common interest. Further, the Statute of the Metropolis from 2015 outlined general principles and guidelines for metropolitan governance and established criteria for federal support for action that involve inter-federative governance in urban development.

a) São Paulo Metropolitan Area (RMSP)

As one of the largest urban agglomerations in the world, the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo (RMSP) concentrates diversified economic activities making it a primary node in the global city network (Parnreiter, 2015). The RMSP with its approximately 20 million inhabitants, comprises 39 municipalities

and generates more than 1/3 of the Brazilian GDP and half of its industrial production (The World Bank, 2015).

Over the years, several institutional structures have been developed in the RMSP, to support coordination and development across the region. However, the key challenge has been the lack of decision-making authority and limited financing mechanisms within the institutions leaving them with only an advisory role (Wetzel, 2013). The earlier structures of RMSP were based on two councils (consultative and deliberative) supported by a planning agency, a transport agency and a metropolitan fund. Throughout the institutional trajectory of the RMSP, the planning agency (Empresa Metropolitana da Grande São Paulo—EMPLASA) remained constant since its formation in 1975, working as a technical body for territorial planning until its extinction in 2019.

The most recent reorganization of the RMSP, based on Complementary Law no. 1,139 of 2011, establishes three new instruments in the management of metropolitan issues: a) The Regional Development Council; b) The Metropolitan Agency; c) The Metropolitan Development Fund. The regional council is supported by sub-regional advisory councils that would involve representatives from civil society. Although municipalities, the state government and civil society are represented, the governance structure suffers “from a lack of effectively functional mechanisms for collaborative planning and management that could involve and mobilize both private and public actors alike, including local governments and inter-municipal consortia” (Klink 2017, p.329).

Nevertheless, innovative bottom-up experimentations have emerged among municipalities in form of Inter-municipal Consortia—which operate within the metropolitan territory. The consortium in the Greater ABC region is an example that has demonstrated a considerable level of successful inter-municipal cooperation because it has taken a pragmatic approach such as incremental pilot projects (Frey, 2021; Klink, 2017).

Overall, the RMSP has remained weak in institutional structuring despite the long history of municipal coordination and inter-municipal cooperation like in the case of the consortium of the Greater ABC. Prof. Klink, a panellist for this research, summarizes the weaknesses of the RMSP as follows:

...the issues we're grappling with still nowadays are the lack of Metropolitan awareness, lack of Metropolitan institutions, like you're aware of the case of EMPLASA that has just been extinguished, and a complete lack of institutional financial structures.

b) Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte (RMBH)

The Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte (RMBH) is the third-largest metropolitan area in Brazil, located in the state of Minas Gerais. Since its institution in 1973, the number of municipalities has expanded from 14 to today's 34 with a population of about 6 million in a territory covering 9,468 km² (Coy et al., 2018). The RMBH accounts for a third of the GDP of Minas Gerais and a quarter of the population.

The institutional structures in RMBH have commonly been lauded for being participatory and inclusive. However, this was not always the case as the initial cooperation in the region was headed by a planning agency known as PLAMBEL (Planejamento da Região Metropolitana de Belo Horizonte), which later, during the financial crisis of the 1980s, lost importance. The attempt to restore cooperation in RMBH after the new constitution of 1988 led to the creation of a new institutional structure, which, however, failed initially due to the poor involvement of the state government (Pires, 2010).

A constitutional amendment from 2004 and a subsequent law from 2006 amended the metropolitan structure and defined “the new models and legislative instruments” that provided an innovative

governance structure based on participation and inclusiveness with the aim of transforming the RMBH into a fairer, more dynamic and sustainable metropolis¹.

The institutionalized arrangement of the RMBH, stipulated in the Law No. 88, 2006 (Minas Gerais, 2006) comprises the Metropolitan Assembly, the Metropolitan Deliberative Council, the RMBH Development Agency and the Metropolitan Development Fund. A key initiative is the inclusion of representatives of a metropolitan collegiate, comprising civil society actors, into the Deliberative Council as a promising attempt to create a process of participatory planning and social control at the metropolitan level (Monte-Mór et al., 2016).

Prof. Klink summarizes the institutional structuring of RMBH as follows:

...this case is generally considered to be a positive case amid lots of failures. Institutionally speaking, it did its homework [...] because they organized institutional structures from 2007/2008 onwards [...] established a metropolitan development agency and managed to set up a metropolitan bureaucracy responsible to coordinate the metropolitan plan.

Germany

Germany is a federal country with four levels of elected public administration: national, state (Länder), county (Kreise) and municipality. The Länder are responsible for providing the institutional settings for the municipalities and the regional levels, including the metropolitan areas. Zimmerman (2017) notes there exists no particular institutional format for metropolitan governance defined at the federal level and the states do not impose the creation of metropolitan areas on municipalities. Cooperation is therefore highly voluntary, but once metropolitan areas are created, they are under the legal supervision of the state government, whereas the Federal Regional Planning Act only provides general territorial planning principles such as those of sustainability.

Although the federal government does not regulate the metropolitan arrangement, the improvement of the regional economic structure is envisaged as a collaborative task of the federal and state governments. It is for such reasons that the 1995 Ministerial Conference on Metropolitan Planning (MKRO) led to the establishment of the “Initiative European Metropolitan Regions in Germany” as a soft form of intervention with voluntary participation of municipalities (Zimmermann, 2017). Stuttgart and Hannover, the subject of our research, are two of the eleven Metropolitan Regions created.

While the 1960s and 1970s in Germany were characterised by metropolization and institutional arrangements conceived to support service provision and regional and spatial organisation, these were weakened in the 1980s and only saw a resurgence in the 1990s due to the rising necessity for enhancing regional competitiveness (at national and EU levels) (Walter-Rogg, 2006).

a) Verband Region Stuttgart (VRS)

The Stuttgart region is situated in the State of Baden-Württemberg. The Association of the Region Stuttgart (VRS) was constituted by the law on Strengthening the Cooperation in Stuttgart Region (Gesetz über die Stärkung der Zusammenarbeit in der Region Stuttgart) in 1994. It consists of 5 administrative counties (Kreise) and 179 municipalities, including the city of Stuttgart, comprising a population of 2.7 million with 630,000 people living in the city of Stuttgart (Slack 2019; Walter 2003; Zimmermann 2017).

The origins of inter-municipal cooperation in Stuttgart date back to the 1950s and 1960s with loose and voluntary organisations of municipalities, which, however, lacked real capacities for solving regional problems. Even state-driven reforms in the 1970s that included a regional corporation and a

¹ <http://www.rmbh.org.br/rmbh.php#arranjo>

neighbourhood association, were not successful as these lacked decision-making powers (Megerle, 2009) and faced resistance from local governments (Zimmermann, 2011). Only the 1990s crises brought about by the German reunification and the adoption of the European single market in 1993 (Zimmermann, 2017) and the resulting demographic and land-use imbalance in Stuttgart finally demanded a regional approach that was deemed as a solution to the growing need to compete at European/global scale (Bajomi et al. 2018). Following the impetus for stronger regional integration, the state established the VRS as a second-level metropolitan entity, with specific coordination and service delivery functions (Anderson, 2015). These functions include regional planning, landscape planning, economic development, transport, waste and tourism marketing and some voluntary tasks (Verband Region Stuttgart, 2019).

At the heart of VRS is the directly elected Regional Assembly giving the Stuttgart region its “own parliament” entrusted with decision-making powers on topics assigned to VRS (Zimmermann, 2017; Walter, 2003). Zimmermann (2014) notes that this direct election was an idea pushed strongly by the minister-president at that time with the expectation to develop a sense of regional identity and to solve existing regional conflicts. The 80-96 members of the regional assembly are elected for a five-year term by the eligible voters in the region (Kiwitt & Lang, 2017).

The assembly is headed by an honorary chairman, who is also elected for 5 years and who chairs the meetings of the regional assembly and its committees. The administrative functions of the VRS are managed by a regional director, elected by the regional assembly for an eight-year term. There are also three decision-making committees responsible for Economy, Infrastructure and Administration, Planning and Transport.

The VRS has been regarded as an “example of a highly developed regional association” and, along with Hannover, represents “a national and international benchmark in relation to regional cooperation” (Megerle, 2009, p. 45). A key success factor for VRS is the democratic legitimization through direct election of the assembly. As Walter (2003) notes, “authorities, in general, are only regarded legitimate if the public can recognize itself within them” (p. 9). The region has demonstrated successful organizing capacities in improving the conditions for economic development, competitiveness, climate change adjustment and innovation (Anderson, 2015). Despite the successes, VRS also encounters challenges such as consensus problems among municipalities that are tied to traditional conflicts and competition.

b) Region Hannover (RH)

The Region Hannover (RH) is the second-largest agglomeration in northern Germany after Hamburg with an area of 2,300 km² and about 1.2 million inhabitants. Hannover, its core city with a population of 535,000, is the capital of the state of Lower Saxony (Priebes, 2014). The region generates approximately 20% of the GDP of Lower Saxony and is home to about 15% of the state population (Krüger, 2011).

Cooperation within RH dates back to the 1950s with attempts to coordinate action between the city and neighbouring municipalities. However, only in 1963, the state of Lower Saxony considered it needful, approving a statutory measure to create the Greater Hannover Association to conduct physical planning, overcome local border conflicts within the 210 municipalities in its jurisdiction and foster regional economic development (Priebes, 2014; Krüger, 2011).

The German-wide territorial reforms in the 1970s saw the state implement a new institutional structure for RH, with only 20 municipalities and the Hannover city, and formed a new multi-purpose association responsible for services such as social housing, water, energy, waste etc. (Priebes, 2014). A directly elected metropolitan assembly with 75 representatives was also incorporated to manage the association (Krüger, 2011). In the 1980s this association lost most of its mandates and this decade was characterised by weakened regional coordination in RH. It was in the 1990s that the regionalization

debate swept across Germany, leading in 2001 to the amalgamation of the county, the association and the central city into one single 'regional county' based on a two-tier system (Priebes 2002).

The newly formed RH became responsible for most major policies of the region including, among others: business promotion, regional planning, public transport and roads, vocational schools, public health and hospitals, environmental protection, waste management, youth and social welfare, and public safety (Priebes, 2014; 2020). The administrative and political powers are unified under the mandate of the directly elected regional president. The regional assembly made up of 85 members—including the regional president—is the most important political body in the RH that determines the fate of the region on behalf of the electorate. The regional assembly is elected every 5 years, the president every 8 years. There are also regional and sectoral committees that support the regional assembly on specific issues such as traffic, environment and recreation, regional planning, social matters, among others.

The success of Hannover can be attributed to years of coordinated action both in physical planning and fostering regional development. The region has also managed to create a single regional government, yet at the same time maintaining the local identity of its 20 municipalities and enhancing democratic legitimacy by the institution of a directly elected regional assembly.

Prof. Zimmermann, during the panel discussion, notes that:

...Hannover is one of the few regions that had a regional planning authority in place in the 1970s. During the 80s, it was a little bit weakened and gave up some of its functions, but it was never really abolished. So, there were ups and downs, but inter-municipal cooperation was always accepted ...was always part of the DNA of the region.

Discussion

Whilst the nature of the problems faced by local governments in Germany and Brazil have similarities, the cases reviewed demonstrate differences related to historical trajectories, politics, economic situations and values, among other intangible factors, which had an influence on how institutional arrangements evolved within both countries and even within individual cases. It is interesting that instead of these variabilities, some common trends can be identified. Firstly, it can be stated that it was in the 1970s that in both countries there were strong expectations regarding the possibility of comprehensive urban planning. In Germany, these were the heydays of integrated urban development plans, the merging of municipalities and the creation of strong regional authorities, supported however, by democratic participation. In parallel, in Brazil, it was during the authoritarian military regime that the metropolitan regions were created in the belief of planning and controlling cities centrally by the state. From the beginning of the 1980s onwards, significant global changes occurred, which were reflected in the way metropolitan governance was managed. Neoliberal globalization and the discourse of neoliberal urbanism (Zanotto, 2020) turned major cities into global political actors (Oosterlynck et al, 2019), at the same time, they found themselves involved in national and international competition between cities and city regions for entrepreneurial investment (Frey, 2019), favouring strategic diversification, however with the unifying objective of economic success. In Brazil, this process of innovative diversification has also been driven by the democratisation process and the movement of municipalism favouring "municipal autarkism" (Daniel, 2001) or "municipalism at all costs" (Souza, 2006), in detriment to inter-municipal cooperation. That is, whereas in Germany a general trend can be observed to "soft institutions of governance on a larger scale as a reaction to global competition and continental integration" (Blatter, 2006: 121), though with differences between the regions depending on the degree of their embeddedness into the global economy; in Brazil, the historical legacy of the authoritarian military regime in association with the strengthening of local democracy and

decentralisation by the new constitution led, as a general trend, to institutional fragmentation and a weak, dysfunctional regionalization, affecting the capacity to adequately confront ICA dilemmas. But let's have a look at the specific innovation with regard to democratic governance in our four case studies and how they tried to overcome ICA dilemmas.

São Paulo-Maintaining the political structure inherited from the military regime, the practice of metropolitan governance in São Paulo is characterized as continuously weak and insufficiently adapted to the new democratic condition. The RMSP has continued to struggle with this institutional legacy as metropolitan governance has been associated with the military regime and, thus, with centralization and authoritarianism; hence the lack of commitment to decisively address the metropolitan question, especially on the part of the municipalities, which tend to see the strengthening of metropolitan institutions as a threat to their local autonomy.

Although a 2011 state law set out a new structure, it is still characterized by institutional fragmentation, a weak degree of control and decision-making power. Based on the ICA framework, it can be noted that the cooperation in the RMSP goes beyond a mere commitment relying exclusively on social embeddedness, while on the other hand, the governance institutions neither meet the criteria of a delegated regional authority. As regards the RMSP, the regulations are based on state law and the scope of collaboration is complex due to the high number of local authorities, but a high level of autonomy is retained by the municipalities. It rather resembles Councils of Governments or other regional organizations, which are, according to Feiock (2013), focused on collective and multipolicy relationships among local actors. However, enforcement doesn't occur through contractual relations, rather the possibilities of the municipalities are bounded by the legal framework established by the state. In addition, the municipality of São Paulo, apparently much more concerned about dealing with the pressing problems within its own jurisdiction (Sandroni, 2011), on the one hand, and its role as an emerging global player in the globalized world economy (Stren & Friendly, 2019), on the other, did not assume the necessary leading role in pushing the metropolitan question in a collaborative manner.

At the same time, the inter-municipal consortium of the ABC region reveals the possibilities of voluntary inter-municipal arrangements evolving over time into more stable, durable cooperation structures, pointing a possible way to, at least partially, overcome the ICA dilemma in democratic metropolitan governance. While it was voluntary for the municipalities to enter the consortium, resembling a "partnership" arrangement, by the time common projects have been developed and interdependencies and mutual commitments widened, the local governments have given up part of their local autonomy in favor of an augmented capacity of interinstitutional collective action, backed up by civil society and private sector support. The emergence of alternative forms of inter-municipal cooperation in metropolitan regions could therefore be interpreted as a response to an unfunctional arrangement on the metropolitan scale.

Belo Horizonte- As mentioned before, the resistance of mayors to surrender a little of their autonomy leaves transaction costs for collective agreements relatively high, although institutional progress and long-standing practice may contribute to enhancing the capacity for collective negotiation and action. Like RMSP, the RMBH institutional structure alludes to a "council of government", and likewise the enforcement method is not through contracts. Structure and responsibilities are statutory, stipulated by state laws. However, a peculiarity is a parity-based Deliberative Council with participation of representatives from the state and local governments, as well as from civil society. In contrast to São Paulo, the democratic metropolitan reform in Belo Horizonte has been made possible in the legislative process because of the decisive roles and favourable relationship between the mayor of the city of Belo Horizonte and the state governor in the negotiation process: "the fact that the government of the state-supported these proposals in the legislative arena without having had a central role in the discussions

allowed the transactional costs in question to be diluted in the sphere of the Legislative, which allowed them to be superseded” (Faria & Machado, 2011: 142).

There are also a few consortia in the case of RMBH operating as bottom-up initiatives of inter-municipal cooperation. Similar to what we observed in the ABC Region, we also recognized in Belo Horizonte the ambivalence of relatively weak metropolitan arrangements, with its effectiveness depending on the willingness to cooperate on the part of the mayor of the state capital and the governor, but at the same time an opening up of possibilities for voluntary and pragmatic cooperative initiatives between local governments facing collectively very concrete inter or trans-jurisdictional challenges.

Stuttgart-The VRS can be described as a regional authority with a strong governance structure and a directly elected regional assembly. Cooperation based on delegated authority is more encompassing than contractual arrangements, but at the same time, the loss of autonomy among the municipalities is lower than in imposed municipal mergers. The case of VRS is a result of local authorities’ willingness to transfer some of their power and responsibilities to an authority that acts independently at the metropolitan scale. In the case of VRS, the functions of the regional authority are broader in scope than in the case of a typical council of government, but simultaneously some functions are retained at the local level, preserving the local autonomy. Although VRS is not a single jurisdiction, it is able to issue binding decisions in many fields of regional importance. However, as VRS is not a single jurisdiction, coordination costs used to be relatively high; on the other hand, as the members of the regional assembly are directly elected by the citizens, they are usually forced to be accountable to the citizens.

Hannover-The RH has the formal status of a county within the vertical structure of the German political system (Prieps, 2002), making it a proper regional government. As earlier noted, the formation of RH resulted from the amalgamation of the city of Hannover with the surrounding district. Politically, the RH is represented by a directly elected regional president who is also the head of the administration, whereas the directly elected metropolitan council sets the regional norms and regulations.

According to the ICA Framework, regional governments are the strongest form of cooperation involving an extensive transfer of authority imposed by a higher-level authority. Yet, such kind of forced cooperation tends to weaken municipal autonomy as the competencies of municipalities within the region have been greatly reduced. Notwithstanding the process of amalgamation, it is important, however, to mention that the region still involves a total of 20 municipalities, which maintained responsibilities for providing several services at the local level. Heinelt & Zimmermann (2011) also emphasize that strictly speaking, the formation of territorial Hannover was not imposed from above but rather the state was only responding to the will of the municipalities and all political parties of the Hannover agglomeration. In this sense, the Hannover experience is certainly an extraordinary case, especially from a Brazilian perspective, where the trend goes continuously in the direction of the multiplication of municipalities and the increase of in the number of Metropolitan Areas (Araújo et al., 2016), although recent legislative efforts, like in the case of Minas Gerais, aimed at constraining these possibilities (Faria & Machado, 2011).

Cross-Case Analysis

The cases studied in this research reveal many differences that have shaped the subject of metropolitan planning and governance. Historical and political settings, cultural aspects, spatial-temporal dynamics, planning traditions and other factors have shaped the different levels of awareness and practice regarding the metropolitan question. Despite the differences, the cases seem to converge in the sense that all metropolitan areas have struggled in constructing strong and effective governance and planning structures at the metropolitan scale. Nevertheless, they also reveal a common awareness in the

recognition of the opportunities related to the coordination and sharing of public services such as transport, waste, and water; hence the need for cross-boundary collaborative governance and planning.

Whilst this research was not a comparative study in the strict sense, trying to understand the cases from a comparative perspective seems quite appropriate. As demonstrated in the German cases, concentrating a reasonable level of power at the metropolitan level, is crucial to deal effectively with the many problems of metropolitan or regional nature. This is both a functional and a political argument and should help to reduce transaction costs. Nevertheless, in order to avoid metropolitan management to become a mere managerial and technocratic practice, there is need for citizen participation and clear lines of accountability. Our case studies pointed out two basic institutional solutions: the directly elected regional assemblies or parliaments in Germany, or even a directly elected regional President as in the case of Hannover; and the expansion of institutions of participatory democracy and citizen engagement as practised in the ABC region and the RMBH in Brazil, offering both cases promising approaches for more inclusive cooperation at the metropolitan level.

Table 1 below presents a summary of the findings across the studied cases, outlining the variety of arrangements adopted and the different successes and challenges that emerge in each case.

Table 1 – Synoptic summary of the case studies

Metropolis	Type of Institutional Arrangement	Successes	Challenges
São Paulo Metropolitan Area (RMSP) pop. 20m area: 8,000 km ² no. municipalities: 39	Fragmented Governance with lower-level success cases Multiple institutions including Regional Development Council; Metropolitan Agency; Advisory council and a separate Metropolitan Development Fund Inter-municipal Consortium Greater ABC as a successful inter-municipal cooperation	Considerable experience in metropolitan planning Successful bottom-up experience of an inter-municipal consortium in the ABC Region	Authoritarian Institutional and cultural legacies Lack of effective mechanisms for coordination Lack of civil society involvement in metropolitan issues Inadequate financing mechanisms Low institutional legitimation
Metropolitan Region of Belo Horizonte (RMBH) pop. 6m area: 9,500 km ² no. municipalities: 34	Hybrid institutional model -vertical and horizontal coordination Active incorporation of civil society and the private sector through a metropolitan collegiate Multi-institutional structure with a Metropolitan Assembly, Metropolitan Deliberative Council, Regional Development Agency and a Fund	Negotiated integration with active incorporation of civil society Successful design of new institutions for metropolitan governance Long experience of metropolitan coordination Willingness to cooperate between state and municipal governments	Authoritarian Institutional and cultural legacies Institutional complexity Inadequate financing mechanisms
Verband Region Stuttgart (VRS) pop. 2.7m area: 3654 km ² no. municipalities: 179	A second-tier metropolitan entity (regional authority) Directly elected Metropolitan Assembly, hence high political legitimacy and decision-making power Local authorities delegate power to a regional authority	Democratic legitimacy through direct election Strong, well-established regional association Multi-stakeholder approach Strong organisational capacity Bottom-up approach	High negotiation costs Traditional conflicts Limited authority (assigned tasks)
Hannover Region (RH) pop. 1.2m area: 2,300 km ² no. municipalities: 20	Directly elected Regional Government and Regional President Merger of the city and the surrounding district to form a single territory High decision-making capacity Entity in charge of regional policies	High political legitimacy due to direct elections Years of experience in performing regional tasks and planning tradition Successful reorganisation of the region including amalgamation Local identity	Weakening of the local level Possible neglect of participation

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Conclusions

This article aimed to better understand forms of institutional arrangements for metropolitan governance that have evolved to overcome the dilemma of collective action. Based on four metropolises with different structuring and coordinating mechanisms, the study demonstrated that the choice of institutional structures is influenced by the specific local context such as geographical and historical trajectories, local politics, economy, and diverse externalities. Each case has revealed successes and shortcomings in moving towards more coordinated and democratic metropolitan governance.

From a theoretical point of view, the responses to ICA dilemmas have been different, for example, the need to improve efficiency and capacities resulted in mergers or strong regional authorities in Germany, while in Brazil, the metropolitan regions, imposed during the military regime to address the ICA dilemmas, led to institutional fragmentation and hence low state capacity in view of the metropolitan challenges. Our findings concerning the governance arrangements in the cases studied in this paper reveal some limitations of the Institutional Collective Action Framework as an explanatory tool. The framework offers a solid background to understanding why local governments do – or do not – cooperate for collective action, and how the transaction and autonomy costs interplay in the choice of coordination mechanisms. However, the integration mechanisms proposed by the ICA framework (figure 1) run the risk of being idealized as institutional arrangements. Yet, they do not always “fit into the boxes” and neglect other factors that might influence the coordination efforts. Besides transaction costs and benefits other factors such as the contextual configuration and evolution of the local governments' institutional structures as well as the specific political and administrative cultures make a difference and have been important in shaping the collaborative arrangements in the cases studied.

In Brazil, the RMSP and RMBH have struggled due to the institutional legacies that are opposed to a democratically constructed metropolitan agenda, owing to an authoritarian past of the military regime. In both cases, coordination has only been successful where social actors have driven the process in a bottom-up approach as in the case of the ABC area of São Paulo and to some degree, the metro of Belo Horizonte. Several trials and errors of institutional structures have emerged over the years, but ultimately, they lack decision-making authority and democratic legitimation to coordinate planning and public policy-making at the metropolitan level. On the other hand, the cases in Germany have come up as more powerful in terms of their ability to coordinate metropolitan functions. Although the RH and the VRS slightly differ in their institutional designs, outlining the differences in the process through which they have evolved to their current governance arrangements, makes them interesting in that they show how the different scenarios and complexities influence the creation and governance of metropolitan areas. The two regional authorities seem to enjoy sufficient decision-making powers, financial resources and high technical capacities in order to effectively coordinate functions of regional interest.

Several insights can be drawn from the practices identified in these cases that can contribute to the theoretical debate on governing resilient metropolises. As a start, there is no one-fits-all arrangement appropriate for indiscriminate replication. As such, metropolitan governance structures should be adapted to the local political and socio-economic context leveraging the potentiality of flexible approaches. Second, citizen participation is essential in fostering legitimacy and accountability as demonstrated by active civil society participation in the cases of RMBH and the ABC consortium in RMSP. Frey (2019) notes that the absence of “real regional citizenship” is a fundamental limiting factor for regional democracy. Third, metropolitan structures based on democracy, transparency and collaboration, as seen in Stuttgart and Hannover, foster political legitimation and widen regional decision-making power. Fourth, strengthened decision-making authority and financial mechanisms are crucial for metropolitan institutions to be able to deliver. Metropolitan areas hardly have the necessary fiscal autonomy and mostly depend on the national institutional framework and the transfer of powers and resources from other governmental tiers, standing in the way of success as shown in the Brazilian cases. Lastly, there are opportunities to leverage national government support in terms of providing legal frameworks and incentivising cooperation that could help to improve inter-jurisdictional planning processes and policy integration in favour of sustainable metropolitan development.

Data availability statement

The dataset that supports the results of this paper is available at SciELO Data and can be accessed via <https://doi.org/10.48331/scielodata.W6TFNY>

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