



IGU Regional Conference
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Metropolitan governance rescaling in Belgium, France and United Kingdom. Studying boundaries of urban governments through the application of an analytical framework for institutional changes.

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Urban and metropolitan rescaling (definition 1)

- Adaptation to a new international economic context (globalisation, post-fordism, capital flows, etc.), with a dialectic relation between de-territorialisation and a re-territorialisation.
- Linked with state capacities transformations and shifts towards sup- and sub-national institutions.
- Cities play an important role as neo-liberal agents in a competing world.
- The rescaling has major implications on urban and metropolitan governance (fragmentation and reconfiguration, changes in action capacities of institutions, evolution of stakeholders role and regulatory processes, relations with other urban nodes).

“Throughout western Europe, this increasing internal fragmentation, redifferentiation and polarisation [...] has been further intensified since the early 1980s through: the deployment of new forms of regional structural policy towards the ‘endogeneous’ development of major urban regions [...] and the construction of new forms and levels of state territorial organisation, notably on urban-regional or metropolitan scale.” (Brenner, 1999: 440)

Urban government and urban governance (definition 2)

- Urban government = level of government in urban areas (not necessarily at city scale) : municipalities, districts, communities, urban communities, etc.
- Significant differences between European countries due to national legislation, geographical and cultural specificities, especially:
 - size, fragmentation, population
 - place in national institutional framework
 - competencies, fiscal capacity
 - policy and tools
- Urban government has a specific status in urban governance: urban governance has not replaced urban government.
- Urban governance: a lot of understandings (ambiguity inherited from governance theories).
- “Urban governance is a process of mediation and coordination of institutions (multi-level), markets actors, civil society and associations and all urban stakeholders in order to define and achieve collective goals in a fragmented and unpredictable context.” (adapt. from Le Galès, 1995).

Urban government boundaries and governance

- Government boundaries in urban areas and changes of these boundaries are a major issue of urban politicians and practitioners.
 - They are defined as the spatial limits of governments.
 - They are a significant and structural parts of the urban governance system.
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- Boundaries of urban governments reflect the local fragmentation and have significant impacts on relation between local institutions.
 - Changes in these boundaries have a great effect on other urban actors networks or structure and relations/regulation between them, e.g. NGO, companies, chamber of commerce, etc.
 - Boundaries have a thickness depending on the nature of the institution.
 - Boundaries affect “feeling of belonging” (population, companies, etc.) and are affected by this feeling.
 - They are critical issues of “governance strategies” at urban area or metropolitan scale, especially for elected.

Changing boundaries in changing urban areas

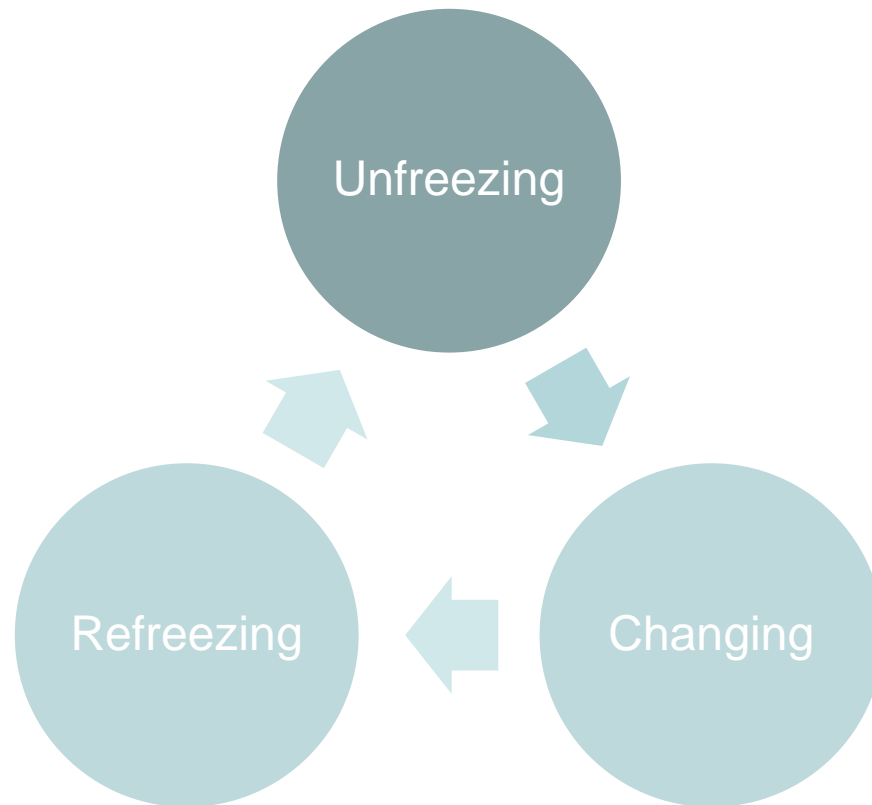
OBSERVATIONS

- Despite common tendencies in some European countries, changes in urban government boundaries differ from one country to another.
- There are a lot of “urban government/governance models”.
- Despite inefficiency of some boundaries, sometimes they withstand pressures.
- Boundary changes are not always related to competencies / other structural change (merger, etc.).

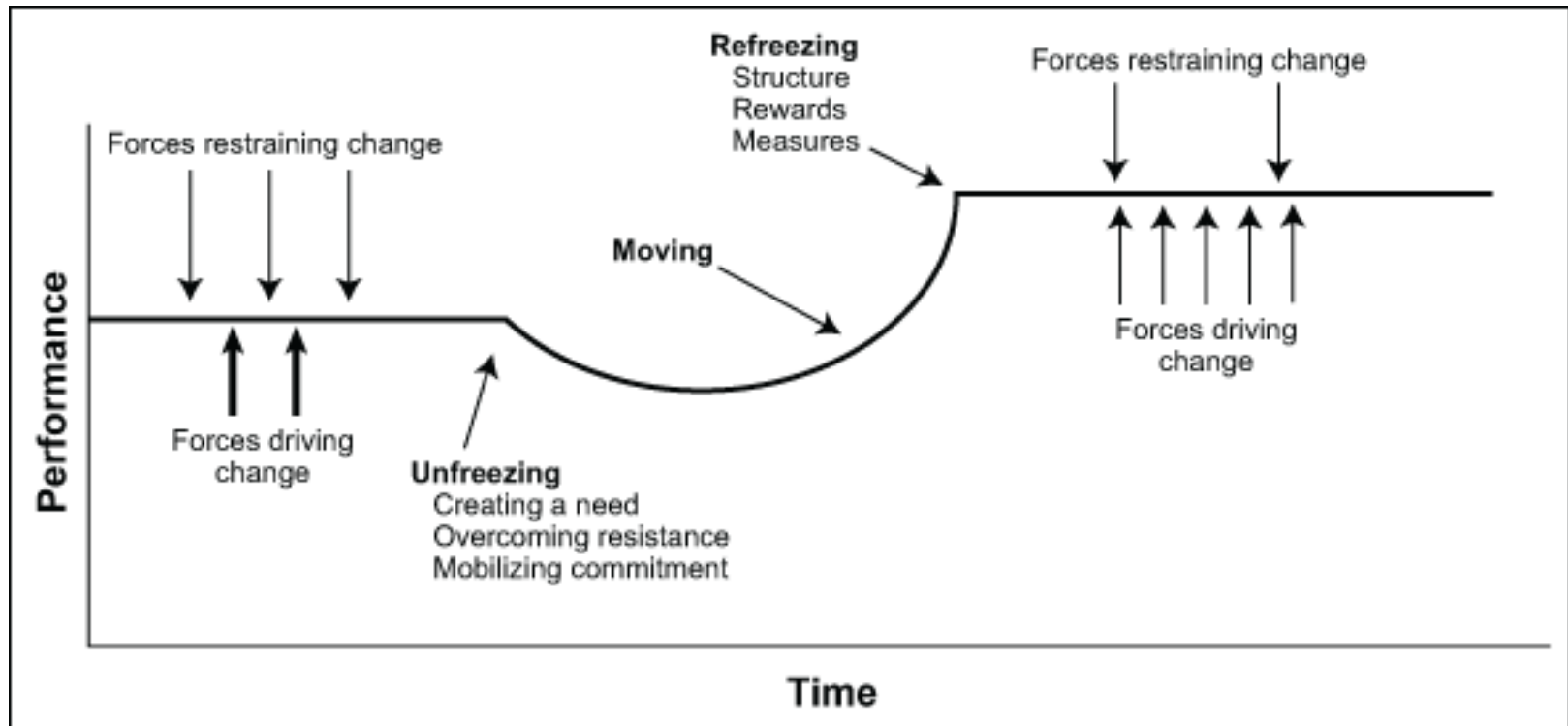
AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

- Understanding why and how government boundaries change.
- Understanding why some obsolete boundaries withstand.
- Find an analytical tool to describe a great number of change periods.

Social change model (K. Lewin, 1947)



Social change model (Thatte *et al.*, 2012)



Institutional change theories

Buitelaar *et al.* (2007) identified 4 approaches of institutional change:

INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN (Broomley, 1991)

- Institutions are voluntary designed relations.
- Norms and rules creation, organisation.

INSTITUTIONAL AND EVOLUTIONARY ECONOMIC

- Selection based on efficiency, market dynamic (Hayek, 1960).
- Related to transaction-cost theories: minimisation of transaction costs to improve economic efficiency (Williamson).

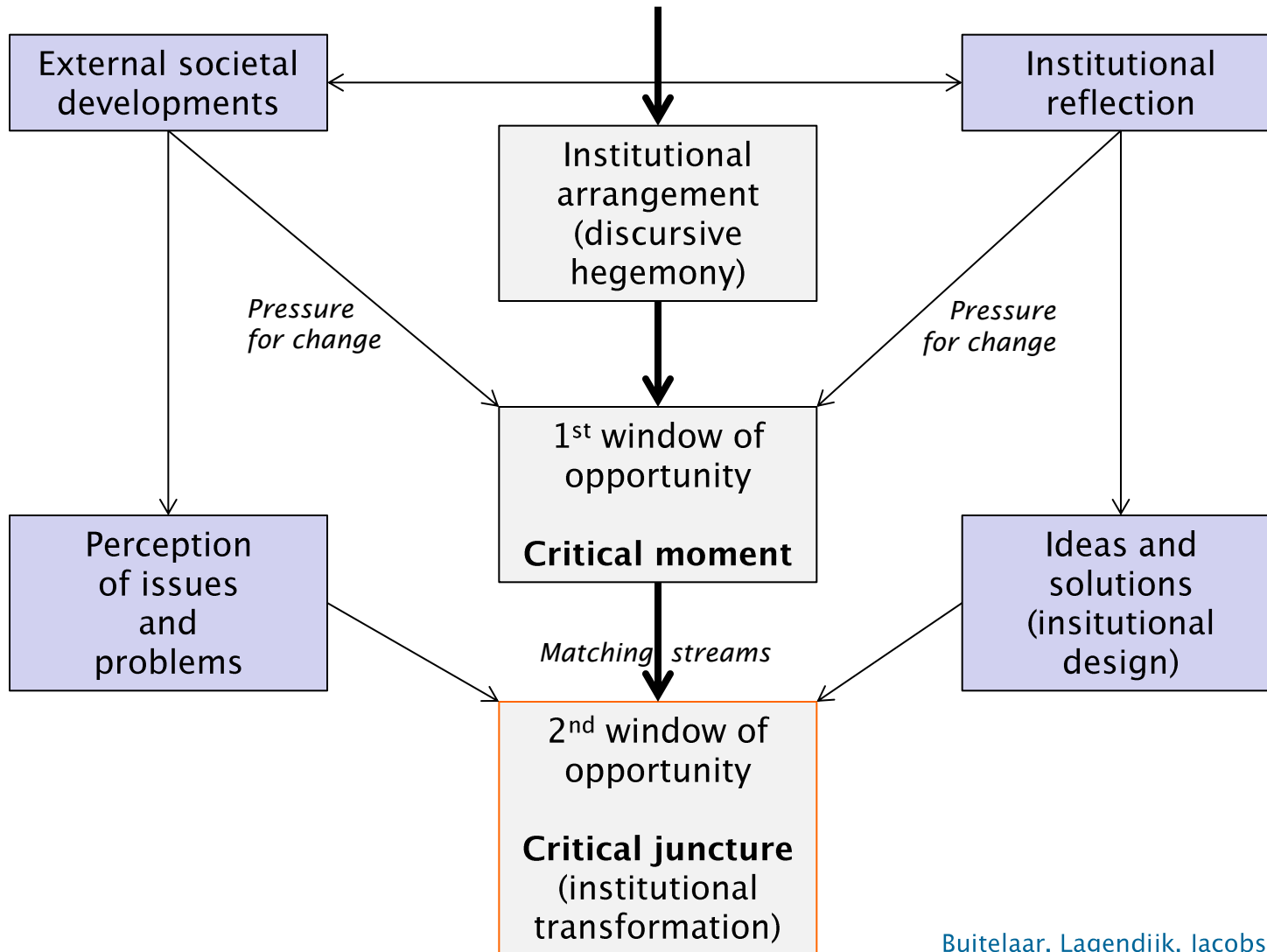
PATH DEPENDENCY (North)

- Each choice affects the next evolution of institutions (“history matters”).

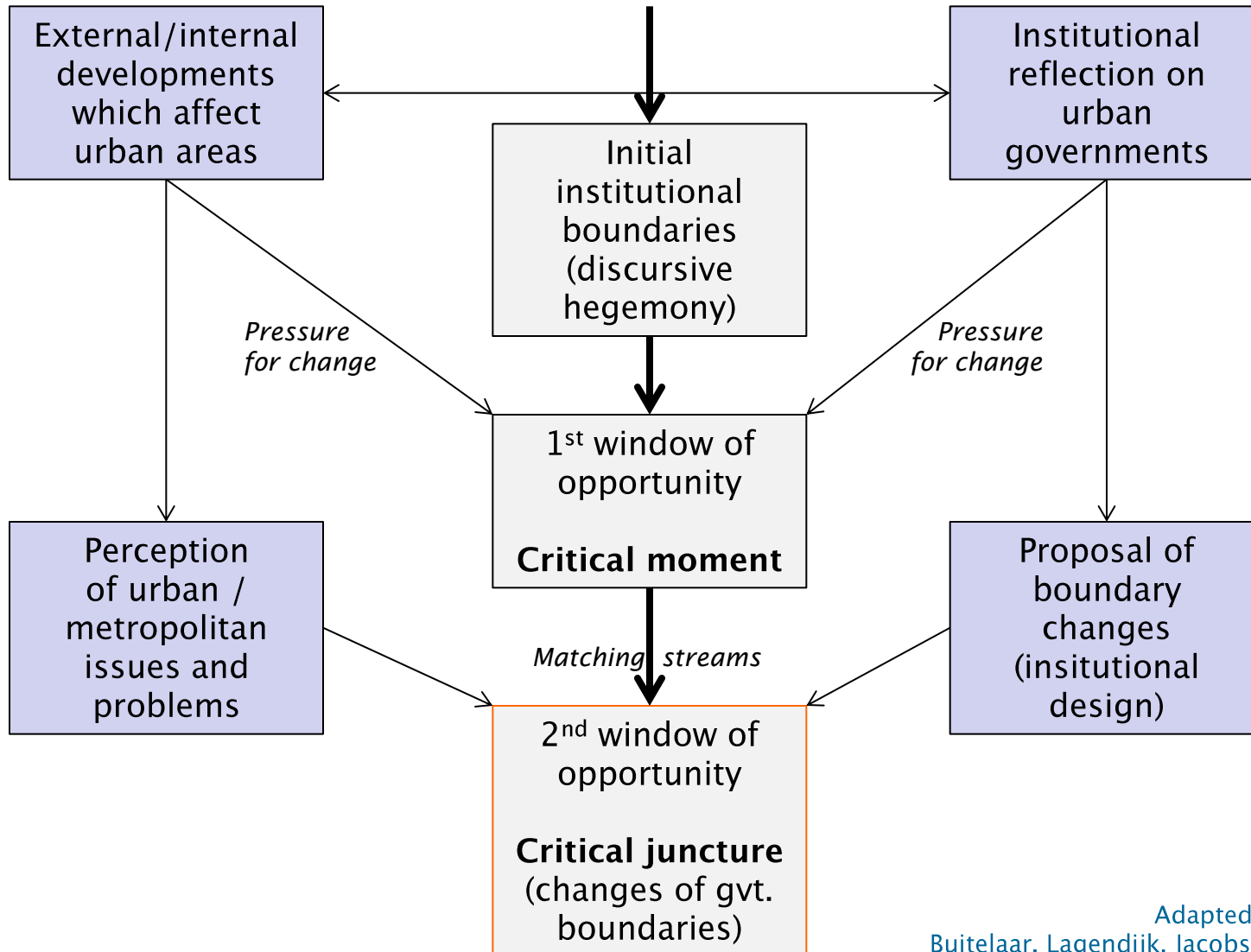
SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

- Role of political inequalities: powerful actors or governing actors maintain a specific institution or try to increase their position (instrumental view).

Institutional change model (Buitelaar et al., 2007)



Urban government boundaries change model



Adapted by the author from Buitelaar, Lagendijk, Jacobs, 2007. A theory of institutional change illustrated by Dutch land policy. *Environment and Planning A*, 39: 897

Research framework

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

- Systematic analysis of 1st and 2nd windows of opportunity for a set of cities.
- Local publications analysis
- Semi-structured interviews of stakeholders.

SELECTED CITIES

Small metropolis and second-tier cities.

- Belgium: Liège, Bruxelles.
- United-Kingdom: Sheffield.
- France: Metz.

Case studies



Sheffield (United Kingdom)

UA - 640.000 inhab.

Brussels (Belgium)

UA - 1.800.000 inhab.

Liège (Belgium)

UA - 650.000 inhab.

Metz (France)

UA - 390.000 inhab.

Saint-Étienne (France)

UA - 510.000 inhab.

Case studies

Urban area	Description	Date	Critical juncture
Liège	Compulsory communal merge	1977	Yes. Partial.
Liège	Creation of an urban community.	2001	No.
Brussels	Creation of an urban community	1971	Yes.
Brussels	Creation of a city-region	1989	Partial.
Brussels	Creation of a metropolitan community	2012	Yes.
Sheffield	Consolidation of the local authority (amalgamation/annexation)	1974	Yes.
Sheffield	Creation of « Sheffield City Region ».	2013	Yes.
Saint-Étienne	Creation of an urban community.	2001	Yes. Partial.
Saint-Étienne	Merge of intercommunal cooperations	2013	No.
Metz	Merge of intercommunal cooperations.	2013	Yes. Partial.

Sample 1.1: Brussels (Belgium)

Context

Federal capital of Belgium.

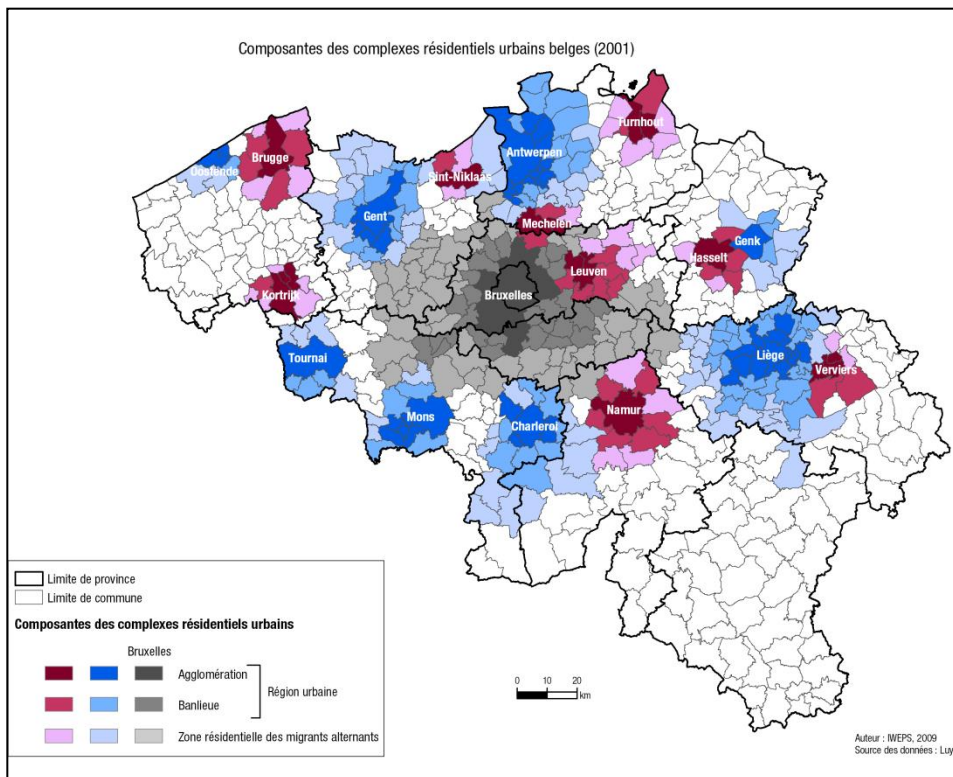
City-region: 1.100.000 inhab.
Urban region: 1.800.000 inhab.

City-region limits inherited from the 17th and 18th century. Officially created in 1971.

The city-region is a source of conflict between the Dutch community and the French community. Federal country.

Analysed event

Design of a cross-regional “Metropolitan community” in 2012, on the basis of the old Brabant.



IWEPS, 2009

Sample 1.2: Brussels (Belgium)

Initial institutional boundaries	Boundaries limited to Brussels–Capital region. No cooperation between other regions. Profound division between concern regions.
External / internal developments which affect urban area	Metropolisation effects. Periurban dynamics affecting both population and economic activities. Political struggle on the “Frenchisation” of the (Flemish) periphery.
Institutional reflections	Economic cooperation for the commuting area of large metropolis. Metropolitan planning.
Critical moment (1)	First discussion on a federal agreement.
Perception of urban issues and problems	Regional size is an impediment to economic development. Brussels highways are in Flanders.
Proposal of boundary change	– Merge of institutions in old Brabant. – Creation of a large metropolis for economic purp.
Critical juncture (2)	Partial: Federal agreement in 2012. Government scale for the city–region, cooperation scale for the economic area around Brussel. Associated with the creation of a new institution with limited (indicative) competencies.

Sample 2.1: Metz (France)

Context

Urban area included in the “Sillon Lorrain”, a French metropolis.

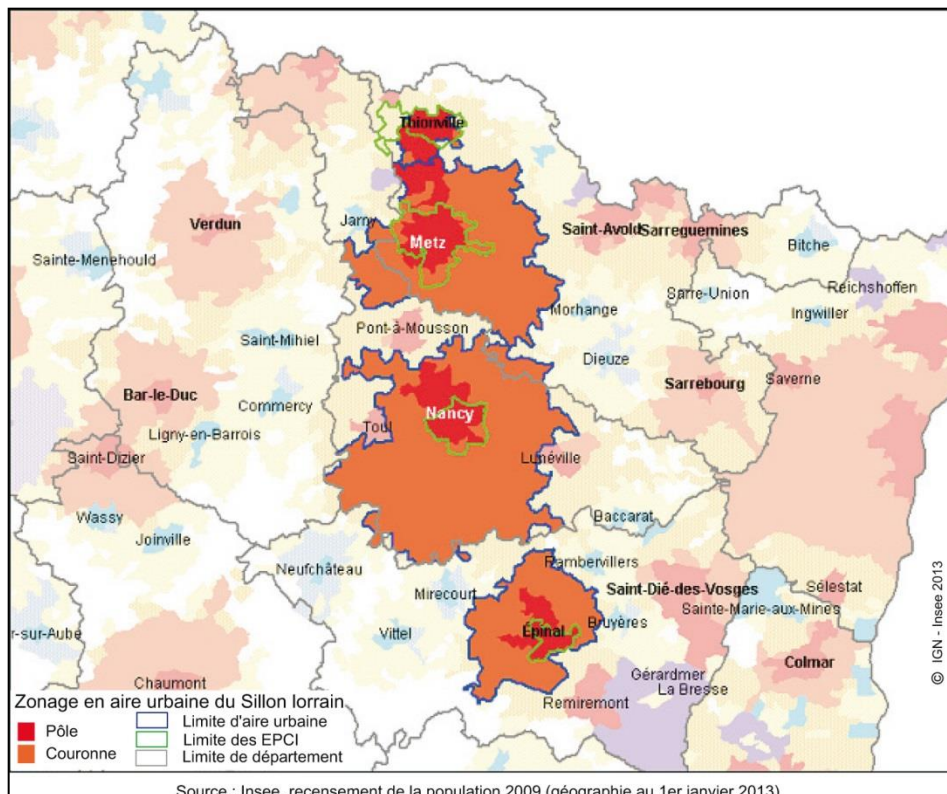
Communauté: 225.000 inhab.
Urban region: 390.000 inhab.

Limited intercommunal structure due to the formation of “defensive intercommunals” around city-center.

French local public administration is expensive.

Analysed event

Formulation of the “Departmental outline for intercommunal cooperation” in 2013–2014 (intercommunals merger).



Sample 2.2: Metz (France)

Initial institutional boundaries	Intercommunal boundaries limited to a part of the urban area. Fragmented intercommunal framework.
External / internal developments which affect urban area	Periurban dynamics affecting both population and economic activities.
Institutional reflections	Creation of inter–inter–municipal cooperations. Cost of institutional framework and public expenses.
Critical moment (1)	Formulation of the “Departmental outline for intercommunal cooperation” in 2013–2014 (intercommunals merger).
Perception of urban issues and problems	Spillover effects, development of economic activities areas out of the centre intercommunal.
Proposal of boundary change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Merge of some intercommunals.– Statu Quo.
Critical juncture (2)	Partial: merge of a small intercommunal with Metz Métropole in 2014. No creation of a new institution.

Some concluding remarks

Preliminary results of this ongoing research

- The analytical framework is robust and practical for a large range of second-tier cities.
- It is useful for the understanding of boundary changes (or durability) of urban governments.
- Initial framework has been adapted to include internal pressure in urban areas.
- The focus can be on boundaries or governments. The study of boundaries is a good (but incomplete) approach for the understanding of metropolitan governance, as well as government.



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