





Introduction: Horizontal Intergovernmental Coordination—A Conceptual Framework

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THE RELEVANCE OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Intergovernmental coordination is one of the most important challenges for modern governments. It is needed to accommodate the actions of distinct jurisdictions in multilevel state architectures (Agranoff, 2004; Aja & Colino, 2014); to avoid spillovers beyond the border of a territory, especially in situations of institutional incongruency (Bollevy, 2009); to solve collective action problems (Feiock, 2013); to integrate policy implementation in dealing with wicked problems (Head & Alford, 2015; Trein et al., 2020); or simply to ensure information, communication, and consequently learning and harmonisation in policymaking among governments

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at the same (or different) levels of government (Behnke & Mueller, 2017). It received a certain amount of attention among federalism scholars (Bakvis & Brown, 2010; Fenna, 2012; Hegele, 2018). In public administration and public policy research, interest surged in particular during and after the Covid-19 crisis (see e.g. Kuhlmann & Franzke, 2021; Navarro & Velasco, 2022; Schnabel & Hegele, 2021). Yet there is still a striking lack of awareness of its relevance, let alone of knowledge on how to structure and organise coordination such as to achieve desired outcomes.

Intergovernmental coordination is so important because it is a necessary response to a twin trend of increasing complexity of both multilevel architectures and policy problems. *Multilevel architectures*, especially the countries inside or neighbouring the political and geographical Europe, have become significantly more multilevel over the past decades. Powers were shifted upwards from the nation state to the EU, because the EU was and still is attracting ever more policy jurisdictions. And powers were shifted downwards to subnational government, because even in traditional unitary states (in part as a reaction to actual or aspired EU membership) decentralisation reforms were enacted, thereby empowering regional and local authorities (Benz, 2024, pp. 21–22). Regarding *policy problems*, the most pressing policy challenges of our time—from climate change mitigation and sustainable development over migration and integration on to providing efficient and equitable services to the citizens—are depicted as so-called ‘wicked problems’. Those policy problems are generally complex, intersect and interact with other policy problems, they escape an easy solution by one policy intervention and often have no definite solution at all (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 160). What is more, wicked problems lack a clear definition of the nature of the policy problem and leave little room for trial and error, thereby further complicating the implementation of a solution. Complexity is hence due, on the one hand, to the nature of the problems which typically are not single-issue problems but span various aspects and perspectives. Furthermore, actor constellations add to the complexity: governments at different levels, politicians, bureaucrats, parliamentarians, and stakeholders from the economy and civil society are involved. All of them pursue potentially conflicting interests, which makes negotiations complex, burdensome, and time-consuming.

This twin trend of increasing complexity hence challenges the coordinative capacity of policymakers more than ever before. More complexity means more interdependency, and if this interdependency is not processed adequately, the effects of uncoordinated policy decisions can at best be inefficient and at worst fatal, especially in situations of crisis outside the

regular day-to-day business (Kuhlmann et al., 2024). Crisis management necessitates coordination even more acutely to avert the lingering catastrophe (for many see Boin et al., 2018). Moreover, in an era in which citizens of democratic states increasingly scrutinise the actions of their governments, failure to achieve coordination jeopardises the democratic legitimacy of elected governments. It is hence vital for governments at all levels to reap the benefits of coordinated action and to avoid the negative externalities of non-coordination across policy sectors, across territorial units, and even across state boundaries.

In such a complex multidimensional setting, however, we still lack systematic knowledge on how to organise, manage, and implement intergovernmental coordination under various conditions. There is not even consensus about what coordination actually is, let alone how it can be achieved. It is hence the aim of this edited volume to *provide a shared conceptualisation of coordination with particular emphasis on horizontal intergovernmental coordination*; and to explore systematically *how governments at all levels manage coordination in practice*—in day-to-day business as well as in crisis situations. This introductory chapter serves to outline the concept of intergovernmental coordination as a foundation on which the chapters assembled in this book will build upon. Furthermore, it provides an outlook on the structure of the book, explaining the comparative rationale and set-up as well as the analytic criteria along which individual chapters are organised.

CONCEPTUALISING HORIZONTAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

By focusing on horizontal intergovernmental coordination, we deliberately pick one specific aspect of multilevel governance (MLG) which we analyse in greater detail. MLG research deals basically with problems of coordinating decisions and actions in complex state architectures of divided yet interdependent authority. In this sense, MLG is the management of interdependencies, and the major instrument of managing interdependencies is coordination (Benz, 2007). MLG as an analytic framework inspired a host of conceptual and empirical research in the past 25 years (Bache & Flinders, 2004; Behnke et al., 2019; Benz, 2024; Enderlein et al., 2010; Hooghe & Marks, 2003; Piattoni, 2010), which helped us understand the nature of decision problems in the European Union, of power conflicts between subnational and national governments, and of

dynamics of authority migration upwards and downwards from national governments. As the word ‘multilevel’ suggests, however, horizontal relations and coordination problems, that is, between actors at the same territorial level, have found far less attention in MLG scholarship than vertical relations across two or more levels of government. Horizontal relations are, however, an integral part of MLG. They have been investigated, among others, in local government studies (Teles & Swianiewicz, 2018), metropolitan governance studies (Feiock, 2004; Heinelt & Kübler, 2005), and public administration research (Lægheid et al., 2014). By focusing on horizontal intergovernmental coordination, we thus add to a so far under-researched aspect in MLG studies. Also, we link subdisciplines by encouraging scholars who dealt with horizontal coordination in the realm of the above-mentioned subdisciplines to reinterpret their findings in the analytical categories of MLG.

Coordination as Process or Outcome

Coordination has been called the ‘philosopher’s stone for government’ (Peters, 2015, p. 2), meaning that it is one of the oldest and never entirely soluble problems of public action. It is ubiquitous, of increasing relevance, and there is no single best way to solve it. Coordination becomes necessary as a result of specialisation of tasks and concomitant institutional differentiation, hence creating interdependence between actors in solving complex problems.

It is, however, not only a problem of harmonising action *between* organisations; coordination problems occur just as well *within* organisations, following necessarily from the perennial problem of combining specialist and generalist perspectives when taking decisions on complex issues. The specialist perspective is important to understand the details of the problem at hand. The generalist perspective is necessary to understand the ramifications of a problem, its links with other problems, and the external effects of decisions on policy sectors or territories outside the narrow focus of the specialist. Within organisations, division of labour between organisational sections and units secures the necessary expertise, but then necessitates coordination across units. The same trade-off between a specialist and a generalist perspective also occurs in the division of labour between organisations, or, for that matter, between territorial units, governments, and states.

In organisation and public management research, coordination is often treated as a state of the world, a result or an outcome of preceding actions. Based on an understanding of coordination as an outcome, Metcalfe invented his so-called coordination scale (Metcalfe, 1994), which has been quoted and adapted amply since. Similarly, in policy research, the notion of ‘policy integration’ is linked to the same understanding of coordination or integration as a state of the world (Tosun & Lang, 2017; Trein et al., 2020). In our view, that is, from an MLG perspective, it is however more helpful to conceive of coordination as a process (Schnabel & Hegele, 2021). As elaborated in the theory of actor-centred institutionalism (Scharpf, 1997), coordination processes involve actions, interactions, and decisions of (mostly corporate) actors within an interaction situation. The interaction situation is structured by institutions which distribute power among the actors involved and set up norms of acceptable behaviour. It is hence possible to analyse the institutional framework that structures the situation, the preferences or positions of actors, their strategies of interaction in the decision-making process, and the results that ensue from the process. The process perspective on coordination not only allows to analyse in greater detail how coordination comes about and sheds light on the challenges of reaching coordinated outcomes; it is also possible to distinguish analytically and empirically a decision process which may be more or less coordinated from an outcome which may or may not result in coordinated action. Coordination processes, even if they take place, may fail to lead to the desired outcome. Negotiations may fail, and the decisions taken by the actors may result in negative externalities for others or may deviate from joint resolutions.

Following the conceptualisation of actor-centred institutionalism, coordination as a process involves several steps: *First*, actors must form a *position*, which may itself involve preference aggregation within corporate actors, and positions and preferences may conflict between actors. *Second*, *communication* must take place, taking the form of information, negotiation, arguing, or bargaining among the actors. To be sure, game theory also acknowledges the possibility of coordination without communication, based on mutual observation and adaptation or adherence to conventions, as exemplified by the decision to organise traffic on the left or on the right side of the street. But the type of problems that can be solved without communication and based on mutual observation and adaptation allows only for limited complexity and presupposes identical interests among all involved actors. Hence, the standard situation of coordination

will involve communication. *Third*, decisions need to be taken according to a *decision-making rule* (typically voting, with varying quorums ranging from a dictatorial decision to unanimity). The whole process is embedded in an institutional framework of formal and informal rules, roles, and expectations. And every step involves its own challenges making the result prone to failure. For example, conflicts of interest need to be moderated, potential collective action problems need to be overcome, and the result must meet accepted by the actors involved.

While this description of coordination as a process does not offer a neat and simple definition, it allows to treat rather different situations as substantially comparable and to reach generalisable insights across a great variety of empirical instances. With this conceptual focus on process, we can also distinguish different dimensions of success of coordination: the successful establishment of a coordination body and its use by actors over time to manage a policy problem; the successful interaction of actors resulting in shared understanding, proposals, or agreements and joint projects; or the successful management of the underlying policy issue, and the coordination of monitoring and evaluation efforts.

Actors of Coordination: The Focus on Governments

Studies of coordination based on a broad application of the governance concept tend to emphasise the role of non-state actors as relevant stakeholders in processes of production and co-production of public policies, especially in network and participatory governance literatures (Hendriks & Boswell, 2018; Rhodes, 1997). MLG theory, while acknowledging the relevance of private actors for policymaking, mostly emphasises *state* actors at various levels or in different units of government as the main units of analysis. Territories and nation states still play a core role in governance. And within nation states, state actors—at central as well as regional levels—are the ones entrusted by the sovereign to take binding decisions within the confines of their territory (Mayntz, 1987). In our analysis of inter-governmental relations, based on the question how policymaking and policy implementation can be coordinated, we follow the emphasis of MLG research on the relevance of state actors. What is more, we focus primarily on relations *between executive actors*, that is, executive politicians, ministries and public agencies, and public servants due to their elevated role in policymaking and implementation. This does not preclude, however, relations *within* governmental units, for example between branches

of government, between executive departments, or collaborative networks involving non-governmental stakeholders. But, for example in intra-parliamentary relations, party conflicts or challenges between governmental and oppositional factions are of less interest here. Relations are broadly understood, encompassing formal and informal institutions, networks, processes, routines, or even cognitive patterns, where relevant.

Dimensions of Coordination: The Focus on Horizontal Relations

Typically, coordination problems are grouped along the dimensions of vertical and horizontal (and sometimes cross-sectoral) coordination (Schnabel & Hegele, 2021). Still, what ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ mean in a given situation can only be understood by taking into account the situation context as a frame of reference (Behnke, 2018, p. 262).

Vertical coordination always involves a notion of hierarchy, where actors at a superior level of decision-making (in organisations: a higher hierarchical level; between organisations: e.g. a ministry as opposed to a government agency; and between territorial units: the central government as opposed to regional or local governments) interact with actors at a lower level of decision-making. Often, the hierarchy of levels is mirrored in a hierarchy of powers, attributing to the actor at the higher level more decision or adjudication powers. Power relations and means of power are hence unequally distributed, but transaction costs can be lowered by hierarchical modes of decision-making.

Horizontal coordination takes place between actors or units at the same hierarchical level. Again, this may mean different sections in an organisation, different departments in a government, or different governments at the same level—inter-municipal, inter-regional, or inter-national coordination. Horizontal coordination can be bi- or multilateral, involving two, a few, or all units of one level. Sometimes, horizontal coordination may also involve a vertical component, when units at a lower hierarchical level coordinate their action to prevent encroachment in their powers from higher-level governments (Bednar, 2009; Schnabel, 2017). In the above-mentioned, broader understanding of governance, horizontal coordination may also be used to denote coordination processes and institutions between state and private actors, for example in collaborative networks, to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness of policy delivery. A special case of horizontal coordination is *cross-sectoral* coordination. It lies at the heart of the literatures on policy integration and focuses specifically on the

problem how policymaking actors can coordinate their decisions and actions across policy sectors, thereby providing coherent policies and avoiding negative spillover effects (e.g. between climate protection and economic development).

The defining characteristics of horizontal coordination are its border-spanning nature as well as its lack of hierarchy. The fact that coordination always connects actors from different units, territories, or policy sectors brings with it a natural myopia of the actors involved. Coordination is hence specifically aimed at creating a shared understanding of problems, at broadening the perspective of the actors involved beyond the narrow confines of their area of expertise, and to potentially overcome not only different perspectives but also conflicts of interest. The lack of hierarchy can be problematic insofar as a powerful tool for reducing transaction costs cannot be applied. Instead, horizontal governance mechanisms such as networks based on mutual trust; negotiations based on the better argument; or bargaining based on the aim to maximise one's own position come into play, all involving high transaction costs in terms of time and effort. Those elevated challenges of horizontal coordination at regional and local levels, and in part cross-sectorally and between state and private actors, are explored in empirical examples throughout the book, providing a foil for the discovery of common patterns, typical problem structures, or particularly useful constellations and mechanisms of coordination.

THE COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Analysing horizontal intergovernmental coordination necessarily requires a comparative perspective. Countries are still a prominent unit of reference for policymaking, and we can learn much about our own country by observing practices that are (not) effective and successful in another country. Only by learning how institutions, coordination instruments, and processes are organised in other countries, regions, or situations, which problems actors face and how they solve it, can we put the experience from our own country in perspective. We thereby avoid the fallacies of methodological nationalism by taking those experiences that we make on a daily basis for granted, assuming that they will occur in similar ways in other countries, too. Furthermore, a comparative perspective is conducive to uncovering coordination patterns and formulating conjectures under which coordination can be achieved in which ways. To be sure, practices that are successful in one setting may or may not travel easily to

institutional and cultural settings in other countries. But we need examples for learning, and particularly in groups of countries which are institutionally similar in relevant respects. It may be a promising strategy to adopt concepts already tested elsewhere.

Systematically, we compare coordination along *two dimensions*: across *types of multilevel architectures* and, concomitantly, across *levels of government*. The sample of country reports in this book includes states with two or three levels of government and varying degrees of regional or local authority. We prefer to avoid the conventional distinction between federal and unitary states, as even traditional unitary states have devolved powers to regions and local authorities in the past decades (Keating, 1998). Rather, MLG as an overarching framework can be applied to those differentiated multilevel architectures and enables comparisons along situational configurations instead of classifications of state architectures. Hence, we use the notions of ‘federal’ or ‘unitary’ only in a descriptive, and not in a classificatory, manner, indicating that there are three levels of government with autonomous political powers (‘federal’) or that the regional level, where it exists, has only administrative powers and the main substate unit is the local level (‘unitary’). The number of governmental levels in a state impacts the second dimension of comparison—the level at which horizontal coordination takes place—at regional and/or at local level. In countries where units at the regional level (NUTS 2 in the European nomenclature) have a constitutionally protected status and autonomous political rights, potential coordinative relations are more manifold—horizontal at regional level, horizontal at local level, vertical between central and regional, between regional and local, and—to a lesser degree—between central and local level. What is more, in some countries, regions expose a strong asymmetry in terms of political or economic power, making multilateral horizontal coordination at regional level more difficult to achieve. Where, on the other hand, the regional level is mainly an administrative and statistical unit, horizontal coordination at local level gains more importance. More specifically, intermunicipal coordination within a country as well as across the border between municipalities of neighbouring countries comes into focus. Also, the horizontal coordination at local level often exposes a dynamic of central-local intergovernmental relations fundamentally different from the relations between central and regional governments, in terms of types and areas of coordination as well as areas of conflicting interests.

Another aspect is the difference in tasks and policy areas between regional and local governments. The latter are often tasked with the delivery of key public services, for example waste collection, primary education, and social care. The responsibilities of local governments therefore tend to be in policy areas with high expenditure requirements which contrasts with their typically more restricted leeway to dispose autonomously of financial resources compared to regional governments.

The broad comparison across countries and levels of government makes it necessary to treat individual features of countries as essentially comparable. For example, regional units in different countries have different names (*Länder* in Germany, *Autonomous Communities* in Spain, *Regions* in Belgium, to give just a few examples; and local authorities or municipalities to denote the local governments). While the country specific denominations are used in the individual chapters, in comparative perspective we refer to the ‘regional’ and ‘local’ governments, respectively.

Finally, the comparison across varying state architectures provides not only insights into typical institutional structures, coordination situations, and patterns or mechanisms of coordinating; it furthermore hints also at motivations of governments to initiate coordination or to join coordinative networks. Local governments engage in horizontal coordination to pool resources and save costs by sharing facilities; or to provide better access to services by sharing burdens with neighbouring municipalities. Regional governments often coordinate in order to secure harmonised policy implementation and to prevent encroachment into their powers by central governments. Reaping funding opportunities from higher-level governments, especially from the European Union, is a strong motivator for horizontal coordination at both regional and local levels.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The book consists of four parts. This introduction serves to elaborate the concept of horizontal intergovernmental coordination—its meaning, dimensions, and the structural problems linked to it as well as the intricacies of uncovering and measuring it empirically. This first chapter hence provides the basic conceptual definitions and a broad analytical framework for the subsequent empirical chapters. In the second part of the book, we assemble country reports from 18 European and neighbouring countries, exposing which arenas and mechanisms of horizontal coordination exist, how they work, and how they relate to a country’s institutional

framework. This broad comparative approach allows for profound insights into patterns of horizontal coordination. In the third part, illustrative case studies, giving examples of specific situations of horizontal coordination, contribute to understanding which structural problems are more acute in some situations than in others and which institutional or procedural ways that were selected to deal with certain challenges worked for better or worse. From a comparative analysis of those case studies, we are thus able to distil dos and don'ts, best or worst practices of intergovernmental coordination given specific circumstances. In the fourth part, the editors conclude on those comparative patterns and synthesise the lessons learnt.

Case Selection and Methodology

The country reports are authored by scholars who are experts in their country's policymaking and public administration fields. The country sample—admittedly—does not follow an analytic scheme. As this book is the joint product of the Working Group on horizontal coordination of COST Action 20123 'Intergovernmental coordination from local to European Governance',¹ the included countries form a convenient sample, resulting from the composition of the members of the working group. Still, the countries assembled in the book cover a wide range of institutional characteristics, as well as variation in geography and history. Furthermore, they vary in their characteristics of territorial governance such as the number and authority of territorial units or the size, density, and distribution of the population. Those features are likely influential on the evolution and workings of institutions and patterns of horizontal intergovernmental coordination.

For example, if a country is an island, or otherwise geographically separated from its neighbours (e.g. by mountains or deserts), there is less incentive and necessity for cross-border cooperation. If, on the other hand, the state border cuts across a densely populated or heavily industrialised area, then it is likely that there will be a long tradition of cross-border cooperation to manage mobility, economic growth, or the environmental impact of those industries. Furthermore, historical legacies of, for example, wars, authoritarian regimes or strong migration movements leave their traces in today's coordinative set-up. If minorities in a country have rights of self-administration, either territorially or

¹ url: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA20123/>

non-territorially, this impacts the arrangements of horizontal coordination. And if a country was governed by an authoritarian regime in the near past, this may still impact on structures and processes of local self-government.

Regarding the characteristics of territorial governance, for example, if a country has a very low population density, then horizontal coordination across administrative boundaries of local governments is by necessity different from a metropolitan area. Local decisions create less spillover, but it may be even more important to pool resources to provide basic services and infrastructure. But also the distribution of population density and the relationship between metropolitan and rural areas is relevant for the development of intergovernmental relations. The *appendix* gives an overview on relevant indicators of the territorial governance structure which provide a context for interpreting the results. Besides general statistical information (Appendix Table 1) on the country size, the population size, the economic power indicated in GDP per capita, and the EU membership status, Appendix Table 2 offers a number of indicators of territorial governance structures. NUTS 2 regions, according to the EU classification, indicate the number of regional units of comparable size. Population density at NUTS 2 level, the Rural Access Index, and the Urban population index are different measures for illustrating the asymmetry between urban or even metropolitan areas and rural areas. The more extreme this asymmetry, the more diverse the patterns of horizontal coordination are expected to be, ranging from arrangements to manage metropolitan areas to bilateral agreements between sparsely populated areas to secure basic services like hospitals, schools, or public transport. The local autonomy index measures the degree of autonomous policy decisions that local governments can take. Again, it can be assumed that the more autonomy they have, the more intensely they will cooperate horizontally.

As those examples illustrate, the case selection and also the ‘data collection’ procedure are not guided by a deductive logic, trying to prove theoretically formulated causal conjectures in a controlled experiment. Rather, the idea is to assemble a broad collection of qualitative descriptions. Those descriptions follow the same template for structuring the material, and they profit from the inside knowledge and understanding of the authors who are able to emphasize those mechanisms and problems that are of relevance for their country. Also, the authors offer their interpretations, thereby enriching the potential for theory building. The broad range of varying political, economic, and cultural backgrounds adds to the

robustness of the analysis which mainly consists in discerning inductively dominant patterns, hence providing a starting point for theory building in future research.

Country Reports and Case Studies

The descriptions of coordination situations come in two types of formats: we distinguished between country reports and case studies. The country reports aim to give a broader overview over the legal foundations and empirical instances of horizontal intergovernmental coordination, while the case studies serve as examples of good or bad practices in how actors actually deal with coordination problems in specific situations. In combination, country reports and case studies contribute to practical learning on how best to deal with various coordination situations.

More specifically, *country reports* serve to display the big picture of the situations, actors, processes, and institutions of intergovernmental relations that exist in one country. They provide rich empirical evidence and examples of existing practices as a basis for exchange and mutual learning. All country reports are structured according to the same template: In the *Introduction*, they briefly describe their country in terms of its geographical and political situation in Europe as background of conditions under which horizontal coordination is taking place. In the second section, '*Intergovernmental Relations: The Polity*', the constitutional and institutional architecture of a country is exposed with regard to intergovernmental relations. Most importantly, the tiers of government, their number, powers, and their interaction are described. Also, if existent, specific institutions of horizontal intergovernmental relations are explained. Based on an understanding of the institutional set-up, section three then proceeds to outline the practice of *Horizontal Intergovernmental Coordination: Policy and Politics*. Typical instances of horizontal coordination are described and analysed in an exemplary way to understand the type of problems that occur, the position and motivation of actors involved, and the way in which coordination is typically addressed. Here, a wide variety of situations is displayed across the reports as regards the level of coordination—local, regional, cross-border; the types and groups of actors involved and the main policy issues. Of special interest is the next section, which we labelled '*EU-Induced Changes in Horizontal Coordination*'. While this may not be relevant for all countries (and hence this section is omitted in a few chapters), it turned out that for member states and

perhaps even more for candidate states the expectations and incentives that the EU provides can be a strong motor for adapting institutions and routines of horizontal coordination. The transposition of European law and concomitant need for coordination, the empowerment of local governments to form horizontal networks for acquiring EFRE funds or the establishment of formal representations of regional and local governments in European networks are but the most obvious effects of progressing European integration. Comparative reading of this section across the country reports gives a detailed picture of the enormous legacy that the EU has in influencing policymaking capacities of states through its formal and informal instruments. The chapters end by highlighting relevant ‘*Recent reforms/trends/developments*’ such as new reform agendas of current governments or reactions to recent crises (e.g. Covid, migration challenges, climate change, or the war in Ukraine). In the ‘*Concluding reflections*’, the authors evaluate the state of horizontal coordination in their country and highlight specific challenges or best practices from which to learn.

The *case studies* provide brief application-oriented descriptions of extreme or typical situations of horizontal coordination. They detail a particular type of coordination problem and illustrate ways in which actors deal with the challenges of the situation. The practical examples offer lessons for best practices as well as barriers to achieve the envisioned aims relative to the type of problem and the decision situation in which actors find themselves. Hence, the case studies provide deeper insights in the coordination mechanisms and offer hands-on experience for practitioners as well as the empirical foundation for systematic lesson-drawing and theory development. As a group of cases, they represent a broad array of decision situations, cover crisis situations, coordination between governments to facilitate intercultural exchange and regional economic development, coordination involving agencies and the private sector for supporting climate change policies, as well as coordination involving experts and advancements in technology to improve the delivery of transport services. Taken together, the case studies exemplify various ways in which coordination problems are addressed in everyday policymaking in different contexts.

The case studies are also structured along one identical template: A *Pitch* of issue and scope (geographic, time) is followed by *Conceptual clarifications*. Here the authors explain the type of coordination situation, (e.g. its purpose, the motivation of the actors involved, the scale and of direction of coordination); the number of entities involved either within

same authority or cross-border with different authority frames as well as the focus of coordination and level of institutionalisation (ad-hoc vs permanent; issue-specific or policy area focused or general coordination mechanism). The main section serves to describe the coordinative ‘*practice*’, that is, how coordination is organised, which actors were involved, what exactly they did, and what the results of the coordination efforts were. The description is followed by an ‘*Evaluation*’ regarding the quality of coordination, its effects in terms of goal achievement, and a consideration of the reasons of failure or success, resulting in a concluding section on *Lessons* learnt.

Analysis and Comparison

The uniform structure of the contributions makes it possible to distil in the conclusion of this book preliminary findings on patterns and drivers of horizontal intergovernmental coordination in MLG structures. Three aspects are elaborated there. *First*, we distil the most relevant challenges that regional and local governments face and that induce them to enter into horizontal coordination. *Second*, we compare the coordination mechanisms in use in different countries according to their degree of formalisation or institutionalization as well as their issue-scope. We use the notion of ‘coordination mechanism’ loosely to encompass various institutions, processes, tools and routines by which actors try to achieve coordination. The two comparative categories (institutionalisation and issue-scope) result in a rather broad categorisation from highly institutionalised, enduring mechanisms with a broad issue-scope over mechanisms of medium size to issue specific mechanisms which show, however, varying degrees of institutionalisation and durability. *Third*, we distil factors emerging from the country reports—and even more so from the case studies—that promise to facilitate the establishment and functioning of coordination mechanisms. To be sure, in distinguishing coordination as a process from a coordinated outcome, we do not assume that functioning coordination mechanisms will automatically result in more effective policy solutions. They are, however, a precondition for successfully solving policy problems.

While the comparative evidence provides rich starting points and suggestions for formulating assumptions about common problems, trends, and responses, the rather loose organisation of the country sample obviously does not allow to draw clear causal conclusions. The patterns, mechanisms, and driving factors that we found across the chapters are certainly

not exhaustive. Other coordination mechanisms may be relevant in other countries, and other problems certainly exist which have not been reported here. It need also be taken into consideration that the authors of the chapters have their own disciplinary background as federalism, local governance, or public administration scholars, as political scientists, lawyers, or economists. Hence, they may be biased in their look at their own country, highlighting some problems and mechanisms while neglecting others.

Still, we are confident that the broad array of countries and concomitant institutional, political, and cultural set-ups that we assembled here provides a robust insight into relevant aspects of the problems of horizontal intergovernmental coordination. Whatever challenges, mechanisms, or driving factors we highlight in the conclusion was mentioned across a number of cases and hence clearly bears a certain relevance beyond the individual experience. The comparison is based on systematic and structured accounts of relevant aspects. And in our analysis, we systematically take into account insights from scholarship of different scientific communities—comparative federalism, MLG, policy studies, local governance, and public administration.

In connecting conceptual, analytical, and empirical insights from those various communities, we elaborate an analytic framework that encourages scholars to take other perspectives into account and to use categories of analysis that travel across scholarly disciplines of scientific communities. While we would not claim to formulate a theory of horizontal intergovernmental coordination, our conclusion offers empirically well-grounded hints towards descriptive patterns and causal relationships. The mechanisms and factors we identify may be interpreted as hypotheses and are meant to encourage further empirical research aimed at testing their validity in other contexts. In this way, the insights generated in this volume are of relevance for academics and practitioners alike, offering helpful empirical information, hints for best practices, and analytic interpretations stimulating empirical research and further theory building.

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