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# Does professional identity matter in territorial attractiveness strategies? Focus on dyadic working relationships between French metropolises & regions

Laura CARMOUZE<sup>1</sup>, Sarah SERVAL<sup>2</sup>, Christophe ALAUX<sup>3</sup>

## Quelle est l'importance de l'identité professionnelle dans l'élaboration des stratégies d'attractivité territoriale ? Le cas des relations dyadiques de travail entre les métropoles et les régions françaises

**Abstract:** This article investigates the different forms of dyadic working relationships between the French metropolises and regions to define their territorial attractiveness strategies. We explain the more or less involvement of dyadic working relationships through organizational and institutional levers used by territorial managers, adding the individual levers: professional identity. The originality of this research is the focus on relationships constrained by law. Indeed, we analyse four French metropolis-region cases and the findings make it possible to improve the continuum of dyadic working relationships substituting the “no relationship” form to the “interaction” form. Finally, we shed light on the role of professional identity and territory commitment, shifting from a linear approach to a dynamic one.

**Key-words:** Dyadic Working Relationships, Territorial Attractiveness Strategies, Professional Identity, French Metropolises and Regions

**Résumé :** Cet article a pour objectif de comprendre les différentes formes de relations inter-organisationnelles dyadiques entre les métropoles et les régions françaises, dans le cadre de la définition de leurs stratégies d'attractivité territoriale. Nous analysons le degré d'implication des relations inter-organisationnelles en

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fonction des leviers institutionnels et organisationnels que peuvent actionner les managers territoriaux, en ajoutant les leviers individuels tels que l'identité professionnelle. L'originalité de cette recherche tient au contexte des relations inter-organisationnelles contraintes par la loi. À travers l'étude de quatre relations métropole-région, les résultats nous permettent d'améliorer le continuum des relations inter-organisationnelles en substituant l'interaction à l'absence de relation. Enfin, nous mettons en lumière le rôle des leviers individuels, à travers l'identité professionnelle et l'engagement au territoire, passant d'une approche linéaire des relations à une approche dynamique.

**Mots-clés** : Relations inter-organisationnelles dyadiques, Stratégies d'attractivité territoriale, Identité professionnelle, Métropoles et régions françaises

### **Résumé étendu**

« Le Big Bang territorial » est une expression souvent utilisée dans les articles scientifiques et de presse pour qualifier la dernière réforme territoriale française. Cette vague de réforme publique locale (acte 3 de la décentralisation) a redéfini le paysage institutionnel en positionnant le couple région-métropole comme moteur du développement économique local. Désormais, les métropoles et les régions font de l'attractivité territoriale leur principal objectif stratégique en matière de développement économique. Cependant, les relations inter-organisationnelles entre les métropoles et les régions sont imposées par la loi dans une logique descendante. En effet, ces deux organisations publiques sont obligées de travailler ensemble et entretiennent donc des relations dyadiques de travail. Le terme « dyadique » fait référence à deux éléments en interaction : dans ce cas, une relation de travail entre deux organisations publiques locales qui sont la métropole et la région.

Tout d'abord, au regard de la littérature existante (Mattesich et al. 2001 ; Selden et al. 2006 ; Thomson et Perry 2006 ; Thomson et al. 2007 ; Sedgwick 2016), quatre formes de relations dyadiques de travail sont conceptualisées allant de l'absence d'engagement à un processus stratégique intégré, intitulées : absence de relation, coopération, coordination et collaboration. Ces formes de relations varient sur un continuum allant de la plus faible à la plus forte implication. Cependant, en raison du contexte légal contraignant, les métropoles et les régions sont obligées de travailler ensemble, et la forme « absence de relation » n'existe donc pas.

Ensuite, la littérature a déjà mis en lumière différents leviers institutionnels et organisationnels pour expliquer l'implication plus ou moins forte des relations dyadiques de travail. Toutefois, ces leviers ont été conceptualisés selon une approche linéaire. En effet, plus les leviers institutionnels et organisationnels sont présents, plus les relations sont intégrées. Néanmoins, les travaux académiques ont négligé l'influence des leviers individuels en général et de l'identité professionnelle en particulier. Actuellement, à travers les différentes vagues de réformes publiques, les stratégies d'attractivité territoriale ont considérablement évolué, prenant une

dimension de plus en plus technique. Les managers territoriaux, tels que les managers métropolitains et régionaux, font preuve d'un haut degré d'expertise en termes de connaissance du territoire et de processus stratégiques. En 2016, Reyes a étudié la construction de l'identité professionnelle des managers (Sainsaulieu 1985 ; Dubar 1991 ; Dubar et al. 2015) pour comprendre la définition de la stratégie d'entreprise. Le présent article suit le même parcours dans un autre contexte : la construction de l'identité professionnelle des managers métropolitains et régionaux définissant des stratégies d'attractivité territoriale. Le processus de construction de l'identité professionnelle souligne les tensions entre deux sources de pouvoir (Mongy, 2017) : un pouvoir démocratique porté par les élus et un pouvoir technocratique incarné par les managers territoriaux. L'identité professionnelle des managers territoriaux ayant accru leur expertise et donc leur pouvoir, influence la définition des stratégies d'attractivité territoriale. Toutefois, l'identité professionnelle des managers territoriaux reste sous-étudiée et nécessite plus d'exploration (Serval, 2017). Pour apporter de nouveaux éclairages en lien avec ce manque dans la littérature, l'article vise à répondre à la question suivante : en quoi l'identité professionnelle est-elle importante dans les relations dyadiques de travail entre les métropoles et les régions ?

Le premier objectif est donc de caractériser les différentes formes de relations dyadiques de travail dans un contexte où les organisations sont institutionnellement contraintes de travailler ensemble. Le deuxième objectif consiste à expliquer ces formes de relations de travail inter-organisationnelles en fonction des leviers institutionnels et organisationnels que peuvent actionner les managers territoriaux, en ajoutant les leviers individuels à travers le concept de l'identité professionnelle.

Pour ce faire, une étude de cas multiple (Yin, 2009) se focalise sur quatre couples métropole-région français en prenant soin de faire varier les critères de ressemblance et de dissemblance : la métropole d'Aix-Marseille-Provence et la région Provence-Alpes-Côte-D'azur (1), la métropole de Brest et la région Bretagne (2), la métropole Grand-Lyon et la région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (3), et enfin l'Eurométropole de Strasbourg et la région Grand Est. La méthode qualitative choisie repose sur 29 entretiens semi-directifs, conduits auprès des managers territoriaux en charge de la définition des stratégies d'attractivité dans ces organisations publiques locales. À partir d'une technique booléenne (absence *versus* présence de critères), une forme de relation dyadique de travail est assignée à chaque cas étudié. Puis, l'ensemble des entretiens est traité à partir d'une analyse de contenu thématique.

Les résultats structurés autour d'une analyse inter-cas permettent d'adapter le continuum des relations inter-organisationnelles allant de la moins impliquée à la plus impliquée. La forme « absence de relation », qui est impossible dans le cadre d'une injonction à travailler ensemble, devient la forme « interaction ». En effet, les managers territoriaux interagissent lorsqu'ils ont des interactions sociales, des échanges d'informations et des actions collectives discontinues. Les résultats

confirment aussi la présence des trois autres formes de relations dyadiques de travail, à savoir la coopération, la coordination et la collaboration.

De plus, selon un cadre d'analyse multi-niveaux (niveaux *macro*, *meso* et *micro*), trois grandes catégories de leviers sont identifiées : institutionnels, organisationnels et individuels. Le rôle des leviers individuels est mis en lumière à travers l'identité professionnelle, et une approche dynamique est proposée pour comprendre les relations inter-organisationnelles. Dès lors, l'identité professionnelle se construit et s'équilibre en fonction des piliers institutionnels (e.g. histoire du territoire, normes de confiance, culture et valeurs) et des processus organisationnels (e.g. ressources, outils, temps et espace partagés). Alors que la littérature antérieure s'est principalement concentrée sur les leviers organisationnels et institutionnels (Mattesich et al. 2001 ; Thomson et al. 2007 ; Sedgwick 2016 ; Quélin et al. 2017), c'est cette interdépendance entre les différents leviers qui mise en exergue.

Toutefois, si la méthode qualitative permet une richesse des résultats, elle contient aussi ses limites. Pour améliorer la validité externe, les résultats pourraient être testés dans d'autres domaines de la gestion publique, en substituant les stratégies culturelles ou les stratégies de développement durable aux stratégies d'attractivité territoriale. Enfin, une recherche longitudinale permettra de comprendre les trajectoires d'implication des relations dyadiques de travail et le rôle des différents leviers institutionnels, organisationnels et individuels.

## Introduction

“The territorial Big Bang” is an expression often used in both scientific and press articles to qualify the last French territorial reform. This public reform has redefined the institutional landscape reinforcing the region-metropolis couple in order to foster local economic development. Raising jointly local economic development means that the metropolises and regions put territorial attractiveness as their main strategic goal. Moreover, the inter-organizational relationships between the metropolises and regions are imposed by the state in a top-down logic. Indeed, these public organizations have no other choice than to work together through dyadic working relationships. The term “dyadic” refers to something that concerns two elements: in this case a working relationship between two public local organizations.

First of all, based on prior literature (Mattesich *et al.* 2001; Selden *et al.* 2006; Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson *et al.* 2007; Sedgwick 2016), we use a theoretical framework to identify four different forms of dyadic working relationships from no commitment to an integrative strategic process, namely: no relationship, cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. These forms of relationships vary on a continuum from the least to the most involved. However, due to the constraining institutional context, with regions and metropolises obliged to work together, the “no relationship” form could not exist.

Then, prior literature has already shed light on different institutional and organizational levers to explain the more or less involvement in dyadic working relationships. But, these levers have been conceptualized with a linear approach. Indeed, the more present institutional and organizational levers are, the more relationships are involved. Nevertheless, academic works have neglected the influence of individual levers in general and professional identity in particular. Currently, through the different waves of public reforms, territorial attractiveness strategies have considerably changed, gaining an increasingly technical dimension. The territorial managers, such as the metropolitan and regional managers, display a high degree of expertise in terms of territorial knowledge and strategic processes. In 2016 Reyes studied the managers professional identity construction (Sainsaulieu 1985; Dubar 1991; Dubar *et al.* 2015) to understand the definition of the strategy. This present article aims at following the same path on another context: the professional identity construction of metropolitan and regional managers defining attractiveness strategies. The process of professional identity construction underlines the tensions between two sources of power (Mongy, 2017): a democratic power from politicians and a technocratic power from territorial managers. This professional identity of territorial managers who have increased their expertise and so their power, seems to matter in attractiveness territorial strategy but remains understudied and requires more exploration (Serval, 2017).

To provide new insights in line with this research gap, the paper aims to answer the following question: how does the professional identity matter in dyadic working relationships between the metropolises and the regions? Through this general question, the first goal is to characterize different forms of dyadic working relationships in a context where organizations are institutionally constrained to work together. The second goal consists in the explanation of these dyadic working relationships forms based on institutional and organizational levers in line with prior literature, and on an individual lever with the integration of professional identity as a main factor.

The first section provides the theoretical framework through the categorization of different forms of dyadic working relationships and the different categories of levers. Then the methodological design exposes the qualitative method based on 29 semi-structured interviews of territorial managers, and the Boolean technique assigning four forms of dyadic working relationships to the four case studies. The findings focus on an intra-cases analysis exploring the institutional, organizational and individual levers for each case and so each form of dyadic working relationship. The discussion is structured around three axes: the conceptualization of different forms of the dyadic working relationships institutionally constrained (1), the individual levers relating to the professional identity fostering the involvement of the working relationships (2) and the consequences of a dynamic approach to characterize the inter-organizational relationships between the French metropolises and regions.

## **1. A linear approach of the dyadic working relationships between the French metropolises and regions**

Since the new institutional framework in 2015 implemented by the last public reform, the French metropolises and regions have to define jointly their territorial attractiveness strategies. The following subsection presents a continuum of dyadic working relationships ranging from no relationship to an integrative co-working process, highlighting the problems related to this characterization (1.1). Then, we shed light on the institutional and organizational levers identified in the prior literature fostering the involvement of the working relationships. Finally, we underline the missing individual levers, linked to the professional identity, that might also explain dyadic working relationships forms (1.2).

### **1.1 The dyadic working relationships between the metropolises and regions: a continuum from no relationship to collaboration**

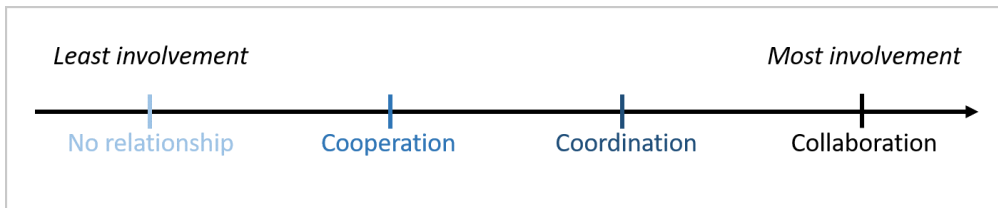
Achieving collaborative goals depends on inter-organizational forms that shape members' interactions and collective action (Mattesich *et al.* 2001; Selden *et al.* 2006; Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson *et al.* 2007; Sedgwick 2016). This common idea has shaped the French public reform reinforcing the working relationships between the metropolises and regions to define and implement jointly the territorial attractiveness strategies. To give an example, the regional schemes of economic development, innovation and internationalization are established by the law on the new territorial organization of the Republic<sup>4</sup> in 2015. They are in charge of defining guidelines for regional attractiveness strategies and are drawn up by the regions in consultation with the metropolises present in their territory.

The Figure 1 puts in a continuum different forms of the dyadic working relationships from the least to the most involved. On the one hand, each form is characterized by inter-organizational activities (Sedgwick 2016) and on the other hand more or less shared risks and resources (Mattesich *et al.* 2001).

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<sup>4</sup> Loi portant nouvelle organisation territoriale de la République.

**Figure 1: A continuum from the least to most involved forms of dyadic working relationships**



Source: Figure adapted from Mattesich *et al.* (2001), Selden *et al.* (2006) and Segdwick (2016)

No relationship represents no attempts at inter-organizational activity. The cooperation suggests that both organizations exchange information through informal relationships, with minimal risk assumed and reward gained. The coordination situation refers to a greater level of formally shared risk and reward with a stronger exchange of resources. Finally, the collaboration includes shared strategic planning activities such as shared goals and assessment processes about collective actions.

Due to the constrained legal environment that shapes the dyadic working relationships between the French metropolises and regions, these two public organizations have to at least interact with each other. In doing so, the “no relationship” form expanded by Selden *et al.* (2006) is quasi-impossible. These two public organizations have systematically minimal interactions even they are punctual and not integrated in a whole strategic process. For example, the regional schemes of economic development drawn up by the regions in consultation with the metropolises are discussed at territorial conferences of public action (established by the law on the modernization of territorial public action and the affirmation of metropolitan areas<sup>5</sup> in 2014). Indeed, to adapt the continuum of the dyadic working relationships (Mattesich *et al.* 2001; Selden *et al.* 2006; Segdwick 2016), we could substitute the “no relationship” form to the “interaction” form in order to represent situations where the French metropolises and regions have shallow relationships, formed through social interactions and information exchange.

The different forms of dyadic working relationships can be explained by institutional, organizational and individual levers, which are presented in the following subsection.

## **1.2 The institutional and organizational levers fostering the working relationships: what is the role of professional identity as individual levers?**

What kind of levers a territorial manager has to activate in order to foster the involvement of the dyadic working relationships? Building on the prior literature, we

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<sup>5</sup> Loi de modernisation de l’action publique territoriale et d’affirmation des métropoles.



identify the institutional (1.2.1) and organizational (1.2.2) levers that can foster more or less the working relationships between the metropolises and regions. After introducing these levers, we focus on the individual divers (1.2.3) highlighting the role of the professional identity in a constrained environment. Indeed, these three categories of levers are able to face the increasing complexity and technicity of the territorial attractiveness strategies jointly defined by the French metropolises and regions.

### **1.2.1 Institutional levers**

Concerning the institutional levers, Quélin *et al.* (2017) focus on the impact of the formal institutions on the inter-organizational relationships such as legal systems and contracts. Other academics (Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson *et al.* 2007; Sedgwick 2016) tend to include more informal institutions through reciprocity, trust and mutuality process. Broadly defined, institutions refer to sets of rules, beliefs and values that constrain and influence working process (North 1990). More specifically, institutions can be understood as “regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources provide stability and meaning to social life” (Scott 2013, p.56). Adapted from Scott (2013), we consider that institutions encompass three pillars which directly influence the different forms of dyadic working relationships in the study of public interest domain: legal environment, norms of trust, culture and values. Moreover, due to the constraint environment within evolve the French metropolises and regions, we add the path dependency refereeing to political and historical background of the territory that shapes development trajectories (Martin 2000; Boschma 2015).

First, the legal environment corresponds to the formal and regulative aspects of institutions driven by coercive mechanism (North 1990; Scott 2013). According to the French legal context, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Act of Decentralization promulgated in 2015 reinforces the empowerment of local authorities. Indeed, the metropolises and regions are now in charge of economic development in general and the territorial attractiveness strategies in particular. Due to the territorial interlacing (e.g. one metropolis belongs to one region), local authorities have to share power. Moreover, the regional and metropolitan strategies can be legally binding in case of disagreement with another local authority that operates on the same territory. The French legal framework fosters region and metropolis to work together in order to impulse local economic development.

Secondly, norms of trust refer to a normative element identified by Scott (2013). Norms of trust are a central component for the functioning of all relationships (Ostrom 1998). More particularly for the public organizations such as the metropolises and regions, norms of trust determine, for a large part, the sustainability of democratic functioning. This is in line with the public value approach (Stoker 2006; Bozeman 2007). An “I-will-if-you-will” mentality encompasses

reciprocal obligations towards each other (Thomson *et al.* 2007) that could be understood as a “psychological contract” (Ring and Van de Ven 1994). Indeed, the dyadic working relationships between the French metropolises and regions are institutionalized by norms of trust through patterns (e.g. territorial attractiveness strategies) that must be consistent between each other.

The third pillar, based on culture and values, alludes to a cultural-cognitive element (Scott 2013). A common culture and values facilitate reciprocity, as they allow to define shared goals (Thomson *et al.* 2007). Cummings and Bromiley (1996) deal with common beliefs which enable good-faith efforts (1) honesty (2) and absence of abuse (3). According to the French metropolises-regions relationships, culture and values can refer territorial particularities that shape specific local relationship patterns.

Finally, the path dependency is linked to the cultural aspect as it refers to territorial history and so, to territorial particularities. Path dependency can be defined as previous choices that influence outcomes and trajectories of an organization (Pierson 2000), and in our case, of a territory (Martin 2000; Boschma 2015). This concept refers to processes that continuously reinforce themselves situating as the results of past institutions. In the case of the metropolises-regions relationships, the path dependency might increase, decrease or maintain the involvement of working relationships despite the political power. Indeed, the high technical expertise required for implementing territorial strategic processes leads to a power balance between two decisional spheres: political and managerial (Cloutier *et al.* 2016).

### **1.2.2 Organizational levers**

While the institutional levers refer to a *macro* level of analysis, the organizational levers are at a *meso* level. In prior literature, this level has been unlighted as an important factor to explain inter-organizational relationships. Indeed, Mattesich *et al.* (2001) consider that the greater the sharing of resources is, the greater the collaboration would be. Organizational levers can be understood as a sharing of human, financial and informational resources that enable collective actions. Organizational levers refer therefore to a set of internal resources and processes effectively and formally allocated to inter-organizational activities with its dyadic counterparts. This sharing “allow[s] participants to make choices about how to solve the collective action problems” (Thomson *et al.* 2007, p.25) in order to achieve a “collective will” (Thomson and Perry 2006). Considering the constraining dimension of the dyadic working relationships between the metropolises and regions, this sharing resources aspect is a key issue for collective action and primarily for strategic planning activities. Indeed, we identify two main levers that influence the more or less involvement of working relationships: shared processes and tools (1), time and space devoted to dyadic working relationships (2).

Firstly, organizational processes vary from decision making of territorial

attractiveness strategies to their evaluation. The more or less important sharing of these processes between organizations influence how organizations jointly articulate heterogeneous resources (Bertrand *et al.* 2017). In the same way, the management tools refer to a set of organizational objects such as indicators and workstation shared or not between organizations. Moreover, the sharing of processes and tools might go hand in hand with the sharing of objectives and results (Mattesich *et al.* 2001; Sedgwick 2016). Due to the “territorial Big Bang” and the increasing competition between territories (Serval 2017), the sharing of organizational processes can be the subject of conflicts between politicians and territorial managers. For example, the regional schemes of economic development, innovation and internationalization are jointly defined over 5 years (2017-2021) by the metropolises and regions and are therefore also based on a joint evaluation. From a managerial point of view, a joint evaluation along the way makes it possible to redefine the objectives and adapt the actions according to the needs of the territory and therefore of the inhabitants. However, from a political point of view, this kind of evaluation may run counter to political time, particularly that of the elections to be held in 2020.

Secondly, time and space are more or less devoted to dyadic working relationships. In our case, time sharing refers to formal and informal meetings. The sharing of space is understood as a set of material (offices, conference rooms) and intangible (websites, applications) resources. This time dimension notably constrains the territorial action due to the interlacing of political and managerial time that may converge or lead to conflict of interest. Again, this tension between the political sphere and the managerial sphere arises. To handle this trade-off between managerial and political interests, territorial managers have to develop their acculturation to the political culture. In case of conflict, they enhance their dexterity to face, balance, bargain and/or avoid the political injunctions to reach their own goals (Serval 2017), and consequently to reach collective actions.

### **1.2.3 Individual levers**

Prior literature has mainly focused on institutional and organizational levers, modelling them in a linear way to explain dyadic working relationships. While existing academic works provide insight to these key levers that explain different forms of inter-organizational relationships, they lack consideration for the individual levers at the *micro* level of analysis.

The uniqueness of an organization is based in particular on an understanding of the relationships between individuals and organization (Chanlat 1998; Martinet and Pesqueux 2013). The relationships between the territorial manager, his superiors and subordinates are therefore essential. The importance of the interaction between the territorial manager, his constrained environment given our context and his organization invites us to consider the importance of the professional identity

dimension. Resulting from sociology, professional identity (or profession) remains little used in management. According to Osty (2002), professional identity is defined as a dynamic process of self-construction in a situated space, based on a biographical process (identity for oneself) and a relational process (identity for others). The family, codes (e.g. modes of relationship with politicians), symbols (e.g. general interest) and the university prepare the territorial manager to be a professional with a public service mission.

Due to “territorial Big Bang” and the waves of reforms, territorial managers must be both master of their territory and master of territorial strategic planning processes, adapting their professional identity according to their changing environment. Moreover, the persistent tensions between political and managerial powers add to the increasing tensions between differently socialized age groups, which results from the evolution of the access conditions to local public employment. The increasing expertise of territorial managers constitutes a source of power that they exploit, and which is manifested through the construction of a professional identity (Mongy 2017). Indeed, we aim at exploring the following research question: how does the professional identity matter in dyadic working relationships between the metropolises and the regions?

The introduction of these individual levels of analysis may lead to more complexity and non-linear relation between the forms of dyadic working relationships and the categories of levers.

## **2. Methodology to understand the dyadic working relationships**

We start by presenting the qualitative research design (2.1). Then we successively explicit the data collection with the sample composition (2.2) and the data analysis methods (2.3). This section ends by the presentation of each selected case study (2.4) that shows a specific configuration of dyadic working relationships between the metropolises and regions.

### **2.1 Qualitative research design**

We consider the dyadic working relationships and their levers as observable phenomena which are socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann 1966). This basic premise involves a focus on organization members’ meanings and the interpretations of their experience lived. An exploratory investigation with a qualitative method aim to address the following research question: how does the professional identity matter in dyadic working relationships between the metropolises and regions?

A case study as research strategy is used to investigate “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” because “the boundaries between

phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2009, p. 13).

Our research design is based on a multiple case study (Yin 2009). This choice derives from the decision to empirically study varying forms of dyadic working relationships in order to examine the main levers that explain more or less involvement. We selected four cases of dyadic working relationships between the French metropolises and regions that represent territorial variation and specificities in terms of geography, demography, sociology, economy and history. This research article is part of the academic work of a University Chair, specialized in these research issues. The University Chair's public relations networks and expertise have enabled us to identify upstream the territories likely to represent the heterogeneity of the selected cases. Indeed, these four cases encompass different dyadic situations with dyads that have a long history of working together or dyads that still attempt to work together.

## **2.2 Data collection through interviews**

Our qualitative method is based on semi-structured interviews in order “to obtain both retrospective and real-time accounts by those people experiencing the phenomenon of theoretical interest” (Gioia *et al.* 2013, p.19). The interview guide was designed to gain a comprehensive account of the experiences and viewpoints of the interviewees with regard to the research questions at hand. Consequently, based on previous literature (Thomson and Perry 2006), the interview protocol consisted of following themes: (1) history and perception of the recent territorial reform, (2) territorial strategy, (3) inter-organizational relationships with counterparts, (4) governance modality, (5) trust and conflict (6) information and organizational learning.

We conducted 29 semi-structured interviews with territorial managers who were involved in territorial attractiveness strategies. The Table 1 provides an overview on the sample composition.

**Table 1: Sample of 29 semi-structured interviews**

Metropolis-Region dyads	Territorial level	Nb. of inhabitants*	Area*	Density *	Prefecture of region Status of region
Aix-Marseille-Provence-Métropole	Metropolis	1 841 460	3 148 km <sup>2</sup>	585 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Marseille
Provence-Alpes-Côte-D'azur	Region	4 983 438	31 399 km <sup>2</sup>	158 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Not merged
Brest	Metropolis	207 726	218 km <sup>2</sup>	951 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Rennes
Bretagne	Region	3 276 543	27 207 km <sup>2</sup>	120 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Not merged
Grand Lyon	Metropolis	1 354 476	533 km <sup>2</sup>	2 538 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Lyon
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes	Region	7 820 966	69 711 km <sup>2</sup>	112 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Merdeg
Strasbourg	Metropolis	484 157	339 km <sup>2</sup>	1 428 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Strasbourg
Grand Est	Region	5 554 645	57 433 km <sup>2</sup>	96 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Merged

\*Figures from the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (Census of 2014)

Source: Authors

## 2.3 Coding process and data analysis

Firstly, we start by the operationalization of the phenomenon that we aim to explore: different forms of dyadic working relationships between French metropolises and regions defining their territorial attractiveness strategies. Indeed, we draw the methodology from Sedgwick (2016) who assessed the forms of dyadic working relationships through a Boolean technic with the “absence” or “presence” of inter-organizational forms criteria. Each criterion is dichotomized into “absent” or “present” to fit the “0” or “1” coding process of to the Boolean logic (Sedgwick 2016). Based on this methodology, we qualitatively assessed the following criteria (Mattesich *et al.* 2001; Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson *et al.* 2007; Sedgwick 2016) case by case, according to their effective presence in interviewees’ discourse transcriptions or not: social interaction and information exchange (A), collective actions (B), involuntary share of risks and gains (C), voluntary share of risks and gains (D), share of strategic goals (E), share of evaluation process (F). Following this coding process, each case corresponds to a specific form of dyadic working relationship: interaction, cooperation, coordination, collaboration. As exposed above, the selection of four cases that could respond to four forms of dyadic working relationships was made possible through a round-trip process with the New Place Marketing and Attractiveness Chair's network.

Then, in order to examine the categories of levers of each dyadic working relationship’s form, data analysis is based on an abductive logic following a thematic content analysis. Indeed, thematic codes are explanatory or inferential codes that identify emerging themes, patterns or explanations suggested by the analysis of field data (Miles *et al.* 2015). Patterns can refer either to variables linking similarities and differences among categories, or processes relating connections in time and space within a specific context. Focusing on dyadic working relationships requires to define patterns as processes relating connections between two public organizations.

To do so, we start identifying themes faithfully linked to informant terms through an open and axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and we then gradually refine the

names according to field data and discussions with the various researchers (three researchers in contact with the field). Consequently, the abductive logic leads us to identify new connections between relationships applied to the definition of territorial attractiveness strategies.

## 2.4 Cases description

We present each selected case and put into perspective the specific configuration of the dyadic working relationships. The Table 2 shows the differences between the cases in order to test the replication of the results discovered later (Glaser and Strauss 1967). After the last reform in 2015, some regions have been merged and at a national level, we shift from 22 regions to 13 regions. Indeed, some regions still exist, meanwhile new regions arise. We paid attention to select two cases which involved new merged regions and two cases that refer to regions previously existing. We also selected cases that display varying size and density to maximize variance in terms of geographic and demographic trends.

**Table 2: Cases description**

Metropolis-Region dyads	Territorial level	Nb. of inhabitants*	Area*	Density *	Prefecture of region Status of region
Aix-Marseille-Provence-Métropole Provence-Alpes-Côte-D'azur	Metropolis	1 841 460	3 148 km <sup>2</sup>	585 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Marseille
	Region	4 983 438	31 399 km <sup>2</sup>	158 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Not merged
Brest	Metropolis	207 726	218 km <sup>2</sup>	951 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Rennes
Bretagne	Region	3 276 543	27 207 km <sup>2</sup>	120 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Not merged
Grand Lyon	Metropolis	1 354 476	533 km <sup>2</sup>	2 538 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Lyon
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes	Region	7 820 966	69 711 km <sup>2</sup>	112 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Merdeg
Strasbourg	Metropolis	484 157	339 km <sup>2</sup>	1 428 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Strasbourg
Grand Est	Region	5 554 645	57 433 km <sup>2</sup>	96 hab./km <sup>2</sup>	Merged

\*Figures from the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (Census of 2014)

Source: Authors

The four dyads refer to four French region-metropolis couple that display varying forms of dyadic working relationships from shallow commitment to an integrative co-working process.

The first metropolis-region dyad refers to AMPM and PACA. The AMPM is located in the South East of France and is the largest French metropolis in terms of area. The creation of this metropolis is the result of a top-down logic that has led and still leads to strong oppositions between the two largest municipalities Aix-en-Provence and Marseille. Moreover, the PACA region is a not-merged region created in 1986. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) ranking, in 2016, PACA is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest region in France in terms of wealth creation.

The second metropolis-region dyad corresponds to Brest and Bretagne. Located in the North West of France, the metropolis of Brest is the smallest French metropolis in terms of area and inhabitants. As PACA, the Bretagne region is a not-merged one created in 1986. The Breton culture refers to the Celtic culture dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup>

century and has its own regional language. Due to this cultural and historical background, the territorial belonging feeling of inhabitants is very strong. In view of the INSEE ranking of 2016, Bretagne is the 10<sup>th</sup> region in terms of wealth creation.

The third dyad between metropolis and region refers to Grand Lyon and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes which are located in the South East of France. Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes is a merged region created in 2015 which regroups two past regions: Auvergne and Rhône-Alpes. According to the INSEE ranking, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes is the 2<sup>nd</sup> region in terms of wealth creation. Indeed, both the region and the metropolis are considered as the 2<sup>nd</sup> economic locomotive of the country after Paris and its region.

The last metropolis-region dyad is related to Strasbourg and Grand Est. Strasbourg is an Euro-metropolis located in the North East of France. The term “Euro” refers notably to the European dimension, due to its cross-border location close to Germany. Grand Est is also a merged region created in 2015 and encompasses three past regions: Alsace, Lorraine and Champagne-Ardenne. Due to the cultural and historical heritage of these three places, the recent merger does not allow a belonging feeling from the inhabitants at the regional level. According to the INSEE ranking of 2016, Grand Est is the 7<sup>th</sup> region in terms of wealth creation.

### **3. Findings characterizing the dyadic working relationships forms and levers**

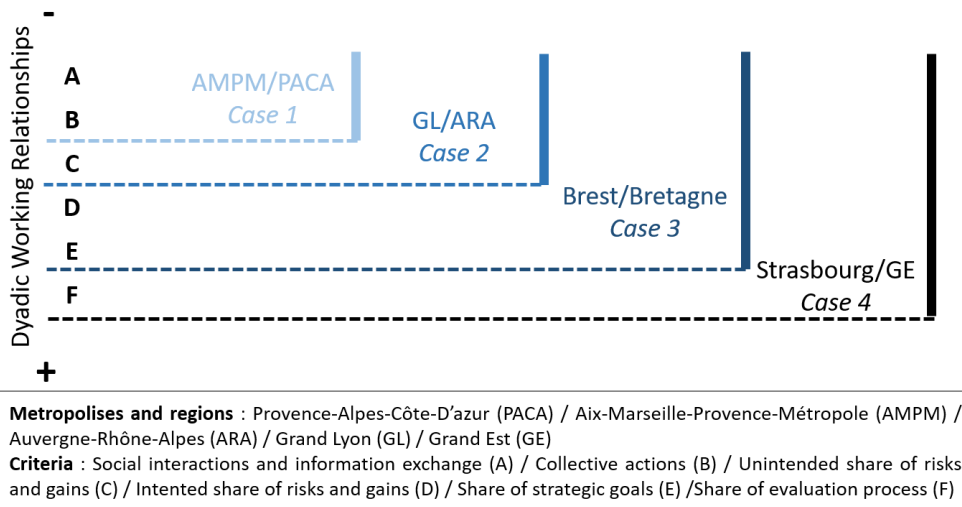
The findings presentation is structured in two parts. Firstly, we characterize the forms of the dyadic working relationships (3.1) through a Boolean technic. Secondly, we complete this analysis through an intra-cases perspective (3.2) that shows the set of levers influencing more or less the involvement of the inter-organizational relationships. To do so, considering that each form of dyadic working relationship varying from shallow relationship to an integrative collaboration, we focus just on additive variables. Indeed, as a scale of intensity, each superior form keeps variables from the former form and integrates additive variables. As consequence, for each case, we shed light just on additive variable to avoid repetition.



### 3.1 Typology of dyadic working relationships forms: interaction, cooperation, coordination and collaboration

We characterize the four dyadic working relationships forms between the French metropolises and regions defining and implementing territorial attractiveness strategies in the Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Typology of four dyadic working relationships assigned to four cases**



Source: Authors

The dyadic working relationship between AMPM and PACA corresponds to an interaction form: the least integrated configuration of relationship. This configuration is determined by two main criteria, namely: social interactions and information exchange, and collective actions. Social interactions and information exchange are carried out in particular during the territorial conference of public action. As exposed in the first part of this article, this conference enables the metropolis and region belonging to the same territory to debate and give their opinions about their territorial attractiveness strategies. The criterion of collective actions refers to different projects and/or public services that support local companies and their business operations. About this portfolio of public actions, a regional manager explains: *“when you have a business start-up project in the heart of the metropolitan area, the region supports the metropolis as a partner but the project is led by the metropolis and its economic development agency”* (R1.2). AMPM and PACA share some disconnected and discontinuous actions. In doing so, they do not share intentional risk, gain, strategic goal or evaluation process.

The inter-organizational relationships between Grand Lyon and ARA are

characterized by a cooperation form. This form includes social interactions and information exchange, collective actions and sharing of involuntary risks and gains between both public organizations. *“Grand Lyon has significant budgets for the management of urban and social services, which the region does not have because Grand Lyon has taken over the responsibilities of the department. We have high social expenditures that do not have the region (...). However, the metropolis is in charge of urban services, such as cleanliness, environment and security, having positive spin-offs at the regional level in terms of investment”* (M3.1). This quotation highlights the fact that, in this case, the share of risks and gains derive from externalities that are not strategically voluntary.

The next case concerns the dyadic working relationship between Brest and Bretagne that is more integrated than the others and fits the coordination form. This kind of relationship encompasses social interaction and information exchange (e.g. territorial conference of public action), but also collective action such as the “Word Campus of the Sea” located in Brest. The share of voluntary risks, gains and strategic goals increases the integration level of the relationship. For illustration, a regional manager describes: *“Bretagne has promoted a partnership contract between the region and the fifty-nine cities including the metropolis of Brest. We based the content of the partnership on the work of territorial managers groups. Then, we submitted this content to politicians in order to get feedback and political agreement. Brest has negotiated with the region about the different partnership opportunities in compliance with their own strategic goals previously defined (...). To give an example of our common strategic objectives, the region decided to support the structuring of a French Tech metropolis. We have therefore signed a convention dedicated to the “French Tech Brest” and we will fund together this project”* (R2.3).

Finally, the last case is the most integrated and refers to the Strasbourg-Grand Est dyadic working relationship. This case suits the collaboration configuration. Both public organizations share information, actions, risks and gains. They also think jointly their assessment process. Indeed, a metropolitan manager explains: *“I have a counterpart in the region who is doing the same coordination work as me, but it would be interesting for our positions to be co-financed by the city and by the region (...). I suggested that we animate together the Strasbourg Eco2030 committee: we would take care of preparing the information and making the reports together”* (M4.2). Furthermore, Strasbourg and Grand Est define together operational and strategic goals, which are implementing and assessing jointly: *“at the evaluation level, the mission is to set up a shared business intelligence tool with common indicators for monitoring the implementation of the economic development plan”* (R4.2).

To summarize, each case corresponds to a specific degree of dyadic working relationship: AMPM and PACA are interacting, Grand Lyon and ARA are cooperating, Brest and Bretagne are coordinating and Strasbourg and Grand Est are collaborating.

### **3.2 Intra-cases analysis to understand the influence of the levers on each form of dyadic working relationship**

The intra-cases analysis explores the institutional, organizational and individual levers used by territorial managers which influence the involvement of the dyadic working relationships forms, corresponding to the four cases: AMPM-PACA (3.2.1), Grand Lyon-ARA (3.2.2), Brest-Bretagne (3.2.3) and Strasbourg -Grand Est (3.2.4).

#### **3.2.1 The case of Aix-Marseille-Provence-Métropole and Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur**

Concerning the first case, the Table 3 shows the influence of the institutional, organizational and individual levers on the working relationship between AMP and PACA. The institutional levers encompass the coercive aspect of the legal environment and a path dependency based on historical and cultural backgrounds. To illustrate the power of path dependency, a manager of the metropolis explains: *"for 30 years, no one has wanted to tackle transportation problems because it is a long-term commitment, and today users pay the price for this situation"* (M1.1). This quotation also highlights the influence of organizational levers through a minimal share of organizational resources, and short time and space devoted to the relationships. Furthermore, the consideration for the individual level of analysis reveals tensions between the politician and managerial spheres of power. While metropolitan and regional managers want to work together, they depend on political injunctions which jeopardize their own strategic intent. *"Obviously we negotiated and it was a real negotiation because at first the region did not want to hear anything. I think they were not really aware of the possibilities offered to metropolises. As everywhere, there are always discussions between region and metropolis, but it also depends on political tensions between both"* (M1.3). Territorial managers have been prevented from engaging themselves in formal collaborations, they still interact with each other but on an informal basis, through a professional belonging identity. *"The metropolitan project encompasses the issues of territorial attractiveness in the sense that it focuses on needs and challenges of the territory (...). We have the responsibility to write and pilot this project, and we are now entering in the discussion phase with partners including the region and the department. At this stage, we realized a project framework based on essentially informal exchanges between us"* (M1.2). At the regional level: *"I didn't see the strategic document of the metropolis but I know their strategy because I have personal and friendly relationship with managers in charge of metropolis attractiveness strategy"* (R1.1).

The dyadic working relationship between politician and territorial managers from AMPM and PACA is very limited to specific problem that requires a collective action and knowledge sharing to be solved. For example, concerning the implementation

of regional economic development and innovation strategy, a regional manager said: *“the operational governance of the strategic plan is based on two levels of interaction. On the one hand, the territorial economic committees bring together the region, the economic development agencies, the consular chambers and the departmental councils. On the other hand, the specialized economic committee brings together the PACA region with the different metropolises of the territory: Aix-Marseille-Provence, Nice Côte d’Azur and Toulon”* (R1.2).

The professional identity of territorial managers emerges from their shared feelings of serving the same territory. Despite their belonging to metropolis or region organizations, their commitment overpasses organizational borders and refers to a public interest linked to their territory of actions. *“The promotion process of the territory must be articulated with other processes, and each actor must benefit from a collective approach, because each one will draw the fruits at its level (...). The common goals are: to promote the businesses, attract investors and talents, and create jobs. In that sense, there is a total convergence between the metropolis of Aix-Marseille and the PACA region”* (R1.1).

**Table 3: Coding sheet of the case AMPM and PACA**

INSTITUTIONAL LEVERS		ORGANIZATIONAL LEVERS		INDIVIDUAL LEVERS	
1.1 Legal environment	1.1.1 Coercive aspect	2.1 Share of organizational resources	2.1.1 Information	3.1 Tensions between politics & managers	3.1.1 Temporary tensions 3.1.2 Permanent tensions
1.2 Path dependency	1.2.1 Cultural background	2.2 Time devoted to dyadic working relationships	2.2.1 Meetings	3.2 Commitment to the territory	3.2.2 Operational commitment
	1.2.2 Historical background	2.3 Space devoted to dyadic working relationships	2.3.1 Conference rooms	3.3 Professional identity	3.3.1 Specific knowledge

Source: Authors

### 3.2.2 The case of Grand Lyon and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes

Considering the second case, the Table 4 indicates the set of levers which shape the cooperation between GL and ARA. At an institutional level, the governance mechanisms constitute a set of taken-for-granted practices, based on formal rules and informal norms such as trust. They used to set up inter-organizational programs that have fostered their capacity to handle the involvement of dyadic working relationships. A territorial manager of the region explains: *“we have for example a huge project on the development of hydrogen because we have 80% of companies that deal with hydrogen in France that are installed on the territory. So we develop a “valley” project with the European Union, Michelin, Engie, and all the major*

enterprises in this sector. This is a big projects supported by the different metropolises, communities, and also the state” (R3.1).

Concerning the organizational levers, the sharing of resources, time and space are most important than in the case of AMPM and PACA. Consequently, operational goals, actions, projects and territorial branding are thinking jointly. To illustrate, a metropolitan manager presents the points of agreement and stumbling blocks between the metropolis and the region regarding the major economic projects implemented jointly. *“The region’s major projects go hand in hand with ours at the metropolitan level. Everything related to industrial, digital and health projects is important for the region and for us, and we do things together. After that, there are contradictions due to our respective economic development agencies, and major questions remain, particularly concerning airports”* (M3.3).

Concerning the individual levers, territorial managers also display a commitment to the territory that shapes coordination. This commitment to the territory is strategic and surrounded by a competitive environment. To illustrate, a manager of the region adapts his professional identity to his territory: *“if you are going to spend the weekend in Lyon you will not spend elsewhere on the same region. So there is a form of competition between the territories. Our job is to explain to them that while there is competition on certain strategic areas, there is also an interest in working together to be in a learning ecosystem”* (R3.2).

**Table 4: Coding sheet of the case GL and ARA**

INSTITUTIONAL LEVERS		ORGANIZATIONAL LEVERS		INDIVIDUAL LEVERS	
1.1 Legal environment	1.1.1 Coercive aspect	2.1 Share of organizational resources	2.1.1 Information <b>2.1.2 Operational goals</b>	3.1 Tensions between politics & managers	3.1.1 Temporary tensions 3.1.2 Permanent tensions
1.2 Path dependency	1.2.1 Cultural background 1.2.2 Historical background	2.2 Time devoted to dyadic working relationships	2.2.1 Meetings <b>2.2.2 Projects</b> <b>2.2.3 Actions</b>	3.2 Commitment to the territory	3.2.2 Operational commitment <b>3.2.2 Strategic commitment</b>
<b>1.3 Norms of trust</b>	<b>1.3.1 Reciprocity</b>	2.3 Space devoted to dyadic working relationships	2.3.1 Conference rooms <b>2.3.2 Territorial branding</b>	3.3 Professional identity	3.3.1 Specific knowledge

Source: Authors

### 3.2.3 The case of Brest and Bretagne

Concerning the third case, the Table 5 shows the levers that lead to the coordination between Brest and Bretagne. At the institutional level, the levers that have an influence on coordination encompass the three pillars of institutions and concern the liberating aspect of the legal environment, the territorial path dependency and

a strong reference to norms of trust. Also, territorial managers indicate that the territory displays a specific culture and a set of shared values that enable coordination mechanisms such as transparency. To illustrate the power and history of this local culture and values, a manager of Bretagne argues: *“there is a culture of partnership, of seeking consensus that goes back quite far. I would even say that it can go back to the committee of study and liaison of the Breton interests created in 1950”* (R2.3).

At the organizational level, more than actions and resources, they share strategic goals. Concerning the construction of the territorial attractiveness strategy, a manager of the metropolis explains. *“Before the regional scheme of economic development, innovation and internationalization, there was the regional innovation scheme on which the region had done a major co-construction work with the territory. For the construction of the regional plan for economic development, innovation and internationalization, the region did not repeat the consultation, but the important point is that the region included in its plan, the economic development strategy of the metropolis of Brest”* (M2.3). The metropolis of Brest and the region of Bretagne therefore share strategic objectives, which have already been in place for several years.

At an individual level, professional identity plays a crucial role to facilitate the coordination: *“due to the territorial reform process, we wanted to be one step ahead. We knew that there would be regional strategic plans, and as we did not want the region to write it alone, we decided to write our metropolitan strategy before them. To make it as successful as possible, we decided to involve the different territorial managers in order to define this project jointly. Consequently, collaboration promotes the development of a global know-how for the territory”* (M2.1).

In this case, the multiple belongings of public managers to their territory, their institutions and their profession lead to a better understanding of problems and how to solve them. The multiple belonging is also supported by a dynamic of bridging gaps between the different spheres of power: politicians and territorial managers, metropolis and region. In that sense, the acculturation process between spheres of power is a learning one which fosters the empowerment of territorial managers. A manager of Brest explains: *“we are in negotiations with the region on projects like the “World Campus of the Sea” or “French Tech Brest”. Brest is currently the smallest metropolis in France, but we are working intelligently in partnership with the other players in the area. We are calling for balanced measures to reduce the risk of social fracture in the regional territory, and we will soon be expanding”* (M2.3).

**Table 5: Coding sheet of the case Brest and Bretagne**

INSTITUTIONAL LEVERS		ORGANIZATIONAL LEVERS		INDIVIDUAL LEVERS	
1.1 Legal environment	1.1.1 Coercive aspect	2.1 Share of organizational resources	2.1.1 Information 2.1.2 Operational goals <b>2.1.3 Strategic goals</b>	3.1 Tensions between politics & managers	3.1.1 Temporary tensions 3.1.2 Permanent tensions
1.2 Path dependency	1.2.1 Cultural background 1.2.2 Historical background	2.2 Time devoted to dyadic working relationships	2.2.1 Meetings 2.2.2 Projects 2.2.3 Actions	3.2 Commitment to the territory	3.2.2 Operational commitment 3.2.2 Strategic commitment
1.3 Norms of trust	1.3.1 Reciprocity	2.3 Space devoted to dyadic working relationships	2.3.1 Conference rooms 2.3.2 Territorial branding	3.3 Professional identity	3.3.1 Specific knowledge <b>3.3.2 Empowerment</b>
<b>1.4 Culture and values</b>	<b>1.4.1 Transparency</b>				

Source: Authors

### 3.2.4 The case of Strasbourg and Grand Est

In the last case, the set of levers presented in the Table 6 leads to collaboration. The institutional levers encompass the pillars of institutions: different aspects of the legal environment, the path dependency, the norms of trust, and the culture/values dimension. A manager from the metropolis of Strasbourg talks about a paradigm shift in the way public management is approached. *“To create value in the region, we work with a marketing governance system. The aim is to increase the metropolitan area’s market share by attracting a number of targets and creating value collectively, with private partners, but also the region and municipalities”* (M4.3).

Concerning the organizational level, the share of resources, time and space indicate the highest level of integration with common processes and web application. Processes are illustrated by this quotation of a manager from the region: *“our SRDEII was voted on by all our partners including the metropolis, and we co-constructed indicators for the 26 priority actions. The goal is to establish a path-making evaluation process, followed by all the actors of the territory”* (R4.2). Moreover “Imagin’Est” is a regional web application, which asks their opinions to the citizens about public policies, and this application is territorially declined, so it profits to Strasbourg.

At the individual level, in addition to the link between professional identity and the commitment to the territory, the case of Strasbourg and Grand Est displays the highest form of integration with the creation of specific tools to formalize the dyadic working relationship. Indeed, the hybrid function is a new criterion defined as a

position of liaison manager co-financed by the metropolis and the region: “my counterpart in the Grand-Est region is also in charge of coordinating economic development projects with the metropolis. We work together on common topics such as developing evaluation criteria” (M4.2).

**Table 6: Coding sheet of the case Strasbourg and Grand Est**

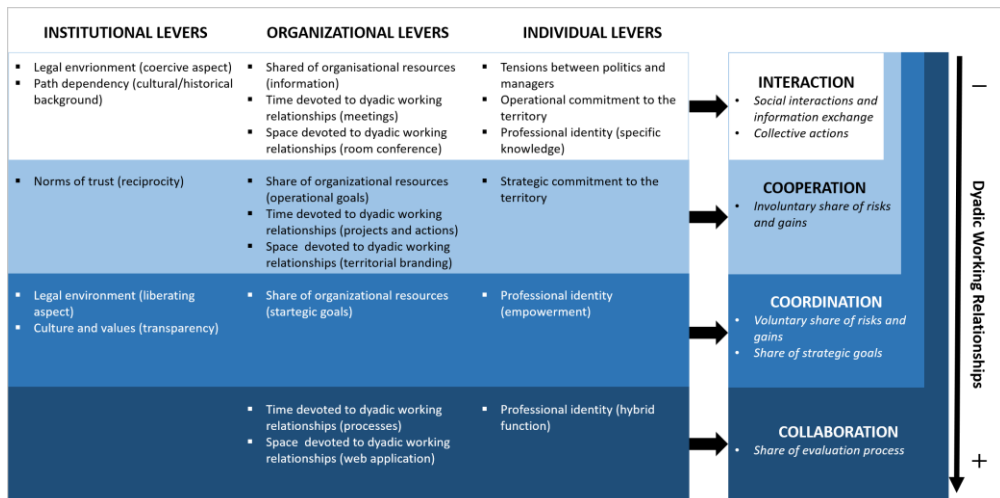
INSTITUTIONAL LEVERS		ORGANIZATIONAL LEVERS		INDIVIDUAL LEVERS	
1.1 Legal environment	1.1.1 Coercive aspect	2.1 Share of organizational resources	2.1.1 Information 2.1.2 Operational goals 2.1.3 Strategic goals	3.1 Tensions between politics & managers	3.1.1 Temporary tensions 3.1.2 Permanent tensions
1.2 Path dependency	1.2.1 Cultural background 1.2.2 Historical background	2.2 Time devoted to dyadic working relationships	2.2.1 Meetings 2.2.2 Projects 2.2.3 Actions	3.2 Commitment to the territory	3.2.2 Operational commitment 3.2.2 Strategic commitment
1.3 Norms of trust	1.3.1 Reciprocity	2.3 Space devoted to dyadic working relationships	2.3.1 Conference rooms 2.3.2 Territorial branding <b>2.3.3 Web application</b>	3.3 Professional identity	3.3.1 Specific knowledge 3.3.2 Empowerment <b>3.3.3 Hybrid functions</b>
1.4 Culture and values	1.4.1 Transparency				

Source: Authors

To summarize findings, the Figure 3 displays the links between the different categories of levers and the different forms of dyadic working relationships that have been developed below.



**Figure 3: Institutional, organizational and individual levers influencing the dyadic working relationships forms**



Source: Authors

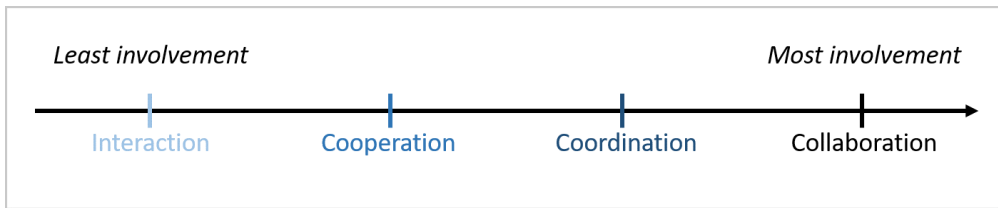
#### 4. Discussing the role of professional identity as individual levers for dynamic dyadic working relationships

The following paragraphs propose and discuss theoretical contributions structured in three main axes. First, we adapt the continuum of the dyadic working relationships forms to the institutionally constrained environment of the French metropolises and regions (4.1). The “interaction” form replaces the “no relationship” form. Second, we highlight the role of the professional identity as individual levers fostering the more or less involvement of the inter-organizational relationships (4.2). Third, due to the interdependence between the different categories of levers we demonstrate the need to shift from a linear approach of the relationships to a dynamic one (4.3).

##### 4.1 A continuum of dyadic working relationships forms adapted to a constrained environment

Conducting a multiple case study leads to a deeper understanding of inter-organizational relationships between local authorities institutionally constrained. As shown in the Figure 4, our findings make possible to adapt the continuum of dynamic working relationships (Mattesich *et al.* 2001; Selden *et al.* 2006; Segdwick 2016) ranging the different forms from interaction to collaboration.

**Figure 1: An improved continuum from the least to most involved forms of dyadic working relationships**



Source: Authors

The institutionally constrained context within evolve French metropolises and regions sheds light on some specificities. Because of the legal injunction imposed through the last public reform, territories have no other choice than to work together and in that sense, the “no relationship” expanded by Selden *et al.* (2006) is impossible. In our case, metropolitan and regional managers interact at least with each other through what we named an “interaction” form. This specific configuration of dyadic working relationships is characterized by social interactions, information exchange and discontinuous collective actions.

Social interactions refer to “interactions between the behavior of some persons and the characteristics of some other persons” (Becker 1974, p.1063). Moreover, information exchange can be understood as the formal and informal exchange of different types of information which vary according to their contents (e.g. written or oral) and meanings (e.g. induced or explicit). In a relationship, there can be social interactions without people exchanging information and there may be an exchange of information without a social interaction. For example, on the one hand, two managers may meet during a conference on public action without exchanging information on the functioning of their organization. On the other hand, two managers can exchange information without knowing each other through a third person, acting as an intermediary.

Moreover, if social interactions and information exchange don’t go together, acting in a collective but discontinuous way is also a distinct characteristic of the shallow commitment in dyadic working relationships. As explained by Thomson and Perry (2006, p.22) “if the collective action is executed in a reciprocal fashion, then participating organizations will continue or expand their mutual commitments”. Indeed, discontinuous actions in time do not allow reciprocity and so do not facilitate mutual commitments. Indeed, when territorial managers interact with each other, they are shallow committed.

Furthermore, our results confirm the growing involvement of the dyadic working relationships forms (Mattesich *et al.* 2001; Selden *et al.* 2006; Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson *et al.* 2007; Sedgwick 2016). Territorial managers can then cooperate if they share involuntary risks and gains. In a most involved way, then can coordinate

if they share voluntary risks and gains but also if they define jointly strategic objectives. The most involved form of working relationships is the collaboration and in this configuration, metropolitan and regional managers share a democratic evaluation process (Soldo 2018), from the common definition of indicators to the continuous adjustment of objectives and actions to be implemented.

Finally, territorial managers can foster the involvement of the four dyadic working relationships forms by using individual, organizational and institutional levers.

#### **4.2 Professional identity of territorial managers influencing their inter-organizational relationships**

To facilitate the involvement of working relationships, prior literature tends to focus on institutional (Scott 2013; Quélin *et al.* 2017) and organizational levers (Mattesich *et al.* 2001, Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson *et al.* 2007, Sedgwick 2016) that our findings have also confirmed. But our findings enable to complete this prior literature in adding also individual levers through the confirmation of the major role plays by professional identity in attractiveness territorial strategies.

In the four cases and so in the four forms of working relationships, there are temporary and permanent tensions between political and managerial spheres. Indeed, these tensions can lead to inertia and prevent the involvement of dyadic relationships through formal partnerships. To address the lack of political support and formal partnership, territorial managers display a territory commitment which leads them to interact informally. Doing so, they acquire specific knowledge and increase their territorial expertise through individual professional mechanisms shaping their professional identity. Moreover, a greater involvement in dyadic working relationships can be activated by a strategic commitment to the territory through a high territorial anchoring of projects and actions (Serval 2017; Soldo 2018). Then, in a more inclusive approach of working relationships, the findings of the coordination case (i.e. Brest and Bretagne) shed light on empowerment of territorial managers. Empowerment is “a process involving a set of management practices (sharing authority, resources, information, and rewards) that influence performance (effort, and productivity), not only directly but also indirectly through their impact on employee cognition (self-efficacy, motivation, and job satisfaction)” (Hernandez and Moldogaziev 2012, p.157). Taking into account the relational and psychological dimensions of the empowerment, this definition is based on the Bowen and Lawler’s approach of empowerment which is understood as “an approach to service delivery” (1992, p.33). Due to this definition of empowerment, professional identity can be considered as a dynamic process of self-construction (Osty 2002), balancing with a biographical process (identity for oneself) and a relational process (identity for others). Furthermore, in the most involved form of dyadic working relationships, the metropolitan and regional managers collaborate through an hybrid function. This

function corresponds to a profession financed by the two organizations dedicated to a common work. The case of Strasbourg and Grand Est sheds light on a position of liaison manager. Indeed, the relational process of the professional identity is directly linked with both the metropolis and the region in a more complex social dimension.

The introduction of professional identity as an individual lever to explain dyadic working relationships may also affect the relation between the other levers (organisational and institutional), leading to a shift from a linear conception to a more dynamic approach that is discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### **4.3 Toward a dynamic approach of dyadic working relationships to define territorial attractiveness strategies?**

Prior literature (Mattesich *et al.* 2001, Thomson and Perry 2006; Thomson *et al.* 2007, Sedgwick 2016) tends to define dyadic working relationships in a linear approach. Indeed, the greater the sharing of institutional and organizational levers is, the more involved the dyadic working relationships would be. However, through a multi-level analysis (i.e. *macro*, *meso* and *micro* levels), findings reveal the importance of professional identity as a dynamic process that balances with the institutional pillars and the organizational resources, tools, time and space sharing.

First, the rise of professional identity increases the expertise of territorial managers. The set of skills developed by territorial managers enables them to develop greater autonomy vis-à-vis their political, economic and legal environment. To illustrate this fact, more and more recruitments ignore the logic of public service competitions (characteristic of the French recruitment process in public organizations), focusing on experts from other fields such as the private sphere (Emery and Giauque 2014). In doing so, professional commitment goes hand in hand with specialization and territorial engineering (Freidson 1986). In this way, professional identity can influence the organizational processes sharing from the decision making to the evaluation of the territorial attractiveness strategies.

Moreover, the increasing professionalization of territorial manager goes with new public governance (Osborne 2006) and public value management (Stoker 2006). Through empowerment, the metropolitan and regional managers can therefore define a territorial governance (Pupion 2017; Soldo 2018) sharing goals and actions with the other public organizations (e.g. municipalities), the private organizations, the third sector (e.g. associations) and the citizens. Indeed, territorial managers can also think about a co-creation process of public value. Due to the varying professional identity of public managers, institutional levers such as legal environment, norms of trust and values may be assessed differently. For example, a constraint for one territorial manager can become an asset for another depending on his identity for himself and on his identity for the others.

Finally, a dynamic approach leads territorial managers to use differently individual, organizational and institutional levers to foster the more or less involvement of dyadic working relationships. This implies thinking about complexity and contingency by adapting the attractiveness strategies to needs of the territory. Unlike a linear approach, a dynamic approach requires adaptation in time and space. As Kandinsky (1954, p.85) said « *any limitation is dictated only by time, by means of an inner necessity, and therefore any limitation can only be temporary* ».

## **Conclusion**

This research has investigated the dyadic working relationships forms and levers between French metropolises and regions in an institutionally constrained environment. Indeed, we have explored the French context through the impact of the last public reform that has obliged the metropolises and regions to work together to define their territorial attractiveness strategies. These constrained dyadic working relationships represent the originality of this article.

First, the findings have made it possible to adapt the continuum of inter-organizational relationships from the least to the most involved forms. The “no relationship” form which is impossible becomes the “interaction” form. Indeed, territorial managers interact when they have social interactions, information exchange and discontinuous collective actions. Moreover, the findings confirm the presence of the three other working relationships forms, namely: cooperation, coordination and collaboration.

Second, linked to a multi-level framework of analysis, we have identified three main categories of levers: institutional, organizational, and individual. We have shed light on the role of individual levers through the professional identity. We also provide a dynamic approach to understand the inter-organizational relationships. Indeed, professional identity balances with the institutional pillars as well as the organizational resources, tools, time and space sharing. These elements constitute our contribution to previous literature that has mainly focused on organizational and institutional levers based on a linear approach (Mattesich *et al.* 2001; Thomson *et al.* 2007; Sedgwick 2016; Quélin *et al.* 2017).

Furthermore, the qualitative design resulted in a richness of findings which does not come without limitations. We have chosen a multiple case study which reduces the ability to generalize our findings. To improve the external validity, our findings could be replicated in other fields of public management substituting the cultural strategies or the sustainable development strategies to the territorial attractiveness strategies. Finally, a longitudinal research design will enable us to understand the involvement trajectories of the dyadic working relationships due to the roles of each lever.

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