Preface and acknowledgements

This book is about so-called Secondary Capital Cities, defined as capitals that are not the primary economic city of their nation states. There is a need to study such cities comparatively because no counterpart exists in their national urban systems. Comparative research brings economic, political, and social differences into the spotlight. This book clearly demonstrates that the economic and political institutions, which form the political economy of a locality, matter in explaining policy variation. Whereas local policy-makers share the motivation to be competitive in interurban competition, the actual policies that they formulate are dependent on place-based institutional constraints and opportunities. Local tax settings are especially important because, in the end, cities want to earn money. This project, and the resulting book, has taught me about the importance of such institutional differences when comparatively analysing cities.

The research for this book was triggered in 2008 when the Swiss federal government published the first draft of its Swiss Federal Spatial Concept. Bern was not designated as a Swiss metropolitan region and this caused alarm among local and regional policy-makers, who began lobbying for a better status. Policy-makers searched for best practices and lessons to learn. Among others, they also sought advice from the University of Bern. In 2013, Prof. Dr. Heike Mayer and Prof. Dr. Fritz Sager launched an interdisciplinary and multi-year research project, which was financially supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (Grant Number 143784). This book is part of that research project.

This book studies Bern, Ottawa, The Hague, and Washington, DC. I was able to live and work in each of these capital cities for several months. This embeddedness provided an in-depth, first-hand understanding of the political and economic challenges of these four Secondary Capital Cities. I had the privilege to be a guest researcher at Leiden University, Campus The Hague from September to November 2014, at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, National Capital Region from December 2014 to February 2015, and at Ottawa University, Center on Governance from March to May 2015. This book relies heavily on these field studies and the interviews conducted during these periods. I want to thank my colleagues at these institutions, who helped me conduct my research, shared
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