

What Governance for European Metropolitan Areas?

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Summary

Effective metropolitan governance is essential to the achievement of the better urban balance *between* metropolitan areas sought by the European Union as it extends to the wider Europe. A sustainable approach to European metropolitan strategies will involve compact urban forms and mixed use, public transport orientated development focussed on city and town centres. A *polycentric* approach of this kind *within* metropolitan areas will also require effective metropolitan governance. This paper explores the *competencies, capabilities and process* required for effective spatial planning and development at the metropolitan level and the models of metropolitan governance that might be considered to achieve this.

The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP)

Spatial planning and development has moved up the European agenda over the last 5 years with the publication of the European Spatial Planning and Development Perspective (ESDP), through the European Commission, and the Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of the European Continent, through CEMAT (the Council of Ministers of the wider Europe with responsibility for Regional Planning).

Towards a better European urban balance

The concentration of Europe's economic activity in the *Global Integration Zone* (GIZ) recognized by the ESDP and focussed on the London, Paris, Brussels, Randstadt, Ruhr/Rhine area, is likely to continue and to grow. If it does then there will be increased urban pressures in this core area and could be related problems of decline elsewhere. Measures to achieve a better urban balance than this are required in zones such as the Baltic, Danube area and the Mediterranean.

Polycentricity

The ESDP sees a *polycentric approach* to urban restructuring *within* metropolitan areas and the development of polycentric relationships *between* metropolitan areas as an appropriate response to the need for a better urban balance. A polycentric Spatial Vision has been prepared for North West Europe and this gives an example of what is being sought.

Europe's metropolitan areas

There are over 100 metropolitan areas, with populations over 500,000, in the wider Europe, containing about 60% of the total population of 480 million. This is a measure of the importance of metropolitan competitiveness and wellbeing to the economic prosperity and social cohesion of Europe. It is also an indicator of the potential significance of effective metropolitan governance in achieving a better urban balance within Europe.

The metropolitan dimension

The process of urbanization across Europe has resulted in core cities and their hinterlands (areas of social and economic influence), or clusters of cities and towns, becoming the primary urban form. Most such areas are now *metropolitan* in character, meaning that they function as one interdependent urban region or area.

Subsidiarity

The concept of *subsidiarity* means that metropolitan areas are now the level at which wider European spatial planning objectives can be realised most effectively. Without effective metropolitan governance the populations of metropolitan areas are unable to influence some of the key issues affecting their future and its sustainability.

Sustainability

Many of the strategic spatial planning issues of concern at the European level, such as *sustainability*, can only be addressed effectively at the metropolitan level. Metropolitan areas share common problems of economic change, social inclusion, urban sprawl, traffic congestion, city and town centre vitality, environmental damage and pollution. They also offer opportunities for renewal and regeneration, high quality urban life, and economic competitiveness. It is because these issues are inter related, and balances have to be struck between them, that *effective* spatial planning and development is required at the metropolitan level.

Integrated Regional Strategies

A sustainable approach to improving the quality of life in metropolitan areas will require integrated social, economic, environmental and spatial action in order to bring about an improvement in the wellbeing of metropolitan areas as a whole. These inter related issues can be addressed best through the formulation of an Integrated Regional Strategy for Sustainable Development produced and agreed by the various public, private and voluntary sector "stakeholders" concerned and with the active participation of the public.

Whilst spatial planning and development has an important part to play in moving towards a more sustainable future it is only one of a number of related functions that have to integrate their activities in a mutually supportive way. Such an Integrated Regional Strategy will provide the necessary *context* for coherent spatial planning and development at the metropolitan and community levels.

Stakeholder planning

In most European metropolitan areas there are a variety of authorities and bodies, with responsibilities that are related to spatial planning, that need to be integrated into the plan making process. These key *stakeholders* are,

- Bodies with responsibility for specific social functions such as housing, welfare, education, health and culture and also for wider spatial planning issues such as social inclusion.
- Bodies with responsibility for specific economic functions such as promotion and training and also for wider spatial planning issues such as economic development and environmental renewal.
- Transportation authorities or companies with specific responsibility for operating the road or rail networks and services and also with wider spatial planning interests in urban change and the location of development.
- Environmental authorities or bodies with specific responsibility for safeguarding natural resources or urban heritage but also with wider spatial planning interests in sustainability. These include bodies responsible for water and sewerage.

An integrated approach to spatial planning and development at the metropolitan level is required, involving all these key stakeholder interests. Strategic planning will not always be the *primary* function of such stakeholders but their integration into the plan making process means that the implementation of the plan will be that much more effective.

Metropolitan Magna Carta and its associated Practice Benchmark

METREX, the Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas, responded to the challenges of the ESDP through the Porto Convocation, held in 1999 on the initiative of the Junta Metropolitana do Porto with the support of the European Commission. The Porto Metropolitan Magna Carta, and its associated Practice Benchmark, aims to assist in achieving effective metropolitan spatial planning in Europe through the development of the necessary *Competence, Capability and Process*.

Competence, Capability, Process

Competence means having the powers to approve, implement and safeguard a metropolitan strategy. Capability means having the knowledge and understanding to take informed spatial planning and development decisions. Process means having in place the means to regularly monitor, review, consult on and roll forward a metropolitan strategy.

Metropolitan competencies

There are a number of key competencies that will enable a metropolitan planning authority or body to be effective.

National Spatial Plan availability

The availability of a National Spatial Plan, to provide a context for strategic planning at the regional level, can make a major contribution to effective metropolitan spatial planning. The concept of "subsidiarity" (decisions being taken at the level to which they apply) depends on spatial frameworks being in existence at European, National, regional and local levels.

Formal terms of reference the planning body

The overall objective of spatial planning at the metropolitan level is to meet the social and economic needs and demands of the area in the most sustainable way possible. This means that the planning authority or body must have the formal terms of reference to do this effectively.

Powers of the metropolitan planning body

Through public participation in the process of plan formulation a strategic metropolitan planning body can seek to obtain the highest possible level of support for the preferred metropolitan strategy and its related policies, programmes and projects. However, there will inevitably be occasions when differences of opinion between communities or public or private interests have to be balanced and resolved in the wider interest of the metropolitan region as a whole. A strategic metropolitan planning body is most effective when it has the powers to take decisions on such conflicts of interest within its area.

Coherence of area of the planning body

In order to ensure that the integrated approach described earlier is effective the strategic planning body should operate over a *coherent* metropolitan area. The example, this could mean covering most of the commuting area, housing market area, retail catchment areas of towns and cities and possibly the hydrological (water catchment) area for environmental reasons.

Power to implement and safeguard a strategy

A planning strategy which is prepared in partnership with key stakeholders and approved by a metropolitan planning body, after a open process of public participation, should be binding on all public and private interests and related levels of local planning. In these circumstances the need for the metropolitan body to use its powers to resolve conflicts of interest or safeguard the approved strategy, from major incompatible developments or incremental erosion from numerous small-scale developments, should be limited.

Level of influence on implementation strategy

If the key stakeholders are an integral part of the strategic planning process then a high level of commitment to the plan should be able to be obtained. The plan will then be a major influence in directing investment in support of the metropolitan strategy. However, there may be occasions when the interpretation of the requirements of the plan becomes an issue or when partners simply disagree. In these circumstances Government approval of public sector investment programmes and projects could be made dependent on their compatibility with the metropolitan strategy.

Models of Metropolitan Governance

Across Europe there are now a number of models of metropolitan governance. They range from authorities with comprehensive statutory powers, through authorities with selected core powers to voluntary groupings of authorities with advisory powers only. They can be summarised as follows.

1. Elected metropolitan authorities with a comprehensive range of social, economic, infrastructural, environmental and spatial planning powers, through which to plan and implement effective and integrated strategies.
2. Elected or appointed authorities with selected core powers through which to plan and implement effective strategies to address key issues.
3. Appointed metropolitan agencies or joint bodies with strategic planning responsibilities and advisory implementation functions.

The comprehensive model (Diagram 1)

The establishment of elected metropolitan authorities with comprehensive powers for integrated strategic planning and implementation usually requires the restructuring of traditional forms of local government based on communities, towns and cities. It is therefore much less easy to establish than other models of metropolitan governance based on the voluntary cooperation of existing authorities to address key issues of common interest such as economic change or transportation. However, the scale of the pressures, problems and opportunities being faced by some metropolitan areas can make the comprehensive model the most effective option.

The core powers model (Diagram 2)

Where the key issues being faced by a metropolitan area are more specific or intense then it may be effective to establish a metropolitan authority with the core powers necessary to address these. Such models usually involve the core spatial planning, transportation, economic and environmental powers necessary to achieve substantial urban renewal and regeneration or urban expansion.

The agency model (Diagram 3)

Where there are established and integrated national and regional strategies in place, which have the support of the key stakeholders involved, it may be easier to plan and implement at the metropolitan level with fewer powers and a more voluntary approach.

Metropolitan capabilities

Whatever the model that is adopted for metropolitan governance, depending on the national and regional circumstances and the key issues being faced, there will be a need for the authority or agency concerned to have the capabilities to plan, monitor, review, safeguard and implement the metropolitan strategy. Some of the key capabilities can be summarised as follows.

Professional resources

Strategic planning at the metropolitan level is concerned with key issues that require a longer term approach. The process of data collection, analysis, the formulation of a strategy and associated policies, programmes and projects, and their subsequent monitoring and review, requires the allocation of professional resources on a continuing basis. A permanent dedicated professional team will provide the necessary continuity and commitment and develop expertise from experience.

Survey and data collection

The key stakeholders will all be able to contribute information, experience and expertise to the metropolitan planning process, as will the constituent local authorities. It will be important that surveys and data collection are organized to agreed standards, that is, to agreed definitions, time periods and geographic areas, to enable analysis and planning at the metropolitan level. Such standards should be reasonable, having regard to the key strategic issues being addressed in the plan.

Projections and forecasts

From the agreed metropolitan data sources, and from national sources such as the census, the strategic planning authority will be able to carry out projections and forecasts to provide a social and economic context for the investigation of strategic planning scenarios and policy options.

Urban development capacity

Within mature European metropolitan areas the key issue is very often the need to balance the demand for development with the development capacity within urban areas and the need for their extension. It is therefore important that the strategic planning authority should have the most complete and up to date assessment of urban development capacity available to it as is possible.

Policy analysis at the metropolitan level

Social, Economic, Housing and Retail development, Transportation and a sustainable Environment are at the heart of all policy analysis at the metropolitan level. Although they may each involve specific groups of stakeholders with sectorial or geographic interests they are often inter related. For example, there may be competition between them for limited development opportunities or development may have an impact on other urban functions, such as transportation, or on environmental resources.

Capability to prepare strategic scenarios and an integrated strategy for a metropolitan area

It is because of the inter related nature of urban development that strategic choices have to be made which balance sectorial and geographic interests in the wider metropolitan interest. This is the key function of metropolitan governance. Whatever the model of metropolitan governance that is chosen it must have the competencies and capabilities to prepare and sustain a metropolitan strategy over the medium to longer term. Many of the development choices for the coming 5 years will often have already been made and it is the ability of the strategy to influence events in the 5-15 year period that is important.

Effective planning Process at the metropolitan level

It is the ongoing process of planning, monitoring and review, which will sustain a metropolitan strategy in the medium to longer term and enable it to anticipate and guide urban change. It will also enable it to be responsive to changes in the wider national or regional context.

A pro active, inclusive and transparent approach

In order to ensure that the plan identifies and addresses key strategic issues within a metropolitan area and that the adopted strategy commands widespread understanding and support, it is essential to provide opportunities for public participation to shape the plan. Although the strategic planning process will involve a range of formal authorities and bodies it will also need to involve a wide range of other informal bodies and the general public, or *third parties*. Good practice should incorporate a requirement to involve third parties in the participation process.

The most powerful force for effective metropolitan spatial planning is a *reasoned justification*, or well founded argument, for the adopted strategy. Complete *transparency*, or openness, to the general public and to key stakeholders throughout the plan making process, and its subsequent monitoring and review, will ensure widespread understanding of the strategic plan and continuing support for it.

Implementation, monitoring and review

Support for the implementation of the strategic plan, through the allocation of the necessary human and financial resources, can be secured through the adoption of formal partnership agreements with key stakeholders to secure their commitment to strategic policies, programmes and projects.

As the implementation of the plan proceeds monitoring will reveal new key strategic issues that have to be addressed or policies, programmes and projects that have to be modified in order to maintain the *relevance* and *effectiveness* of the strategic plan. The plan should be reviewed regularly, in whole or in part as necessary, preferably every two years but at least every five years.

Metropolitan finance

The financial resources available for effective metropolitan governance can include government revenue support and capital grants, local taxes or charges, loans (bonds etc.), public/private finance and revenue income. Only an elected metropolitan authority will have the mandate to raise finance from local taxes or charges and the discretion to allocate these resources according to its own priorities. Financial independence and discretion will be one consideration in choosing the appropriate model of metropolitan governance in any given circumstances.

Conclusion

Whatever model of metropolitan governance that is chosen in particular individual circumstances it should have the competence, capability and process to fulfill the following *key functions* effectively.

- *Preventing* unsustainable development
- *Safeguarding* sensitive areas or resources
- *Exercising foresight* by taking a longer term view of development prospects
- *Presenting possible futures* for public consideration and debate
- *Enabling* the realisation of chosen spatial planning and development options
- *Sustaining* a chosen spatial planning and development strategy

OPTIONS	METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE MODEL					1
	ELECTED METROPOLITAN AUTHORITY WITH COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING, OPERATING AND MANAGING POWERS 22 primary stakeholders in the metropolitan spatial planning and development process (denotes privatised)					
	SPATIAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	TRANSPORTATION and other infrastructure	ENVIRONMENT	ECONOMIC	SOCIAL Health, education, welfare, housing	
ELECTED REGIONAL AUTHORITY WITH MAXIMUM POWERS	2 Regional planning	5 Regional road authority 7 Regional public transport authority 8 Water authority 9 Sewerage authority	14 Regional park authorities	15 Development agencies 16 Training agencies	17 Health authorities 18 Education authorities 19 Higher education authorities 20 Welfare authorities 21 Social housing authorities	
RELATED STAKEHOLDERS	1 National government 3 Local planning	4 National road authority 6 National rail authority 10 (Rail operators) 11 (Bus operators)	12 Natural resources agencies 13 Built heritage agencies 14 National Park authorities		21 Social housing agencies 22 Private housebuilders	

OPTIONS	METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE MODEL					2
	ELECTED METROPOLITAN AUTHORITY WITH CORE STRATEGIC PLANNING, OPERATING AND MANAGING POWERS 22 primary stakeholders in the metropolitan spatial planning and development process (denotes privatised)					
	SPATIAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	TRANSPORTATION and other infrastructure	ENVIRONMENT	ECONOMIC	SOCIAL Health, education, welfare, housing	
ELECTED REGIONAL AUTHORITY WITH MINIMUM POWERS	2 Regional planning	5 Regional road authority 7 Regional public transport authority	15 Development agencies (environmental recovery)	15 Development agencies		
RELATED STAKEHOLDERS	1 National government 3 Local planning	8 Water authority 9 Sewerage authority 4 National road authority 6 National rail authority 10 (Rail operators) 11 (Bus operators)	12 Natural resources agencies 13 Built heritage agencies 14 National and Regional Park authorities	16 Training agencies	17 Health authorities 18 Education authorities 19 Higher education authorities 20 Welfare authorities 21 Social housing agencies 22 Private housebuilders	

OPTIONS	METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE MODEL 3				
	APPOINTED METROPOLITAN BODY OR AGENCY WITH STRATEGIC PLANNING POWERS ONLY 22 primary stakeholders in the metropolitan spatial planning and development process (denotes privatised)				
	SPATIAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT	TRANSPORATATION and other infrastructure	ENVIRONMENT	ECONOMIC	SOCIAL Health, education, welfare, housing
APPOINTED REGIONAL AUTHORITY WITH PLANNING POWERS ONLY	2 Regional planning	4 National road authority 5 Regional road authority	12 Natural resources agencies 13 Built hertiage agencies	15 Development agencies 16 Training agencies	17 Health authorites 18 Education authorities 19 Higher education authorities
RELATED STAKEHOLDERS	1 National government 3 Local planning	6 National rail authority 7 Regional public transport authority 8 Water authority (or companies) 9 Sewrage authority (or companies0 10 (Rail operators) 11 (Bus operators)	14 National and Regional Park authorities		20 Welfare authorities 21 Social housing agencies 22 Private housebuliders