

Metropolis Observatory

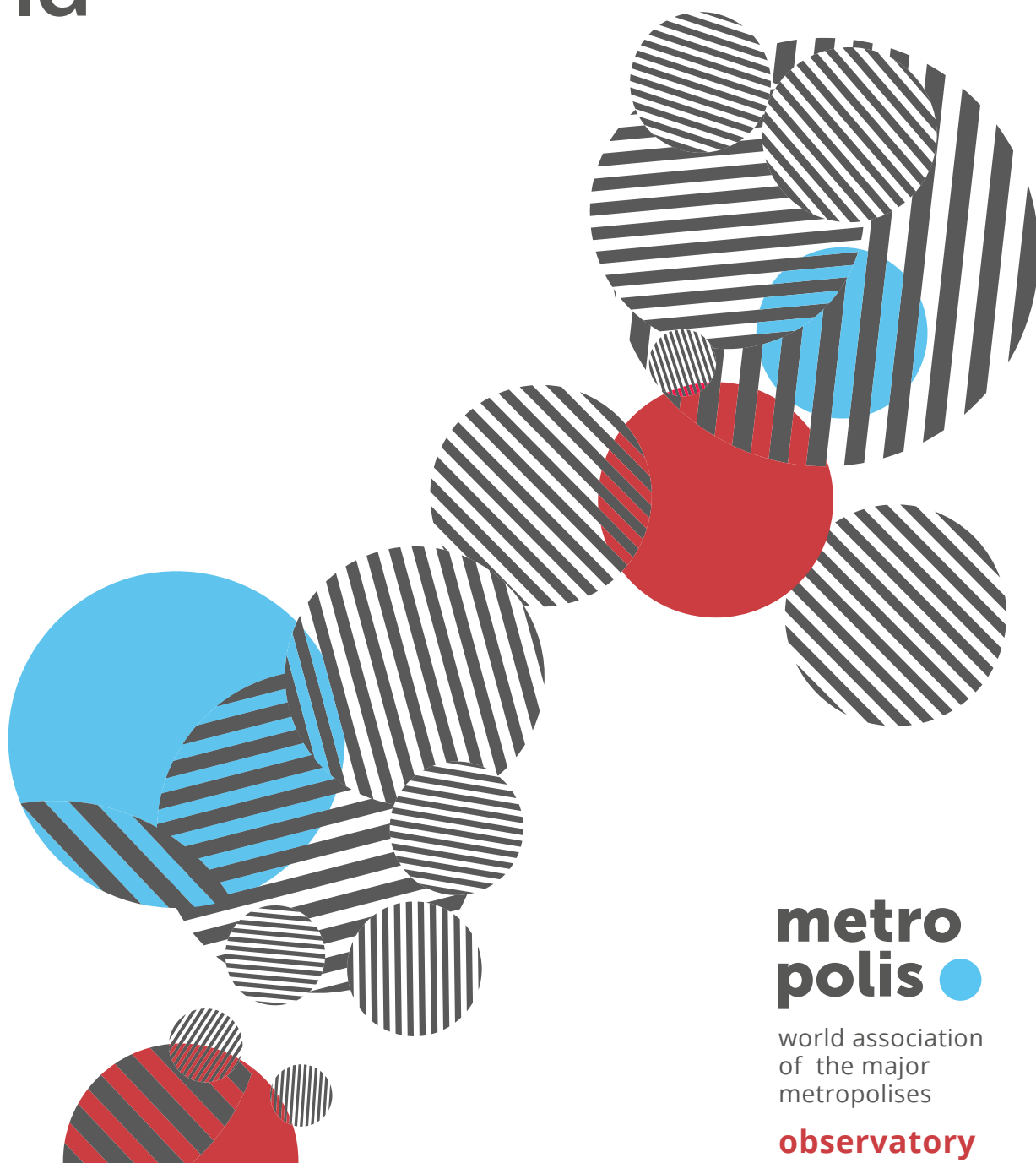
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ISSUE PAPER

Metropolitan trends in the world



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Introduction

The world is becoming increasingly urbanised; the accelerated expansion of the metropolitan regions is an increasingly visible phenomenon in the 21st century.

In 1990, less than 40% of the total human population lived in a city, but since 2010 over half of all people have been living in an urban area. By 2050, estimates indicate that seven out of every 10 people will live in a city.

As a result, the economic, social, cultural and environmental transformations in the last two decades have led to profound new territorial reorganisation processes ranging from new patterns for the location of urban activity to the appearance of significant changes in the role of metropolitan areas.

We are undergoing a spatial re-configuration in which the metropolitan and urban scales must coexist. This process will have a major impact on large cities and the surrounding territories.

How can we strike a balance to prioritise global issues today without losing sight of local ones and without affecting people's daily lives, while respecting the autonomy of each neighbourhood, town and city that makes up the metropolis? In this first publication from the Metropolis Observatory, Mariona Tomàs analyses the contemporary metropolitan context and offers us initial recommendations to answer this question.

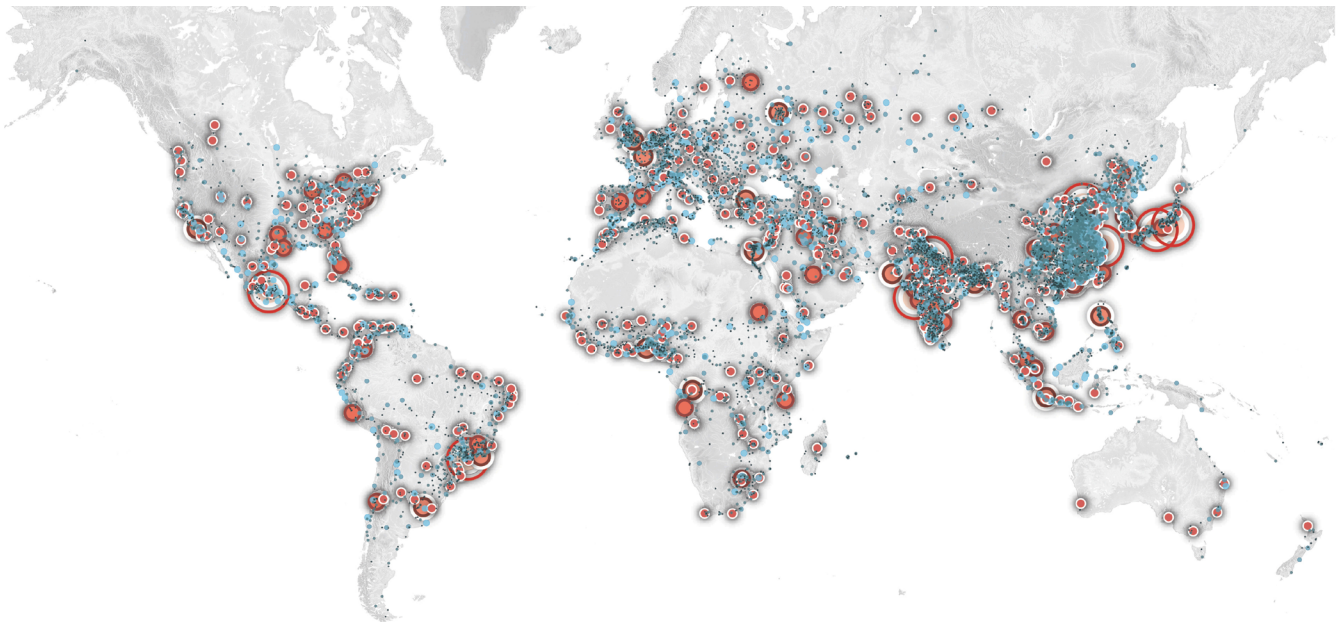


Felip Roca
Metropolis Secretary General

General trends and key issues

The process of urbanisation in the world is stable and growing: in less than a century, nearly four billion people will live in urban areas. This trend is expected to grow in the next two or three decades, with 2.4 billion more residents in urban areas. Regions that are currently rural will start to transition towards urban societies, leading one of the greatest transformations in human history, with all the advantages and disadvantages that entails.

According to the latest Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD IV), 1.6 billion people (41% of the total urban population) currently live in metropolitan areas and over 600 million new inhabitants are predicted by 2030. The Asia-Pacific region dominates the global urban system, since it is home to 47% of the world's urban population and 45% of the metropolises in the world. Following behind are Latin America and the Carib-



Credits: GOLD IV Report: Co-creating the urban future . Edition 2016

World map of metropolitan areas, intermediary cities and % of population living in small towns

bean, which have 13% of the urban population and 14% of the metropolitan areas, and Africa, with 12% and 11%, respectively. The rest is divided among the other regions.

Metropolitan areas are spaces of innovation and of generation of wealth, culture and opportunities, accounting for 60% of the world's GDP. However, although human development rates are higher in urban areas than

in rural ones, this quality of life is threatened by two main problems, which are related: social inequalities and environmental problems.

The challenge of social cohesion is shared: there are now major inequalities in urban areas, not only in relation to income per capita, but also to access to services and goods (education, healthcare, housing, drinking water, food, electricity, etc.). No real equality of opportunity



Metropolitan areas have turned into the battlefield for human rights and specifically the 'right to the city'

The way to face these challenges is to improve metropolitan governance

exists: it varies by social origin, gender, country of birth and ethnic group, to name a few variables. Thus, life expectancy depends not only on someone's country of residence (North/South), but also on the neighbourhood where they live. For example, statistics from the city of Barcelona in 2014 show a difference of up to nine years in the life expectancies of men living in the richest and poorest neighbourhoods (Agència de Salut Pública de Barcelona, 2015). While these inequalities are found in the Global North, they are amplified in the Global South: metropolitan areas have turned into the battlefield for human rights and specifically the 'right to the city' (right to housing, to mobility, to basic services, to culture, to freedom and to participation).

Environmental problems are the second issue in metropolitan areas. The Rio Conference in 1992 had warned of the importance of sustainability, and since then local Agenda 21 initiatives have been developed to try to reduce the amount of urban waste, recycle and produce clean forms of energy. However, CO₂ emissions have not declined and the quality of the environment has worsened in the air, water and soil: premature deaths from pollution are starting to become an indicator of a problem that requires global and not just local action. Various initiatives and forums held on the global scale have stressed the need to achieve greater sustainability, like the 21st Climate Change Conference (COP 21) that approved the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015. Therefore, the next 20 years will be critical for finding new models of production and consumption and we must lead the transition towards more sustainable metropolitan areas. Furthermore, natural disasters are devastating in urban areas. We need to plan for them, adapt infrastructure to combat their effects and boost resilience, especially in the most vulnerable areas. Social inequalities and environmental problems are undoubtedly related. The lack of access to drinking water or clean air entails a decrease in the quality of life and life expectancy. People who inhabit the most polluted areas in unhealthy conditions are often the poorest, with less equality of opportunity. This vicious circle particularly occurs in the countries of the Global South, where urbanisation processes have taken place in a more disorderly way and with

a heavy dose of informality, leading to a lack of legal recognition of the place where people reside. Moreover, in many developing countries, environmental variables are not taken into account and urban concentration is linked to major air pollution. The gap between rich and poor is often reflected in segregated urban communities populated by private housing estates (gated communities, condos, etc.) and by informal settlements (shanty towns, slums, favelas, villas miseria, etc.). How to remake these settlements to achieve greater equality and environmental quality is the main challenge of the Global South, where the welfare state has begun to develop in an incipient way. As stated in the GOLD IV report, by 2050 the population of Africa is expected to increase by 800 million people. There are also predictions of major growth in India and China, countries with great inequalities and environmental problems. Therefore, we must avoid polarisation not only between urban areas, but also within them.

The metropolitan areas of the countries of the Global North share these concerns. As covered in the Urban Agenda for the EU adopted in Amsterdam in May 2016, issues related to social inclusion and sustainability are a priority for European urban areas. Also prominent are the subjects of welcoming immigrants and refugees in cities, the circular economy, job creation in local economies, the digital transition and innovation in public administration.

In brief, the key element consists of combining the attraction of capital and economic growth in metropolitan areas while preserving inclusion and sustainability at the same time. Many documents and academic studies agree on one aspect: the way to face these challenges is to improve metropolitan governance, understood as the variety of ways to govern the increasingly larger urban agglomerations in the world.

Metropolitan governance

There are many models of metropolitan governance and no single formula is suitable for everyone. In fact, each city has its particularities and form of governance due to historical and political reasons. However, we can distinguish four main models of metropolitan governance according to the type of institutional arrangements made:

- 1)** Metropolitan governments or structures created expressly to deal with metropolitan challenges on a single level (after the merger of municipalities or a designation as a 'metropolitan city') or on two levels (maintaining the municipalities, but with a metropolitan level of coordination).
- 2)** Sectoral metropolitan agencies with an average degree of institutionalisation to manage or plan a single service (public transport, the environment, the police, etc.).

3) Vertical coordination, in which metropolitan policies are not carried out by a specifically metropolitan body, but de facto by other levels of government that already exist (a region, a province, a county, etc.).

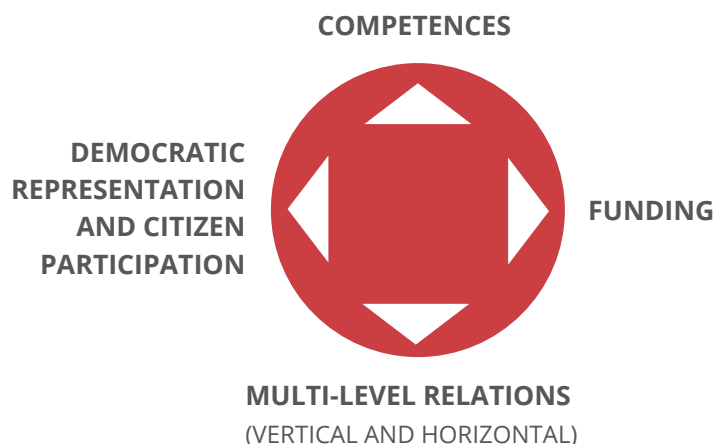
4) Less institutionalised models based on municipalities' voluntary cooperation, whether through a grouping or association of municipalities, or by means of strategic planning.

Institutional fragmentation exists in most metropolitan areas in Europe and models with an average degree of institutionalisation prevail: robust metropolitan governments and voluntary associations of municipalities are in the minority. This trend may be extrapolated to the countries of the OECD, where 51% of the metropolitan areas have some sort of metropolitan body, but without the ability to regulate and only 18% have metropolitan authorities with powers (OECD, 2015). In practice, models of metropolitan governance vary according to the tradition of cooperation, political alliances, relations between levels of government and the local configuration of public and private stakeholders. These balances modulate the kind of governance that evolves over time. There are many examples of cities that have a relatively institutionalised model of metropolitan governance according to the stage, moving from a metropolitan government to sectoral agencies, from a strategic plan to cooperation between municipalities, etc.

In any case, all models of governance must deal with the following issues: competencies, funding, democratic representation and civil participation, and multi-level relations.

Metropolitan governance variables

Graphic 1



Metropolitan areas lack the financial resources to meet urban challenges

Creative ways must be found for the population to feel like part of the territory

Competences

As highlighted in the Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas approved in Montreal in October 2015, in general metropolitan areas enjoy no political recognition. In most cases, their competences are related to hard policies (urban planning, public transport, infrastructure, the environment), while they lack competences related to soft policies (education, health, social services, economic development). Furthermore, both cases mostly deal with competences shared with other levels of government (local, regional or state-related). The binding or non-binding nature of the decisions made must also be taken into account. For example, this could involve determining whether the actions set by an urban metropolitan plan are mandatory or not for municipalities. Without this exclusive and binding nature, it is very difficult to provide solutions on a metropolitan scale.

Funding

To a large extent, funding determines a metropolis' degree of autonomy. This is not only true with regard to material resources (the amount), but to the source of this funding (own or by other means). As shown in the documents and also expressed in the Barcelona Declaration in March 2015 by European metropolitan mayors, metropolitan areas lack the financial resources to meet urban challenges. Thus there is little fiscal autonomy, since most of the resources are transfers from other administrative areas. For example, although London has a metropolitan institution (the Greater London Authority), its funding depends on a subsidy from the British government. Therefore, other fiscal instruments are required to develop inclusive policies based on sustainability and solidarity. In fact, it is important to provide fiscal redistribution instruments in the metropolitan territory to reduce inequalities within metropolitan areas, as is the case in Copenhagen, Tokyo and Minneapolis-Saint Paul.

Citizens

In a few cases, metropolitan areas have directly or indirectly elected metropolitan governments. In general, indirect election models predominate, where people who have been elected as political representatives in their respective municipalities form part of the metropolitan structure (like in Barcelona or in France).

There is no great turnout in cases of metropolitan governments selected directly by the people and there are only two examples in Europe: Stuttgart and London. In Stuttgart, after a first vote in 1994 in which turnout bordered on 70%, it began to stabilise at over 50%. In London, turnout has been stable at under 40%, except in the elections in 2008 (45%) and 2016 (46%). In fact, Blair's government held a referendum prior to the creation of the Greater London Authority: 72% of the people voted in favour, but only 35% of the citizens with the right to vote actually exercised that right. If we compare this with turnout in the municipal elections, in both cases we see that the percentages are similar. In other words, the direct election of the metropolitan council in both of these agglomerations would not have achieved greater turnout success or differentiated itself from municipal elections.

Therefore, we must rethink political participation in metropolitan areas, taking into account that in most cases, there are no representative institutions in a territory where people live, work and pursue their daily lives in more than one municipality. Creative ways must be found for the population to feel like part of the territory and have the tools to develop their status as citizens, and not just as consumers or clients. Moreover, these forms of participation must include ones that are often excluded and take a gender perspective into account in their design, implementation and evaluation. New information and communication technologies could be useful for improving civic participation in urban environments.

Major multinational corporations' growing interest in smart cities puts the capacity of governance to the test

Multi-level governance

Metropolitan areas are situated in an environment of multi-level governance, where horizontal and vertical relations exist. In fact, cities have established themselves as political actors that weave their own international networks, like Metropolis, UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments. These networks enable an exchange of experiences and best practices that may serve to stimulate policies in other cities and make metropolitan problems visible on a global scale.

We must also take into account how local and metropolitan authorities relate to the private sector. In fact, one of the current challenges consists of promoting economic development strategies that generate opportunities for wealth for all and that are respectful of the environment: economic activities that are sustained by the circular, social and collaborative economy, which create decent jobs and, in developing countries, promote the transition from an informal economy to a formal one.

Various public, private or joint venture entities of different territorial scopes, diverse compositions and varied functions operate in urban agglomerations. As such, another challenge of metropolitan governance consists of coordinating them all. In addition, we must guarantee the economic efficiency and viability of the management of the services in areas with major profits like water and those related to the sustainability of the territory. In this regard,

major multinational corporations' growing interest in smart cities puts the capacity of governance to the test, since public-private partnership is inescapable in this area. In fact, neither city councils nor metropolitan governments possess the technology or the knowledge to deploy the smart city: the connection between public and private interests is at the heart of metropolitan governance.

In this regard, there are two interpretations of the metropolitan sphere's opportunities to improve democracy. On one hand, the private sector's greater involvement in the government of metropolitan areas may lead to less transparency and accountability. On the other hand, the opening of decision-making to other (public and private) stakeholders and the introduction of participatory mechanisms provide an opportunity to involve the citizenry and to improve the quality of democracy. In any case, the private sector must be involved in the development of urban policies: an approach that includes a plurality of stakeholders and is shared by all parties is necessary to make progress in the challenges facing metropolitan areas. One way to develop this approach is through strategic planning, which enables a consensus to be reached on the future of the metropolitan area.

In addition to relations with other cities and with various sectors of society, the governance of metropolitan areas is affected by relations with other levels of government (municipal, regional and national). In this regard, the political and legal consideration of the municipality and of the metropolitan area is



crucial: if it is an important level of government (with competencies and funding), if it plays a prominent political role in the country (high turnout in the elections), etc. Moreover, to understand these vertical relations, the importance of the agglomeration in the region or country as a whole is essential (according to its relatively decentralised political structure).

In fact, metropolitan institutions with strong powers (legal and fiscal autonomy) and democratic legitimacy (direct election of their representatives) are not created in a vacuum, but in an already existing political structure. The main reason why powerful metropolitan governments are not created is the political re-

sistance generated by this type of intervention from municipalities and from other levels of government that already exist, like provinces, regions or the central government itself. In fact, few governments dare to create new metropolitan governments that group together most of the population of the country and/or capital city. When that has happened, they were given limited powers (of management, implementation and planning) in very specific fields (especially transport and the environment, and to a lesser extent spatial planning and economic development). Political recognition of metropolitan areas therefore requires acceptance by higher levels of government, which are those that legislate and determine their capacities.

Recommendations

Metropolitan governance is based on legitimacy through results, meaning the ability to make policies and provide solutions to problems. In this regard, it depends to a large extent on the competences, funding and recognition that metropolitan areas are given by higher levels of government. Likewise, metropolitan governance must include mechanisms for democratic representation and civic participation to legitimise its decisions.

Metropolitan governance is also about creating a shared vision among all public and private stakeholders. In fact, the success or failure of the various formulas of governance is understood by the attitudes of metropolitan representatives: the willingness to cooperate and find a minimum common denominator in favour of the general interest. A metropolitan institution may formally exist, but there must be a political will for it to work successfully. In this regard, it is important to improve multi-level cooperation and especially to get the collaboration of national states. Indeed, even if there is a global system of urban areas, the world

continues to be governed by states: this is the time for them to become actively involved in the political recognition of metropolitan areas.

The GOLD IV report addresses 11 recommendations for the agenda of metropolitan areas:

- 1)** Establish new governance models to deal with the increasing complexity of metropolitan areas.
- 2)** Base metropolitan governance on democracy, transparency and collaboration.
- 3)** Give metropolitan areas adequate powers and resources.
- 4)** Develop comprehensive economic strategies in metropolitan areas to drive the national economy and create opportunities for all.
- 5)** Use vision-led strategic planning to support inclusive urbanism.

Metropolitan governance must include mechanisms for democratic representation and civic participation to legitimise its decisions

- 6)** Ensure quality infrastructure and services that are resilient and accessible to all.
- 7)** Lead the transition to sustainable and more resilient societies with greener and smarter metropolitan areas.
- 8)** Promote territorial solidarity between metropolitan areas, intermediary cities and their hinterlands.
- 9)** Put the 'right to the city for all' at the heart of urban policies in order to renew the social contract and strengthen metropolitan citizenship.
- 10)** Recognise culture (including heritage, diversity and creativity) as a pillar of flourishing metropolitan areas.
- 11)** Actively engage on the global stage and cooperate and promote knowledge-sharing among metropolitan governments.

These recommendations are similar to those formulated by the New Urban Agenda. There seems to be a consensus on the problems and challenges facing metropolitan areas. The hard part still remains: the political will to start to resolve them.

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