

Subtheme Paper

Governance of Megacities in Federal Orders

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Abstract

During the last half of the twentieth century, most countries experienced exceptional demographic growth. As a result, some traditional cities suffered physical expansions that flowed beyond their historic jurisdictional limits. A new urban form, the metropolis, became the locus of economic, social, and cultural life for more than half the urban population in both developed and developing nations. Metropolitanization produced a continuous urban landscape often characterized by social differentiation and administrative fragmentation. Given that many federal systems recognize the municipality as the basic unit of government, various questions should be answered in order to fully profit from the advantages that local governments offer in terms of flexibility, local democracy, and power of election. For one, how can federal systems respond positively to necessary intergovernmental relations (vertical and horizontal) in a metropolitan context? Second, how can governments best manage differences (demographic, social, and economic) among local governments within metropolitan regions? Third, how can governments and civil society establish the necessary channels for all local stakeholders to participate in the local public decision-making process? This paper presents preliminary ideas about answering the above questions and other related issues. It is divided into seven sections. The first describes the way cities are classified according to size and function. The

second raises the question of metropolitan fragmentation; the third tries to answer what is at stake in local public administration and management; and the next two sections present a few ideas about governance and local public services. The local finance section gives some information about decentralization tendencies and the capacity to generate local revenues. The last section touches on some basic issues of public participation.

1. New Urban Forms

The last half century was characterized by population growth and parallel urbanization in which city areas physically overflowed the jurisdictional limits of their original human settlements. Known as metropolitan growth—in which the urban agglomeration envelops various neighbouring administrative jurisdictions—metropolitanization has marked the landscape, affected the role of local and city governments, and modified the territorial organization of most countries in the world. The economic, political, and social impacts of these processes have been given wide attention, and new terminology has been coined to refer to these urban phenomena.

By *size*, cities with at least a million inhabitants are referred to as *millionaire cities*. Those over ten million inhabitants—or just with more than eight million, the size of London and New York in the 1950s—are conventionally classified as *megacities*. Geographically, these urban agglomerations might be identified as *metropolitan areas*. A metropolitan area includes one central city and a set of politico-administrative units (municipalities) that are incorporated if the continuous urbanized area covers part of their territory. The term *conurbation* refers to a spatial phenomenon in which the expanding urban area of a city absorbs spatially discreet townships and/or other built-up areas that were previously built independently.

By *function*, one refers to a *metropolitan zone* in which a local jurisdiction is included if it develops some interaction with the city centre or with an area already considered part of the metropolis. This interaction becomes relevant when it reaches a conventionally defined percentage of the labour force living in the local jurisdiction

that works in the metropolitan zone to which it is linked geographically. Thus, the region in which the city is located becomes a potential *hinterland* functionally interdependent with the central city; therefore, any metropolitan-zone demarcation is only temporarily valid because it is susceptible to incorporating additional neighbouring jurisdictions.

Based on this interaction criteria, it should be clear that even a small city, at least 50,000 inhabitants (a conventional figure), attracting a proportion of workers from a surrounding local jurisdiction can be considered a *metropolitan zone* and also, but not necessarily, a *metropolitan area*—if it meets the criterion of continuous urbanized area. A *city region* (or *metropolitan region* if at least two jurisdictions are involved) becomes a recognized functional unit if the population and economic activities in its hinterland, and the cities located within, are dependent to the central city. Strong economic complementarities among cities will form a *system of cities* and define a *functional region*.

Two or more functionally interrelated metropolitan contiguous zones will be considered a *megalopolis*—a Greek term adapted by the French geographer Jean Gottmann in the 1960s to describe the discontinuous urban complex of the north-eastern seaboard of the United States. The terms “*world city*”, curiously coined by Patrick Geddes in 1915 as recognized by Peter Hall, and “*global city*”, put into use by Saskia Sassen, refer to urban agglomerations in which the location of transnational firms’ command functions and related activities play an important role in the global economic order. The three prime global cities are New York City, London, and Tokyo, though others might follow in a hierarchical order as members of this club.

It is probably not necessary to go into more detail but only to insist on the complexity of these geographic phenomena relevant for environmental, economic, and administrative purposes. The demographic aspect is too important to leave aside. During the next half century, when the world’s population will reach a limit due to a drastic reduction in both birth and death rates—known as the demographic transition—most megacities, millionaire cities, metropolitan areas, and also megalopolitan areas will be located

in countries in the under-developed and developing worlds. It is expected that more than half of the total population in the world will be concentrated in such large agglomerations. At the beginning of this century, 500 million people, almost one in every ten inhabitants of the world, lived already in 35 megacities of which 20 were in Asia, 2 in Africa, 10 in America, and 3 in Europe.

The profusion of these huge urban agglomerations with a metropolitan-area status poses a challenge to federal orders, at least in terms of adequate institutional arrangements (“metropolitan governance”), subsidiary functions (“who does what, where”), and fiscal federalism (“income autonomy/dependency of local governments and/or metropolitan areas”). During the last 15-20 years, economic (and cultural) globalization, on the one hand, and the idea of place and locality on the other, have triggered new urbanization processes and a necessary recognition of new ways to administer and manage these new urban forms. However, there seems to be “no one answer”, as variations in metropolitan structure and governance reflect national values and context.

What are the salient characteristics of these new urban forms? What are the criteria to evaluate alternative structures? Which are the possible models for metropolitan governance? These are three questions that guide the following discussion.

2. Fragmented Metropolis

Most urban agglomerations entail a vast geographic scale and population and are also spatially dispersed but not necessarily in low densities. They are socially, economically, and politically complex and diverse; structured in dense, sometimes congested, interactive networks involving flows of information, goods, people, values, and money; highly polarized, reflecting differences in income and well-being; administratively and politically fragmented; spatially imbalanced in terms of economic and social infrastructure; functionally specialized in terms of local activities; and spatially heterogeneous.

In the face of these salient characteristics, what are the criteria for assessing basic alternatives in terms of public administration responses? In theory, institutional arrangements should be positively

evaluated both structurally and functionally if the following criteria are met or enhanced:

1. *Efficiency*: ability to capture economies of scale and scope in service provision and financing;
2. *Externalities*: containment of local service spill-over effects;
3. *Redistribution*: ability to achieve “distributive justice” in the allocation of social benefits and costs over a multiple set of differentiated jurisdictions;
4. *Responsiveness*: extent to which localized variations in consumer demand are met;
5. *Accessibility*: access by users to service provision;
6. *Accountability*: degree to which decision-makers can be held politically responsible for the impact of their decisions.

The policy analysis literature sees these criteria in conventional terms as *efficiency* and *equity*. But what problems are these new urbanization trends generating for government responsibilities at the local level? How can problems be managed; how can metropolitan areas be governed; how are organized civil society and citizens responding? These are interrelated questions.

There is little agreement on what the issues are, how to proceed, and whether to adapt local governments to these new urban geographies. Two extreme institutional responses are good examples of alternative solutions: Toronto’s *amalgamation* versus Los Angeles’ *secession*. Neither consolidation nor fragmentation as a principle of local governance organization is ideologically or politically neutral. In fact, in the American tradition, the idea of small, autonomous local governments finds a strong historical advocacy, but the argument in terms of the role of government is a permanent politico-philosophical debate between John Locke—who saw government as servant and as subordinate to the individual and a way of enhancing and protecting property—and Thomas Hobbes—for whom the state was to protect man from himself and his neighbours and thus act with few limits. In between, there are various other models of governance. In the context of metropolitan regions, the rationale is to respond to physical expansion, urban development, and service needs beyond municipal boundaries.

One position favours the creation of larger government units and service districts covering the metropolitan area; the other favours retaining smaller units for both government and service provision. A more recent policy issue is the shift (evolution) from public to private sector involvement in the provision and production of goods and services for multiple and differentiated clients.

Technological and economic exchanges emerging from recent transformations in the world economic system have triggered social and spatial trends affecting all urban regions of the world. But while in developed countries, the core city concentrates business activities and houses mainly the poor, while the rich have settled in the outer suburbs, in developing countries, a wealthy core is in general surrounded by the poor living mostly in illegal settlements. In the current geographical and economic conditions, metropolitan regions have developed as complex territorial units. As such, they are functional units and at the same time suffer from spatial, social, and administrative fragmentation.

In the context of a federal system, the administration and management of such metropolitan regions beg for strong inter-governmental relations (IGR), both horizontally among governmental entities at the same territorial level and vertically between its constituent parts (national, state, and municipal). An interesting example is Buenos Aires, a metropolitan area comprising a population of 13 million people. It includes the Federal District and 19 adjacent municipalities in the province of Buenos Aires. This fact gives the governor of the province a significant role because many public services are under the province's control. Argentina's legal framework does not allow for the creation of a metropolitan authority, but in any case, political differences and rivalries between the government of the city proper and the mayors of the surrounding municipalities would inhibit such an arrangement. However, provincial legislation does allow municipalities to create "consortiums" that can operate in connection with the national or the provincial government or among municipalities themselves. This legal authorization in the case of Buenos Aires has permitted private companies, civil-society organizations, and the business sector to

operate innovative management schemes, despite limited human and financial resources.

A challenging case is Bogotá, Colombia, with a population of close to 7 million and about 18 municipalities in close proximity. Regional coordination and common policies for development and urban growth have been difficult to achieve due to inappropriate institutional and legal frameworks, limited knowledge and consciousness of local leaders, administrative fragmentation, and, at the same time, an overlap in competences among different administrative agencies.

After years of military rule, newly elected democratic authorities under a new constitution saw a revival of local governance in Brazil. Sao Paulo, with 18 million inhabitants and 39 nearby municipalities, is a good but limited example of effective metropolitan government where the very different local authorities act collectively in a coordinated way. An example is the *Camara Regional do Grande ABC* covering an area with a strong political identity and more than two million people. Although this is only a limited initiative to create a sort of subregional governance aimed at improving the economic conditions of the area, its success is also limited due to problems of duplication of efforts, lack of coordination and financial resources, weak administrative and technical knowledge, and, most important, the absence of an institutional framework. Consequently, the whole experiment is dependent on the political will of the local authorities to implement policy decisions.

Mexico's capital city is another example. It is the third largest city in the world (after Japan's Tokyo-Yokohama megalopolis and Seoul, South Korea), with a population of more than 22 million. As a geographical functional unit, the metropolitan area includes the Federal District (DF, Distrito Federal), geographically subdivided into 16 *delegaciones* or local jurisdictions functioning as the equivalents of local authorities and as many as 58 municipalities in the neighbouring state of Mexico and one municipality in the state of Hidalgo. The DF, which physically contained Mexico City until the 1950s, houses in addition to its own government authorities, the federal government powers (including all ministries and

the other branches of the executive). Administered as a federal government agency until 1993, the head of the DF government is now directly elected by the residents and has a status similar to a state governor.

Already a metropolitan area in the 1970s, it reached megacity status when the outward sprawl intensified in the 1980s. Millions of daily commuters overflowed the city's transportation network travelling long distances and, worse, investing hours to reach their jobs, now distributed all over a vast megalopolitan region. In fact, the national capital became a complex regional megalopolis when the Mexico City Metropolitan Area (MCMA) "touched" at the end of the 1990s the metropolitan area of Toluca (the state of Mexico's capital city), more than 60 km (37.3 miles) to the west of the city centre.

In the face of these trends in Mexico City and, to a certain extent, in other cities in the country, the federal government responded in the 1970s by creating commissions to control urban growth and provide other necessary administrative coordination at the inter-state level. The activities of the commission for the Central Region (particularly oriented to the MCMA) practically ceased in the 1980s because it was showing only limited results. It was replaced by sector-specific metropolitan commissions. By the mid-1990s, in order to manage urban sprawl in the Valley of Mexico, the DF and the state of Mexico signed an agreement with the federal government's Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL) to set up what was called the Human Settlements Metropolitan Commission. In 1998, a bilateral agreement to create the Executive Commission of Metropolitan Coordination was signed between the DF and the state of Mexico as a more comprehensive framework to coordinate, evaluate, and monitor plans, programmes, and actions within the metropolitan territory of the Valley of Mexico.

These efforts are obviously not unique. Many examples around the world are successfully in place combining different models (consolidated unitary metropolitan government or fragmented governance with voluntary or induced cooperation schemes) in efforts to manage metropolitan functions and growth. Toronto, as an extreme, abolished existing municipalities to create the City of

Toronto Authority. The Montreal Metropolitan Community (MMC) is another case in point, as are the Metro Council of Portland in the United States, the Stuttgart Regional Association in Germany, and a few others, not the least being the Greater London Authority (GLA) set up in 2000.

The most important example of a central government for a metropolitan area perhaps is the Greater London Council (GLC), a top-tier administrative body that lasted for more than 20 years from 1965 to 1986. The GLC was running strategic services and looking after population change, employment, housing, pollution, transport and roads, the central London business district, growth and development areas, urban open spaces and landscape, public services and utilities, and planning standards. This was obviously a strong manifestation of planning power and a reflection of socialist policies and Labour Party popularity up until the mid-1970s and again in the early 1980s. At the end in 1986, some powers were devolved to the city and the metropolitan boroughs, while others reverted to the national government. But again in the late 1990s, there were some efforts to re-establish a Greater London Authority that would not directly provide any services but carry out four strategic functions: transport for London (and administering the London “congestion charge”); metropolitan police; London fire and emergency planning; and the London Development Agency to promote development across London.

3. Local Administration and Management

The study of administration, management implementation, and public policy became, in the context of the “reinventing government” movement, fragmented and/or neglected. With growing social complexity, it no longer had the impact on decisions that had prompted the development first of public administration and later of public management. It was realized that government could do things only in part and that, without effective partnerships, it could not achieve the results it deserved. Close and active partnerships with non-governmental parties are needed to accomplish government’s purposes. But what is at stake for local authorities to do just that?

The local authority's main purpose is to improve social well-being by supplying public goods and services and also creating conditions for economic development. So, when referring to fragmented metropolitan structures, we are essentially thinking in terms of the geography (the influence of space and location) of local administration and, specifically, three basic issues: (1) the size and shape of the administrative areas used in delivering public services; (2) interactions among the areas; and (3) the spatial allocation of public services among and within areas. The first two necessarily refer to IGR. In the third one, we are additionally facing the problem in location-allocation models: the determination of optimal locations of central facilities in order to minimize movement and other costs.

There is a valid distinction between public administration, as related to establishing hierarchy and authority boundaries, and public management, which is promoting and limiting the exercise of government power and coordinating different agencies (and agents) and programmes in service integration. In this sense, public administration is also about managing—both promoting and limiting—the exercise of government power, in other words, the “what” and “how” and not less the “who” and the “where”.

The preceding concepts are certainly relevant to analysing a metropolitan region. An internal system of subdivisions and an associated division of administrative functions (not only at the national level) concerns emotional and political links between peoples and places. In the context of ethnic and cultural diversity, in a highly heterogeneous metropolitan region, based on cultural, political, and ideological, as well as socio-economic and demographic, not to mention geographic and ecological, differences, the goal of federalism—that is, the development of institutions that balance the centrifugal and the centripetal forces within the polity—is put into evidence: how to bind together the separate and diverse areas and interests into an effective whole?

4. Governance

The term “governance” has been a catchword in political theory and political science since the 1990s. It should also be prominent

in public administration. Governance has become a central issue in the face of the salient complexities posed by metropolitan areas to “the act or process of government”. Some of these complexities have been mentioned already; that is, metropolitan regions include vast geographical areas and large populations in patterns of dispersed but not uniformly low-density development; massive complexity with strong and dense networks of interaction, social diversity, and economic polarization with increased subarea specialization; and great political fragmentation and increasing infrastructure and social services imbalances affecting heterogeneous neighbourhoods, ethnic diversity, specialized commercial clusters, and diverse activity complexes.

Thus, “governance” is a way of describing the political, social, and administrative links between government and this broader environment. It is also a way of capturing the initiatives that governments deploy to shrink their size while at the same time meeting their citizens’ demands. While “government” is the portion of the activity that acts with authority and creates formal obligations, “governance” describes the process and institutions through which social actions occur, which might or might not be governmental.

Two broad uses of the term can be distinguished. Governance is related to (1) the nature of an organization, and (2) the nature of the relationships between organizations. In the first meaning, governance is a broader category than government; it recognizes how difficult it is for government institutions to be solely responsible for coordinating social complexity and steering societal development. In the second meaning, governance refers to the particular forms of coordination that involve networks and partnerships in contrast to top-down control. Four salient features are considered:

1. Interdependence between organizations covering state and non-state actors in the context of shifting and opaque boundaries;
2. Continuing interactions between network members because there are needs to exchange resources and negotiate purposes;
3. Game-like interactions based on trust and regulated by rules agreed to by network participants; and
4. A significant degree of autonomy from the state, which does

not occupy a sovereign position but, instead, indirectly and imperfectly steers or heads networks.

In this context, there are some alternative models for the governance of metropolitan regions.

One model is, of course, *doing nothing*. The other is *privatizing* all or some functions that cross local jurisdictions. In between, there are examples of centralizing efforts and of maintaining the decentralized pattern of multiple local authorities. The spectrum is wide:

1. Centralization of power and of administrative functions (service delivery);
2. Annexation of new or already built-up areas;
3. Amalgamation or merger of city and suburbs, two or more adjacent cities, or city and county;
4. Creation of regional authorities, either a single multifunctional one or several special-purpose agencies;
5. Establishment of a formal two-tier government structure with members appointed or elected to it; and
6. Partnerships or associations (either voluntary or promoted and ad-hoc or permanent) between or among local authorities, between local and state governments, or between local authorities and private agencies.

The last two appear to favour retaining smaller units for both government and servicing, while the first four options support the creation of larger government units and service districts on a metropolitan scale.

5. Local Public Goods and Services

In a metropolitan area, local authorities face various challenges when trying to deliver public goods and services. “Pure” public goods, by definition, no matter if they are produced by private contractors or companies, are non-divisible, non-rejectable, and non-exclusive. But few goods fall into this category due to difficulties in ensuring equal provision. Most public goods and services are “impure” because they are provided at fixed locations or along fixed routes where use declines as distance increases from the routes.

Hence, they are related to accessibility; therefore, location becomes an issue. Another “impurity” besides location relates to density of provision. Local governments usually provide these services but their provision differs not only in how much is spent on a service but also in the scale necessary to reach viability in providing a service. These factors affect the decision as to whether the service is offered by a local government.

Geography (space) matters in terms of access to public goods and services, due to:

1. Jurisdictional or territorial fragmentation (including, among other aspects, economies of scale in producing public goods and services) and consequent inequalities or “tapering effects” in service provision levels between local areas, which means that the utility of public services is a function of distance;
2. The fixed location of some public services; and
3. Externalities (negative or positive) generated by the presence of a service either in a fixed location (e.g. parks, hospitals, libraries, and highways) or in terms of differences between areas (a) originated by historical, political, or organizational factors or (b) imposed upon areas by desirable or undesirable aspects of service infrastructure because locating services has unproved impacts on other neighbourhood areas.

If coordination problems are to be solved, there is a need for intergovernmental relations based on trust among municipalities (contiguous or not), between the state and municipalities, and between these and the federal government. Such trust-based coordination is essential for efficiency, equity, and distributive justice. This means that no matter where people live in a metropolitan area, a just territorial distribution of income will be secured in order to meet their local needs. This, of course, poses the problem of minorities and special merit cases, another argument in favour of local differentiation. In some cases, especially those arising from welfare policies, the states or provinces rather than the municipalities are the right units of government to internalize spillovers. These might be cost-side spillovers, when significant mobility of lower income families occurs between cities and within metropolitan

regions, or benefit-side spillovers, where there are possibilities that populations in neighbouring areas benefit from measures directed to groups in adjacent municipalities.

Efficiency problems in the provision of local public goods and services are related to (a) duplication of public services and infrastructure when each municipal authority, in trying to comply with its responsibilities, feels it is necessary to provide all services possible, even in an inefficient or partial way; (b) the need for some services to reach a certain scale to be economically viable and efficiently produced, thereby disadvantaging some municipalities due to their population size; and (c) over demand for a public service by a neighbouring population when neither they nor the consumers to which the service is offered will benefit because the quality and quantity levels are affected by an excessive demand not considered originally.

Problems of equity are inevitably related to financial matters because quality levels of public services vary between jurisdictions. Needs are not met when the fiscal base of a poor municipality is not big enough to secure the provision of services at expected levels and qualities.

Finally, “to do the job” is not possible even with enough resources when coordination within the local government or among local authorities is absent. The provision of some public services requires some coordination, if not a formal body. For example, are environmental protection, metropolitan transportation, and solid-waste management to be regulated at an intergovernmental level by a metropolitan governmental entity or by an *ad hoc* commission? That is a major question. But all these problems will not be tackled if the local authorities are not able to increase their material, financial, and human resources.

6. Fiscal Federalism and Municipal Finances

The link between subnational inequalities and fiscal federalism is important. A good example is Mexico, a country of great regional disparities. In 2000, the central and northern states enjoyed a per capita income twice as large as that in the southern states. The most

dramatic difference was between the Federal District's income per capita and the rest of the states: 1.4 times that of Nuevo Leon, the second richest state in the country, and six times that of Chiapas, the poorest state. Such differences seem to have been increasing since the 1980s.

In Mexico, around 50 per cent of ordinary federal income is every year transferred to the states, representing approximately 85 per cent of their annual total income. This is equally true for the municipalities. For some poor rural municipalities, federal transfers and subsidies (*participaciones federales*) represent more than 80 per cent of their income, while the total federal funds transferred to municipal units represent no more than 6 per cent of the yearly federal tributary income.

It is important to recognize, however, that national programmes like *Solidaridad* (PRONASOL), launched by the Carlos Salinas administration in 1988, and more recently *Oportunidades*, an offspring of the Vicente Fox administration, along with efforts to increase transparency and accountability—insisted upon by the present administration of Felipe Calderón—have been effective in supporting an increment in total income being directed to, and also collected by, local authorities.

In some cases, urban municipalities have been able to break this dependent situation. This has been done by increasing their local property taxes, instituting more efficient tax collection, or imposing an increment in charges for public services (mainly for water and sanitation). In fact, federal transfers, paradoxically, have inhibited urban municipalities from augmenting their local revenues, particularly in municipalities located in the large Mexico City metropolitan region.

In general, the fiscal-transfer system has promoted biased results favouring states rather than municipalities. Furthermore, while the federal government reduced the percentage of total subsidies directed to the Federal District from 23.4 per cent in 1980 to 12 per cent in 2000, the change only favoured states with consolidated urban markets over states with predominantly agricultural economic bases. So, it is fair to conclude that this fiscal instrument, while responding to decentralization principles, did not reduce

regional inequalities during the past two decades, even though the resources directed to and generated by local authorities experienced a real increment. During 1994-2001, total municipal income nationwide increased more rapidly than that of the Federal District, which in 1996 and 1997 was exactly the same as that of all municipalities. However, the municipalities' total income grew despite the slow growth of the country's GNP.

It is true that expenditures on public services that maintain and enhance a city are largely the responsibility of local government, but the nature and scope of the local government functions depends not only on the size of its population but also on the degree of autonomy local governments have in the political system. In fact, the weight of federal transfers is such that local authorities are subject to the priorities of the state and federal governments. Furthermore, state and federal executives can exercise their discretionary powers to allocate funds as well as investments to certain municipalities.

A different picture emerges when local authorities are able to generate direct revenues within their jurisdiction. In a comprehensive study that examined governing issues in metropolitan areas in the United States, a two dimensional scale was proposed to identify the competitive positions of municipalities in metropolitan regions. It measured on one axis the way a citizen as "voter" would see the rate of taxation affecting him/her and, on the other axis, the appreciation he/she might have as "consumer" of the resources available. The case of low taxes and high resources available was thought as ideal, while the opposite as undesirable, but the other two possible cases in this model seemed paradigmatic and so could be applied to other contexts. The rates of taxation, as well as the availability and provision of public services, are highly differentiated in the metropolitan context. Some municipalities are characterized by low taxes and others by high taxation, and some by low and others by high resource availability. These differences are attractive to some citizens and can trigger a process of metropolitan residential mobility whereby family units migrate to regions that have become more appealing. Those local governments well placed on the two axes change for the better in a faster mode than those

more stressed by improving their revenues via the property tax. This fact enables these municipalities to address their citizens' preferences for non-care services, that is, public goods and services that enhance their quality of life, going beyond administrative overhead and the provision of basic services.

The set of standards exemplified in the previous description when evaluating local governments' performance as building blocks of a metropolitan region would include, therefore, not only the efficient delivery of public services but also, and even more important, the creation of a competitive region to attract human and economic capital. An additional ingredient for metropolitan governance is active citizen participation.

7. Representative Democracy and Participatory Citizenship

Political representation and citizen participation are two conditions of governability at both the local and the metropolitan levels. These are related to political equality and institutional development as well as to democratic principles such as (a) free, fair, and frequent elections; (b) freedom of expression; (c) free access by citizens to views other than those of officials (alternative sources of information); and (d) full freedom for political organizations to form and engage in political activity.

In this context, the two basic conditions/expressions of the relationship between those governing and those governed need due clarification.

Political representation. The degree to which civil society in general and neighbourhood organizations in particular are represented in city governments and bureaucracies and how they are perceived and their demands considered by key decision-makers are crucial elements in explaining different institutional arrangements and also differential outcomes. This is necessarily an empirical question and begs for specific local studies in which citizens' and social groups' practices could be addressed positively.

Citizen participation. In the context of a metropolitan region in which municipalities and state entities are governed by different political parties, the way neighbourhood organizations and their political participation in general are accepted will vary according to the ideological principles of the local administration. Also, the possibilities of entering the planning process will be different vis-à-vis the way the authority, being controlled by one party or another, understands the process and is open to urban practices. Unfortunately, in some cases, the public-private divide is being understood more in terms of regulation, while the role of the community as participant in the provision of services (especially in health care and education, though also in housing) is becoming less important. These trends should be considered when looking at metropolitan regions and at the possibilities of coordination and cooperation among the various actors or stakeholders that are present with different roles in the neighbourhood, municipal, and metropolitan arenas.