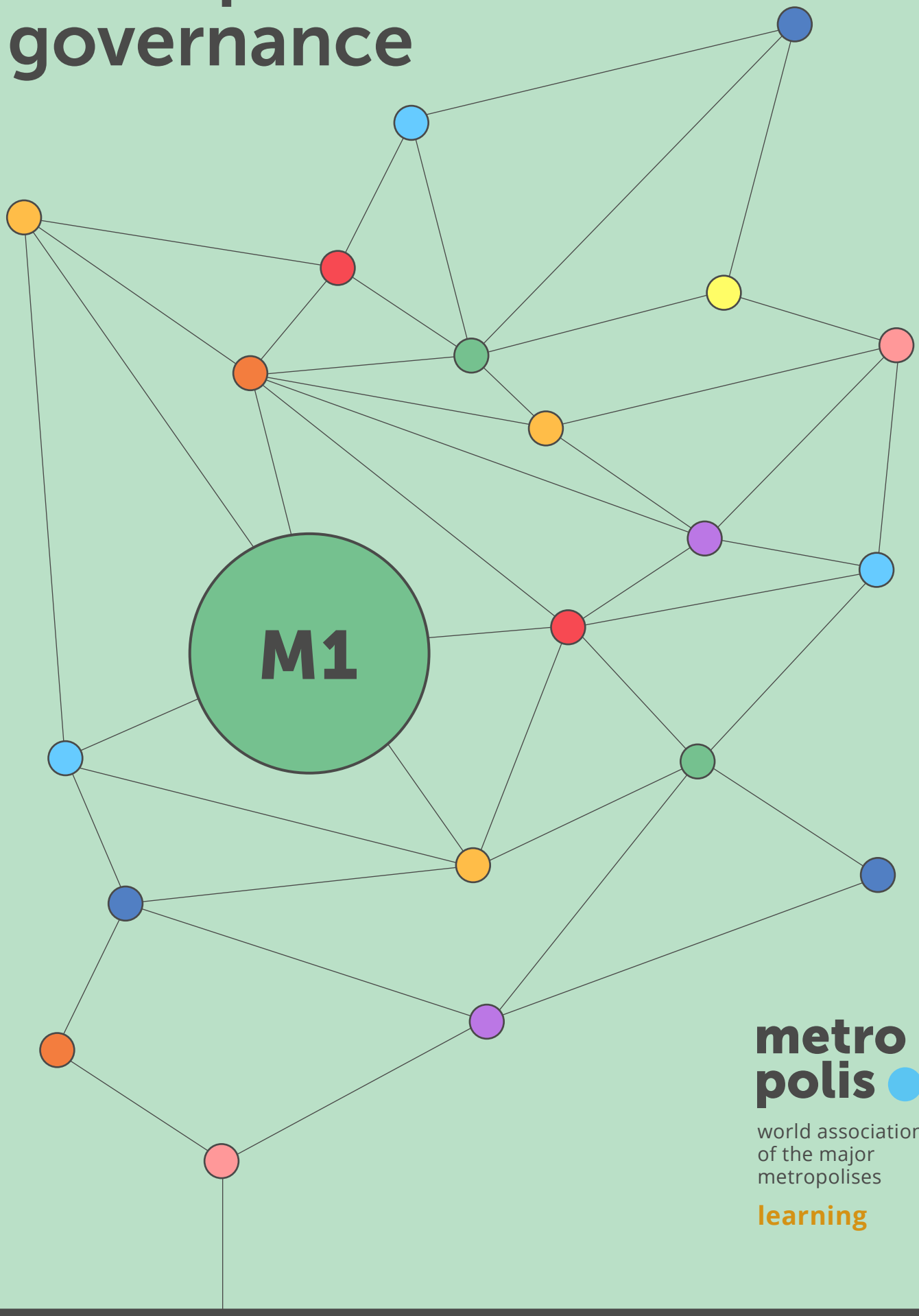
Models of metropolitan governance



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Author of the original text from which this edition is taken:

Mariona Tomàs

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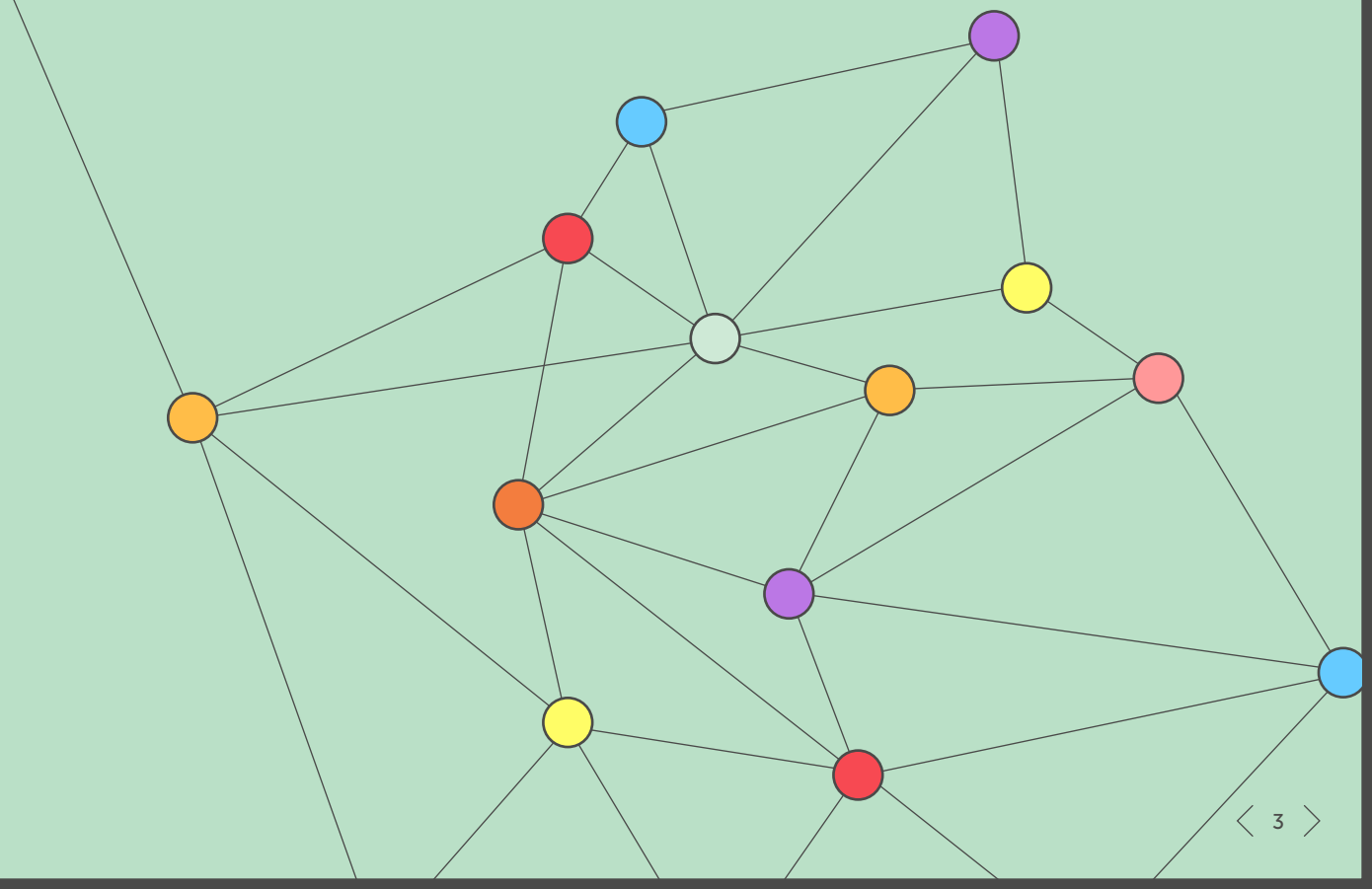

1 The metropolitan reality of the contemporary urban world

Metropolitan areas can be defined as those functional urban areas with a population of more than a million inhabitants. These metropolises are currently home to 41% of the world's urban population[1] and generate 60% of its GDP, making them spaces of innovation and opportunity. However, they are also threatened by serious environmental problems and important social and gender inequalities, priorities reflected in the objectives of global agendas like the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[2].

Limited by its remits and administrative borders, the city cannot effectively manage the impacts and tensions it faces, particularly concerning challenges arising from social and environmental problems such as heavy rain, poor air quality, lack of decent and affordable housing, public transport shortfalls and social and economic inequalities. That is why sustainability and an inclusive and gender-responsive perspective are challenges shared by most cities, despite their regional differences.

To step up to these new challenges from a real scale of contemporary urban dynamics, global consensus is growing around the need to improve **metropolitan governance** and onboard **gender mainstreaming** in the very concept of governance. In this regard, considering gender as a cross-cutting category avoids homogenizing men and women's reality, concealing differentiated needs and demands that prevent the construction of a real equality of opportunities. This is the cornerstone of the need to change institutional structures and overhaul the process of the design, implementation and evaluation of metropolitan policies to safeguard gender equality.

[1] With regards regional distribution, Asia-Pacific is home to 47% of the world's urban population and 45% of its metropolises. It is followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, with 13% of the world's urban population and 14% of metropolitan cities, and Africa, with 12% and 11% respectively. The rest is distributed among the other regions (GOLD IV Report: Co-creating the Urban Future. Edition 2016). More information: Other Reports | GOLD

[2] The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda are not specifically urban, although the suite of social and environmental problems are unmistakably transferred to the urban scale.

2 Metropolitan governance

2.1 The gender perspective on global agendas

2.2 Models of governance according to degree of institutionalisation

2.3 Variables for analysing metropolitan governance

2.1 The gender perspective on global agendas

In the framework of the preparatory sessions prior to the approval of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) in **Quito** (2016), Habitat III and Communauté Métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) organised the Thematic Meeting on Metropolitan Areas in **Montreal** where the **Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas**[3] was approved. This October 2015 document listed shortfalls in metropolitan areas and called on States to recognise their political importance and award better legal and financial instruments to urban agglomerations. However, the gender perspective was only touched on in three of the 42 articles:

- Article 12 speaks of the commitment to promote sustainable metropolitan development policies that take a gender-responsive approach to supporting **inclusive** housing, social services, culture, a safe and healthy living environment (particularly for women, youth, the disabled and older persons), green spaces, clean air and water, and affordable and sustainable transportation and energy policies.

- It also underscores the need to take an urban and metropolitan stance that includes a **diversity of perspectives** by multiple stakeholders. It proposes the full use of data disaggregated by age, gender and origin.

- Similarly, article 21 references the need to implement **metropolitan policies** around sustainable planning and development to effectively respond to the expected growth of urban populations in the coming decades. Within the policies to be developed, it recognises "the need to promote gender equality" but gives no further details.

[3] More information: Fostering Metropolitan Cooperation for Sustainable Urban Development - The Montreal Declaration

For its part, the NUA[4] includes the gender dimension in 15 articles from a total of 175, through the following issues:

The need to achieve gender **equality** and the **empowerment** of all women and girls (articles 5 and 40) and their full and effective participation.
It references equal rights in all fields and in leadership in all levels of decision-making by ensuring decent work and equal pay for equal work, or work of equal value (article 13.c).

The prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination, **violence and harassment against women and girls** in public and private spaces (articles 13c, 26, 39 and 100), and limitations on their individual freedoms, such as female genital mutilation and forced and child marriage (article 39).

Age- and gender-responsive **planning** and investment for sustainable, **safe and accessible urban mobility** for all (articles 13f, 15 and 114) with the aim of strengthening the resilience of cities and human settlements (article 77) and reducing the risk of disasters and climate change adaptation and effect-mitigation (article 101).

The NUA underscores the need of age- and gender-responsive planning with the aim of strengthening the resilience of cities.

The development of **integrated and age- and gender-responsive housing policies and approaches** across all sectors, in particular in the employment, education, healthcare and social integration sectors, and at all levels of government (article 32).
And for these to be participatory at all stages, from conceptualisation to design, budgeting, implementation, evaluation and review (article 92).

The promotion, at the appropriate level of government, of increased security of tenure for all, recognising the plurality of tenure types and developing fit-for-purpose and age-, gender- and environment-responsive solutions within the continuum of **land and property rights**, with particular attention to security of land tenure for women as key to their empowerment, including through effective administrative systems (article 35).

[4] More information:
The New Urban Agenda

Support for subnational and local governments in fulfilling their key role in **strengthening the interface** among all relevant stakeholders, offering opportunities for dialogue, including through age- and-gender responsive approaches, and with particular attention to potential contributions from all segments of society, regardless of their migration status, without discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity or socioeconomic status (article 42).

New forms of direct partnership between governments at all levels and civil society, including through broad-based and well-resourced permanent mechanisms and platforms for **cooperation** and consultation open to all, using **information and communication technologies** and accessible data solutions (article 92).

Capacity-development programmes to help subnational and local governments in financial planning and management, anchored in institutional coordination at all levels in a transparent and sustainable manner, with particular attention to **age- and gender-responsive budgeting** and the improvement and digitalisation of accounting processes and records in order to promote results-based approaches and build medium- to long-term administrative and technical capacity (article 151).

A call is made to promote new forms of partnership between governments and civil society, through platforms for cooperation and consultation open to all.

Finally, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[5] makes explicit reference to the importance of the gender perspective and the territorial and urban dimension in Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 11, respectively.

SDG 5 is targeted at achieving gender equality, empowering all women and girls, and emphasises the discrimination and gender violence that women and girls continue to suffer around the world, with less access to education, medical care, decent work and equal representation in adoption processes and political and economic decision-making. **Goal 11 is a call to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**.
The two objectives cannot be disassociated and are a call to reconfigure the actions of urban areas from renewed frameworks of inclusive governance with a gender perspective.

[5] More information: Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2.2 Models of governance according to degree of institutionalisation

Metropolitan governance is a concept that spread as of the 1990s and refers to the ability to step up to the challenges of urban agglomerations. It distinguishes itself from the classic notion of "governance" by taking a broader view that covers not only the role of the public sector but also the private one in metropolitan governability (Jouve and Lefèvre, 1999). It is defined as "a process of coordination of stakeholders, social groups and institutions with the intention of delivering on debated objectives that have been discussed collectively and defined in fragmented environments" (Borraz and Le Galès, 2001: 350) and whose result directly impacts the lives, norms and social structure of our cities' citizens.

There are multiple models of metropolitan governance and no agreed formula. For historical and political reasons, each city has its peculiarities and form of governance. However, **four main models of metropolitan governance** can be differentiated, depending on their degree of institutionalisation: metropolitan governments; sector-based metropolitan agencies; vertical coordination, and voluntary cooperation among municipalities.

1 **Metropolitan governments** involve the most political recognition of the metropolitan reality even though their creation process is usually complicated, **due to resistance from other levels of government.** They reduce institutional fragmentation since they are structures expressly created to approach metropolitan challenges with a **view of the whole** and which implement policies at that scale. However, their drawbacks include a high economic cost and lack of flexibility with regards changes to urban area dynamics.

There are multiple models of metropolitan governance and no agreed formula.

They can take two forms. The first is based on a merger of the municipalities that comprise a "metropolitan city" at a single level. This

Lyon - Ludovic Charlet, Unsplash

In the vertical coordination model, metropolitan policies are implemented through areas of previously existing governments.

is the case of **Toronto**, **Seoul**, the **Quito** Metropolitan District and the Lima Metropolitan Municipality. It also covers the case of the **Santiago de Chile** Metropolitan Regional Council, although it has limited resources and involves the intervention of the federal and national government. The other option is to make up a second level of government that is elected indirectly, upholding the municipal structure. This is the case of the metropolitan areas of **Barcelona**, **Lyon**, London and Hanover, among others.

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Sector-based metropolitan agencies plan and manage a single service (public transit, environment, police, etc.) with a technical rather than political nature. The model of representation is usually indirect, with mixed funding from fees and transfers. Metropolitan transit agencies are common, such as in the **Buenos Aires** metropolitan area or **Bogotá**, where it is handled by TransMilenio[6], and in water management, as occurs in **Belo Horizonte**[7]. Although this model is effective, there is the risk of losing the global insight into the metropolitan reality, particularly if several sector-based agencies with different territorial coverages operate in a single urban agglomeration. For example, the transport agency in Helsinki covers seven municipalities, while the environment agency covers four.

[6] More information: TransMilenio Bus Rapid Transit System

[7] More information: Urban Solid Waste Management in MRBH

3 In the **vertical coordination model**, metropolitan policies are implemented through **areas of previously existing governments**. Therefore, since no new entity is created, funding, representation and type of remit depends on the country's territorial structure. If there are broad powers, own funding and direct representation, this formula encourages the implementation of metropolitan policies. But since there is no initial recognition of the metropolitan reality, the scale can be diluted in the different policies of the institutions that comprise it. One example of this model is the Community of Madrid, which has assumed metropolitan leadership from the basis of broad remits determined in its statute of autonomy and the powers of the former provincial government. Most of its funding is its own (direct and indirect taxes) and transfers from the State and it has an Assembly directly elected by the citizens. This model is also followed by the city-state of Vienna and the Brussels-Capital Region.

Voluntary cooperation among municipalities is the least institutionalised model, in which different local representatives are organised at their own initiative and can take two forms. On the one hand, the most traditional is the **association of municipalities**, where effectiveness (remits and funding) derives from the legal framework in which the cities operate and the political will of the municipal representatives. Barcelona (1987-2011), San Salvador, Buenos Aires, Torino and Cotonou[8] are examples of this model. On the other hand, **strategic planning associations** are more flexible forms that function as consultation instruments and consensus spaces to reach inclusive agreements, although their nonbinding nature can be a risk for delivering on objectives.

In OECD countries, 51% of metropolitan areas have some type of metropolitan body, but without the ability to regulate.

4 In either of its formulas, this model of governance can be more short-lived and have a lower impact on metropolitan policies. In addition, the disparity of resources and profiles of municipalities complicates the distribution of the financial burden. But they are also the forms that adapt best to a changing environment and, since they are rooted in the municipal level, they uphold a process controlled by local stakeholders. In the case of Europe, there is **institutional fragmentation and a prevalence of models with a medium degree of institutionalisation** across most metropolitan areas. The same trend is seen in OECD

[8] More information: Urban Development Strategy for the Cotonou Agglomeration

countries, where 51% of metropolitan areas have some type of metropolitan body, but without the ability to regulate, and only 18% have metropolitan authorities with powers (OECD, 2015). However, there have been metropolitan reforms in the largest urban areas of Italy, France (Paris and **Lyon**) and England (nine urban areas) to create metropolitan governments – indirectly elected in Italy and France, and directly in seven of the English authorities. In other cases, such as **Santiago de Chile**, the direct election of metropolitan leaders is planned. In view of these reforms, it could be said that we are facing a new golden age of metropolitan institutionalisation, as occurred in the 1960s and 1970s (Heinelt and Kübler, 2005).

However, we must bear in mind that in practice each metropolitan area has a model of governance in keeping with the tradition of cooperation, political alliances, relations between spheres of government and local configuration of public and private

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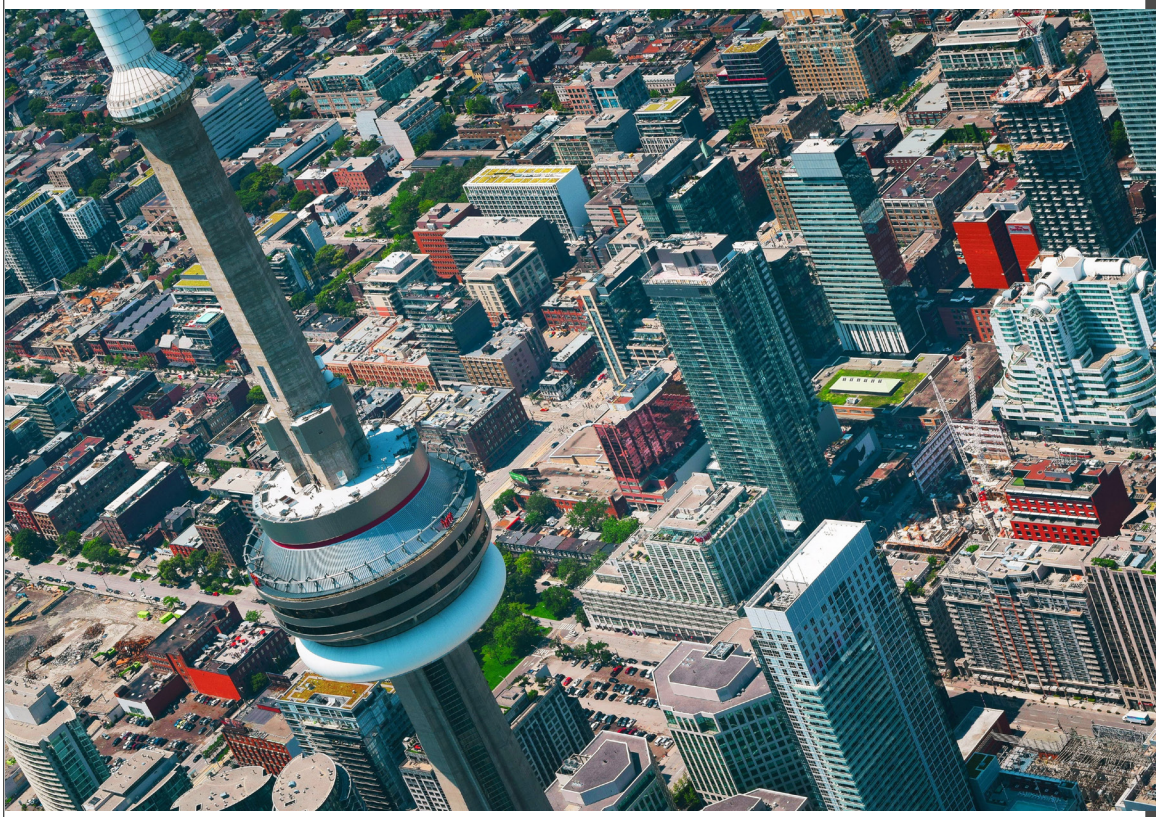
stakeholders. These balances modulate the type of governance, which evolves over time. There can be a variation from one model to another depending on the stages of each city: a metropolitan government can evolve into sector-based agencies, while a strategic plan or cooperation between municipalities can become a metropolitan government, etc. In any case, key challenges entail introducing an inclusive metropolitan perspective that considers the experiences, perceptions and realities of women, older persons, migrants, etc.

Key challenges entail introducing an inclusive metropolitan perspective that considers the realities of women, older persons, migrants, etc

In this regard, there are changes of approach towards **more participatory and decentralised processes where the principles of transparency, accountability, equality and defence of rights are posited as fundamentals for the promotion of social transformation**. Despite the advances made by more participatory processes with a greater presence of women in decision-making spaces, the different models of governance still have a long way to go, both in building structures that foster equality and in the dynamics that perpetuate discriminatory conduct with regards women's rights. Effectively, the processes of metropolitan construction are mostly exclusionary ones reflecting a male view of the metropolitan city.



Toronto - Tim-gouw, Unsplash

2.3 Variables for analysing metropolitan governance

Regardless of the model of governance, there are four crosscutting variables impacting a metropolitan area's ability to tackle current challenges and which serve as analysis and decision-making criteria:

(1) Remits

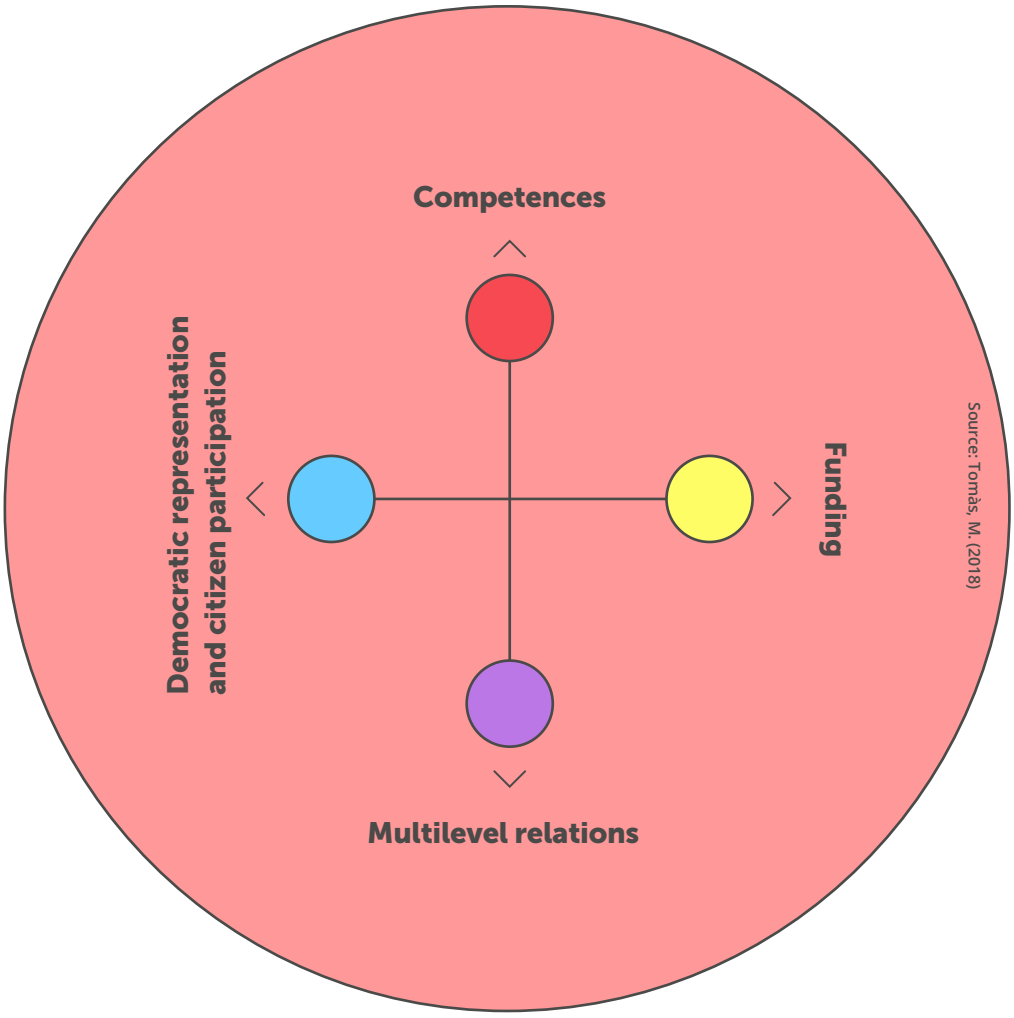
(2) Funding

(3) Democratic representation and citizen engagement

(4) Multilevel relations

Regardless of the model of governance, there are four crosscutting variables impacting a metropolitan area's ability to tackle current challenges

Metropolitan governance variables:



1 Governance model **remits** differ according to the size and type of issues concerning the physical world (**hard policies**) or the socioeconomic world (**soft policies**); whether or not decision-making is exclusive and, finally, the degree of coverage of these decisions in line with whether they are binding or not. In general, metropolitan remits have focused almost exclusively on the field of policies concerning the organisation of the territory, transportation and environment, fields where the gender dimension has traditionally been ignored.

In relation to soft policies, economic and social development are the most common policies, but in many cases not the only ones. In this regard, exclusive powers ensure greater autonomy, as does their binding nature. For example, determining whether actions set out by a metropolitan plan are mandatory for municipalities or not will have a different impact. Some metropolitan structures, such as the Communauté Métropolitaine de Montréal[9], have the remit for social housing, where impacts can be made on policies targeted at women. Other policies related to social cohesion or culture are less common, although recently created structures like the Barcelona Metropolitan Area include powers over social cohesion. This can open the door to the development of metropolitan policies related to the care and reproductive tasks traditionally assumed by women.

Metropolitan remits have focused on policies about the organisation of the territory and transportation where the gender dimension has traditionally been ignored.

2 **Funding** goes a long way to determining the measure of autonomy of metropolitan structures in relation to the amount of material resources and funding source. The latter consideration, usually combined, stems partly from **transfers** from cities (bottom-up) and from a higher level of government, States or sub-state entities, according to the country's political structure (top-down). It also comes from **own fees and taxes** deriving from the sale of services such as water, waste treatment rates, etc.

Although financial autonomy makes it easier to implement public policies since they are not dependent on external budgets, metropolitan areas do not have fiscal autonomy and their resources stem from other administrative areas. This is the case of

[9] More information: Plan d'action métropolitain pour le logement social et abordable, 2015-2020

Santiago de Chile, which has a metropolitan institution (the Regional Council), but funding dependent on central government subsidies. The problem of metropolitan funding is also usually a municipal problem, particularly in African cities. To tackle this, one interesting reference is the case of Dakar[10], which expanded on its financial mechanisms by opening itself up to the international capital market. With a programme that entailed technical consulting by international organisations, it was one of the first cities to get funding for its investment objectives without requiring the guarantee and intermediation of the central government.

3 **Democratic representation and citizen engagement** in metropolitan governments is generally via models of indirect election, where city halls and government departments form part of the metropolitan structure as city representatives, where they have been appointed. In cases of direct election models, citizen engagement is usually low and follows the patterns of municipal participation. In the case of Stuttgart, following a first vote in 1994 that drew a turnout of 70%, regular participation has hovered at around 50%. Meanwhile, Greater Manchester recorded a 27% turnout in its first election and 15% in the 2019 municipal elections.

Multilevel relations give an account of how metropolitan areas are situated in a multilevel governance setting where there are horizontal and vertical relations

With regards the **composition** of metropolitan assemblies and city halls, they are not usually representative of social or gender heterogeneity. The deficit of gender proportionality in government structures and participatory spaces is a feature across all regions. The unequal burden of care work borne by women is usually one of the main obstacles to their participation. It is therefore essential to promote gender-response inclusive instruments and processes and to leverage new information and communication technologies to facilitate women's participation, such as the Berlin initiative[11].

4 **Multilevel relations** give an account of how metropolitan areas are situated in a multilevel governance setting where there are **horizontal and vertical relations**. **Horizontal relations refer to the necessary coordination between public and private interests that is central to building metropolitan governance**. As with the

[10] More information: Municipal Finance Program

[11] More information: Berlin Open Data strategy

Accra - Virgyl Sowah, Unsplash

inclusive perspective, the participation of a plurality of stakeholders is needed to make headway in the challenges that cities face. **Vertical relations** bring in other levels of government (regional, state) and the city's weight in the overall region or country is key. The political and legal consideration of the municipality or metropolitan environment thus matters: if it is a government sphere with powers, political legitimacy and fiscal autonomy, or which plays a key role in the country's politics. In this regard, political resistance to its institutionalisation from other levels of government is common since they are wary of the powers and political imbalances that can be generated.

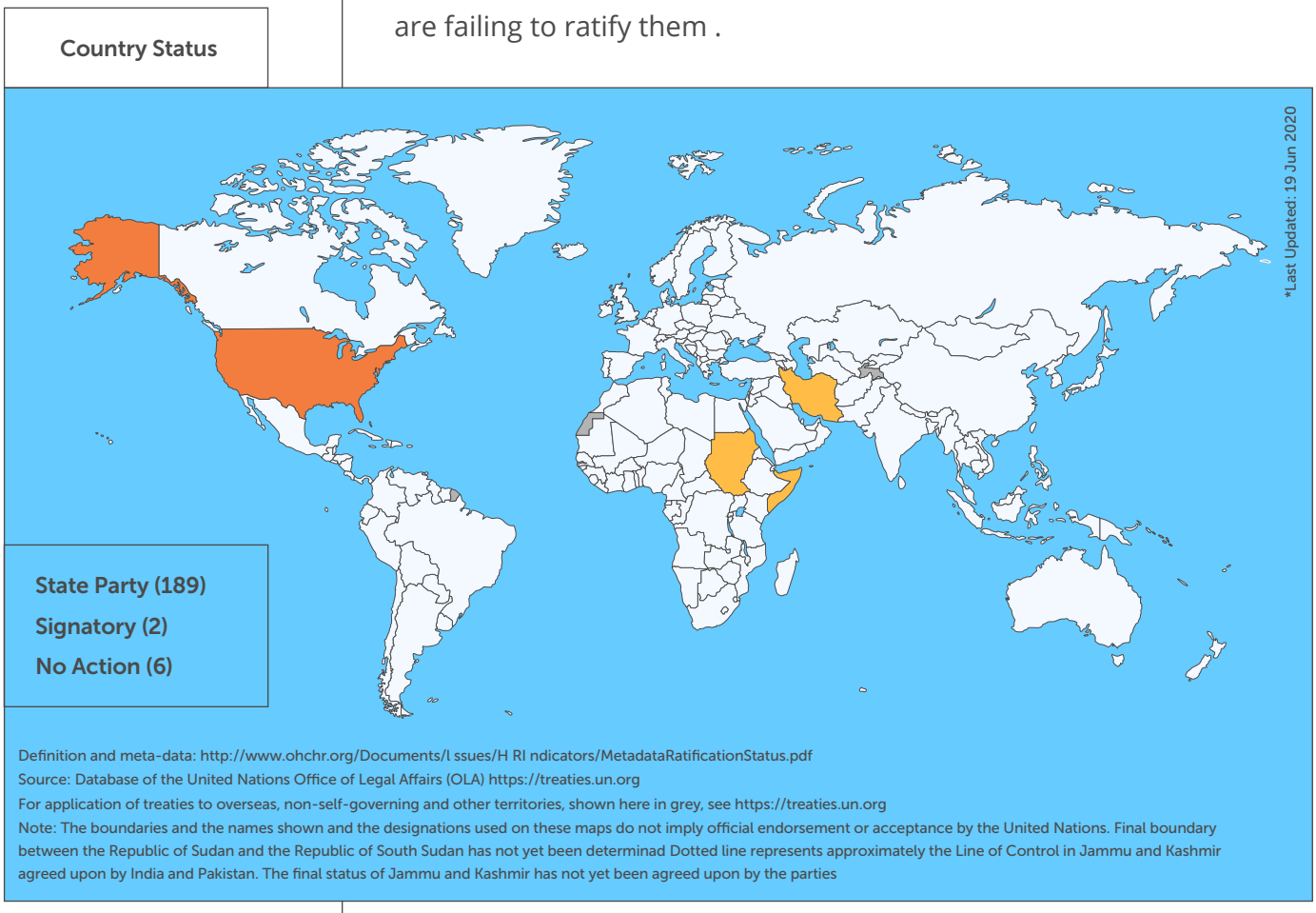
Political recognition of metropolitan areas therefore involves acceptance by **higher levels of government**, which are those that legislate and determine their capabilities. Furthermore, cities are political agents that weave their own international networks[12] to exchange good experiences and showcase the metropolitan problem at a global scale.

[12] Some of them are: UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments), Metropolis (World Association of the Major Metropolises), Medcities (Mediterranean Cities Network), Eurocities (European Cities Network), METREX (Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas), FMDV (Global Fund for Cities Development) and EMA (European Metropolitan Authorities).

3 The gender perspective in metropolitan governance

The abovementioned points have fallen noticeably short in implementing the gender-mainstreaming strategy across metropolitan policies and institutions. In this section we consider the main challenges and strategies to promote a form of metropolitan governance with a gender perspective. According to Brody: "Gender-sensitive governance requires that gender equality and the realisation of women's rights are at the heart of the goals and practices of governance. **Policies and legislation should address the differing needs, interests, priorities and responsibilities of women and men**, as well as their unequal economic and social power" (Brody, 2009: 3). To that end she differentiates four main challenges:

- **Failure to tackle entrenched gender inequalities:** Although there has been some progress, policies and legislation are still not eliminating gender inequalities. While the international frameworks exist to challenge these gender inequalities – in the form of the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other human rights instruments – signatory countries are not putting their commitments into practice, and others are failing to ratify them .



Feminise decision-making: The spaces of power are eminently male, regardless of the level of governance, and this translates into a minority number of women leaders with decision-making and action capabilities regarding public policies and therefore citizens' lives. According to UN Women, only 24.3% of seats in parliament were held by women in 2019, demonstrating the slow growth in elected women considering the figure was 11.3% in 1995.

Incorporate a plurality of views, including care responsibilities and the people who assume them, primarily women, in governance processes. The organisation of the job market and the working arrangements of governance institutions are usually inflexible, making it difficult for women to balance their work with unpaid care responsibilities. In turn, the processes designed to engage citizens in decision-making – such as participatory budgeting – can exclude women by failing to provide crèches or other facilities.

It is essential to incorporate in governance processes a plurality of views, including care responsibilities and the people who assume them, primarily women

Put the discrimination faced by women in governance institutions and processes on the political agenda. Even when women are involved, they are often kept on the margins of decision-making or are confined to 'soft' policy areas such as health and education.

These challenges can be developed into three action areas:

1. **Promote inclusive participation in governance:** The presence of women in the different spheres of governance is a good starting point but it is crucial to invest time and other resources to empower women and develop their capabilities. Of note as an example is the **women in leadership programme**[13] implemented by the city of Mashhad that impacted the whole of the area. The programme seeks to empower female students from an early age (8 to 11) so they can take on leadership roles in urban sustainability and simultaneously foster their engagement in civic affairs.

2. **Design inclusive governance:** The challenge is to deconstruct the stereotypical and exclusionary model towards governance as

[13] More information: Girls Leadership and the Urban Environment

an instrument of the reproduction of male privileges which are far removed from daily life and to foster women's participation. With regards incorporating women's daily experiences into urban policies, of note is the **SafetiPin**[14] programme developed in Bogotá. This is a safety strategy posited on a map-based mobile and desktop application that compiles information by users and trained auditors on the perception of safety in public spaces. The audit is based on nine parameters: lighting, openness, visibility, crowd, security, walkpath, availability of public transport, gender diversity and feelwing. The programme was developed with the complex coordination of private sector, administrative and social stakeholders and community participation.

3 **Reform governance institutions:** To foster more balanced institutions that do not reproduce discriminatory policies, views and behaviours or ones lacking a gender perspective, we need to:

- **Put citizens' rights at the heart of political action, with more solid and transparent accountability systems.**
- **Organise more inclusive and participatory processes of engagement which identify the different needs of women and men.**
- **Raise awareness among governance institutions and stakeholders around gender issues.**
- **Promote a new distribution of work time for a good work/life balance, committing to a co-responsible social model with access to free crèches and other care facilities.**

We must put citizens' rights at the center of political action, with more solid and transparent accountability systems

In relation to this point, it is worth mentioning the **Demeter Programme**[15] being carried out by the Barcelona Metropolitan Area Transparency Agency. It is an instrument for mainstreaming the gender perspective into transparency policies and innovation projects with the aim of helping deliver a balance and co-responsibility between women and men. Specifically, it addresses generating, showcasing and promoting data availability on the real situation of women in diverse areas to improve diagnoses on persistent situations of gender inequality.

[14] More information: Using SafetiPin to build safer cities for women

[15] More information: Demèter Programme

Buenos Aires provides another example of developing more balanced institutions, through its creation of a **gender indicators system**[16]. In this case, it is an open platform providing statistical information with a gender perspective, generated from a collaborative process between different organisations and levels of government.

Gender indicators system of Buenos Aires

Institutions should organise more inclusive and participatory processes of engagement which identify the different needs of women and men

[16] More information: Gender indicators system of Buenos Aires

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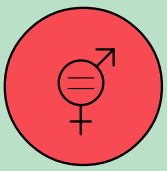

GENDER EQUALITY
SDG 5

SUSTAINABLE CITIES ANDCOMMUNITIES
SDG 11

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
SDG 16

Secretariat General
Avinyó, 15. 08002 Barcelona (Spain)
Tel. +34 93 342 94 60
metropolis@metropolis.org
metropolis.org

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