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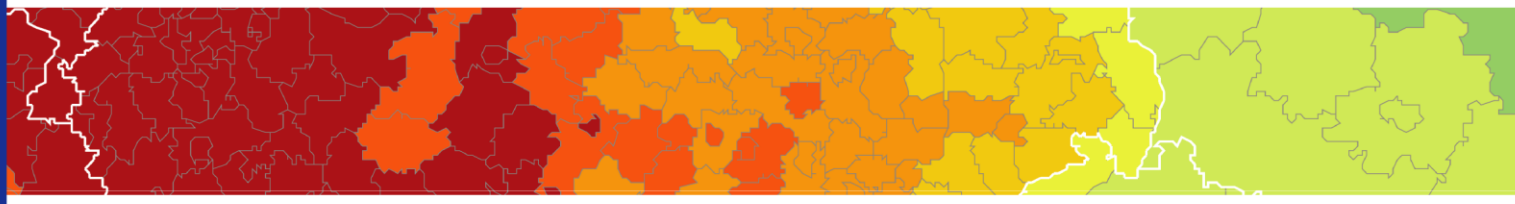


Targeted Analysis

SPIMA

Spatial dynamics and strategic planning in metropolitan areas

Executive Summary

Conference version

1 February 2018

1. Background

To address the challenges of metropolitan development in Europe, we need a better understanding of the complex relations between city centres, suburbia and larger peripheries. A key concern in this regard is the response of traditional urban planning practices to the current urbanization trends that go beyond the core-centric spatial patterns and beyond the jurisdictions of a single administrative authority. Metropolitan areas are characterized by close economic and social linkages between their urban and suburban parts that involve a number of local governments. There is very seldom a local authority that has the competency to address all challenges in a metropolitan area on its own. Currently, urban policies and governance practices, seem to lag behind in addressing these complex challenges.

Against this background the SPIMA project explores a range of urban development issues raised by ten metropolitan areas across Europe and how these issues are addressed within their current institutional frameworks and the local authorities. Whether transport, environment or social disparity issues are at stake, the key concern is in finding a “problem owner” who can address these issues at an appropriate spatial and administrative scale.

2. Objectives and research questions

As a targeted analysis, SPIMA is primarily a stakeholder-driven project. It is based upon the request of ten metropolitan areas in Europe which need a better understanding of the key challenges in spatial development in the metropolitan areas and of the governance processes that such development entails. Firstly, the project builds upon the experiences of the stakeholder areas and deconstructs these experiences by mean of institutional analysis, interviews and assessment of key urban trends and spatial scales. Secondly, by means of a comparative research approach, the project has developed policy recommendations and tools to support the relevant authorities in addressing key challenges and in achieving a coherent metropolitan spatial planning approach. The stakeholder areas include Vienna, Prague, Brno, Zurich, Brussels, Oslo and Akershus, Turin, Terrassa, Lille and Lyon.

The project analyses the following seven key issues: 1) definitions for delineating metropolitan areas, 2) key socio-economic and environmental trends that determine the spatial dynamics and the spatial scale for metropolitan development; 3) current challenges in the spatial development and governance and the institutional frameworks; 4) key success factors, incentives and policy tools for improving metropolitan governance; 5) types of metropolitan areas; 6) policy implications for metropolitan planning process; 7) relevant guidelines for implementing a coherent metropolitan planning approach.

3. Delineating metropolitan areas

One of the lessons learned from the SPIMA project is that there is no unified definition for delineating a metropolitan area. Different approaches are being used to delineate the metropolitan areas of the stakeholders. These approaches often differ from the one commonly referred to in previous studies of EU-OECD (2012), based on Functional Urban Areas (FUA).

In order to assess these differences in more detail and identify the most relevant configuration of the metropolitan areas in the ten stakeholder cities, the project

developed an alternative approach for delineating a 'Metropolitan Development Area' (MDA). The MDA represents the most recent consideration of the scale of metropolitan development in each stakeholder area. In some cases, MDA is a legally binding area with fixed borders, while in other cases it has more fluid borders. Some MDAs are based on the extent of the transport infrastructure networks while others represent specific institutional arrangements between regions and municipalities. The method uses GIS tools based on local spatial data and data from European and OECD databases. It allows a breakdown of spatial data at the spatial scales of MDA, FUA and MUA, based on aggregation of LAU2 (local administrative units).

The MDA method can be particularly beneficial in local policy making as it allows assessing the relevance of the potential or already existing MDAs with regard to key urban development trends (e.g. transport, urbanization, environment, housing etc.). This allows planners to assess the "spatial fit" of the proposed MDAs, visualise its overlap with FUAs and MUAs and show the relation between the local administrative units, within the core urban area and beyond the FUAs. This helps making a more precise definition of the metropolitan area in order to support the future spatial planning strategies.

The proposed ten MDAs, which have been discussed by the stakeholders, illustrate a generally increasing urbanization trend and the transformation towards polycentric spatial structures with more dynamic redistribution of services between core cities and the sub-urban settlements.

4. Spatial planning at metropolitan scale

As spatial planning is often a competency of the national (or federal), regional and particularly of the local governments, a multi-level spatial planning process needs to be established in order to address metropolitan developments in regional and local land use plans. As evidenced, planning for metropolitan areas should be based on key principles of spatial planning governance, embedding three key planning elements: *strategic, statutory and collaborative planning*.

Different experiences have been made by the stakeholders with regard to each of these planning elements. While metropolitan development is to one degree or another embedded in the current urban strategies and visions, the actual implementation of these strategies is in its early stages in most of the stakeholder areas. Further progress is needed in more firmly integrating metropolitan development issues in the statutory spatial planning practices at local level and in strengthening the coordination and collaboration across different local administrative units and governmental levels.

4.1 Emerging urban trends and spatial dynamics of metropolitan areas

The stakeholder areas have a number of unique characteristics related to the spatial distribution of urban functions (e.g. areas of urban intensification, rural-mountain, post-industrial, new growth etc.) and to the geographical extend of the areas (e.g. cross-border, inter-regional, inter-municipal and local). However, they also have a number of similarities.

Urban growth varies greatly among the cities. Most of the areas experience pressure for urban growth outside their core urban area. In most of the cities there are areas with intensified urban activities and areas where growth is being encouraged further and/or areas where on the contrary the wish is to restrict growth due to environmental

reasons or due to rural developments and agriculture (e.g. Vienna, Turin, Lyon, Lille, Zurich, Oslo - Akershus, Brno, Prague). A few of the areas, such as Turin and Terrassa, Vienna, Prague, also have post-industrial urban spaces that need regeneration.

Both suburbanization and densification are common patterns in most of the areas, determined by a combination of factors, varying from substantial population growth in Vienna, Zurich, Oslo and Brussels to an intensified relocation of businesses and jobs in the suburbs, as in Prague, Brno, Brussels, Lille and Lyon. This process creates different spatial dynamics in the distribution of population and jobs and determines the need for a transport infrastructure that allows greater mobility and accessibility between the core city and its suburbs. In all ten areas the capacity of the current transport infrastructure is to some extent insufficient in meeting these demands. There are as well differences observed among the areas with regard to redistribution of population between the core city and suburban areas and in some areas there is a rather fragmented population pattern.

There is as well a high variation between the number of the local authorities within the metropolitan areas. To a large degree this determines the complexity of the spatial planning process and the need for coordinated efforts between different municipalities. A key issue is achieving a joint vision and a common understanding among municipalities about how to accommodate emerging urban trends across the metropolitan area as a whole. A sufficient evidence about key urban development trends and spatial planning scenarios at metropolitan scale is essential to support the development of such vision.

4.2 Institutional frameworks to support metropolitan planning approach

The experiences of the stakeholder areas show that a coordinated metropolitan planning approach is either not yet firmly institutionalized and/or not yet fully embedded in the routine planning practices of the regional and local authorities. Often the current institutional structures are fragmented which impedes the effective coordination and collaboration between local plans and policies. While a number of initiatives have been already implemented in the stakeholder areas, these are as yet not a common practice for all local authorities and their elected bodies. Many of the initiatives need to be scaled up in terms of territorial scope and policy issues.

The key evidence generated with this regard shows that the current strategies in the stakeholder areas indicate a growing commitment among regional and local authorities about the need for a joint spatial planning effort at the metropolitan scale.

The regional authorities, together with variety of inter-municipal collaborative bodies and clusters of municipalities, are gaining a prominent role in fostering spatial planning at metropolitan scale. Collaboration at regional scale is considered as essential by many actors.

The institutional status of the stakeholder areas varies between formal (based on top-down regulations), informal (based on purely collaborative arrangements) or semi-formal (based on formalized agreements between actors). The type of status is not in itself, however, a determining factor for effective metropolitan planning, in as far as it leads to a joint metropolitan strategy and an implementation plan accepted by all actors across governmental levels (vertically) and policy sectors/local jurisdictions (horizontally).

The research indicates that for some of the cities establishing a legally binding framework for metropolitan planning is an important precondition in fostering progress in metropolitan planning initiatives while for others collaborative institutional arrangements between the relevant authorities play the most important role. However, the generic guidelines and a combination of several success-factors for effective metropolitan planning may apply in *every* case, whatever the legal framework.

In all stakeholder areas there are currently collaborative bodies which, to some extent or another, address metropolitan development challenges, varying between thematic sector-oriented, inter-regional, inter-municipal and cross-municipal. Their role is essential in ensuring a wider stakeholder involvement in the preparation of metropolitan strategies and spatial plans.

4.3 Key challenges in managing metropolitan spatial development

There is a significant number of challenges present in all stakeholder areas. These challenges provide strong evidence that illustrates the diversity of issues that require actions to be taken at the metropolitan scale of planning. Among 51 challenges, divided into eight categories, the five most frequently cited are:

1) ensuring an efficient transport infrastructure;
2) the need for multilevel collaboration;
3) achieving a shared vision on strategic plans;
4) dealing with traffic congestion; and
5) political reluctance to address issues at the metropolitan scale.

Other key challenges include suburbanization, an inefficient spatial planning process, a lack of recognition of the metropolitan areas, and need for affordable housing. There is a consensus about the types of challenges identified among different groups of actors in the stakeholder areas.

4.4 Key success factors for implementing metropolitan planning and governance

Applying a coherent metropolitan planning approach necessitates establishing a shared-governance, process, enabling more dynamic interactions between the spatial scales, policy issues, land-use functions and a wide range of actors. The key success factors in this regard include:

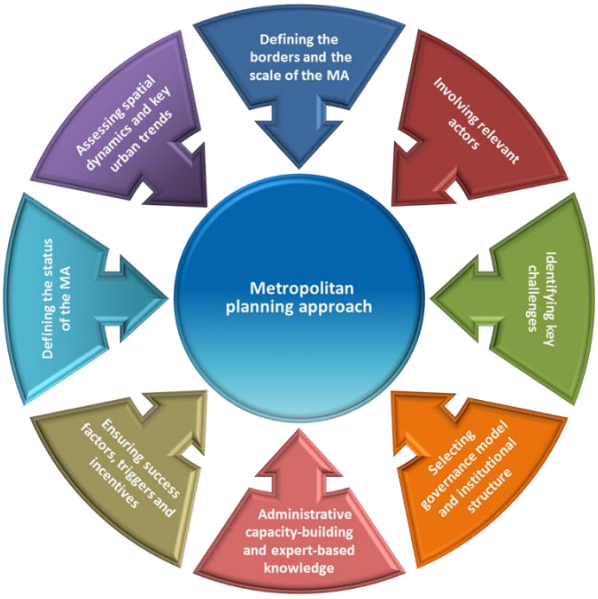
- Combining top-down policy incentives with bottom-up collaboration and implementation.
- Collaboration between the relevant planning authorities at national, regional and local levels.
- Involvement of a wider range of stakeholders (e.g. businesses and branch organizations).
- Ensuring the transparency and openness of collaboration processes and build awareness
- Working towards a “minimum gain for all” when negotiation and compromise is needed.

- Starting with bottom-up initiatives (e.g. transportation) that can be convincing for most actors.
- Political commitment and support from higher levels of government (e.g. national).
- Mobilizing political leadership to engage with different actors in collaboration.
- Setting the rules of the game: combine flexible shared governance in spatial planning with the establishment of more restrictive/legal mechanisms for managing growth.
- Creating common funds and agencies for supporting the metropolitan scale of planning, that can enable expertise and financial incentives to be applied (e.g. EU and/or national sources).

4.5 Guidelines for implementing metropolitan planning approach

The implementation of the metropolitan planning approach embeds eight *"action areas"* that set different foci in *strategic, statutory and collaborative* planning processes. Implementing these action areas may help gaining better understanding of the current situation in the metropolitan areas, establish the suitable governance process and support decision-making about future plans and strategies (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Eight action areas on the implementation of metropolitan planning approach



Among the stakeholder areas there is relative progress made with regard to assessment of current urban trends and identification of key challenges. The action areas that are less well addressed relate to ensuring key success factors, incentives and triggers, the establishment of a suitable governance model and in the involvement of relevant actors. A metropolitan planning approach aims at delivering the following key benefits:

- Achieving synergy and complementarity between sectoral policy issues (e.g. transport, housing, public services, the environment, urban sprawl etc.).

- Preventing duplication of planning efforts by different authorities, including financial resources, in the preparation of individual spatial development (land-use) plans.
- Optimizing current organizational structures and the enforcement of planning procedures
- Achieving greater understanding among actors, including political bodies, of the potential mutual benefits and joint solutions in coordinated efforts in spatial planning.
- Strengthening institutional capacities and knowledge-based evidence for decision-making.

4.6 A typology for metropolitan areas

The SPIMA typology helps translating the recommendations on potentially relevant policy tools for metropolitan planning approach to other metropolitan areas in Europe. Typology A categorizes the stakeholder metropolitan areas by their *spatial characteristics* (i.e. size of the area and its population density). Typology B provides categorization by *institutional characteristics* (i.e. the formalization status and the number of municipalities). Based on typology A and B six categories of areas have been defined.

The importance of different policy tools to address key challenges show a very similar pattern for each of the six types of metropolitan areas, no matter which categorization was used. For most of the metropolitan areas, coordinative and collaborative policy tools are the most relevant. These tools show most benefits in addressing many of the key challenges of the stakeholder areas as they aim fostering a shared-governance process at metropolitan scale. The strategic and structural policy tools are seen as the second most important, while the procedural/financial tools are considered to be less significant.

5. Recommendations for strengthening spatial planning in metropolitan areas

The results of the SPIMA project suggest an operational metropolitan planning approach based on the following key recommendations and policy implications:

- *The spatial planning systems may strongly influence the development of the metropolitan areas as these embed complex territorial governance processes between the national (federal) state, the regional (sub-regional) and local authorities. A coordinated spatial planning across these governmental scales is needed in order to address metropolitan development challenges.*
- *In many cases (except federal states) the national governments play a role in setting a spatial planning policy or legislation, but are not directly involved in actual development of spatial plans at regional or local level. Ongoing decentralization of planning competences in most of the areas requires strengthening the administrative capacity and the planning practices of local governments in managing multifaceted territorial developments at metropolitan scale.*
- *As there is no one single definition of a metropolitan area that matches ongoing urbanization trends, administrative borders or perceptions of actors, the delineation of its relevant spatial scale can be facilitated by the MDA tailor-made*

approach. An assessment of the "spatial fit" of a proposed MDA with regard to key urban trends and its relation to FUA and MUA can be a useful decision-support tool in planning and management of the metropolitan areas.

- *Effective metropolitan planning depends on a shared-governance process that is more flexible and dynamic, and is at the same time clearly linked to the administrative levels of statutory spatial planning. This implies more coordination efforts and shared competencies between governmental levels (vertically) and across policy sectors/departments (horizontally).*
- *Implementing a metropolitan planning approach can be highly beneficial in ensuring a "spatial fit" between the "de jure city" and the "de facto city". Such an approach implies setting different foci in strategic, statutory and collaborative planning and involves eight specific "action areas".*
- *A mix of policy tools is needed to implement metropolitan planning approach. The most relevant set of policy tools to address challenges at metropolitan scale relate to coordination and collaboration processes such as: instituting metropolitan bodies to coordinate planning efforts at metropolitan scale or establishment of effective collaboration process among multiple actors.*
- *The formal status of the metropolitan area is not a strongly determining factor for the effectiveness of metropolitan planning and governance, whereas acceptance and recognition of the metropolitan areas as such is an essential trigger for initiating metropolitan collaboration.*
- *EU policy is a key incentive for regional and local authorities in initiating coordinated efforts in regional and local development. An EU metropolitan policy agenda and funding instruments can be highly supportive for the implementation of a metropolitan planning approach across Europe, including strengthening the commitment from national and regional governments.*