Preliminary Findings and Key Messages Booklet

1st Global State of Metropolis

Metropolitan Management from Policy, Legislation, Governance, Planning, Finance and Economics

UN-HABITAT
For a Better Urban Future
For UN-Habitat, metropolises are not defined neither by their population, territorial extension nor by the number of their local jurisdictions, but by their functional geography. Metropolises of the twenty-first century, also known as urban agglomerations, functional urban areas, metropolitan areas, metropolitan zones, metropolitan regions, large coalesced cities and megacities, among other names and definitions which vary depending on the legal, administrative, political, economic or cultural criteria in their respective countries and regions, are all characterised by strong economic, social and environmental interdependencies which need to be integrative managed, based on functional territories and across both jurisdictional boundaries and the urban-rural continuum.¹

In March 2020, the UN Statistical Commission endorsed a global definition of cities to facilitate international comparison.² This definition captures the full extent of a city including the dense areas beyond the municipal boundaries. It defines a metropolitan area as a city and its commuting zone, which consists of suburban, periurban and rural areas economically and socially linked to the city. An approach supported by metropolitan authorities and experts, as well as by the UN World Urbanization Prospects (WUP).

¹ Functional territorial approaches are supported by the New Urban Agenda, highlighting paragraphs 87-88, 90-92, 95-96, 115-117 and 136. ² The recommendation on the method to delineate cities, urban and rural areas for international statistical comparisons can be found in: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/51st-session/documents/BG-Item3j-Recommendation-E.pdf
As the world continues to urbanize it is also becoming metropolitan

Whether horizontal spreading, dispersed urbanization or peri-urbanization, the physical extent of urban areas is growing much faster than their population, thereby consuming more land for urban development.\(^3\) Those phenomena have made many cities grown beyond the boundaries of their central municipality or “city proper” configuring bigger and denser metropolises. This is a trend still present in all world regions and affecting all kind and size of cities, from megacities, to intermediate cities and even small towns.

Therefore, metropolises are becoming a predominant typology of cities in the twenty-first century. At least 2.6 billion people lived in 1,934 metropolises in 2020 representing approximately 60% of the world’s urban population or one third of humanity. 34 metropolises have surpassed 10 million inhabitants; while 51 have a population of 5 to 10 million; 494 of 1 to 5 million; and 1,355 of 300,000 to 1 million.\(^4\)

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3. Detailed analyses at the World Cities Report available in [https://unhabitat.org/wcr/](https://unhabitat.org/wcr/)
Key messages and general trends

**Metropolitan population will grow rapidly.** UN-Habitat’s Global State of Metropolis Report projections show that the number of people living in metropolises in 2035 will increase to 3.47 billion representing 39% of the global population by then. Almost 1 billion people will become new metropolitan inhabitants during the next decade. This will impact economy, societies, environment, governance, infrastructure, and services in all type of cities among the world regions.

**In average, one new metropolis will arise every two-weeks during next years.** 2,363 metropolises are projected to exist by 2035 meaning 429 metropolises more than today. Worldwide, numerous small towns and rural areas will become urban agglomerations.

**We live in a world of small and intermediate metropolises.** From the existing 1,934 metropolises only 85 are termed big or large, 34 megacities with more than 10 million inhabitants, and 51 with between 5 to 10 million, while the most representative groups correspond to intermediate and small metropolises. Projections indicate that in the next years the trend will remain the same, since by 2035 there will arise 14 new megacities while 415 other-sizes metropolises.

**Urban population and metropolitan growth are related.** There is a positive relationship between urban population growth and the emergence of new metropolises. All the world regions will exhibit an emergence of new metropolitan spaces along with the rise in urban population.

**Metropolitan growth will be led by developing regions.** Asia-Pacific and Africa will lead the growth while Eastern Europe will remain stable. Latin America and the Caribbean as well as Western Europe, North America and Oceania will show an increase in numbers albeit at slower rates.

**Metropolitan governance has maximised city responses to COVID-19.** Governance arrangements played a facilitating role by serving as a “hinge” for local governments to work together more effectively, reaching a larger population with their actions, in less time, and optimising resources and results. Evidence suggests that metropolitan areas with institutionalised governance frameworks are more likely to coordinate their actions.

**There is a global metropolitan management gap.** Most of the world’s metropolises are not managed in a differentiated way, meaning they do not have neither a metropolitan plan nor institution. This deprives them of taking advantage of the agglomeration dynamics and functionality and, instead, their negative effects increase due to municipal and sectoral institutional fragmentation and to the lack of coordination at metropolitan scales.

**Existing metropolitan management systems are currently unbalanced.** While several metropolises have advanced their governance arrangements and planning instruments, the financing mechanisms both for implementing projects with metropolitan impact and maintaining metropolitan institutions working properly, are highly relegated. For their part, metropolitan policies and legal frameworks are emerging in many parts of the world.

**Metropolitan dynamics are constantly changing impacted by global challenges.** Metropolitan figures and management systems are being highly impacted by armed conflicts in regions such as Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe; by climate related hazards in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Europe and other States; and by economic recession prospects all over the world.
Integrative approach for metropolitan management

UN-Habitat's integrative approach for metropolitan management involves local, sub-national and national governments participation in metropolitan policies and legislation, metropolitan planning, metropolitan governance, and metropolitan financing mechanisms and economics. These last are called by UN-Habitat as the drivers of change for sustainable urbanization, understood as specific elements that work together and are required to deliver urban services and products, leading changes that will ultimately result in the achievement of sustainable and balanced territorial development. The drivers of change were also identified by the New Urban Agenda as its implementing areas.

5. Detailed info available in: https://unhabitat.org/our-strategy

(a) Policy and Legislation
(b) Planning and design
(c) Governance
(d) Financing mechanisms
Metropolitan management assessment

UN-Habitat’s Global State of Metropolis Report analyses metropolitan management from the drivers of change for sustainable urbanization. Assessment factors jointly defined with metropolitan authorities and experts through several Experts Groups Meetings (EGM) are described below.

**METROPOLITAN POLICIES AND LEGISLATION**

**Multilevel and sectoral policies.** The public policies that metropolises have adopted in recent years, including sectors such as transport, water and sanitation, basic infrastructure services, environment, health, housing, urban-rural linkages, among others managed at metropolitan level. Also, the national and subnational policies regarding metropolitan management and development.

**Legal frameworks.** Laws, regulations and other normative frameworks related to the development and management of metropolitan spaces, including local, subnational and national frameworks. Also, the role of legal frameworks enabling or constraining other drivers of change, namely metropolitan governance, metropolitan planning and metropolitan finance and economics.

**METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE**

**Institutional solutions.** The formal institutions established at supra-municipal level, including metropolitan governments, sectoral authorities, development agencies, intergovernmental cooperation mechanisms, among others. Also, informal arrangements such as informal networks, committees and commissions, social norms, culture, traditions, among other informal instances.

**Decision-making.** The governing bodies leading metropolitan affairs, as well as the processes and tools used by local actors and organisations to participate at decision-making on metropolitan affairs. Also, the knowledge management strategies, data and tools to inform decision-making processes transparent and accountable.

**Collective action.** The administrative acts enacted regarding metropolitan affairs, the common visions on metropolitan development participatively agreed, and the international cooperation actions impacting metropolises.

**METROPOLITAN PLANNING**

**Planning instruments.** The development planning, land-use, urban, strategic, and territorial planning instruments and guidelines adopted at metropolitan level. Also, the metropolitan development and land-use models as well as the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for metropolitan planning.

**Associative projects.** Territorial projects and interventions with metropolitan impact, as well as the mechanisms to develop and operate associative projects.

**METROPOLITAN FINANCE AND ECONOMICS**

**Financial resources and fiscal systems.** The different type of resources available for metropolitan projects and management, including the financing of metropolitan institutions and governing bodies, as well as the accountability mechanisms implemented.

**Productivity and economic development.** The strategies implemented by metropolises to improve their productivity, competitiveness, and economic development.
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Metropolitan policies and legislation

Preliminary findings

- Less than half of the assessed metropolises have their own legal frameworks establishing metropolitan management basics. The existing ones focus on defining the territorial and jurisdictional scope, governance system, planning instruments, accountability mechanisms, and citizens participation on metropolitan affairs.

- Metropolitan legal frameworks are diverse with respect to their competent legislative bodies, as well as their scales of applicability, depending on the political regimes of each country. Some metropolises have their own legal framework that in unitary countries is usually enacted at national level and in federated countries at subnational level, other metropolises share legal frameworks that are mostly national and valid to all metropolises in the country. A few metropolises are regulated by multiple legal frameworks, in which case can be both national and subnational.

- There is no predominant trend on legal frameworks establishing metropolitan jurisdictional integration (metropolitan government) and those favoring inter-governmental coordination (metropolitan governance), even though there is a slightly majority choosing the last. On the other hand, a few legal frameworks have defined hybrid models.

- All metropolises with formal institutional arrangements have some type of sectoral policy at metropolitan level, although their scope differs corresponding the capacities of metropolitan institutions in relation to their constituent local governments. Just a hand of regional and other sub-national policies include metropolitan approaches and projects with metropolitan impact. Even less for the case of national urban policies.

- The most common sectors addressed by metropolitan policies are related to climate action, economic development, environment and transport. Some innovative sectoral policies but no so common are on clean energy, gender equity, health, heritage, public spaces, safety, social cohesion and urban-rural linkages.
Pla d'internacionalització de l'Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona 2021-2025
Metropolitan governance

Preliminary findings

- Formal institutional arrangements are the most common among the assessed metropolises. Just in a few cases these are complemented by and articulate with informal arrangements.

- There are some cases featuring multiplicity of institutional arrangements, but no major problems related to institutional fragmentation are detected. In general terms, the functions and competencies of each institution are well established by legal and other regulatory frameworks.

- The existing governing bodies for decision-making are also multiple, but there is generally a main one and several that are complementary or derived from the first. Local governments usually have balanced participation at metropolitan government bodies, but the central municipality frequently has more political power, either implicit or explicit, at decision-making mechanisms and processes.

- Decisions are increasingly made based on evidence. Metropolitan observatories, labs, think tanks, open data platforms, and other knowledge management strategies are gaining prominence.

- Although progress is being made on citizen participation for metropolitan affairs, there is still no clear trend regarding incorporation of citizen representatives into government bodies, formal institutions and decision-making processes, nor regarding the establishment of direct mechanisms to guarantee participation. In addition, more vulnerable population is not often taking into account, not at least explicitly, for decision-making on metropolitan affairs.

- A significant number of metropolises have defined medium- and long-term development visions. These are generally aspirational, but some have started to be included within planning instruments and sectoral policies making them more implementable.

- International cooperation among metropolitan institutions, metropolitan governments, and from them with other development actors, has increased considerably since the COVID-19 pandemic. Lessons learned exchange and increasing the voice of metropolitan authorities at global decision-making scenarios are the factors that most motivate metropolises’ diplomacy.
Metropolitan planning

Preliminary findings

- Two main types of metropolitan planning instruments are identified. Land-use or territorial plans, and socio-economic and strategic development instruments. They are not usually linked, although some hybrid-nature plans start to emerge by integrating land-use planning and socioeconomic development, as well as sectoral and zonal plans with metropolitan scope.

- Topics most frequently included at metropolitan planning instruments mark a clear trend to achieve more healthy, natural, polycentric, vibrant, global, connected, livable, competitive, and resilient metropolises.

- In terms of metropolitan planning and land-use models, the instruments clearly give attention to issues such as urban sprawl, metropolitan centralities, mixed land uses, renovation and recycling of urban spaces, transport-oriented development, and proximity to social facilities, housing and other urban services.

- Diverse territorial projects are been included at metropolitan planning instruments, but in several cases the metropolitan impact of the projects is not clear, not even the added value of they being implemented associatively.

- No trend is identified on linking metropolitan planning instruments with municipal and regional ones, on their hierarchy and preponderance, nor on their role within national planning systems. An important number of metropolitan planning instruments are not legally binding being of voluntary implementation by the municipal and regional governments.
The Greater London Authority
Consolidated Budget and Component Budgets for 2019-20
March 2019

PRÉVISIONS BUDGÉTAIRES 2021

Inovačná stratégia BSK
Rozvoj výskumno-vývojovej a inovačnej základne Bratislavského samosprávneho kraja v období 2014-2020
Metropolitan finance and economics

Preliminary findings

- The budget of metropolitan institutions is made from a mixture of sources including, but not limited to, local and regional governments contributions and services fares. That budget primarily supports investment in essential human and administrative resources to keep metropolitan institutions and governing bodies running.

- The metropolitan scale is not a common beneficiary of the classic fiscal decentralisation systems as the municipalities are. Therefore, some metropolitan institutions have started to provide a variety of services to expand their income, specifically those aimed at administrative operations and investment.

- Financing with international resources is becoming an increasingly common option for metropolitan institutions. These resources are especially used to implement associative projects and policy actions with metropolitan impact.

- Targeted legal frameworks have enabled metropolitan authorities to strengthen their fiscal and tax systems. However, few metropolises have the technical and political capacity to generate their own taxes and fees.

- The aim for having metropolises more productive, competitive and prosperous have motivated the formulation of specialised economic policies and the creation of new metropolitan institutions and authorities.
Methodological notes

This second booklet on the Global State of Metropolis was drafted from the metropolitan management assessment made to the Global Sample of Metropolises defined and analysed jointly by UN-Habitat and metropolitan authorities and experts participating at several Experts Group Meetings (EGM) held between 2019-2022. It is also nourished from the data contained at the first booklet published in 2020 available in: https://unhabitat.org/global-state-of-metropolis-2020-%E2%80%93-population-data-booklet

Some general information on the Global State of Metropolis Report is presented below.

About the Global State of Metropolis Report

The Global State of Metropolis Report started to be prepared to revisit the first five years of the New Urban Agenda implementation, aiming to:

1. Take stock of the new metropolitan realities around the world, looking at the most recent global and regional trends on metropolitan development.
2. Offer tools, inspiring practices and conceptual approaches to address the major challenges of metropolitan and regional management in terms of policy and legislation, governance, planning and financing.
3. Strengthen the knowledge and research on metropolitan subjects as well as the cooperation for sustainable metropolitan development through existing and new platforms.

With this initiative, UN-Habitat hopes contributing to the ongoing debate on metropolitan and territorial subjects and complement the important work done by several international partners, academics and national, sub-national and local governments.

Added value compared to other reports

This UN Global Report is different from others of its kind since it is the first:

- Assessing metropolitan management at global level from the four UN-Habitat drivers of change for sustainable urbanization, namely policy and legislation, governance, planning and finance.
- Analysing regional and global metropolitan trends up to 2035 from the UN World Urbanization Prospects (WUP).
- Which Global Sample of Metropolises for Case Studies is already being used to improve UN-Habitat normative and operative cooperation in 50 countries, based on the analyses results.

- Composed by case studies jointly drafted and peer-reviewed with metropolitan experts and representatives involved in managing the respective metropolises.
Global sample of metropolises for case studies

The Global State of Metropolis Report is being informed by fifty detailed case studies on metropolitan management, which global sample was defined to be representative enough in terms of economic, population and geographical criteria as listed below:

- **Economic criteria:** Metropolises from low-, middle- and high-income countries.
- **Population criteria:** Including small, intermediate and large metropolises or megacities.
- **Geographic criteria:** Metropolises from all world regions and UN Regional Groups.
The process of structuring the Global State of Metropolis Report

Detailed info on the preparation of the Global State of Metropolis Report is available in:


Relevant web stories:

A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world