Metropolitan Governance Systems in the Global South: Forms and Effectiveness

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ABSTRACT

Large metropolitan areas have increasingly become the key sites for wealth generation in many countries of the world. A feature of the urban landscape worldwide and accentuated by globalization, these conurbations span or encroach upon multiple jurisdictions of local government and embrace ever-larger populations. Despite the strong performance of metropolitan economies in many countries, these places tend to have a sizeable informal economy, a large number of low-skilled immigrants, and a high rate of unemployment. These conditions contribute to increased socioeconomic inequalities, residential segregation and social exclusion. The spatial organizations of metropolitan areas can exacerbate income inequalities and only metropolitan wide planning and governance efforts can ameliorate these issues. The question facing the metropolis is at the same time simple and complicated: how best to develop an institutional architecture of government and governance that can offer macro-level policy development and implementation across what is often a complex raft of individual governments, institutions, and agencies.

This paper will report the findings from one element of a research program to investigate the impact of metropolitan governance on economic growth and the well-being of residents. For the four federalist countries in Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela) the forms, functions, political legitimacy and performance of the emerging metropolitan governmental structures are identified and factors explaining the progress, or lack thereof, are examined. The relatively few models of successful metropolitan governance organized by the local governments themselves was explained by resistance from existing institutional structures and political systems as well as geographical disparities in terms of socio-economic status, governmental services and resources within metropolitan areas. In future work, the framework applied in this study will be extended to other regions in to order to contrasts to the findings from Latin America and to seek broader explanations of the unmet metropolitan challenges.

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The metropolitan areas of today's world and their numbers and sizes are ever increasing, soon to house the majority of the world's population (United Nations Habitat 2008). A feature of the urban landscape worldwide and accentuated by globalization, these conurbations span or encroach upon multiple jurisdictions of local government and embrace ever-larger populations. The spatial organizations of metropolitan areas can exacerbate income inequalities and only metropolitan wide planning and governance efforts can ameliorate these issues. The question facing the metropolis is at the same time simple and complicated: how best to develop an institutional architecture of government and governance that can offer macro-level policy development and implementation across what is often a complex raft of individual governments, institutions, and agencies. This paper summarizes the primary research findings on the effectiveness of the governance systems that are being constructed to meet the challenges of collective life in these large and complex metropolitan areas—with specific reference to those in the four federalist countries in Latin Americas: Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela.[1]

The terms "metropolitan" and "governance" have multiple meanings, in both the academic literature and the world of practice, and require clarification at the outset. For the purpose of this discussion, metropolitan refers to large, contiguous, built-up areas involving one or usually more local governmental jurisdictions, which have come about through processes of increased urbanization and often conurbation, normally from upwards of 500,000 inhabitants and often well over a million (Gilbert 1996; 1998).

The term "governance" in research and policy communities is of more recent provenance (Hirst 2000, Demmers, Jilberto and Hogenboom 2004; Bevir and Trentmann 2007; Schmitter 2008; Bevir 2010). In contrast to the term "government," which describes the set of institutional and organizational structures and authority, governance refers to the process that defines the expectations of participation by different sectors of civil and political society in the decision-making process and of their role verifying performance and assessment. The use of the term governance, especially in a normative sense of "good governance," is not without critics (Demmers, Jilberto and Hogenboom

[1] For the complete study, see Peter K. Spink, Peter M. Ward, and Robert H. Wilson, eds. *Metropolitan Governance in the Federalist Americas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, forthcoming).

2004; Bevir 2010). For example, rationalizing "governance-beyond-the-state" can undermine democratic practices (Swyngedouw 2005). Another criticism comes from observers that find too little attention is placed on the primary actor, i.e., on government, in the governance framework and encourages replacing governance with governing (Hambleton and Gross 2007) to focus greater attention on the actions of government.

Recognizing the multiple definition, and perhaps misuses, of the term, "governance" is used in this project, as the practice in the literature addressing metropolitan policy issues (Devas 2005; Klink 2008; Rodriguez-Acosta and Rosenbaum 2005; United Cities and Local Governments 2009; Hambleton and Gross 2007), for three reasons. First is the concern about the ability of government to provide better-than-adequate public services in an efficient manner in highly complex settings. Second is a concern with the institutional dynamics of planning for and providing those services in areas where multiple governments are often required to coexist and create interjurisdictional mechanisms for coordination. Third is the concern with the capacity of existing political systems to effectively incorporate citizen preferences and participation in metropolitan-wide affairs. Increasingly, the practical answers to these concerns—how to guarantee service provision, interjurisdictional coordination, and citizen participation—seem to require new forms of association and public action that lie beyond the stricter definitions of government.

But existing studies of the actual practices of metropolitan governance are not encouraging. Lefèvre (1998) observes that, in general, the top-down institutional reform of metropolitan areas seems to have failed within the principal Western countries, and is being replaced by a bottom-up governance approach. Equally, we think it may provide an important clue to understanding at least part of the lack of success of metropolitan governance in Latin America (Rodríguez -Acosta and Rosenbaum 2005, 305; Rojas et al. 2008).

This paper will first describe, in broad stroke, urbanization patterns and, in particular, the growth of large conurbations and their spatial organizations. Three primary challenges to public policy—inequalities and resource disparities, institutional complexity and reform of the state, and economic efficiency in public service provision—will then be discussed. The following section reports the findings on

metropolitan governance in Latin America. The key characteristics of the institutional and organizational forms and the policy issues addressed by these metropolitan initiatives are discussed. It explores the explanatory power of three sets the factors—powers and authorities attributed to local governments, jurisdictional geography of local governments and political praxis--that shape the emergence and dynamics of these metropolitan-based systems.

The methodology adopted is one of comparative case studies with the four federalist countries in Latin America serving as cases. Federalist systems create unique institutional environments in which state and provincial governments often play central roles in the metropolitan question. In some countries the state-local relation mirrors many of the characteristics of national unitary systems, the nature of federal constitutions and practices defines the institutional contexts of state and provincial governments and justifies limiting our cases to federalist countries. On pragmatic grounds, the large number of metropolitan areas in these countries in which very significant proportions of each country's population resides suggests that questions about social justice, dignity, and economic inclusion found in these areas will become a policy priority.

METROPOLITAN GROWTH: REGIONAL PATTERNS AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROCESSES

Humans have lived in geographically delineated communities for several millennia. Although many such settlements achieve population levels that would justify being called cities, and a number reaching one million or more population, it was during the industrialization, led by England in the eighteenth century, that urban growth truly accelerated. Although urban settlements were by no means dependent on industrialization, their numbers and size accelerated with industrialization. Countries with high levels of development invariably have high urbanization rates. Among the developed regions of the world, using United Nations definitions (2009), national urbanization rates averaged 52 percent in 1950. In stark contrast, the average rate of urbanization among developing countries in that year was 18 percent. As of 2010, it is

estimated that more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas. While developed countries had reached levels of 75 percent or higher in 2010, it is in developing countries where the pace of urbanization is most accelerated. Between 2005 and 20l0, the average annual urban growth rate was 2.4 percent in developing countries compared with 0.68 percent for developed countries (United Nations 2009).

Significant regional differences in levels, rates, and phasing of urbanization exist (see Table 1). In Latin America, for example, very rapid urban growth driven by rural-urban migration occurred in the decades immediately after World War II; by 2010, the average national level of urbanization in the region was 80 percent. The region has some of the largest cities in the world, including Buenos Aires, Mexico City, and São Paulo. These are now slow growing, but rapid growth is observed in mid-size cities of these countries, such as Cordoba, Monterrey, and Porte Alegre.

Table 1: Levels of Urbanization and Metropolitan Growth Rates, National Averages by Region and Years

	Urbanization Level[1]				Urban Population[2]				Number of large cities[3]				Growth Rate[4]
Regions\Year	1950	1970	1990	2010	1950	1970	1990	2010	1950	1970	1990	2010	1950 - 2010
World	28.8	36.1	42.6	50.5	729	1,330	2,255	3,486	41	91	160	277	2.61
Africa	14.4	23.6	32.1	40.0	33	87	205	413	1	3	15	34	4.23
Asia	16.3	22.7	31.5	42.2	229	483	1,003	1,757	11	35	69	139	3.40
Europe	51.3	62.8	69.8	72.8	281	412	503	533	17	21	23	24	1.07
Latin America	41.4	57.1	70.3	79.6	69	163	311	469	3	11	26	42	3.18
North America	63.9	73.8	75.4	82.1	110	171	213	289	8	19	25	34	1.61
Oceania	62.0	70.8	70.7	70.2	8	14	19	25	1	2	2	4	1.92

Source: UN World Urbanization Prospects, 2009, http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/index.htm

Notes:

1. Percent of population residing in urban area
2. Measured in millions
3. Cities with over 1.5 million population
4. Un-weighted regional average of national urban population growth rates, in per cent per year

The Africa region has the lowest urbanization levels, with national averages of 14 percent in 1950 and 40 percent in 2010 (see Table 1). This change in level of urbanization is being driven by high annual growth rates in a number of African countries. The emergence of large cities in Africa was not as closely correlated with economic growth and manufacturing activity as found in other regions. These relatively weak urban economies and rapid population growth have created very distressing living conditions for poor populations in most cities.

National urbanization levels and rates of urban growth in Asia are quite heterogeneous. Despite low overall levels of urbanization in countries in the region (42 percent in 2010), half of the world's urban population lives there. West Asia is highly urbanized, at 66 percent, followed by East and Southeast Asia, at 50 percent and 40 percent, respectively (United Nations 2009). South Asian countries trail, but with India's relatively rapid urban growth, the levels of urbanization will quickly rise in coming decades. Unlike the pattern in the more developed nations, it is often the largest cities in Asia that are growing at the highest rate.

Much of the worldwide increase in urban population is accruing in large cities. Based on 2009 population figures, the UN identifies 277 have populations of more than 1.5 million and 606 cities in the world with over 750,000[2]. An increasing number of the very large cities are found in developing countries. In 1950, of the 30 largest cities in the world, 20 were in developed countries; in 2010, the corresponding number is seven (United Nations 2009).

The very large metropolitan areas in developed countries are experiencing very slow growth, in part due to the phase of the demographic transition in which a country is located. In contrast, migration rather than natural population growth can lead to higher rates of urban growth, as found in a number of mid-size cities in these countries. But in many countries in Asia and some in Africa, rapid population growth associated with the middle phases of the demographic transition coincide with rapid rural-urban migration and are leading to the very high rates of urban growth. Thus, demographic processes are quite important in understanding urbanization growth across the globe.

The demographically driven variations contribute quite diverse policy challenges in metropolitan areas; in some, slow population growth, if not decline, and slow economic growth place a priority on redevelopment strategies while rapid demographic and economic growth in other cities places a priority on provision of infrastructure and housing. A troubling feature of the demographic transition in most metropolitan areas is its differential effects across social class. In general, higher population growth rates occur among families of lower socioeconomic status, the result of relatively slow declines in fertility rates among these families, thus creating special policy challenges in social services and education.

Across this globally-ubiquitous urbanization process, multiple spatial forms of metropolitan areas are emerging. The OECD identifies three types of spatial form (2006, p. 31). First are **monocentric metropolitan regions,** in which a single dominant core is linked to a hinterland of towns and rural areas. Population growth can lead to higher densities and to spatial extension, or sprawl, of these areas. Second are **monocentric metropolitan regions with smaller multiple nuclei,** in which a dominant core can have

[2] Please note that increases in population can occur through changes in the spatial definition used by national census bureau.

a number of separate cities or subcenters within close proximity and with strong transportation connections. The third type is the **polynuclear or polycentric metropolitan regions.** This form most often emerges where adjacent cities grow into each other, creating what geographers call a pattern of conurbation.

This paper reports the findings of case studies of metropolitan governance in the four federalist countries in Latin America, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela (Spink, Ward and Wilson 2012). These countries examined in this study vary markedly in size—both geographically and in population terms. The countries tend to be large territorially (with Brazil much larger at over 3 million square miles) (see table 2). Brazil (almost 200 million) and Mexico (103 million) have large populations, whereas Argentina and Venezuela are in the 25- to 40-million range. This variation in population and geographic size leads to variation in the number of local governmental jurisdictions.

Despite variations in metropolitan expansion patterns among countries in the Americas, common features associated with metropolitan growth emerge. Absolute demographic growth and the spatial expansion associated with suburbanization have invariably meant that in most metropolitan areas the original built-up area has expanded beyond its original boundaries into adjacent governmental jurisdictions, that is municipios. It is increasingly common for large urban areas of half a million or more population to span more than one jurisdiction: more often than not they encompass several municipalities or borough equivalents, and occasionally embrace several dozen separate jurisdictions spread across two or more states and provinces (as cases of Mexico City and Buenos Aires amply demonstrate) and even cross-national in configuration (as Cuidad Juarez and Tijuana on the Mexico-US border).

Table 2. Characteristics of the Four Case Study Countries

	Mexico	Venezuela	Brazil	Argentina
Size of Country (sq. miles)	761,605.50	352,144.33	3,286,486.71	1,068,301.76
Size of Country (sq. km)	2.0 million	912.1 thousand	8.5 million	2.8 million
Total Population (2005) (in millions)	103.1	26.6	186.4	38.7
Population Density (sq. miles)	139.45	72.06	56.63	37.01
Total Urban Population (%)	76	93.4	84.2	90.1
Number of Cities 500,000-1 million	8	2	18	2
Number of Cities 1-3 million	4	2	11	2
Number of 3 million + Cities	3	1	2	1
Number of Metropolitan Areas	67	NA	23	NA
Federalist Territories				
Number of States	31 states and 1 Federal District	23 states and 1 Capital District	26 states and 1 Federal District	23 provinces and 1 Autonomous City
Total number of Municipalities	2,543	349	5,507	1,144[1]
Economic Data (in US$)				
GDP Total (2005)	768 billion	145 billion	883 billion	183 billion
GNI (Atlas method; 2005)	753 billion	131 billion	726 billion	173 billion
GNI per capita (Atlas method; 2005)	7,300.00	4,940.00	3,890.00	4,460.00
GDP per capita (2006)	10,700	7,200	8,800	15,200

GDP per capita is gross domestic product divided by midyear population. Source: http://www.finfacts.ie/biz10/globalworldincomepercapita.htm

Argentina source: National Institute of Statistics and Censuses, 2001 http://www.indec.gov.ar/
(1) Municipalities are defined by the provinces on basis of population (ranking from 500, 1,000, 1,500, 2,000, 3,000 or 10,000 inhabitants) or, in some provinces, municipalities are defined based on the relationship between population and other factors, such as area (km2) and voters, among other variables.

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POLICY CHALLENGES IN METROPOLITAN AREAS

A devil's advocate could argue that the apparent lack of success in developing effective metropolitan organization is largely a problem in the mind of the planner or the institutional designer and that, pragmatically, some kind of passive incremental approach is best—especially one that can be left to existing governmental units. In order to frame the discussion of the role of the public sector in metropolitan areas, it is useful to introduce three key issue: (1) inequalities and resource disparities, (2) democratic governance and reform of the state, and (3) economic efficiency in the delivery of public services.

Inequalities and Resource Disparities

The OECD (2006) identifies an urban paradox. Despite the strong performance of metropolitan economies in many countries, these places tend to have a sizeable informal economy, a large number of low-skilled immigrants, and a high rate of unemployment. These conditions contribute to increased socioeconomic inequalities, residential segregation and social exclusion. At the macro level, metropolitan areas tend to have higher personal income disparities than do the nations in which they are located (UN Habitat 2010). The issue of inequality in metropolitan areas arises in three ways.

First, urban poverty is a primary factor in urban inequality, yet it follows distinct patterns across regions around the world. Rural-urban migration historically has been a source of the urban poor. As noted earlier, rural-urban migration has diminished in Latin America and disappeared, for all practical purposes, in developed countries. In Asia and Africa, rapid urbanization will continue to be fueled by rural migrants for decades (World Bank 2009). Recent rural immigrants to cities in Asia and Africa can be expected to incur slow economic and cultural assimilation, with a limited network of social support. The lag in fertility decline among poor women in cities means that natural population increase will remain potentially a source of urban poverty. In Latin America, recent improvements in income distribution and urban poverty have occurred in many countries, driven by both labor market developments and public policy (Lopez-Calva and Lustig 2010). Despite some positive dimensions of these social processes, urban poverty and slums remain a prominent issue in both developed and developing countries (Fay 2005; UN Habitat

2008; Davis 2006). Even though the proportion of urban dwellers in slums is globally declining, the absolute number of slum dwellers is on the rise. The urban divide, terminology used by UN Habitat, has multiple dimensions, including economic and social, and will be one of the primary challenges in metropolitan areas throughout the world.

A second concern with inequality, or more precisely equity, arises in the spatial organization of cities, specifically the spatial differentiation with regard to socioeconomic status (Roberts and Wilson 2009). A broad range of cultural, economic and social forces determines patterns of housing settlements within cities. In capitalist economies, spatial differentiation, or residential segregation, is often viewed as the natural outcome of market forces, with the poor occupying lesser valued land. Racial and ethnic prejudices, as well as social cohesion among immigrant communities, can help explain residential segregation. It is also well established that socioeconomic residential segregation rises with the size of cities (Roberts and Wilson 2009). Metropolitan areas in the Americas tend to be subject to high levels of poverty-based socioeconomic segregation (Sabatini 2003; Telles, 1995; Duhau 2003; Fischer 2003; Rodríguez and Arriagada 2004; Wheeler and La Jeunesse 2006; UN Habitat 2008). Gated communities and new towns, an emerging phenomenon in developing countries (for Shanghai, see Walcott and Pannell 2006; for Jakarta, see Firman 2004; for Santiago, see Sabatini 2003), will likely aggravate spatial inequalities in metropolitan areas.

A third form of disparity within metropolitan areas is produced through the institutional structure of local government (multiple local governments with resource disparities among them) and the actions of these governments that have differential effects on various socioeconomic population segments. Public infrastructure investments and land-use policies affect urban expansion and the spatial organization of cities. These policies also create the context for land speculation and increased property values, and their benefits accrue primarily to wealthy segments of the population (including non-resident international real estate groups). But other policies, especially urban services provision, also have spatial impacts. In areas where services are poor or inadequate, property values are lower and therefore may be more attractive to low-income populations. At the same time, residential segregation of poor populations affects the

demand for urban services. The provision of public services may, in fact, reinforce patterns of segregation and the spatial manifestation of socioeconomic disparities.

The spatial distributions of (1) low income populations, i.e. spatial segregation, and (2) urban services (in terms of both demand for services and spatial impacts of its implementation) are mutually determined. Residents in an urban area generate a demand for services, such as education, health and other social services, as well as housing, transportation, public security, and the like. Furthermore, several public services, including water, waste water, and electric systems, have geographically defined service areas. When such services, especially water and wastewater services, are not extended to residential areas, public health challenges likely emerge. Populations dependent on public transportation represent a particular spatial demand. Similarly, populations with large numbers of children create higher demand for education services than found elsewhere in the city or metropolitan area.

Inequalities in public service provision are characteristic of metropolitan areas, as will be discussed below. Most metropolitan areas have multiple local governments and when overlaid on socio-economic segregation invariably, these structures institutionalize significant resource disparities. The presence of wealthy municipalities and poor municipalities in metropolitan areas inevitably exacerbates inequities in public services. In the poor municipalities, inadequate government revenues impede progress on education, health, poverty, and even economic development policies. Physical decline of infrastructure and housing are frequently encountered in local jurisdictions with large shares of the urban poor (for the case of Europe and the United States, see Andersen 2003).

The formation of a single local government covering an entire metropolitan area would provide an institutional structure better able to address these spatial disparities. More often, higher levels of governments adopt redistributive policies to address the socioeconomic disparities in metropolitan areas, as when national governments redistribute resources across states and/or municipalities targeted for services for lower-income populations. That is, transfers to distressed communities or equalization in revenue systems can remedy resources disparities. However, redistribution within metropolitan areas presupposes governmental institutions at the metropolitan level that

can articulate and implement metropolitan-level redistribution. The lack of metropolitan institutions, to be discussed below, prevents action on redistribution.

To the extent that low-income communities are organized and act politically, the effective demand and supply of services can be affected. But this strategy to improve urban services is rarely found due to the differential access to channels of political participation, especially in relation to policy formulation and implementation. Racial and ethnic minorities and the poor rarely have the organizational clout, even if local political institutions are present, to articulate effectively their interests in the same way that business, middle classes and other elites are able to do.

Democratic Governance, Institutional Complexity and Reform of the State

There are a number of imperatives driving the search for new metropolitan governance architecture, but in Latin America, as democracy has been extended to formerly authoritarian or one-party regimes, new governance institutions have been forged predicated on representational democracy. This has meant experimentation in recasting traditional state-society relations, whether these were patrimonial, corporatist, or dominated by party political machines. It has also invoked a need to consider how citizenship and participation can be strengthened in ways that will respond to the emerging civic culture and civil society. In reviewing democratic transitions and consolidations in Latin America, Peter Smith (2005, 342) concludes that present-day democracy remains rather shallow (see also Dominguez and Shifter 2003; Mainwaring and Scully 2010). At the subnational level, however, balances are few, representative institutions are weak and untested, and freedoms and rights are restricted—in practice if not in principle (Domínguez and Shifter 2003).

Reform of the state has been the subject of policy discussions around the world and, in the Latin American context, democratization has occurred contemporaneously with reform in most countries. But reform of the state, especially in terms of local government, is not a new phenomenon. The growth of cities themselves has historically led to new forms of local government with new powers and functions. And in Latin American, we can observe the process of new governance mechanisms emerging in many capital cities (Myers and Dietz 2002).

The choice of the four Latin American federalist countries as the focus of the\is study requires a note of explanation. National government systems can be classified as having federalist or unitary structures. Constitutionally, the architecture of federal governments differs markedly from unitary systems. Under most federal arrangements, lower levels of government (referred to hereafter as subnational governments) have constitutionally defined rights and relative autonomy from the federal government. Each form can be relatively centralized, with a relatively strong national government, or decentralized. The central authority in unitary governments may choose to delegate or devolve powers to lower (regional or local) levels, creating a more decentralized system, but the central government has the capacity, if not always the political wherewithal, to recall such devolved or delegated powers if it so chooses, a feature not available to federalist systems.

What do these federal versus unitary differences mean for metropolitan governance? First, if the key to metropolitan management is to create a new tier—an independent metropolitan government—then it is probably easier to achieve in a unitary state, since the central government can legislate to create a new tier of government—as in Quito, Ecuador, where in 1993 the Metropolitan District was forged out of the county district surrounding the old city of Quito. The very fact that a simple act of Parliament or Congress can create and revoke a metropolitan area, and do so without engaging in a major constitutional reform, makes such arrangements feasible.

A second implication is that while it may be difficult in federal systems to conceive constitutional changes that would create a new tier of government with powers separate from states, municipalities, and federal government, these federal structures do offer clear weights and lines of authority that allow state and local governments to engage formally in intergovernmental relations, as well as in collaborative arrangements. Where municipal autonomy exists, either of a constitutional or practical nature, intermunicipal arrangements and state/provincial-municipal arrangements can offer viable arrangements for constructing some level of metropolitan governance.

Today's reform of the state, especially in Latin America, has given special attention to *decentralization and devolution*. This process has found quickening support among international agencies such as the World Bank (Rodríguez 1997; Campbell 2003; Eaton

2004; United Cities and Local Governments 2009). Decentralization efforts in Latin America are of sufficient duration that assessments of impacts have been conducted (Falleti 2005; Falleti 2010; Wilson et al. 2008; Smoke et al. 2006; Diaz-Cayeros 2006). These reforms affect policy-making systems which, in the federalist structures examined here, are already complex, needing incorporate interactions between the central and subnational governments, each with varying degrees of autonomy and responsibility to the other. The resulting complexity is accentuated in metropolitan areas as they stretch beyond the geographic boundaries of individual municipal jurisdictions, assuming increasing importance as economic centers and leading to increased need.

Policy challenges in federalist systems, especially in metropolitan areas, can be addressed through intergovernmental coordination, either vertical across levels of government or horizontal among governments at the same level. But the different modes of coordination have associated various levels of difficulty in their implementation. But how best to address the challenge of institutional complexity in metropolitan governance is clearly a theme that is increasingly present on the planning and democratic agenda, as are the many permutations for action and arguments for best approaches. Multiple local governments can coordinate their actions in one or more areas, agencies can be created, and authority can be devolved upward or downward from one level of government to the next. In the following section, through examining the practice of metropolitan governance in the four federalist countries in Latin America trends are identified and explanations of these are proposed.

The Economic Efficiency in Public Service Provision

As populations grow large, so the profile of public service requirements also changes. While one may argue that many basic functions such as public security, education, sanitation, and road maintenance are necessary in all urban areas regardless of size, scale requirements in large cities and conurbations lead to fundamental changes in the way these services are provided. A small town might allow for the disposal of wastewater on the dwelling premises through septic tanks, but in larger urban areas wastewater systems must be established. In transportation, city streets and pathways will need streetcars or subways. Furthermore, new services and regulatory activities become

necessary or possible as large numbers of people reside in close proximity. It is here that the economics of efficiency rears its head and voice in the policy agenda.

Economies of scale refers to the variation in per-unit cost of production as the quantity produced increases. This idea, derived from microeconomics and developed in the context of private-sector businesses, is also highly relevant to the provision of public services. For many public services, such as the provision of drinking water, the cost per unit provided declines as the level of production increases. However, it will also be the case that at some point the average cost of provision may well start to rise again due to *diseconomies of scale*, for example as in transportation systems that become inefficient due to congestion. For some types of services, especially those for which face-to-face interactions are required, the situation is one in which diseconomies of scale may occur at fairly low levels of service. Here there will be greater efficiencies in more localized delivery systems. Whether to scale up or scale down provision of a particular service is a continuing theme in the metropolitan debate, in relation to both the economics of city size and the incentives for crossjurisdictional activity.

The problem of externalities—that is, when the total benefit, positive or negative, of a transaction is not accurately incorporated in the price associated with the transaction—is common in metropolitan areas. Public services are usually provided on a geographical basis with citizens in the jurisdictions sharing the expense. Yet, differences in the consumption of services may well vary among taxpayers, leading to concerns about equity and intense competition for revenue generation across local jurisdictions. While this generates one class of issues within a single jurisdiction—linked to regulation and costs—the issues grow when moving to multiple jurisdictions, as in most of our metropolitan regions.

Tackling issues of intergovernmental collaboration or the redefinition of service areas among jurisdictions, including provision by a state or provincial government rather than municipal government, may be on the agenda of decision makers as efficient means for providing services are sought. To achieve appropriate scale in the provision of services, municipal jurisdictions across metropolitan areas can attempt to coordinate urban development strategies, land-use planning, water and drainage infrastructural development, transportation, social services, public security, environmental policy, and so on.

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS FROM LATIN AMERICA

With this background, we turn to the empirical results of the study. First, the key characteristics of the federalist systems in each country and their influence on metropolitan initiatives are described. The discussion then turns to the metropolitan initiatives themselves in terms of, first, the primary policy areas addressed and, second, the types of organizational forms these initiatives take. Second, the roles of political systems and praxis in facilitating or impeding collaboration are examined. Finally, the roles played by local governmental and spatial factors in explaining the emergence of these metropolitan initiatives are identified.

The four countries examined here share a common constitutional structure with three levels of government--federal, state/provincial, and local--but at the same time are very different in terms of the level and exercise of powers at the federal, state/provincial, and local levels (see table 3). In Venezuela, the central government is everywhere, not least since President Hugo Chávez centralized powers in the presidency. In Mexico and Argentina, the federal and state governments play important roles in municipal government, with a common trend toward the strengthening of state and local governments in each case under "new" federalist arrangements. Only in Brazil do municipalities form part of the federal pact and are institutionally autonomous; elsewhere, they are under the aegis of the regional (state/provincial) governments.

The federal governments in these countries play a large role in defining authority and resources in municipal government, albeit loosely and without any apparent roadmap of where it expects metropolitan government to lead. In Venezuela, the overarching federalist project is one of political control, especially in the capital city, whereas in Brazil there has been an initial federal- and later state-mandated blueprint for metropolitan regions—but beyond that, the practice of intergovernmental relations and collaboration remains in doubt. In Mexico and Argentina, we observe state and provincial governments exerting their authority in the federalist pact, to the detriment or neglect of the constituent municipal governments.

Table 3. Metropolitan Initiatives, Institutions and the Country Context

	Argentina	**Brazil**	**Mexico**	**Venezuela**
Frequency of Initiatives	Few	Few but increasing	Few, moderately increasing	Rare
Strength of municipalities	Weak	Increasing strength	Modest increase	Weak and weakening
State/provincial government authority over municipalities	Significant	Limited	Significant	Marginal
Functional areas of state/provincial-municipal government interactions	Regulation of some intermunicipal services	Manages some service systems-e.g. public transportation	Regulation of some intermunicipal services and finances	NA
Political systems at local level	Local political parties dependent on state parties	Local political competition; timid efforts with metropolitan legislative-like bodies	Increasing competition in local politics, undermining effective metro-level government	National party tending to dominate local governments
Other significant factors	High urban inequality	High urban inequality	High urban inequality	High urban inequality

In Brazil, there are a number of important intermunicipal consortia. Constitutional powers have strengthened local government, but municipalities are significantly dependent upon state and federal transfers and state governments are relatively weak partners in metropolitan initiatives. In Mexico, metropolitan initiatives are relatively uncommon but are on the increase, and the strengthening of municipal governments remains an incomplete project. Jurisdictional geography seems to play an important role in explaining the infrequency of initiatives, but so too does political competition between and among parties create pressures for local leaders to demonstrate policy and institutional effectiveness, and this usually works against collaboration.

In Argentina, municipalities are weak in terms of authority and resources, and there are relatively few initiatives. Provincial governments and political-party competition appear to constrain municipal discretion in moving forward. In Venezuela there are also very few initiatives, and municipal governments have been weakened in recent years as a result of the recentralization of political authority and resources.

Metropolitan Initiatives by Policy Type and Organizational Form

There is a continuum in the frequency of metropolitan initiatives across countries, with Brazil at one end followed by Mexico, where local governments are developing capacity and authority. At the other end of the continuum, municipal governments in Argentina and Venezuela are relatively weak and, in the case of Venezuela, are being weakened more as the process of centralization is under way (see Table 4). There is very limited experience with metropolitan initiatives (outside Caracas in the Venezuelan case) in either of these two countries.

Table 4. Frequencies of Metropolitan Initiatives by Policy Focus and by Country

	Argentina	**Brazil**	**Mexico**	**Venezuela**
Public transportation		■	■	■
Highways and streets				
Water and wastewater systems	▪	▪	■	■
Solid waste management	■	▪	▪	
Land use and regional planning	■	▪	▪	▪
Environmental protection and growth management	▪	▪		▪
Emergency services (fire and medical)				
Public security			▪	▪[a]
Employment and job training				
Health		▪		▪[a]
Education				
Social welfare and services				
Housing				

■ - Important and frequently found policy arena organized at the metropolitan level.
▪ - Occasional policy arena organized at the metropolitan level.
[a] Caracas 2008.

As anticipated, certain policy areas are more likely to generate collaboration or scaling up of service provision and planning than others (see table 4). The large majority of experiences and existing initiatives address infrastructure systems, such as transport, transit, water, and solid waste, or land use and environmental planning. As anticipated, public services with very large fixed costs and/or involving territorially extensive systems (environmental or service delivery systems) are most commonly provided through metropolitan initiatives. Their public finance implications and clear benefits from collective action appear to make them good candidates for coordinated action on a metropolitan-wide basis. Similarly, where one or two jurisdictions are expected to incur the costs of an undesirable service for the entire metropolitan region—the management of solid waste disposal, for example - these, too, may be organized at the metropolitan level so that the receiving areas of the "bad" (negative externality) are compensated appropriately.

However, in contrast to the relative high frequency of initiatives in the infrastructure-related policy areas is their almost complete absence in initiatives involving redistributive policies. Social services, education, health, and housing are rarely the focus of metropolitan initiatives despite the fact that these services are often key concerns in municipal government. Even in instances where institutional incentives might suggest a metropolitan-wide system, delivery systems remain municipally oriented. In the case of the municipally based unified health service system in Brazil, where states have the capacity and role to create and support synergies through substate regional coordination, the São Paulo metropolitan region remains firmly focused on municipal rather than metropolitan lines, at the same time that other parts of the state have shown considerable advances—for example, in the area of health consortia among small municipalities. More than economy-of-scale considerations, it seems to be the fiscal topography that intervenes most here. As noted above, better-off jurisdictions are reluctant to subsidize others (directly or indirectly) within the metropolitan area; and few political leaders are willing to broach redistribution outside their own jurisdictional limits. The lack of significant metropolitan initiatives for policing (despite policing's historical role in shaping metropolitan meanings) can be mostly explained by a strong

preference of local government to maintain control of policing and public security within its own jurisdiction, in part to guarantee replies to accountability claims.

The high frequency of nonredistributive policies among metropolitan initiatives confirms that political interests are indeed able to influence the metropolitan agenda, only here the influence is negative. Policies that require redistribution or resources are not on the metropolitan agenda. At the same time, we can note that service managers and technical staff often share the concerns of many academics and other research professionals for ensuring that services are provided adequately and equitably. Increasingly in a number of our countries, adequacy and quality of service provision is becoming a subject of public debate in terms of both citizen participation and, at times, co-management. Equity, for example, has figured large in the public health arenas of Latin America, where discussion about service integration and delivery on a demographic-need basis is also present.

Another characteristic of interest in the multiplicity of initiatives is their intergovernmental or inter-organizational nature. Inductively, three types were observed: (1) collaborative initiatives; (2) organizational initiatives; and (3) institutional initiatives (see Table 5). Although the source of motivation for the establishing a particular initiative, that is the specific reason for human agency and the form of working relations between government units, varies substantially, the frequency of initiative utilization across these three groups reflects varying degrees of difficulty and political commitment.

Table 5. Frequencies of Metropolitan Initiatives by Type and by Country

	Collaborative	**Organizational**	**Institutional**
Argentina	▪	▪	▫
Brazil	■	▪	▪
Mexico	▪	▪	▫
Venezuela	▪[a]	▪	▪[a]

■ - Frequent
▪ - Infrequent
▫ - Absent
[a] But only Caracas

Collaborative initiatives are those forms of working relations between government units that depend critically on the willingness and disposition of governments to enter into collaboration; they are essentially questions of decision and of interpersonal skills by local officials and leaders. Collaborations can be purely voluntary, but higher levels of government may also induce collaboration through enabling legislation, offering financial incentives, brokering, or through the exercise of political pressure. Often key is the leadership and actions of mid-range political and social actors, such mayors, other public officials, associations of associations, civic leaders, among others, all of whom are capable of articulating connections and building networks across different organizations and policy communities. Indeed networks of organizations are themselves collaborative activities. In numerical terms collaborative initiatives are the most common in our four countries (see Table 4), resulting primarily from the case of Brazil. To the extent that these are voluntary, their emergence represents important responses to very real policy challenges.

The second type -- organizational – comprise those initiatives that change the competencies of existing governmental units by developing their resource base or authority, or by redefining operational jurisdictions. They do not depend on voluntary decisions or willingness, as do the collaborative initiatives, but require concrete action to create or alter, in a formal and binding sense, the architecture of organizational forms and procedures. As an exercise in government reform, leadership here is also important, but it often needs to be of a more managerial nature, linked to skills of getting things done, but can also require persuading citizens to ratify reform. Organizational initiatives are also found in each country due, in part, to efforts to enhance the powers of local governments. Decentralization processes, as embedded in the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, have frequently strengthened the municipalities. Although state and provincial governments might be able to empower local governments to address metropolitan challenges, this is not often encountered. In Argentina organizational initiatives appear most likely to occur when the federal government becomes involved – as it does when city government infringes across two provincial territories (the cases of Buenos Aires and Rosario metropolitan areas). Reorganization of activities on the basis of subsidiarity principles, as

found in Europe, would be characterized as organizational although no such initiatives were found in the four countries examined here.

The final type—institutional--consists of new spaces and practices of governance both governmental and public, including councils and governmental authorities. These initiatives do not rise to the level of a newly formed government. No new tiers of governments for metropolitan areas have been formed in these countries. Rather the institutional initiatives denote new organizations or associations, but without formal governmental authority. This result is disappointing since this sort of structure could have considerable potential to fulfilling, eventually, the ideal of democratic governance across a large metropolitan area.

In practice the three types of initiatives – collaborative, organizational and institutional – do not necessarily create mutual exclusive categories given that a single initiative may have characteristics of more than one type and initiatives may change over time (for example, a collaborative initiative become institutionalized); but the grouping of initiatives in this fashion aids our discussion of identifying significant differences and patterns in a vast range of initiatives. For example, the significant presence of collaborative initiatives, those that depend on decisions and willingness of local actors, suggests that the current metropolitan governance arena is something of a double-edged sword cutting both ways. On the one hand it suggests that there is scope for action if those involved are interested in doing so, but it also confirms an initial suspicion that a change in circumstances, such as change in local political leadership, could just as easily undo or undermine metropolitan initiatives.

In summary, metropolitan-wide issues exist, as evidenced by the frequent use the limited purpose collaborative initiative for certain types of services and functions. But these face potential shortcomings, including limited public accountability and neglect of those public services with a redistributive or poverty alleviation element. Organizational and institutional initiatives, both of which involve some reassignment of governmental functions and improving governmental capacity, have favorable characteristics on several governance principles, especially in terms of citizen engagement. But these are more difficult to achieve and less frequently encountered.

Factors Affecting the Emergence of Metropolitan Initiatives

This study found that three sets of factors help explain, at least partially, the emergence and dynamics of metropolitan-based initiatives:

1. The constitutional and/or state-attributed powers of local government including fiscal capacity.
2. Political systems and praxis
3. The jurisdictional geography of local government.

Constitutional provisions and powers and authorities attributed by state governments to local government affect the structuring of government in metropolitan areas. Decentralization and state reform have been on the agenda in the four countries in recent decades. Although these efforts did not address metropolitan affairs, they led to stronger local governments, especially in Brazil and Mexico, and to a much lesser extent in Argentina and Venezuela. In general, we have found that when the powers of local government are weak in terms of constitutionally defined authority, administrative capacity, or political legitimacy, then metropolitan collaboration is less likely to emerge. Put another way, strong local governments are a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective metropolitan governance to emerge.

Changing the constitution for purposes of metropolitan governance or otherwise, is a formidable undertaking in all political systems and is generally eschewed. Among the countries examined here, only in Brazil and, to a much lesser extent Mexico, is there some form of constitutional designation. Consequently, introducing a new tier or purpose-related government by constitutional means seems unlikely. However, we find that through the exercise of constitutionally defined powers, state or provincial governments can have a profound effect on the emergence of metropolitan forms—a point to which we return below. In general, also, local governments are limited by their constitutions in their flexibility to improve or significantly change their fiscal capacity through the creation of new dimensions of revenue collection, or by altering the rates of taxation that they can levy (with the exception of property taxes), or in recasting of the terms of revenue sharing with higher levels of government to their own advantage.

Another feature of metropolitan areas in all four countries is disparities in the levels of economic development across municipalities. In general, the core urban municipalities have much higher levels of per capita income than surrounding municipalities. This leads to substantial disparities of fiscal capacity across local governmental jurisdictions, exacerbating the relatively limited authority that local governments have to modify revenue systems and to enhance own-source revenue. Further complicating this problem is that it is often the less-wealthy municipalities that have the higher needs for public services in such areas as education and health. The result is a significant mismatch between fiscal capacity of metropolitan municipalities and demand for social services. This mismatch between the tax base and the local government capacity can, in worst-case scenarios, lead to a "beggar thy neighbor strategy" whereby one municipality engages in fiscal games, such as offering unfair incentives that poach business and other forms of fiscal rent-seeking (such as offering lower land taxes or registration fees) from its neighbors.

Moreover, there are few incentives to promote metropolitan redistribution of resources in favor of particularly disadvantaged local governments. The very few attempts at metro-wide redistribution or the creation of common funds for selected aspects of metropolitan development have generally foundered on mistrust and a breakdown in collaboration between the constituent players—as the case of Guadalajara amply demonstrated.

Political systems and praxis affect metropolitan initiatives in a variety of ways, but in general their effect is to dampen the prospects for organizational and institutional initiatives. Historically, very few rising political leaders have embraced metropolitan issues as part of their agenda, since most careers arise out of pre-existing local, regional and national paths. Using a metropolitan base as a springboard for political advancement is, in general, a low reward stratagem since significant results are unlikely to accrue in the short term. Exceptions that prove the rule are those of President Chávez in Caracas who appears to have a strong interest in constructing a metropolitan governance structure, albeit one firmly anchored in his Bolivarian Circles. However, when the metropolitan structure was opposed to his political project, he successfully sought to undo it. Similarly in the case of Monterrey metropolitan area, in Mexico, the fact that 85 percent of the state

population lives in what is the single dynamic national center of manufacturing and commerce makes it imperative that the state Governor controls the body politic of the metropolitan area; which is done through state executive agencies rather than a new metropolitan institutional architecture.

For similar reasons political parties rarely stake their colors to the mast by advocating for metropolitan governance. Even in Mexico where a national party (the PRI) had hegemonic control for several decades of the twentieth century and thus was unlikely to be threatened by opposition parties or by constraints in passing constitutional changes, institutional arrangements of multiple subnational and local governments remained tied to patronage and career management. Fully-fledged regional governments would only create imbalances and instability.

The territorial basis of political parties affects the prospects for decentralization in Latin American countries. Political parties, even those with a strong territorial dimension, do not engage in metropolitan questions. Nor does it appear that single party control or dominance across metropolitan jurisdictions will lead to institutionalization of metropolitan governance. Elected politicians, even under the same party banner have more to lose than gain from formal institutionalization of government, and this may helps to explain why, where collaboration occurs, it is voluntary and largely *ad hoc*. Thus during the recent third wave democratization that we have seen in Brazil, Mexico and Argentina it is probably not surprising that political leaders and parties have in general avoided investing a great deal of energy in the creation of new metropolitan arrangements.

The jurisdictional geography of local government, referred to earlier as the spatial patchwork of local government, can both facilitate and complicate metropolitan initiatives. Here, it is useful to distinguish several types of spatial configurations of local governments in metropolitan areas: the large single jurisdictions; those in which there are a number of municipalities with not-dissimilar sizes (polynucleated); those in which there is a dominant core municipality with adjacent smaller, if not dependent, municipalities; those in which there is a dominant core but also adjacent secondary-core municipalities; and those that comprise or contain federal districts (see table 6).

Table 6. Jurisdictional Geography of Metropolitan Areas by Country

	Argentina	Brazil	Mexico	Venezuela
Large, single jurisdiction			**Ciudad Juárez**	**Barquisimeto**
Polynucleated municipalities	**Mendoza**	**Porto Alegre, Santos, Vitoria**	**Toluca**	
Dominant core with small adjacent municipalities	**Cordoba Rosario**	**Natal, Salvador**		**Maracaibo**
Dominant core with adjacent secondary-core municipalities	**Buenos Aires**	**Belo Horizonte, Campinas, Recife, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo**	**Monterrey Guadalajara**	**Caracas**
Federal districts	**Buenos Aires**	**Brasilia**	**Mexico City**	**Caracas**

Large, single urban jurisdictions are less common and found in only two of our countries (Ciudad Juárez in Mexico and Barquisimeto in Venezuela). In these cases a single unified public sector usually exists, with its departments and agencies, tax base, and electoral system, although in some contexts they are highly dependent upon support from the state or provincial government. These cases of single jurisdictions provide a clearer organizational field from which to address the challenges presented by large urban populations, and public accountability systems in the form of elections for local government are well established.

More common in metropolitan areas, however, are the complicated multijurisdictional geographies where the built-up urban area extends into multiple municipalities, adjacent states, and even adjacent nations, forming a much more complex interorganizational and polycentric field, or to use Abbott's (2009) expression, a *complex metropolitan region*. In all countries, the density of local government activities across these large urban conurbations necessitates collective governmental coordination, echoing the observation of Ostrom, Tiebout and Warren made decades ago (1961), albeit difficult to achieve in practice. In such densely populated jurisdictions, the likelihood of metropolitan initiatives can vary according to local circumstances and along a spectrum.

At one end of the spectrum, a dominant municipality may have highly dependent municipalities surrounding it with vast disparities in resources, leading to a greater, perhaps resigned, disposition of the dependent municipalities to collaborate (examples

here include Salvador (Brazil), Córdoba (Argentina), and Maracaibo (Venezuela). At the other end of the spectrum are the polynucleated metropolitan areas, where a more evenly balanced distribution of resources and population across municipalities, as in Mendoza (Argentina), Toluca (Mexico), or the Santos coastline in Brazil may provide greater opportunities for coordination since potential partners are in similar situations. In the Brazil case, even though there are relatively few initiatives in course, these have tended to take place at this end of the spectrum. In the middle are those scenarios in which a primary municipality containing a significant share of the metropolitan population exists alongside other substantially populated municipalities—São Paulo (Brazil), Monterrey and Guadalajara (Mexico). However, such coordination remains difficult to achieve and may encounter challenges by actors vying for leadership or from those seeking to forge a separate future for their constituents. Federal districts are a special case of jurisdictional geography. They can offer an alternative model for an intermediary or special tier of government (neither state nor municipality), but as part of metropolitan areas (as in the case with all but the Brazilian Federal District) they can bring a very different dimension to interlocal politics, investments, and resources; although rarely do they appear to do so in a positive way. Despite the potential for preferential access to federal government resources, conflicts between federal districts themselves and adjacent jurisdictions prevent collaboration, as witnessed in Buenos Aires and Mexico City.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Two overarching conclusions stand out. First is the clear and urgent need to conceive and create new governance structures for metropolitan affairs that will enable metropolitan-wide policies to be formulated and implemented and will meaningfully engage citizens living therein. Although this finding applies to a full range of public policies, given the context of metropolitan-wide socioeconomic and public resource disparities, it is particularly relevant to the alleviation of poverty and reduction of social inequities and, more generally, to improving lives of residents. How best to achieve this and to move forward is the second main set of conclusions offered. The case studies appear to suggest that while regional governments—states and provinces—seem to provide the more practical bases for initiating an effective architecture of metropolitan

governance, there appears to be no single route to get "there" from the "here and now," and certainly no single overall normative imperative that should be taken as "best practice." States and localities need to work out the politics and management structures that will work best within their own polities and localities. The result will very likely be different approaches within the same country, any one of which may individually have similarities with other approaches in other countries. This confirms one of the practical benefits of comparative studies—identifying opportunities for conversation. Getting there will require many changes in existing patterns of incentives and disincentives that cannot be produced on a drawing board and will have to be negotiated in the day to day.

Humankind's so far less-than-able response to the challenges of metropolitan urbanism suggests to us that more active alternatives need to be found. High-density, closely linked metropolitan areas are increasingly vulnerable, for example, to natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and other extreme climatic events all of which are present in the countries that we are studying. Economic disparities in the global economic arena are another source of vulnerability, and here, too, coordinating actions across jurisdictions requires different approaches to resource distribution and redistributive economic investment in order to generate a more equal playing field for different economic actors. But if there is an overriding argument for the need to break away from the current, almost permanent pre-crisis adaptation and search for serious alternatives, it is the need to make significant inroads in increasing social and economic equity and to better attend to the collective well-being of metropolitan inhabitants.

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