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Conceptualising metropolitan regions

How institutions, policies, spatial imaginaries and planning are influencing metropolitan development

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Chapter 1
Conceptualising Metropolitan Regions: How Institutions, Policies, Spatial Imaginaries and Planning Are Influencing Metropolitan Development

Daniel Galland and John Harrison

> *Never before has the necessity for effective regional governance and planning been so great* (Soja 2015, p. 379).

Abstract The need for effective metropolitan governance and planning has never been so great. In this chapter, we argue that despite an inspiring debate on the issues of metropolitan change, planning and governance, contributions which develop and operationalise broader frameworks for analysis are relatively scarce. Approaching metropolitan regions and metropolitan questions has typically taken one of two perspectives—the specificities of individual cases or establishing general principles. Here, we argue for an alternative approach. Our own approach for conceptualising the planning and governance of metropolitan regions is a heuristic perspective which, due to its focus on thematic, temporal and phronetic approaches we refer to as the TTP framework.

Keywords Metropolitan regions · Metropolitan institutions · Spatial imaginaries and metropolitan planning · Metropolitan policy

1.1 Metropolitan Regions, Metropolitan Questions

As the world has transformed, so too have urban areas. Fuelled by accelerated processes of globalised urbanisation, agglomeration and global economic integration we are witness to the widespread transformation of cities into metropolitan regions

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and the merging of some metropolitan regions to form increasingly large trans-metropolitan spaces (Soja 2014; Harrison and Hoyler 2015). Convinced that there is an unimpeachable economic logic linking activity within and between metropolitan regions to global economic competitiveness, proponents of metropolitanisation have become increasingly prominent advisors to international, national and local leaders on the dynamics of metropolitan change, the policies that are critical to metropolitan prosperity (e.g. innovation, human capital, infrastructure, housing), and new forms of metropolitan planning and governance. Fast emerging to be considered the ideal scale for policy interventions in the twenty-first century, the rise of metropolitan regions in globalisation has led to suggestions that we are experiencing a 'metropolitan revolution' (Katz and Bradley 2013), witnessing the rise of the 'metropolis state' (Jonas and Moisio 2018) and even the formation of a purportedly 'metropolitan world' comprising a global mosaic of metropolitan regions.

For all this, the relentless pace of global urban change poses fundamental questions about how best to plan and govern metropolitan regions. The problem facing metropolitan regions—especially for those with policy and decision-making responsibilities—is that these spaces are typically reliant on inadequate urban economic infrastructure and fragmented planning and governance arrangements (Dlabac et al. 2018; Fedeli 2017; Harrison and Hoyler 2014; Kantor et al. 2012). As the demand for more appropriate, widely understood to mean more flexible, networked and smart, forms of planning and governance has increased, new expressions of territorial cooperation and conflict continue to emerge around issues and agendas of infrastructure investment, housing, land-use planning, environmental management and other social forms of collective provision. In the apt words of Gerhard Stahl, former Secretary General at the European Committee of the Regions, the importance of metropolitan governance cannot be underestimated:

> There is no better subject of debate that simultaneously captures the 'regional' and 'local', the 'urban' and 'rural', and the 'domestic' and 'transnational' dimensions of European policy making, than 'metropolitan governance'. (Stahl 2011, p. 3)

While the planning-cum-political challenges facing metropolitan regions resonate today as much as they did ten or twenty years ago, the stakes have been undeniably raised. For every triumphalist depiction of metropolitan regions as the must-be, go-to, places for entrepreneurs, innovators and creative minds to find inspiration and happiness (Glaeser 2011; Florida et al. 2013), there is a portrayal of metropolitan regions as crucibles for devastating inequalities, catalysts for catastrophic environmental degradation and inescapable places for a large proportion of residents who feel a growing sense of helplessness.

The need for effective metropolitan governance and planning has never been so great (Soja 2015). But where to begin? After all, we have been here before, have we not? Well in short, yes, we have. Allen Scott, for example, asked us to consider what main governance tasks metropolitan regions face to preserve and enhance their wealth and well-being (Scott 2001), while Salet et al. (2003) and Heinelt and Kübler (2005) went a long way in descriptively revealing through specific cases what—in practical experience—the meaning of metropolitan governance is and what can be

learned from the successes and failures of coordinated spatial planning policy at the scale of metropolitan regions (see also Gross et al. 2018; Hamel and Keil 2015). In the intervening years, there has been good and inspiring debate on the issues of metropolitan change, planning and governance—usually based on the specificities of individual cases or general principles—but contributions which develop and operationalise broader frameworks for analysis are relatively scarce. Addressing this deficit is the inspiration behind this book.

1.2 Approaching Metropolitan Regions: The TTP Framework

Our starting point for conceptualising metropolitan regions is a concern that much of the work to date which has approached the question of metropolitan planning and governance has done so from one of two perspectives. There is research which, on the one hand, is oriented towards abstraction. Here, we can point towards seminal contributions which are geared towards providing broad conceptual and analytical frameworks that situate metropolitan regions within the contours of *inter alia* globalisation, neoliberalism, political economy, rather than systematic comparative analysis (e.g. Scott 2001; Brenner 2004; Storper 2013). There is then research which, on the other hand, is much more systematic. Here, the approach is one of taking an idea, a concept or a perspective and seeing/testing how it works in practice across specific contexts—be it different policy spheres, in specific metropolitan regions (e.g. Salet et al. 2003; Kantor et al. 2012; Gross et al. 2018), in different national contexts (e.g. Sellers et al. 2017; Zimmerman and Getimis 2017). Both approaches could be considered at different ends of the research spectrum, each equally valuable in their own way, but it is our contention that there is an important middle ground between abstract conceptual and systematic comparative approaches to metropolitan regions which remains largely untapped.

Responding to this, our own approach for conceptualising the planning and governance of metropolitan regions is a heuristic perspective that comprises three dimensions. Due to its focus on thematic (T), temporal (T) and phronetic (P) approaches, we will refer to this as the TTP framework.

1.2.1 The Thematic Dimension

The first dimension of our TTP framework is founded on four interrelated themes: institutions, policies and ideas, spatial imaginaries and planning styles. We have selected these four, not because they are the only four themes we could have cho-

sen or perhaps even the most important,[1] but they are arguably the most salient in contemporary debates over metropolitan change from a planning and governance perspective.[2] Table 1.1 presents each theme and specifies the major processes impacting metropolitan planning and governance of those themes.

Table 1.1 primarily serves to introduce the structure of the book, which is organised into four parts. We do this because a significant amount of research on metropolitan regions from a planning and governance perspective focuses on one of these themes.

Table 1.1 Thematic (T) framework: four key themes impacting post-war metropolitan planning and governance

Thematic approaches	Major Features Impacting Metropolitan	Planning and Governance
Institutions and Institutional Shifts	Governmentalised	Less governmentalised
	Uniformity	Piecemeal
	Promoting	Enabling
	Public	Public-private
Policies and Ideas	National spatial equalisation of capital investment	Urban & regional competition for global investment
	Managerialism, Fordism, Keynesian welfarism	Entrepreneurialism, growth, competitiveness
	National policies	Global policy mobilities
Spatial Imaginaries	Territory	Networks
	Politico-administrative units	Agglomeration economies
	Provincial scale	Planetary scale
Planning Styles	Regulatory planning	Strategic spatial planning
	Politicised	Depoliticised
	Regimented	Agile

[1] Additional candidates for inclusion as separate themes in this list might be governance or environment/nature.

[2] We are all too aware that our approach is rooted in the politics of metropolitan regionalism and does not therefore account for economic factors (such as firms, trade), environmental factors and so on. This would require a much larger project, one which was beyond us at the current time, and as such we took the conscious decision to demonstrate the framework within a more narrowly confined set of parameters centred on the planning and governance of metropolitan change.

There are those interested in institutions, whose primary interest is assessing if, how and why institutions matter for metropolitan development. Then, there are those interested in policies and ideas who, often coming out of the policy studies tradition but increasingly coming at it through the growing interest across the social sciences and humanities in mobilities, are motivated to understand how and why particular policies are mobilised and why they (do not) work in certain places, at certain times and in certain contexts. Moreover, there are those often writing from a more geographical perspective whose primary interest is in how and why certain spatial imaginaries are being constructed and mobilised in the name of metropolitan regions. Finally (at least in our framework), there are those writing from a planning tradition who are motivated to understand how and why different planning styles reflect and affect metropolitan regions. The key point from this is to recognise that the ways through which researchers approach metropolitan regions reflect/affect how they view them, their planning and governance. More importantly, focusing on one theme and not considering the interconnections between the different themes can only provide a partial, one-dimensional, reading of metropolitan regions (see Jessop et al. 2008 for a similar argument in relation to social scientific thinking more broadly). It is for this reason that we consider the four themes alongside each other in this framework.

1.2.2   The Temporal Dimension

The field of urban studies is experiencing something akin to a historical turn. This is not to say there has not been a strong temporal dimension to urban theorising, rather it is to argue that the focus has been on generating new theories, minting new vocabulary and terminology, and developing new ideas for deepening our knowledge and understanding of globalised urbanisation. The pursuit of claiming something to be 'new' has arguably resulted in a growing myopia towards what is really new vis-à-vis what might be better conceived as old wine in new bottles (Copus 2004). Institutional pressures on academics, political leaders and policymakers mean this quest for 'newness' is likely to get worse, not better. Nevertheless, what is changing is a growing appreciation among many working in urban and regional studies of the need to position current processes, policies, approaches and spatialities within longer trajectories of metropolitan change.

With this, Brenner (2009) contends how we should routinely consider the notion of 'periodisation'. Arguing that periodisation represents 'one of the most challenging and exciting frontiers for current research', Brenner (2009, p. 134) challenges us to uncover how internally coherent and consistent across time and space global orthodoxies are. At one level, periodisation allows us to identify temporally defined *scaled* moments in the planning and governance of capitalist development, alongside the role of, and impact on, cities and regions (Table 1.2).[3] But at another level,

Table 1.2 Thematic–temporal (TT) framework: periodising neoliberal metropolitan regionalisation, planning and governance

Era	Approximate dates	Dominant dimension of sociospatial relations	Institutions and institutional shifts	National policy focus	Spatial imaginaries	Planning styles
Spatial Keynesianism	1930s–70s	Territory	Promotion of national space economy and spatial planning as regulatory intervention (metropolitan institutions)	Spatial redistribution via equalisation of capital investment and compensatory regional policies	Central government regions	National spatial planning and indicative planning
Localism	1980s	Place	Local government reorganisation; public–private partnerships; urban growth coalitions	Urban regeneration; land-use intensification; urban entrepreneurialism; urban locational policy	Cities	Flagship urban regeneration projects
New regionalism	1990s	Scale	Multi-level governance; subsidiarity	Urban and regional competitiveness	Regions (e.g. Europe of the Regions)	Planning reinvented as strategic spatial planning

Table 1.2 (continued)

Era	Approximate dates	Dominant dimension of sociospatial relations	Institutions and institutional shifts	National policy focus	Spatial imaginaries	Planning styles
New city regionalism	2000s	Network	Metropolitan-scale growth coalitions; metropolitan mayoral model; deal-making	Labour markets; urban and regional resilience	Global city regions; mega-city regions; agglomeration; nodal city centrism; polycentric urban regions	Planning as soft spaces of governance and the rise of 'new spatial planning'
Multi-city regionalism	2010s	Urbanisation	Infrastructure alliances	Supply chain expansion; smart cities and regions	Multi-city regions; megaregions; cross-border metropolitan regions; extended urbanisation; regionalised urbanisation	Post-political consensual planning
Virtual regionalism	2020s	Virtuality	Ad hoc flexible governance arrangements	Balancing policy transfer with individual place distinctiveness; place IP	Virtual metropolitan worlds; planetary urbanisation	Agility, planning agile, real-time

periodisation requires us to consider how pervasive the metropolitan region discourse is in different contexts. Spatially, this necessitates an international comparative perspective because if we know anything from recent work it is that metropolitan regionalisation has produced nationally (and sub-nationally) specific forms (Jonas 2013). Meanwhile and related to this, temporally, the pace, dynamics and rhythms of metropolitan change are not consistent across space or time. In an individual case—be it a nation or a metropolitan region—a particular institution, a specific policy, a select group of actors, a type of planning approach is mobilised according to localised territorial politics. Moreover, this may happen sooner, later or at the same time as in another location. It is important to first recognise this, but second, our research needs to account for this. For this reason, the temporal dimension is critical in how we approach conceptualising metropolitan regions and metropolitan change. It is also crucial in bridging the gap to our third dimension—phronesis.

1.2.3   The Phronetic Dimension

Here, we take inspiration from phronetic planning research. Flyvbjerg alludes to the idea of phronesis as a process concerned with 'elucidating where we are, in whose interest this is, where we want to go, and what is desirable according to different sets of values and interests' (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 83). *Phronesis*, commonly translated from ancient Greek into English as 'practical wisdom', 'prudence' or 'mindfulness', is thus concerned with applying intuitive and well-thought-out judgement to the analysis of values as regards their implications. In the realm of planning research, a phronetic approach entails deliberation about (and questioning of) how power and values work and with what consequences to whom, and to suggest how relations of power and values could be changed to work with other (more progressive) consequences (Flyvbjerg 2004).

The connection to the temporal dimension—and periodisation—is to recognise the importance of going beyond being captivated by what is perceived of as 'new' to be much more critical of claims purporting to newness. Periodisation is an important first step in that it sets us on the path towards conceptualising metropolitan change 'in retrospect' (how have we arrived at this point?), 'in snapshot' (what is currently unfolding?) and 'in prospect' (what might happen in the future as a result?). Our argument is that a phronetic approach takes us closer to answering what we perceive to be the key question—what is at stake?

The phronetic dimension of our framework can be seen reflected in the structure and logic of the book (Fig. 1.1). The four parts reflect the four themes highlighted in Table 1.1, with each part divided into three chapters which reflect our phronetic approach. The first chapter in each part is focused on *change* with the aim of reveal-

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[3]It does not escape our attention that Table 1.2 reflects capitalist development. This table could usefully be extended to consider these eras commonly associated with 'capitalist' development in other contexts.
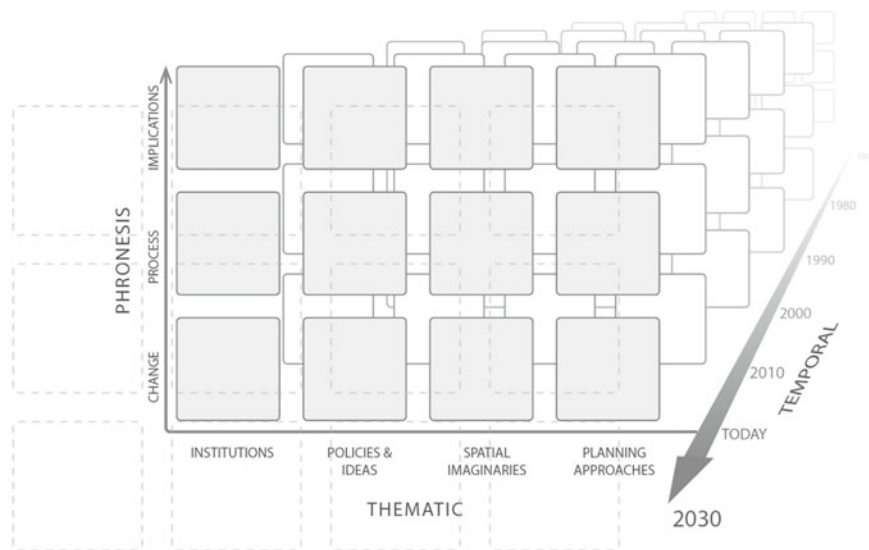
Fig. 1.1 Thematic–temporal–phronetic (TTP) framework for conceptualising metropolitan regions, planning and governance

ing what change has happened/is happening and where it is occurring. The second chapter in each part focuses on the *process* by which change is (not) happening. It does this by revealing the actors involved, examining which voices are strongest/weakest in negotiating metropolitan futures, and analysing the power mechanisms by which change is enacted, but also sometimes stalled, blocked or reimagined. The third and final chapter in each part examines the *implications* of current developments in the planning and governing of metropolitan regions. This is achieved by addressing who—or where—stands to gain—or lose—the most from contemporary metropolitan change, but also by considering what alternative futures there might be, what credibility they have and what it would entail to become a plausible reality.

1.3 Unpacking the Thematic Dimension of Metropolitan Change from a Planning and Governance Perspective

1.3.1 Institutions and Institutional Shifts

Across the world, we have more institutions—both formal and informal—operating at, across or nominally on behalf of metropolitan regions than ever before, yet we appear increasingly sceptical about their capacity to impact positively on metropolitan development. There are those who argue vehemently that metropolitan regions—or more precisely, their leaders and new institutional arrangements—*are* blazing a

trail in reshaping economies and political systems in progressive ways that are providing solutions to what were previously seen as intractable sociospatial problems (Barber 2013; Katz and Bradley 2013; Katz and Nowak 2018). In their book *The Metropolitan Revolution: How Cities and Metros are Fixing our Broken Politics and Fragile Economy*, Katz and Bradley (2013, p. 3) suggest this has come about precisely because:

> Like all great revolutions, this one has been catalysed by a revelation: Cities and metropolitan areas are on their own. The cavalry is not coming.

Yet, it is exactly this broader institutional political economy that sees others equally quick to highlight the vulnerabilities and fault lines associated with metropolitan regions being left 'on their own' by the erosion of urban-governmental capacities and exposure to more market-oriented forms of neoliberal governance (Peck 2014). From this perspective, metropolitan regions have been thrust into a cutthroat world where the odds of success continually lengthen and what is at stake keeps rising in magnitude. Add to this, increasing responsibilities for their own futures, the presence of can-do bravado from economic boosterism at every political turn, and the aspirational rhetoric for what is perceived achievable reaching unfathomable levels, metropolitan regions—and the institutions and people who run them—are forced to operate in conditions which necessitate how they should concentrate ever more of their reduced institutional capacity under the conditions of austerity urbanism to the pursuit of a supposed pot of metropolitan gold at the end of the neoliberal rainbow.

For all that alternative local examples and models do exist and resist (e.g. Bulkeley et al. 2018), a broader institutional political economy of market-oriented forms of neoliberal governance remains dominant globally in determining the goals and setting the conditions for institutions seeking metropolitan change and development. Allied to this, there is no denying institutions matter for metropolitan development (Rodríguez-Pose 2013). Ever since the emergence of a strong institutionalist literature in the 1990s showed institutions to be 'the underlying determinant of the long-run performance of economies' (North 1990, p. 107) and the concomitant rise of the 'new regionalism' overtook the prevailing neoliberal localist orthodoxy in revealing how 'institutional thickness' at the larger (metropolitan) regional scale was the necessary link for achieving economic competitiveness—as well as achieving other regional policy goals such as tackling entrenched inequalities, encouraging smart sustainable planning and enabling piecemeal democratic rights (Amin 1999)—institutions have been marked out as important components of metropolitan change. And yet, despite this recognition that institutions are crucial for metropolitan development, questions pertaining to what the right mix of institutions is, how these institutions should be arranged, what the best institutional environment is, across what geographies should they operate, what policies or strategies should they look to implement remain largely unanswered. At best, we can say we have a series of hotly contested answers.

It goes without saying that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to institutionalising metropolitan regions. What we can point towards instead are trial-and-error approaches to operationalising metropolitan institutions (in the narrow sense) or institutions for metropolitan development (in a much broader sense) across space

and time. The problem is one of the metropolitan praxis: how to put the abstract (simplified) reasoning of institutional theory into (concrete/complex) institutional practice via policies and governance arrangements for metropolitan regions? This is important because in the current period, we see no let-up in the formulation and spread of new policies and institutional arrangements trying to face-up to this challenge. We only have to look at spread of the US-style metropolitan mayor model as well as other mayoral models (Heinelt et al. 2018), the pace of territorial and institutional reform underway in many countries across the globe (Schmitt and Van Well 2016) and the emergence of new of ways of shaping metropolitan change—e.g. privatisation, contractualism, deal-making—to know there is a lot to observe regarding the changing governance arrangements for metropolitan regions. But what, we ask, is being achieved as a result of this change and our observations of it?

Our argument is that we must not overlook how metropolitan institutional reforms are a means to an end. They are not, as often it can appear, the end goal. In this book, we do not set out to simply detail *what* and *where* institutional arrangements are being mobilised and how they might be similar/different across space. This is a fundamental first step, but it should only ever be a first step. The second step in our approach is to ask what we see as the more pressing questions surrounding metropolitan institutional reforms, notably: *who* is orchestrating the change,[4] *how* are they attempting to do this and *why* now? This is a critical step because there is arguably a growing tendency for practitioners and researchers alike to overstate how much of this change is qualitatively 'new' vis-à-vis how much it is a continuation of deep-seated trends. Moreover, it is only by asking these and other related questions that we can reveal the often-overlooked politics of metropolitan regionalism, by which we mean the *realpolitik* of metropolitan reform.

Our third and final step is to consider what is at stake? This is important because institutional change generates a certain amount of hysteria. One way of looking at contemporary institutional change in relation to metropolitan regions is to present it as further indication of cities being empowered to assume their role as the new global leaders. At the other extreme, there are accounts which present the institutionalisation of metropolitan regions as a mechanism by which to devolve austerity—a case of devolving the responsibility for implementing welfare cuts and delivering austerity (Etherington and Jones 2018; Pike et al. 2018). Another way to consider all the institutional activity around the metropolitan scale as bearing the hallmarks of what Lovering (1999) famously referred to as being 'theory led by policy': the idea of weak theorisation based on policy activity alone rather than assessing the true meaning of that activity and its likely implications for affecting meaningful change. Either way there is little or no denying the importance of critically reflecting on whether what we are analysing amounts to genuine institutional reform or is it a case of that well-worn idiomatic refrain of rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic?

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[4]We need to highlight that this is more important than simply who is involved. This question is all about where the power lies and who is setting the agenda.

1.3.2   Policies and Ideas

Of course, institutions are only as good as the policies and ideas they seek to implement. Institutions stand and fall by what they do, not what they are or where they are. At an entry level, the first question that needs asking is what those policies are, quickly followed by a second question which is how similar/different these are to the policies and ideas being mobilised by metropolitan regions both within and across specific national contexts. In line with our earlier arguments, this approach is reflected in the emergence of two types of literature: *general abstractions* that situate policies affecting metropolitan regions within the contours of longer-term discursive parameters which stretch from spatial Keynesianism and redistributive policies during the 1930s–70s, through entrepreneurialism in the 1980s, competitiveness in the 1990s, sustainability and resilience in the 2000s, to smart specialisation in the 2010s (Table 1.2); and *systematic* reviews which take the latest in vogue policy mantra to see how it is being implemented in specific contexts and highlight what works, where and why? The latter owes everything to the institutional capacity to deliver, much more so than what the policy is.

This has become even more acute with the advance of neoliberalism, globalisation and the rise of global urban policy making. What we have grown accustomed to are a series of seemingly identikit neoliberal urban policies (e.g. urban waterfront redevelopment, competing to host global mega events, attracting the creative class, implementing smart technologies) which have been elevated to the status of 'global' policies for metropolitan regions to adopt. Promoting these off-the-shelf boosterist models of metropolitan development has become an industry in its own right, with a growing cadre of global urban consultants, policy experts and metropolitan think tanks mobilising on the premise that they can provide metropolitan elites with solutions to their metropolitan problems.

The transition away from national planning and policy making of metropolitan areas towards a global policy industry poses fundamental questions about how ideas, policies and practices for metropolitan development are generated; how and why some ideas, policies and practices are subsequently captured, become mobile and travel; how and why some ideas, policies and practices mutate and are absorbed more easily than others in practice? A growing 'policy mobilities' literature has gone a long way to uncovering enabling and disabling factors in the flow of metropolitan policies, ideas and practices (McCann and Ward 2011). This has been important in drawing attention away from the can-do bravado of the policies themselves and focusing it instead on the role of the actors and networks involved in orchestrating and promoting the travel of ideas and policies. On this, we see an emerging body of work examining the spread of a city leadership model based around metropolitan mayors (Barber 2013; Heinelt et al. 2018), but perhaps more important for the travel of ideas and policies, the formation of new *global* urban governance frameworks often supported by a new self-styled metropolitan elite. It cannot go unnoticed how there has been a proliferation of city networks (e.g. Eurocities, Metrex, Metropolis, World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments, United Cities and Local Govern-

ments) which have been established to give metropolitan regions and their political elites a forum through which to influence approaches to metropolitan governance, but alongside this there are also groups such as the C40 Climate Leadership Group and the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) network which are backed by large philanthropic supporters (e.g. Clinton Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Rockefeller Foundation) as well as other political and corporate sponsors seeking to influence metropolitan regions.[5]

The very nature of this new world of policy making is putting the spotlight firmly on the actors involved and the shifting power dynamics of who is really influencing metropolitan change, how they are seeking to do this and to what end. Put simply, what are their motivations? For the question is not so much which policies travel, but who decides which policies do (not) travel. Meanwhile and related to this, the challenge of managing multiple interdependent actors each of whom have their own stake in metropolitan development is intimately tied to the promotion of agreement-based policy styles and the rise of a 'new contractualism' in planning and governing metropolitan regions (Raco 2016). National governments see deal-making as a way to retain control of metropolitan regional development, but we must be equally careful in considering the 'depoliticising effects' that these post-political, consensual approaches towards policy making generate (Allmendinger 2017).

All of which means there is a lot to consider, but it also focuses our attention on what is at stake. For alongside these legitimate concerns about these new approaches to planning and governing metropolitan regions, there are other important aspects to this debate which need a fuller examination. We can point towards the narrowing of metropolitan policies in some arenas to debates over large-scale infrastructure as the one-size-fits-all policy solution to metropolitan issues to the detriment of more holistic development plans. We can also identify what Taylor (2016) has referred to as the widespread practice of capturing, re-appropriating, but ultimately misusing, ideas by 'corporate social science' and urban policy gurus in pursuit of fuelling metropolitan boosterism. Indeed, it is this last point which is possibly the most salient. Arguably what recent work is pinpointing as the major disconnect in the policy discourses surrounding metropolitan regions is that for all of the boosterist rhetoric of national and international competitiveness, one of the biggest drivers for policies enacting metropolitan reform and change is actually derived from a more defensive standpoint: a recognition that they need to insulate their metropolitan region(s) from the external threat posed by having to compete with other, increasingly large, metropolitan regions. In a nutshell, the policy landscape is one which increasingly presents metropolitan regions as the answer at a time when their individual status as competitive territories has never been under more threat as activity is seen to concentrate in a smaller number of increasingly large metropolitan regions.

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[5]As an example, C40 is supported by a collective of large philanthropies (e.g. Bloomberg Philanthropies, Clinton Foundation), governments (e.g. UK Government), international organisation (e.g. World Bank) and private sector interests (e.g. Citigroup, Arup).

1.3.3   Spatial Imaginaries

When is a metropolitan region a metropolitan region? On the face of it, this is self-evidently an intuitive question. But dig a little deeper and you quickly realise it is not as simple as first imagined. As with all spatial concepts, there is not one simple definition. Indeed, more than any other spatial concept the metropolitan region is perhaps the most difficult to pin down.

Since the early 2000s, many attempts have been made to define metropolitan regions. The upshot is the emergence of as many definitions as there have been attempts made. So, what have we learned? First and foremost, we have come to recognise the polysemous character of metropolitan regions. Arguably, this has been the greatest attribute of the metropolitan region concept because it has come to serve the interests of so many actors, in so many ways. The reason the metropolitan region concept has remained so fashionable is precisely because it is so malleable. Further evidence for this comes with the recognition that the metropolitan region concept is often used interchangeably with other spatial frameworks (e.g. city regions) or prefaced with adjectives such as morphological, polycentric or megapolitan. This said, despite the lack of a clearly defined methodology for producing a singular approach to conceptualising metropolitan regions, most definitions take on one—or blend together elements—of three distinct approaches:

- An *agglomeration* perspective where urbanisation is taken as the starting point and it is recognised that the outgrowth of urban areas beyond their traditional city limits is forming metropolitan scaled clusters of socio-economic activity.
- A *functional* perspective where integration is taken as the starting point and emphasis is directed towards the growing interconnectedness of an urban core—be it a single city or group of cities—and its surrounding, less densely populated, regional hinterland.
- A *territorial–scalar* perspective where governance is taken as the starting point and the growing imperative for national and local political–economic elites to coordinate activity at this scale, and to embed metropolitan regions within frameworks of multi-level governance, is of utmost importance.

What this demonstrates is that how you approach metropolitan regions largely determines the image of *what* a metropolitan region is. Thereafter, depending on what your definition of metropolitan region is determines *where* is designated a metropolitan region and ultimately where is included, excluded or on the fringes of whatever metropolitan regional discourse is being constructed in that moment.

Of course, we must always remember that metropolitan regions are never the end goal; they are always the means to another end. This is why, of late, research is focusing much less on defining what, and mapping where, metropolitan regions exist. Instead, attention is increasingly directed to better understanding how the metropolitan region concept is mobilised. This requires much more consideration of *when* it is being mobilised, *how* it is being mobilised, *who* is mobilising it and most important of all, *why* it is being mobilised. Stated bluntly, we need to know by whom and for

whom metropolitan regionalism is being pursued. From a sociospatial perspective, this is critical in enabling us to better understand who or where stands to gain the most and conversely who or where stands to gain the least (or worse still, lose the most) as a consequence of metropolitan regionalisation.

One important caveat is that this does not mean we should not ask critical questions about how metropolitan regions are defined and conceptualised. Far from it, in fact, because a weakness of research on metropolitan regions—and to be fair this extends across a lot of social scientific and policy thinking—is the rush to mint newspatial concepts and vocabulary to account for purportedly new geographies of urbanisation, regionalisation and metropolitanisation (Taylor and Lang 2004; Paasi et al. 2018). Yet many of these new terms enjoy only a fleeting existence. In contrast, others, such as 'metropolitan region', capture the imagination and experience longevity. The problem in these cases is that all too often the concept becomes assumed and, as such, is found increasingly to be considered uncritically. Simply put, people assume everyone else will know what they are talking about when they use terms such as metropolitan region. What they fail to account for is that most definitions or conceptualisations of the metropolitan region are very specific and depend almost entirely on who is doing it, when they are doing it, where they are doing it from/for and why they are doing it.

From the outset, even generic definitions which emerged in the 2000s owed much to their intellectual lineage, but the intervening years have made it more important than ever to critically interrogate how metropolitan imaginaries have emerged, transformed and in some cases disappeared, given how the metropolitan region has been mobilised in different national contexts, from different disciplinary standpoints and at different times within this era of metropolitan regionalisation. Our argument is that attempts to define and conceptualise metropolitan regions over the past two decades fall into the trap of attempting to provide an all-encompassing abstract definition or conceptualisation that does match the reality in practice, or they go to the particularity of a specific case—be it an individual metropolitan region or a national context—which makes it difficult to generalise and learn.

In this book, we reveal the inherent unevenness that maps of these spatial imaginaries often belie. This unevenness in institutional capacity, spatial coherence and planning competency is critical because it allows us to consider the extent to which metropolitan regional imaginaries equate to examples of deep or shallow-rooted regionalism. The importance we attach to this is the potential to identify those metropolitan regional imaginaries which are likely to develop into harder institutional forms, which might remain weakly institutionalised and which could just as easily disappear altogether. In other words, a key question when we consider metropolitan (and other spatial) imaginaries is to what end they can be considered significant in any essential way. To put it another way, what is ultimately at stake?

1.3.4 Planning Styles

How is planning currently shaping metropolitan development processes? What roles and styles does planning adopt and what lessons can be drawn from the diversity of metropolitan planning processes and strategies advanced in different sociopolitical contexts nowadays? Metropolitan regions are increasingly determined to find a place that positions them in a global market economy characterised by competitiveness policy agendas. Vigorously defining their abilities and capacities to perform within this categorical imperative that conditions their futures, metropolitan regions have indeed distinctively become strategic places product of processes of state re-territorialisation and rescaling (Brenner 2003, 2004).

Against this backdrop, the qualities and strengths of metropolitan planning vary significantly from country to country. Whilst globalisation is evidently a core external driving force influencing metropolitan competition and performance, national sociopolitical contexts (path dependencies, national policies, planning cultures, etc.) similarly play a relevant role in catering to metropolitan development (Ahrend and Schumann 2014; OECD 2014, 2017). As the fate of metropolitan regions is also highly dependent on their particular national institutional context (i.e. legal framework and participating institutions involved in plan and strategy-making and implementation), their ability to perform strategically is conditioned by the circumstances and idiosyncrasies of the specific national planning system they are embedded (Nadin and Stead 2008; Tewdwr-Jones 2012; Reimer et al. 2014)—i.e. making use of the oftentimes unequal planning powers allocated to the metropolitan level vis-à-vis other levels of planning. The instrumental content as well as the planning processes emerging from metropolitan spatial plans and strategies are thus highly reliant on their institutional contexts (Elinbaum and Galland 2016).

Whilst the distinctively regulatory and land-use oriented substance of planning has long been supplemented by strategic content, metropolitan regions are increasingly conceived as place-making sites empowered by relational processes for decision making (Healey 2007; Haughton et al. 2009). Despite the apparently rigid, cascade-like hierarchy of several national planning systems, the formation of ad hoc horizontal and vertical networks of actors determines the possibility for metropolitan regions to undergo episodes of strategic spatial planning. While this reorientation of governance capacities has been evident insofar as fostering competitive metropolitan regions in settings where territorial relationships are characterised by complex urban and regional dynamics, the range of strategic plans at different levels of planning influenced by relational logics is wide and similarly influences the processes and outcomes of metropolitan development.

The above implies that strategic spatial planning is essentially discretionary in its quest to link (strategic) objectives to spatial policies. With planning playing a strategic role, national governments (through national-level planning) enable themselves to move freely within spatial planning systems in pursuit of particular interests (e.g. accelerating ad hoc spatial development processes) (Galland and Elinbaum 2015). Since strategic spatial planning does not deal with particular land-use content as

statutory planning does, it allows for negotiation processes between several key actors attempting to shape spatial development. This implies that scales shift from being 'hard-edged' containers into rather flexible and less-defined spaces (Allmendinger et al. 2015).

But what else is 'strategic' about strategic spatial planning in metropolitan regions and what are its potential outcomes? Strategic spatial planning supplements 'formal' planning processes backed up by legislation aimed at enhancing legitimacy, transparency and trust. Worth considering is the extent to which informal strategic processes end up influencing formal statutory planning. Over time, however, metropolitan reforms and thereby metropolitan planning processes are subject to constant fluctuations in different sociopolitical contexts. In response to processes of governance rescaling, 'change agents' benefit from windows of opportunity (Kingdon 2011) emerging in metropolitan areas to create multi-stakeholder reform coalitions to foster new metropolitan engagements. Through strategies of legitimation including rhetorical appeals to authority, logic and emotion (Finlayson 2012; Davoudi et al. 2019), change agents attempt to set new agendas by persuading other actors to redefine their goals and interests (Getimis 2016).

Depoliticisation and post-politics constitute 'a lens through which we can frame and understand contemporary planning' via techniques that displace key (political) debates from planning into other managerial or technical (post-political) arenas (Allmendinger 2017, p. 191). Projecting openness or consensus, these arenas end up limiting and displacing opposition to development and growth. In accordance with Mouffe (2000), depoliticisation thus removes the political aspect from polity domains such as planning, thus circumventing transparency and accountability. In metropolitan planning, depoliticisation takes place in the form of conscious political strategies that distort metropolitan strategy-making processes.

As the world has become too fast-paced for a policy domain as (metropolitan) planning to endure, twenty-first-century governments and the market expect that the field responds rather proactively—not through intervention—to catering to metropolitan development and growth (despite social and environmental consequences). In so doing, the steering, balancing and strategic roles of planning can no longer be defined by national governments (Galland 2012), but by new forms of co-production (Albrechts et al. 2017). In these contexts, we can think of processes of metropolitan planning being structured as 'situated practices' rooted in place and time (Healey 2007) product of responses to local problematiques. In these localised settings, what should planning specifically bring to the table?

Planning is the domain par excellence holding potential to envision place, to align sectors and agencies across time and space, to provide synoptic perspectives, to identify individual assets and to continuously search for pluralism. Against this backdrop, metropolitan planning renders these enduring hallmarks meaningful by 'breaking through' proactive and participatory long-term visioning exercises, 'breaking up' into co-visioning and co-produced forms and 'breaking out' into projects, events and interventions that seem to stretch beyond the limits and parameters of single fixed plans or strategies (Tewdwr-Jones and Galland 2020). The question

stemming from this is whether these enduring hallmarks will provide the foundation
to re-conceptualise metropolitan planning in the years to come.

1.4   Rationale of the Book

This introductory chapter has justified the core research aim of the book, which is to
periodise contemporary processes of metropolitan change and approaches to plan-
ning and governing metropolitan regions. To conceptualise metropolitan regions, the
chapter has presented what we conceive as four key thematic drivers of metropolitan
change, namely institutions and institutional shifts, policies and ideas, spatial imagi-
naries and planning styles. Alongside its *thematic* dimension, the research approach
underlying our conceptualisation of metropolitan regions in this book is also founded
on a heuristic perspective that places emphasis on *temporal* and *phronetic* dimen-
sions—which in synergy constitute what we denominate the TTP framework.

Accordingly, the book is organised into four thematic parts that reflect our four
drivers of metropolitan change (Table 1.1). Through the logic of periodisation, each
thematic part embeds the temporal dimension into each of its chapters to denote
how the dynamics and rhythms of metropolitan change are not consistent across
space or time in any given nation or metropolitan region (Table 1.2). Periodisation
thus embraces the analytical window through which metropolitan change can be
conceptualised *retrospectively* (how have we arrived at this point?), *presently* (what is
currently unfolding?) and *prospectively* (what might happen in the future as a result?).
The phronetic dimension is reflected in the structure and rationale of each of the four
parts of the book. Each part is comprised of three chapters, which respectively address
change (revealing what is happening and where it is happening), *process* (examining
who is involved, how they are involved and why they are involved) and *implications*
(what is at stake for metropolitan regions, planning and governance) (Fig. 1.1). It is
thus via the phronetic dimension of our framework that we seek to answer what we
perceive to be the key question—what is at stake?

The final chapter 'What is Metropolitan Planning and Governance for?' draws
together the four drivers of metropolitan change to provide an account concerning
present and future opportunities and challenges facing the planning and governance
of metropolitan regions in accordance with our key drivers of metropolitan change
(Galland et al. 2020).

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