

Building Appropriate Metropolitan Governance Models:

Fragmented governance and global/local challenges

Report by Bernd Gassler



City regions and metropolitan areas continually remind us of the discord which so often exists between morphological, administrative and functional urban areas. Fragmented approaches inevitably influence fragmentation on the ground and create major difficulties when seeking to apply integrated response patterns or introduce coordinated multi-level pro-active measures.

The workshop “**Building Appropriate Metropolitan Governance Models**” at the Urbact Annual Conference 2009 in Stockholm focused on the different layers of government and the diverse systems of governance in metropolitan regions. The questions around, how does multi-level governance in metropolitan regions work and how is it capable of answering the challenges of functional urban areas today, were the main discussed topics.

Dirk Engelke, the moderator of the workshop introduced the panellists and pointed out the main questions to be discussed during the workshop:

- Which essential features need to be in place in order to ensure effective metropolitan governance?
- What are the key lessons to be drawn from existing and evolving governance models?
- Which stakeholders need to be part of the integrated solution and how can they be mobilised?

Frédéric Duvinage from the Basel county – Eurodistrict (CH) introduced the creative structure in his cross-border region and the challenges of the long-established urban-regional cooperation model with a tradition and history of joint collaboration.

Jakub Rybar from the City of Brno (CZ) – the second largest in the Czech Republic - defined the region with a large scale of urban renewal challenges and programmes.

Ms. Katarzyna Stas, City of Katowice (PL) told in her introduction from the Silesian region in Poland with more than 5 million inhabitants, which had to face a disproportionate problem of a mining region with different single cities.

The concerning respondent **Ms. Sylvie Harburger** from the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations (FR) spoke about the concept of her institution, which makes long term investments close to the local/public policy with different forms of financial instruments. For instance, the Caisse des Dépôts is committed to land use policies allowing for housing to be produced upon completion, the majority of it being social. It is also working to enlarge the range of loans in order to assist social landlords who are very much in demand financially in the context of construction programmes and to provide equity capital investments in housing and land.

In a first round about the question of the approach behind the essential features, Mr. Duvinage pointed out that the Eurodistrict had already built up a trilateral infrastructure fund of one million Franken to finance joint projects.

The city of Brno works in a project and policy orientated way. Regional projects have to be supported by the political will. The key points for the approach to regional governance in Brno are on the one hand, a good communication base between local and regional actors, on the other hand, the financial aspect, which affects the building of regional projects.

In the region of Katowice the public administration works on three structural levels. The strategy to come to regional structures between these three levels is focused on the internal aspect, who should join such a metropolitan area and what task should be realized.

Sylvie Harburger stressed the differences between strategy and implementation, and suggested to act not in sequences but more through an interactive/ iterative process, starting from the emergence and conceptualisation of an idea to its implementation.

The annotations from the plenum gave a more project orientated approach how to build up regional governance. In Gelsenkirchen (D) for instance the process for the cultural capital of Europe 2010 brought more consciousness into public to be proud of the region. In the city of Graz (A) the starting point for a regional cooperation discussion was the question about the implementation of shopping centres in the peripheral region, where at first it was necessary to build up trust between the city and the surrounding municipalities to follow a joint future strategy.

The second round of the discussion focused on the question of the driving forces in a metropolitan area.

The example of Brno showed how difficult it is, to have small municipalities around the city for joint measures with a lot of time but unfortunately with no strategy and no money to address regional issues.

Ms. Harburger mentioned that generally the leader is the market and that is why it is so important for public authorities to guarantee coherence between the investments initiated by different public or private investors.

The strong and long institutional implementation of metropolitan areas by law in France was mentioned by the region of Lyon. After many years of experimentation of cooperation there was ten years ago an urgent need for the political representatives of the city to take the leadership as a driving force for the region. The question arose, why the way from metropolitan governance to metropolitan government was not successful until now?

Ireland has actually difficulties on the existing system because there are always competitions between the two agencies which are responsible for developing and delivering regional visions.

Katowice has the current problem how to divide the metropolitan functions in the different cities of the Silesian region as a joint sport stadium or the location of new hospitals or public institutions.

The third round of discussion was followed by the question of existing models of leadership in polycentric areas and how can governance structures react on the change process behind as the democratic or the climate change?

The actors from Basel for instance have problems with the institutional fragmentation in the field of public transport with three different partners and with the circumstance that an agenda set up from the private sector is hardly accepted by the public sector.

Mr. Rybar reported that the city of Brno is willing to build a metropolitan area. The problems are linked to the relation between the public and the private sector. It was not possible until now to build up trust (also competition between the cities e.g. in location management) and there is never enough time in a political period to think about regional development.

The city of Katowice will have the problem of demographic change very soon as it is analyzed that the population will decline more than 25% until 2030.

The driving forces in the Silesian region are the different cities and the mayors. The metropolitan level always has to help the local level in facing the problems.

Ms. Harburger recommended to use the opportunities offered by infrastructure building programmes – such as public transportation facilities for instance – to encourage sustainable cooperation schemes between local authorities. In France, tax incentives set up by the government also turned out to play a positive role in stimulating cooperation.

In Styria (Austria) as well, a new law has been implemented, which encourages the cooperation between cities and municipalities with more financial allocations.

The workshop brought forward practices and policies related by there example to exemplary clusters as regions like regions with large scale urban renewal challenges and regions with

long-established urban-regional cooperation models with a tradition and history of joint collaboration as well as younger approaches of urban-regional cooperation models.

The workshop concluded that a project-oriented approach is an appropriate way to start these urban-regional co operations and build trust among the partners by these first steps.

Beyond trust the questions of competences and finance mechanisms between public-public and public-private partners are key questions for successful metropolitan governance models.

The workshop participants were aware that a crucial point of metropolitan governance models is the democratic legitimation of the model to find a sustainable balance of power between public, private and people's interests.



Workshop panelists

Sylvie Harburger, Dirk Engelke, Frédéric Duvinage, Jakub Rybar, Katarzyna Stas (from left to right), Notetaker Didier Vancutsem (standing), Reporter Bernd Gassler (not on the photo)

“Projects are the core to build up governance to seed the field and come from metropolitan governance to metropolitan government”

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