

# Metropolitan Governance: What is it? How does it work?

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## Abstract

Metropolitan governance is a concept that encompasses all the actions and institutions that shape policies for metropolitan territories. It spreads beyond the jurisdictional boundaries of municipalities, superimpose already existing agreements and institutions, and generally deals with broader metropolitan issues, what requires bigger geographical units and a better management of resources. It generally seeks to solve inter-territorial problems, and to trigger metropolitan competitiveness productivity, social cohesion, and fiscal feasibility.

Despite the different perspectives of metropolitan governance conveyed in literature, this concept generally encompasses the management of public functions, especially its conditions, restrictions and specificities. This concept further includes all kinds of institutional or voluntary cooperation forms and networks, governance plans, regulation strategies, local governmental capacities, as well as interactions between stakeholders, and arrangements among different government and organisations levels.

The utmost concerns during the latter twenty years have centred on the connections among competitive metropolises in a global market. The forms of metropolitan governance currently studied include networks and flexible voluntary forms of cooperation between public and private stakeholders, and cover a continuum of institutional bodies. In past years, metropolitan governance mainly focused on the control of public services' cost, but, more recently, concerns are moving towards governance quality and efficiency, within the scope of political pressures and economic recession.

Different countries adopt different forms, structures, and practices of metropolitan governance that convey their social, economic and political characteristics, as well as its historical and institutional profiles.

This article pursues an analysis of the meaning, content and macroeconomic reasons underlying metropolitan policies, and of the strategies, interests and behaviours of stakeholders in metropolitan backgrounds. It thus identifies the context of the metropolitan governance, the kinds of metropolitan structures, and the outstanding characteristics of metropolitan governance – especially in Portuguese-speaking countries - in order to better realise the evolution of the concepts and practices of metropolitan governance.