

# THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF TERRITORIAL AND METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE

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**Abstract.** In order to become engines of development, large cities require modernization in the area of urban governance. The first part of the article focuses on theoretical concepts of governance and territorial governance, including the instruments that promote good governance, such as the fight against corruption, and its measurement indicators. The second part of the article deals with governance in metropolitan areas, describing several metropolitan bodies of governance, specialised in spatial planning and transportation, discussing the need of coordination and the collaborative approach as a premise for ensuring better transport accessibility and more harmonized spatial plans. Finally, the article presents solutions and recommendations for an efficient reform of metropolitan governance.

**Key words:** territorial governance, decentralization, corruption, metropolitan governance, coordination

## **1. The context**

Most Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe countries have shifted from a

centrally planned economy to a market economic system through **decentralization and privatization**. After an

extensive analysis of European cities in transition, a United Nations' report (UN HABITAT, 2013) recommends that former socialist countries adopt *new types of governance*. In this idea, the European Commission's Report *Cities of Tomorrow* (EC, 2011) indicated the need for a consistent and uniform integrated approach of their governance. A study commissioned by the European Commission in support of the *Cities of Tomorrow Report* also talks about *a new model for territorial governance in urban areas* and advances the idea that it is not through "the artificially bordered cities but **the metropolitan areas** where integration of the different policies can best be achieved" (Tosics, 2011).

The long history of a **centralized government** left deep traces in almost all former socialist countries and their cities. The transition has led to a reconsideration of the role of **cities and urban agglomerations** ("metropolitan areas") as decision-making and control centres, which concentrate many enterprises and important institutions. Urban transitions, at the level of critical infrastructure systems and their management, require new and effective forms of urban knowledge to be produced, communicated and appropriated in order to be able to understand socio-technical transitions (Hodson and Marvin, 2010).

Practical experience, as well as scientific literature, confirms that decentralization can bring a range of benefits and can determine governments to be more responsive and efficient (Bardhan, 2002). **Decentralization and privatization** brought more autonomy to the cities and also new types of local self-governance emerged, the cities

becoming more independent in outlining their **spatial development**. This situation made possible a burst of new actors involved in territorial decision making: landowners, businesses and financial institutions. Still, in these countries, a certain lack of correlation between the legal framework of urban planning and other laws concerning the local public administration became evident. The experience showed that, instead of a single integrated urban strategy, most of the transition countries have several policy documents. It was also observed a lack of coherence between national and regional policies, on one hand, and documents on urban development policies, on the other hand. These countries would require an institutional and legislative reform which takes into account the complex relationship between urban entities and their rural surroundings and other urban networks at regional level.

Although most of the *large cities* in transition have managed to overcome economic challenges due to a diversified economy and international investments, yet, in order to become engines of development, these cities require further modernization, better infrastructure, as well as a better **capacity building in the area of urban governance** (Bagnasco and Le Gales, 2000). Similarly, *small and medium-sized towns* which registered a decline in their urban functions should make use of their geographical advantages and improve their administrative capacity.

### *1.1. Governance, territorial governance, good governance*

Over the last two decades the terms "governance" and "good governance" are being increasingly used, not only in

academic papers, but also in strategies and policy documents, the media and the private sector. The concept of governance is not new and it has been used by different disciplines, often with different meanings, as a result, many times causing theoretical and conceptual confusion (Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden, 2004). In general terms, governance refers to a decision-making process by which decisions are implemented, being an ongoing process that involves a set of procedures, structures, rules, norms and values that facilitate coordination and organization of actors. Therefore, the analysis of governance focuses on the **actors** involved in decision making and in implementing these decisions (Le Galès, 1995), as well as on the decision-making and implementation **structures**.

Because "governance" has a very complex meaning some authors find it more useful to clarify what this concept does NOT mean (Graham *et al.*, 2003). For example, "governance" is not synonymous with "government" or "governmental", as issues of governance are not exclusive tasks of the government (albeit partly, this concept refers to how governments and other social organizations interact, how they relate to people and how decisions are made). Governance is based on a system of agreements, procedures, conventions or policies.

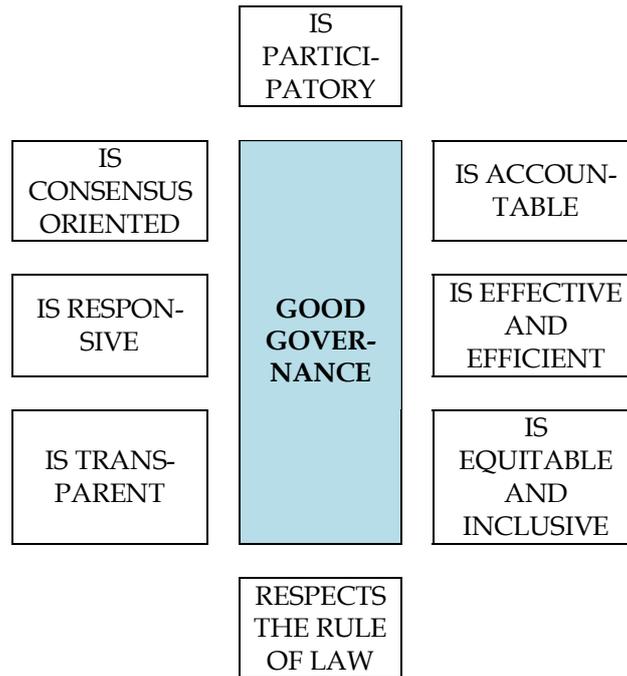
The term of "governance" is applied especially in the spatial development management (Kladivo *et al.*, 2015), the local/urban governance being seen as "the process of organizing and coordinating actors with the aim of undertaking a collective action in order to increase the rate of development" of a territory, reaching thus the economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The concept of governance changes according to the different concepts of *territory* (Davoudi *et al.*, 2008). According to an ESPON study (ESPON, 2007), governance generally refers to the three dimensions of the political activity: political organization (polity, science of government), politics and policies. *Territorial governance* integrates all these three dimensions, while emphasizing the policies, with the objective to achieve sustainable spatial development and territorial cohesion.

*Good governance* describes how public institutions are managing public affairs and resources (Stoker, 1998). In addition to the horizontal integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions in all sectors and policy areas, the elements of governance for a sustainable development are represented by a vertical integration/interconnection between all levels of government (Evans *et al.*, 2006).

Good governance has 8 main features (Fig. 1): it is participatory, consensus-oriented, responsive, transparent, accountable, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. Good governance also ensures the minimization of corruption and guarantees that the voices of the most vulnerable categories in society are taken into account and heard when decisions are made.

Four sectors are involved in the act of governance: the private/business sector; the civil society institutions, including the voluntary or non-profit sector; the government and the media sector. The share of each sector provides an important image of their power in different countries, and the 4 sectors can overlap.



**Fig. 1.** Characteristics of good governance

### *1.2. Governance and corruption*

The instruments that promote good governance are the ones that support institutional development in areas such as transport, health, education, administrative reform and the **fight against corruption**, as well as civil society participation.

As a powerful factor in undermining the legitimacy and credibility of the governance, corruption is always one of the first indicators used when analysing the quality of governance. Transparency International together with Transparency International Romania developed in 1995 the "Corruption Perception Index", which measures the level of corruption in the public sector in 175 countries and territories. The values of this index show that in many institutions from Eastern Europe countries the governance is still weak.

In these countries, there are still institutions that have not reformed their organizational structure, or there is a

deficient or unreformed legislation referring to public servants.

In 2014, the Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2014) in Romania recorded a score of 43 points (on a scale of 0 – a very corrupt country, to 100 – a very clean country), which places Romania on the 69th place out of a total of 175 countries. In 2015, Romania's score was 46, ranking on the 58<sup>th</sup> place from a total of 168 countries. Compared with 2013, the Corruption Perception Index remained unchanged in many EU countries (including Romania) and was slightly improved, due to stabilization of the economy and, in some cases, to governments' efforts in fighting corruption.

In 2011 Transparency International has conducted a research on The National Integrity System (NIS), analysing the soundness and effectiveness of institutions in preventing and combating corruption in 25 European countries (including Romania). NIS

evaluated the following institutions: the legislative, the executive, the judiciary, the public sector, law enforcement agencies, the supreme audit institution, electoral bodies, organizations dealing with surveys, anti-corruption agencies, political parties, the media, the civil society and the business environment. Each of these institutions and sectors were evaluated according to three criteria considered essential to the ability to prevent corruption: a. their overall capacity, b. their internal governance rules and practices, and c. the extent to which the institution fulfils its role in the anti-corruption system.

According to the "Study on National Integrity System in Romania" (Transparency International Romania, 2012), as well as to the national Reports on the NIS, in our country the *strongest* institutions are the Supreme Audit Institution, the Legislative and the National Anti-Corruption Agency. At the opposite pole, the *weakest* institutions were represented by the public sector institutions, the political parties and the business environment. Each dimension was measured by a common set of indicators, so that the national results are incorporating more than 150 indicators analysed.

In spite of the reports' findings regarding the integrity of the national institutions, general recommendations for Romania still underlined the importance of having strong legislative and anti-corruption bodies, thus making a case for:

- More effective parliamentary debates and discourses of civil society.
- A greater transparency of the legislative process, increased time for deliberations in parliament and in society in general, and a better analysis of the potential impact of decisions.

- To create sub-strategies within the national anti-corruption strategy.

### 1.3. Indicators of Governance and Capacity

Governance can be quantified by using a set of indicators, resulted by aggregating data from available sources (Thomas, 2010), known as "the Worldwide Governance Indicators", resulted from a World Bank project initiated in 1996. The study established six key dimensions of governance, embodied in a set of six aggregate indicators. The indicators reflect the opinions of governments, the civil society and the private sector, all which see good governance as a key factor for development (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2010).

The six aggregate indicators that relate to the quality of governance are:

- Voice and Accountability,
- Political stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism,
- Government Effectiveness,
- Regulatory Quality,
- Rule of Law, and
- Control of Corruption.

Results for Romania for the period 1996-2013, on a scale from 0 (minimum) to 100 (maximum value), are positioning our country to the middle of the interval, among 215 countries. The 6 indicators for Romania show values up to 70 points, similar to nearby countries (Serbia, Bulgaria), while more developed countries such as Germany, Austria or France scored over 90 points.

The relation between governance and economic growth has not been studied very extensively, especially in EU transition economies, but existing literature suggests that good governance is a main determinant of sustainable

economic growth. These findings point to the conclusion that underdeveloped and developing countries should first improve their public administration in order to achieve sustainable economic growth.

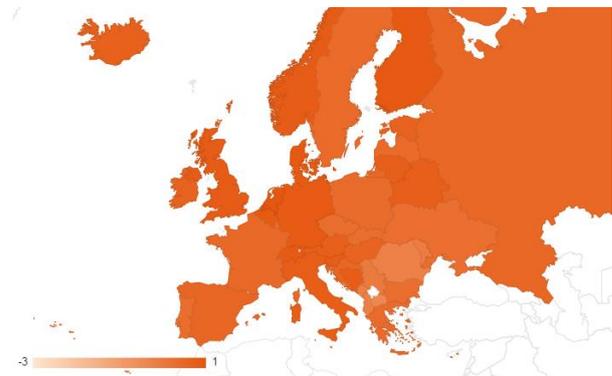
**Table 2.** Capacity indicators and values in the case of Romania

Groups	Indicators	Min/ max values	Value for Roma- nia
<b>Supply capacity</b>	Effectiveness	(-2, 3)	0,34
	Education	(-3, 1)	0,02
	Crime control	(-2, 2)	0,28
	Civil justice	(-3, 2)	0,17
	Revenue collection	(-2, 2)	-0,04
	Other public services	(-2, 2)	0,26
	<i>Supply results</i>	(-3, 2)	0,27
	Legitimacy	(-2, 3)	-1
	<i>The aggregate index of supply</i>	(-1, 2)	0,04
<b>Regula- tory capa- city</b>	Autonomy	(-1, 2)	0,37
	Impartiality	(-2, 2)	0,03
	The quality of regulations	(-2, 2)	0,17
	Price regulation	(-2, 2)	0,82
	Control of gray economy	(-3, 2)	0,19
	Environmental regulations	(-1, 1)	-0,66
	Inflation control	(-3, 1)	0,02
	<i>Regulations results</i>	(-1, 1)	-0,01
	<b><i>Regulatory capacity</i></b>	<b>(-1, 1)</b>	<b>0,18</b>
<b>Coordina- tion capacity</b>	Self-monitoring capability	(-2, 1)	0,13
	Quality of coordination	(-2, 2)	-0,95
	Results of coordination	(-2, 1)	0,64
	<b><i>Coordination capacity</i></b>	<b>(-2, 2)</b>	<b>0,13</b>
<b>Analytical capacity</b>	Effectiveness	(-1, 5)	0,19
	Analytical capacity /experts	(-2, 2)	1,02
	<b><i>Analytical capacity</i></b>	<b>(-2, 3)</b>	<b>-0,68</b>

The governance indicators generally found to have the highest negative impact on economic growth are the control of corruption and the rule of law (Bayar, 2016).

Experience shows that governance and capacity building are in close connection, influencing each other (EC, 2005). According to the OECD (OECD, 2006), **capacity** refers to the ability of people, organizations and the society as a whole to successfully manage its activities. **Developing the capacity of the public sector is a means to improve governance.**

The Governance Report 2014 (The Hertie School of Governance, 2014) shows the values of several *capacity indicators* collected at national level among 94 countries around the world, including Romania. It refers to four types of capacity: supply capacity, regulatory capacity, coordination capacity and analytical capacity (Table 2). The data, coming from organizations and data providers, establishes a link between the institutional form and governance outcomes.



**Fig. 2.** The education index (Romania: 0.02 on a scale between -3 and 1)

As an example, the education index (Fig. 2) is based on the weighted average between investment measures in

education (such as the number of teachers) and educational outcomes (such as school enrolment).

The aggregated index of supply (Fig. 3) represents the average of the following indicators: effectiveness, the supply results and legitimacy.

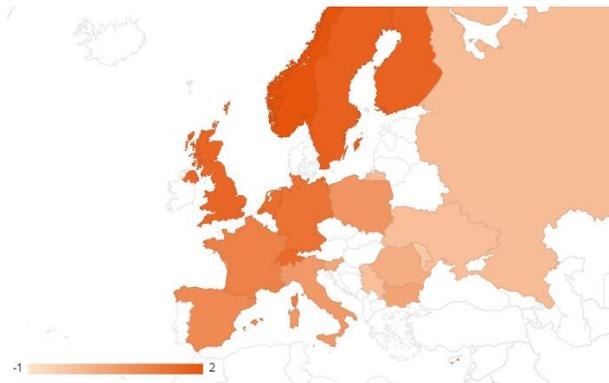


Fig. 3. Index of effectiveness (Romania: 0.04 on a scale between -1 and 2)

## 2. Metropolitan governance

Urban sprawl is becoming a widespread and common phenomenon, which affects European transitioning countries and Western states alike, by transcending the historic and administrative boundaries of the cities and suburbanising the surrounding urban space. Urban sprawl is one element that characterises contemporary *metropolitan areas*, these nodal points where economic, social and cultural activities concentrate. Metropolitan areas have now new significance, since their local governance is now cooperating and collaborating with civic and private sectors in order to address regional policy issues in a network type (Hamilton, 2014). The great challenge for these areas is to determine an appropriate coordination between the formulation of strategic planning perspectives for the whole metropolitan area and the arrangements of governance that enable decisions to be made. Traditional government structures are

not suitable for this new type of multi-centred urban regions because their structures and legal instruments are dedicated to a single entity (city or municipality).

Good governance in metropolitan areas depends on the visions, policies and strategies for sustainable development.

### 2.1. Metropolitan Governance and Coordination

The **administrative approach** of metropolitan areas creates numerous discussions both in political and academic spheres. In general, an **integrated approach** to metropolitan areas must take into account those responsibilities which are considered crucial for the development of the metropolis and its direct surroundings, namely **public transport system, territorial marketing and spatial planning** (Jalowiecki, 2005). The concept of competitive metropolitan development has been extensively discussed by the academic community (Dieleman and Faludi, 1998).

According to a study on **metropolitan governance** in OECD countries (OECD, 2015), which covered 263 metropolitan areas with more than 500,000 inhabitants, finding appropriate mechanisms for metropolitan governance can help cities choose a more effective type of **coordination**.

Appropriate metropolitan **governance structures** can reduce the negative effect of fragmentation of a metropolitan area in several municipalities (Feiock, 2010) and it would allow them to deal with area-wide urban problems that go beyond local jurisdictions. Moreover, studies on empirical cases showed that the institutional structure of a

metropolitan area has a notable impact on both the efficiency of its local public services and on the welfare of its residents by exerting an influence on the distribution of jobs and the level of housing and commuting costs (Gaigne *et al.*, 2013). In this regard, finding metropolitan governance mechanisms that bring prosperity to the metropolitan area is of the utmost importance.

A structure can be considered a **body of metropolitan governance** if it fulfils the following criteria: the structure must cover the central city and a large part of the metropolitan area; the dominant players in the structure must be national or sub-national authorities; the organization/structure must primarily deal with metropolitan governance issues.

The typology of metropolitan governance systems is based on their type of **coordination** and contains four types of *metropolitan governance bodies* (OECD, 2014):

1. Informal (or "soft") coordination, manifested in the polycentric urban areas, occurring in most analysed cases (52% of metropolises analysed by OECD have such a coordination);
2. Coordination at the level of inter-municipal authorities, established for one purpose or multi-purposed (24% of the metropolitan areas analysed by OECD have this type of metropolitan governance).
3. Coordination at the level of supra-municipal authorities (achieved through the creation of a new metropolitan authority, 16% of OECD metropolitan areas have such coordination).
4. Coordination by acquiring a special status of "metropolitan cities", when cities are exceeding a certain threshold in terms of number of inhabitants, giving them

more powers (only 8% of analyzed OECD metropolitan areas have this particular status).

A statistical survey on 34 OECD countries (Romania did not take part in OECD's study) shows that more than half of them (51%) had metropolitan governance bodies WITHOUT regulatory powers, while 31% did not have metropolitan governance bodies at all. Only 18% have metropolitan bodies WITH regulatory powers.

A long-running debate has divided the academic community over the appropriate institutional structure for governing fragmented metropolitan areas. Three theoretical approaches can be observed: *the metropolitan reform tradition, the public choice approach and the new regionalism* (Heinelt and Kubler, 2004).

*The metropolitan reform tradition* views the existence of a large number of independent public jurisdictions within a metropolitan area as the main obstacle to efficient and equitable urban service delivery. It advocates governmental consolidation, meaning that institutional boundaries should match the territorial scale of the economic and social development of metropolitan areas.

*The public choice perspective*, instead, rejects the idea of institutional consolidation and argues that institutional fragmentation of metropolitan areas into a multitude of autonomous local jurisdictions is beneficial for effective and efficient metropolitan service delivery. Thus, the competition between local governments would lead to an effective matching of urban service demands.

Finally, *the new regionalism* argues that area-wide governance is achieved through cooperative arrangements between various public agencies and private actors at different territorial levels. This perspective is based on the experience that most metropolitan problems are addressed through purpose-oriented networks of coordination and cooperation, involving municipalities, governmental agencies at various levels, as well as private entities.

With regard to the competencies of the metropolitan bodies, most commonly authority is granted in the areas of *strategic territorial planning/spatial planning* and *transport*. Under the meaning of metropolitan affairs also fall other aspects of the management of technical networks (water, sewage and waste disposal) and sometimes culture (Lefèvre, 1998).

### 2.2. Metropolitan Governance and Transport

The development of a metropolitan area depends on **good transportation accessibility**, since commuting play an important role at metropolitan level and also transportation hubs can create major economic axes. Mistakes in transport governance can undermine the development of metropolitan areas and the quality of transport facilities can help decongest the traffic in a city. This could explain why public transportation authorities and associations are by far the most common sectoral authorities and also the ones with the highest budgets (Ahrend *et al.*, 2014). When a city expands and a metropolitan area is created, several administrative authorities and several actors are involved in transport policy, their coordination being a prerequisite for better governance. Consensus-building and coordination, together with a significant involvement of non-governmental representation such as

voluntary organisations and the private sector characterise the shift from government to governance (Bickerstaff and Walker, 2001)

**Uncoordinated transport governance** in metropolitan areas can have several negative consequences:

- A lack of good connectivity between the central city and its periphery, or between its suburbs. The transportation system is often lagging behind the urban development, maintaining the old radial structure with the main city in the centre, being thus unable to include the increasingly larger traffic of the suburbs.

- A lack of harmonized tariff structures. Many metropolitan areas have fragmented systems of transport charges, not connected with the services that are used. Sometimes, for the same distance, transport fees within the core city are cheaper than those outside it.

- Also, the lack of an integrated transport system leads to increased car dependency and transport congestion, translated into urban and environmental problems. Car dependence may have negative impact on the labour market and social cohesion since a weak public transport system reduces the mobility of residents and limits the perimeter of labour market for them, leading to inequalities in accessing jobs within the metropolitan area. Experience has shown that further measures to reduce car traffic have not always been successful.

### 2.3. Metropolitan Governance and Spatial Planning

After transport, **spatial planning** is the second most common domain having specialized metropolitan governance bodies. In some countries, urban policy

actually means spatial planning policy, designed to cope with rapid urban sprawl and to improve the provision of infrastructures and services. Although spatial planning does not refer to the same set of activities in all countries, a common objective is to avoid conflicting land use. This is done through general plans establishing zoning and building regulations, as well as through decisions on the location of the major physical infrastructure projects.

Instead of having the state shape its territory based on a single institutional logic, the metropolitan actors could better organize themselves and construct their own framework for interaction that could help them coordinate their efforts to foster territorial cohesion and spatial development (Jouve and Lefèvre, 2006). Moreover, by establishing governance structures which bring together public actors and representatives of civil society, it would ensure the legitimacy and democratic support of their projects.

A strong argument for the creation of a (new) metropolitan level, which is also relevant for Romania, is relieving some of the technical and financial burden of some municipalities (especially the small ones) to develop their own spatial plans, this task passing to the next higher level. In the case of large cities or city regions, local governments often do not have the coverage or the scale to carry the responsibility of comprehensive and effective planning needed for a system of settlements (Gleeson et al., 2010). Planning needs to be approached at the appropriate governance level and not undertaken in a fragmented way by individual municipalities.

Another argument is that the lack of coordination in spatial planning between municipalities can lead to duplication of investments in the same area.

Weak governance in spatial planning could lead to several problems:

- The risk of too many levels of spatial planning. The Metropolitan Spatial Plan can connect the spatial plans at national and local levels. Its role is to streamline their provisions and not to add further administrative burdens or to impose complicated regulations. A metropolitan spatial plan has an added value only if it is based on a consultation process with constituent municipalities of the metropolitan area.

- The lack of inter-sectoral coordination. A disconnection of the metropolitan spatial plans from those focused on regional or economic development can result in divergences between the time frames envisaged at different levels, as well as hamper economic and territorial competitiveness. The lack of an updated national cadastre can be another aspect of inappropriate governance in spatial planning.

Another argument for creating or, if it already exists, strengthening metropolitan government, is the variety of spatial configurations that can be observed at present and the fact that European cities have undergone considerable physical change in recent years (see, for example the “twin cities”, “polycentric regions” or the “urban corridors”). In many cases the administrative jurisdictions of the various local and regional governments do not match the evolving spatial configurations and urban development.

In other words, spatial development and administrative boundaries do not correspond with one another (Salet *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, spatial policies have to respond to these changes, including the formal structures of government that affect the way in which cities can formulate strategic policies. The solution is the formation of organisational arrangements that reflect the new functional interrelationships between different government levels, as well as a collaborative approach and a sound coordination as a central theme in this fragmented institutional landscape.

#### *2.4. Solutions for an efficient reform of metropolitan governance*

The central government has the power to harmonise the different approaches in metropolitan governance. For this, a clear spatial vision on metropolitan and regional strategy is needed, as well as a harmonisation of the spatial planning guidelines at various government levels.

For an efficient reform of metropolitan governance, an increased technical and strategic capacity in the field of spatial planning must be supported, given that sometimes the small municipalities belonging to metropolitan areas often lack the human and technical capacity to develop or update appropriate plans, which requires both training and funding from higher administrative levels. Information on land management must be accessible and accurate, to boost confidence in metropolitan governance bodies at all levels of governance.

Collaborative initiatives for metropolitan concrete projects in the public services area must be launched.

For example, in cross-border areas, where governance bodies belong to different countries, cultural projects may represent a domain to collaborate at metropolitan scale.

It is recommended that a comprehensive consultation process should be implemented, in order to agree priorities and objectives described in metropolitan and municipal spatial plans. The private sector must be organized at metropolitan level and, together with universities, to mediate debates between citizens and local authorities.

ICT technology should be used as a tool for opening the metropolitan governance towards the widest possible community and to bring people closer by simplifying public services through e-government mechanisms.

#### *Conclusions and further research*

Territorial governance means knowing how to apply the general principles of governance in urban and regional planning. It has a strong territorial character, being connected to everything that is related to a territory. The specificity of territorial governance is given by the complexity of the territory.

A good territorial governance ensures a more balanced development and territorial cohesion in Europe: it also involves various actors (social groups, institutions, public and private sector, etc.) building an organizational consensus and a common approach in achieving a sustainable and balanced development.

Appropriate structures of metropolitan governance can reduce the negative effect of metropolitan fragmentation. This can

be done through a better *organization* of responsibilities among the metropolitan public authorities and a good *coordination*, both between its component municipalities and beyond metropolitan borders.

Being aware that “no one size fits all”, we should assume that good governance in metropolitan areas might not be attained in some countries just by following best practice examples from Western Europe. Transitioning countries, such as Romania, because of their former experience with socialist regimes, have a typical legislative, economic and social framework, which is different from countries with an uninterrupted history of democratic systems. Therefore, we propose a continuation of the present article that would attempt to provide an answer to the question: How does territorial governance differ in metropolitan areas in countries with different political or historical backgrounds?

Some scholars (Pierre, 2005) argue that providing answers to such issues related to urban and territorial governance require a comparative analysis. In this case, we also consider that a comparative study of the metropolitan governance bodies, of the mechanisms, cooperation structures and coordination level of metropolitan areas in different national contexts will identify the role of political and historical factors (i.e. centralist system experience) in shaping urban governance. We need to understand, through empirical observation and monitoring, whether we need to apply different conceptual tools in order to propose relevant instruments to promote good governance.

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