

*Project Title:*

# **Metropolitan Governance in Mexico: Learning from the experiences of Canada and Brazil**

## **FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT**

*Project Partners:*

- Centre for Sustainable Community Development at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Vancouver, Canada.
- Sustainable Cities International (SCI) in Vancouver, Canada
- Mario Molina Center (CMM) in Mexico
- Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) in Brazil
- The Planning Institute of Colima (IPCo) in Colima
- The Metropolitan Planning Institute (IMEPLAN) in Guadalajara

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## Abstract

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The *Metropolitan Governance in Mexico: Learning from the experiences of Canada and Brazil* was an action-research project that sought to identify the characteristics of design, implementation and policies of metropolitan structures that might be applicable and useful in addressing the need for collaborative governance and coordinated action in metropolitan areas of Mexico. The project was funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

The project partners are:

- Centre for Sustainable Community Development at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Vancouver, Canada.
- Sustainable Cities International (SCI) in Vancouver, Canada
- Mario Molina Center (CMM) in Mexico
- Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) in Brazil
- The Planning Institute of Colima (IPCo) in Colima
- The Metropolitan Planning Institute (IMEPLAN) in Guadalajara

The project used an action-research approach that allowed us to co-generate knowledge by providing opportunities for sharing and reflection between multi-stakeholder groups. This project engaged researchers from Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Canada, the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) in Brazil, and the Centro Mario Molina (CMM) in Mexico with stakeholders engaged in the field of metropolitan governance: municipal authorities and staff, policy experts, regional government specialists, and NGO staff. Through a combination of interviews, literature review, workshop, and collaborative analysis of research results, we created a learning community to explore the models, success factors, and considerations in designing effective collaborative governance for urban areas.

The project resulted in a paper on “Planning for Effective Governance in Metropolitan Areas in Mexico” (in Spanish and English) – for distribution to the participating municipalities, NGOs and state institutions – also to be presented at the UN Habitat Conference in Guadalajara in November 2015. It also resulted in plans for next steps to implement better metro level coordination in the two participating metro areas in Mexico, and an education tool for Mexican municipalities (and educators/ trainers) to understand the importance of metropolitan governance and the various models and characteristics of effective metro governance – to be disseminated to municipalities and state governments throughout Mexico.

## Key words

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Metropolitan Governance

Sustainable Urban Development

Mexican Metropolitan Areas

## Contents

Abstract.....	2
Key words .....	3
Research Problem .....	5
Objectives .....	6
Methodology .....	6
Project Activities.....	8
Project Outcomes .....	9
Overall Assessment and Recommendations.....	11
References .....	12

## Research Problem

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Several recent developments have converged to make the international quest for effective metropolitan governance arrangements more important than ever. Around the world, people are flocking to cities in search of opportunities for a higher quality of life. The percentage of people living in cities has increased from 13% in 1900 to 52% in 2011; cities will be home to 80% of the population in Latin America by 2025 (Rojas, 2008) and 60% of the global population by 2030 (UN-DESA, 2012). Clusters of adjacent cities have grown into metropolises—physically, economically, and culturally interconnected regions delivering services for increasingly diverse populations, served by multiple local governments as well as additional layers of government.

Urban regions are also changing, both in form and function. Globalization has rearranged production worldwide, metropolitan economies are seen as the new competitive units in the global economy (Yaro & Ronderos, 2011). Metropolitan areas are assuming an ever greater share of national production: Latin American metropolitan agglomerations (such as São Paulo and Buenos Aires) concentrate more than 50% of the productive capacity of their countries, and are expected to contribute more than 80% of future economic growth (Rojas, 2008).

Municipalities grapple with new responsibilities offloaded by higher levels of government as well as the increasingly complex planning challenges that arise from jurisdictional questions. At the same time, it has become clear that high quality of urban life is a key element in success in the knowledge economy. Changing economic and demographic realities are compounded by new environmental and social ones. Climate change, environmental degradation, and resource depletion—and all of the attendant risks to public health and energy security—lend new urgency to the need to develop planning and governance systems that treat the environment as the basis of healthy economies rather than as marginal to them. This is particularly so for urban areas, which are significant contributors to climate change and very vulnerable to its effects.

More than three decades of research suggests that better governance and sustainable urban development requires greater control over urbanization processes; procedural justice systems that support greater participation of a wider range of urbanites; a fairer distribution of the benefits and costs of urban development; urban planning systems that are more integrated and holistic; and greater intervention of local government within urban systems to accomplish all of the above (Keil & Whitehead, 2012).

Mexico, like the rest of the world, faces tremendous expansion across its urban areas. During the last four decades there has been an increase of the population living in cities due to migration processes and demographic growth. In 1960 the population in metropolitan areas was 9 million and by 2010 it was 63.8 million, distributed in 364 cities and 59 metropolitan regions (SEDESOL, 2010). These 59 metropolitan regions contribute 67% of the GDP (SEDESOL, 2010), however most have fragmented political and administrative capacities to manage shared interests across their municipal jurisdictions. Some of the challenges these regions are now facing are land degradation, the unregulated use of natural resources leading to a significant decline in availability and quality of some resources (for example, water), strong social disparities, increasing inequality, lack of job opportunities and a rise in informal settlements due to the lack of land or housing availability. Exacerbating these challenges is the core issue of metropolitan productivity and competitiveness. As population in these areas continues to grow, a metropolis with low productivity impacts the economy of the entire region and the national economy.

These challenges have brought attention to the dire need for effective metropolitan governance systems that facilitate coordination across levels of government and provide effective mechanisms for decision-making on the territorial and economic development of regions. Although several government bodies have begun to address planning at the metropolitan level (e.g. through the establishment of the Metropolitan Coordination of the Valley of Mexico; the revision of the General Law of Human Settlements; and the creation of a national Metropolitan Fund to address public works and infrastructure projects in metropolitan areas), the more challenging questions of how municipalities can best work together remain to be answered.

This action-research project sought to identify institutional models, issues, and processes from Canada, Brazil and beyond that might be applicable and useful in addressing the need for collaborative governance and coordinated action in metropolitan areas of Mexico. The project focused in particular on the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area (GMA) and the Colima Metropolitan Area (CMA) but the final research products were designed to be useful to metropolitan areas around the country.

## Objectives

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The main objective of this research project was to identify characteristics of design, implementation and evaluation of metropolitan policies and structures related to the management of public urban functions of common interest in metropolitan regions, with a particular focus on the Guadalajara and Colima Metropolitan Areas in Mexico.

The sub-objectives were to:

- a) learn from examples and best practices of metropolitan governance structures in Canada and Brazil.
- b) identify key drivers, success factors and challenges for implementation of effective and sustainable metropolitan governance in the Mexican context.
- c) identify and propose a metropolitan governance framework adequate to the Mexican context, specifically related to the GMA and CMA.
- d) develop recommendations for GMA and CMA, defining a timetable/roadmap of key activities/programs as well as monitoring/evaluating steps towards the implementation of a collaborative governance framework.

## Methodology

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The project used an action-research approach that allowed us to co-generate knowledge by providing opportunities for sharing and reflection between multi-stakeholder groups.

Although the definition of “action-research” continues to be debated and constructed, our review of the literature reveals key components of this approach. First, action-research is oriented to addressing a particular issue or situation in society – to support action in the ‘real world’ (Avison, Lau, Myers, & Nielsen, 1999). At the same time, such research also seeks to contribute to knowledge in a rigorous way (Hult & Lennung, 1980). In other words, this approach is about both research and action, oriented to the generation of useful knowledge. Second, action-

research requires collaboration between the researcher and the research subjects (ibid), which changes the relationship of the researcher from 'objective / external' to 'co-generator/ collaborator' in relation to the subject of the study.

This project therefore engaged researchers from Simon Fraser University in Canada, the Universidad do Norte in Brazil, and the Centro Mario Molina in Mexico with stakeholders engaged in the field of metropolitan governance: municipal authorities and staff, policy experts, regional government specialists, and NGO staff. Through a combination of interviews, literature review, workshop, and collaborative analysis of research results, we created a learning community in which to explore the following research questions:

- 1) What are the drivers and critical success factors for establishing a metropolitan governance framework?
- 2) What challenge/barriers need to be overcome to implement a framework?
- 3) What metropolitan governance framework is appropriate for the participating Mexican areas?

The specific research methods included:

1. **A comprehensive literature review** on metropolitan governance focused on definitions, models, and factors for success from around the world
2. **One-on-one semi-structured interviews** with key players in the GMA and CMA on the challenges and opportunities for metropolitan governance - including state and federal government officials, subject experts, and representatives of non-governmental organizations. Interview responses were co-analysed between the Canadian and Mexican teams to identify recurring themes and discussion topics for the learning exchange workshop.
3. **A Learning Exchange workshop** in Guadalajara with representatives of participating municipalities in the GMA and CMA, state authorities, and experts from Metro Vancouver (Canada) and the Natal Metro Region (Brazil).

Our methods were successful in exploring the first two questions. It was relatively simply to identify, through a literature review, the key models and factors in establishing successful metropolitan governance around the world. Further, stakeholders in Mexico were readily able to identify the need for metro level coordination along with the challenges and barriers to implementing such coordination – through interviews and during our two-day workshop in Guadalajara. The participation of experts on Metro Vancouver and Metro Natal in the Guadalajara workshop likewise contributing very valuable information on various structures, processes, and success factors for collaborative approaches to urban governance.

However, it was difficult to answer the third question, in terms of a concrete proposal of the “right” framework for the GMA and CMA. In part, this was due to the fact that we learned through the research that there is no perfect model – that each institutional form has strengths and weaknesses. In addition, it became clear that the framework needs to emerge through a process of engagement over a period of time. In other words, stakeholders in each urban conglomerate area need to work together to establish coordination between municipalities, and through this process, an institutional framework that “works” will emerge. For example, we

learned that Metro Vancouver started by coordinating water services between several municipalities for decades before forming a metropolitan level institution to coordinate land use planning across municipalities.

As a result, our final products focused more on the kinds of considerations and options that need to be considered when engaging in a process of increasing effective coordination between adjacent municipalities – as a guide to actors engaged in such processes.

## Project Activities

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The project involved five main activities:

### *1) Scan of International Metro Governance Models and Success Factors:*

Researchers at SFU, with support from researchers at the Universidad do Norte, engaged in a comprehensive **literature review** on Metropolitan Governance at a global level. The review took into account evolution of thought on metropolitan governance, theory on new regionalism, typologies of metropolitan governance models, and issues to consider in designing coordination between municipalities. From this paper, three short documents were developed as backgrounders for participants of the November 2014 Guadalajara workshop – on “What is Metropolitan Governance?”, “Models of Metropolitan Governance”, and “Designing Effective Metropolitan Governance.” (These products are submitted with this report).

### *2) Analysis of the current situation for Metropolitan Governance in Colima and Guadalajara / Case Studies of the CMA and GMA*

Two Mexican researchers engaged in **one-on-one semi-structured interviews** with key players in the GMA and CMA on the challenges and opportunities for metropolitan governance. Interviewees included municipal and state officials, subject experts, and representatives of relevant NGOs. The Mexican / Canadian team co-analyzed the interview findings by themes for presentation at the November 2014 Guadalajara workshop. In addition, experts on metro governance from Colima and Guadalajara prepared summaries of the situation in these areas for presentation at the event.

### *3) Two-day Learning Exchange workshop in Guadalajara, Mexico.*

About 100 people attended the workshop in Guadalajara. The participants represented state and municipal government authorities, universities, Non-profit groups, the Metropolitan Institute of Guadalajara and the Planning Institute of Colima. We had 2 representatives from Natal, Brazil and one from Metro Vancouver, Canada, along with 3 representatives from SCI and one from SFU.

The agenda flow included 4 main parts:



- Presentation from the guest regions (a presentation from Metro Vancouver and the Natal Metropolitan Region, to learn the main aspect and characteristics of both,
- Panel with the municipal presidents (counsellors) of the regions
- Presentation of the finding of the interviews carried out by the project in Colima and Guadalajara
- Working groups to discuss 4 aspects of metropolitan governance: Institutional Design, Social Participation, Land Use and Water
- Working groups in regions to identify actions that could be developed in the areas they consider priorities

#### *4) Preparation of a Guide for Mexican regions exploring Collaborative Governance*

The Canadian, Mexican and Brazilian members of our team co-wrote a paper on the results of the research. The paper focused on the research, focused on the main characteristics and considerations for establishing collaborative governance frameworks in the CMA and GMA. The paper also outlined the context for metropolitan governance, models of metropolitan governance, applied to the specific context of Mexico. The paper was translated into English and Spanish versions, and professionally designed for dissemination to anyone interested in collaborative / regional level governance in Mexico. (This paper is included with the submission of this report).

#### *5) Development of an Educational Tool on Metropolitan Governance*

The research results were used as the basis to develop a pictographic video on Metropolitan Governance for use by educators, trainers, and government officials around Mexico. The educational tool contains similar content to the paper described above (#4), but is presented in a very friendly, understandable format. (The video will be submitted to IDRC with this report).

## **Project Outcomes**

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### **Outputs / Products:**

- Literature review on Metropolitan Governance – see paper entitled “Urban Mexico: The Case for Metropolitan Governance”
- Findings of the interviews with stakeholders in Guadalajara and Colima – see paper entitled “Urban Mexico: The Case for Metropolitan Governance”
- 3 short backgrounders on the nature and models of Metro Governance globally (in Spanish and English) – shared at workshop in Guadalajara
- Summary report from the workshop in Guadalajara with stakeholders - disseminated to workshop participants and their corresponding institutions

- Professionally designed paper on “Planning for Effective Governance in Metropolitan Areas in Mexico” (in Spanish and English) – for distribution to the participating municipalities, NGOs and state institutions – also to be presented at the UN Habitat Conference in Guadalajara in November 2015
- Plan for next steps to implement better metro level coordination in the two participating areas – CMA and GMA
- An education tool for Mexican municipalities (and educators/ trainers) to understand the importance of metropolitan governance and the various models and characteristics of effective metro governance – to be disseminated to municipalities and state governments throughout Mexico
- Journal article underway based on research results

## **Outcomes**

- Increase awareness among decision-makers and stakeholders about the possibilities, benefits and models for of a metropolitan governance in Mexican urban areas
- Engagement of two metropolitan areas in Mexico in developing next steps for metropolitan governance
- Establishment of a network of experts from Canada, Mexico and Brazil involved in researching and supporting the development of effective governance for urban areas

## **Expected Medium Term Outcomes**

- Further dissemination of the results through workshops, national and international urban forums-congress, and government distribution channels. Examples are the National Meeting of Urban Observatories, the Annual Meeting of the Planning Institutes of Mexico, the FCM Sustainable Communities Conference, the Metropolis Observatory in Brazil, the Sustainability Institute amongst others
- Implementation of collaborative governance frameworks in Guadalajara and Colima.
- Contribution to the creation of public policies to solve the urgent issues related to urban development, waste, water, sewage and mobility in the fast growing metropolitan areas of Mexico.

## Overall Assessment and Recommendations

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The ultimate aim of this project was to share expertise and to explore structures and tools that could be adaptable for Mexico in its pursuit of effective metropolitan governance. We fostered an exploratory process through literature, in-depth interviews with key players, and the opportunity to examine practices from metropolitan regions outside Mexico, such as Vancouver, Canada and Natal, Brazil.

The research and the exchange held in Guadalajara revealed that there are several areas requiring further research for Metropolitan governance to evolve in Mexico. The most critical of these are:

- Jurisdiction – what kinds of services and policies are best coordinated at a metropolitan level, and which are better left to municipalities to address individually. This information will make it easier to know how to assign powers and responsibilities to metropolitan institutes.
- Regulations - What kinds of legal changes need to happen to truly promote and incentivize metropolitan governance in Mexico?
- Social Participation - What are the best social participation mechanisms to ensure effective, long-term planning happens, despite short tenures in political office.

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