

Article

Governing the Metropolis: An International Review of Metropolitanisation, Metropolitan Governance and the Relationship with Sustainable Land Management

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Abstract: Recent research has identified the potential of the metropolitan scale, and indeed metropolitan bodies, in achieving greater coordination and more effective land-use management. In this paper, we have undertaken a systematic scoping review of the English-language literature (2014–2019) on metropolitanisation and metropolitan governance, with a view to understanding the potential relationship with more sustainable land management. Our scoping review identified several dominant trends within current research on metropolitanisation and metropolitan governance illustrating the complexity between sustainable land management and issues of territorial politics, resourcing, and power relations. The centrality of collaborative working relationships in supporting sustainable land management is identified, yet collaboration and effective metropolitan scale governance is not always an easy task or readily implemented. The paper identifies a series of challenges and concludes that while there is general consensus that the metropolitan arena may be an appropriate scale through which to support more sustainable land management, there is no agreement on the mechanisms to enable this. Steering and more strongly directing metropolitanisation processes through either formal metropolitan governance structures or other tools could provide a potential approach but will require significant adaptation in power and funding structures.

Keywords: metropolitan governance; urban sustainability; sustainable land management; urban governance; metropolitanisation; city-regionalism



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1. Introduction

The effective and equitable management of land is central to addressing many of the major crises of our time: housing supply and affordability, transportation and mobility, social segregation and inclusion, and the climate and biodiversity crises. Land-use management involves complex actor constellations at multiple scales shaped by territorial politics, the broader political economy, and path dependency. In a world of increasingly large cities, many marked by fragmented administration and governance, new institutions at the regional scale are becoming more prevalent to manage the complexities of land use and to promote more sustainable management. The emergence of these new governance scales is directly linked to the inability of existing administrative and management functions to cope with the cross-sectoral nature of urban challenges but also to manage externalities that extend beyond their territorial limits. Aligning and coordinating policy and action across administrative boundaries provides new opportunities to develop innovative solutions to tackle the many challenges of our time. Krawchenko and Schumann [1] (p. 15) suggest that “the introduction of metropolitan bodies responsible for strategic planning” is one mechanism that national governments can use to enhance coordination and effectiveness. Over the last three decades, much has been written about the processes of metropolitanisation and

metropolitan governance, focusing on the geography of metropolitan growth or economic development processes. Understanding the emergence and promotion of metropolitan areas as generators of local, regional, and national development across an array of geographical settings, and shaped by a range of actors, is a long-standing endeavour [2], but such concerns have gained increasing salience and traction recently. Understanding these new governance scales and structures is important to addressing the complex societal challenges and governing land use effectively and sustainably in the Metropolitan Century [3].

In this paper, we have undertaken a systematic scoping review of the English-language literature on metropolitanisation and metropolitan governance, with a view to understanding its potential relationship to land-use policy, practice, and more sustainable land management. This review demonstrates a diversity of approaches and resistances to metropolitan governance and challenges the assumption that this scalar fix might be the ‘silver bullet’ for more sustainable land-use management (SLM). The UN (https://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd16/documents/fao_factsheet/land.pdf (accessed on 16 May 2022)) defines SLM as an approach to land management that minimizes land degradation, rehabilitates areas that may already be degraded, and ensures the optimal use of resources. In an urban setting, this approach would: foster the prioritization of more compact growth to prevent increased land take on the urban fringe; integrate urban developments and service delivery; and assist in the strategic management and coordination of brownfield redevelopment. The pan-European ESPON-funded SUPER (Sustainable Urbanization and land-use Practices in European Regions) project suggests that through adopting more sustainable land management practices, biodiversity and green space can be protected and enhanced, more balanced regional development can be supported, and energy and transport use can be reduced, leading to an overall enhancement of quality of life and well-being (<https://www.espon.eu/super> (accessed on 16 May 2022)). Whether adopting responses at the metropolitan scale and through metropolitan-level actors can contribute to more sustainable land management is an open question and depends on their structure, political identity, culture, and resourcing.

2. Methodological Approach

A scoping review is a more systematic approach than a traditional literature review, requiring “rigorous and transparent methods in their conduct to ensure that the results are trustworthy” [4] (p. 6). This review began with a Web of Science (WOS) search using the term ‘metropolitanisation’, given our focus on it as an operating rationality undergirding the creation of policies and spatial plans, the direction of funding and resources, and the creation of new governance scales. Our initial search generated eighty-two items that we filtered by date range (January 2014–September 2019) so to pick up the most recent literature and document types (articles, book chapters, conference proceeding, editorial material, and news items), producing a total of twenty-six sources. A second WOS search was then undertaken using the term ‘metropolitan governance’, which generated a total of 1340 potential sources. These were filtered by the same date range, document types, and language (English), producing 634 items.

Next, we narrowed all 660 items to the most relevant articles to our research goals. Relevant meant focusing on seminal works, comprehensive overviews, and empirical works that contributed substantially to understanding the theories and practices of metropolitanisation. Articles analysing metropolitanisation through case studies of service provision or discussing metropolitan growth rather than concepts of governance were ranked lowest (one star). Abstracts of medium relevance (two stars) were generally those with metropolitan governance as a secondary point of consideration. Articles that were ranked as potentially highly relevant (three stars) were those treating metropolitan governance as the focal point, and primarily included case studies.

The process was repeated using the Scopus database to ensure that as broad a reach of relevant literature was achieved. The Scopus search produced slightly more results (718 vs. 634) than the Web of Science. However, on analysis, a number of papers were

recorded more than once in Scopus, some due to changing publication dates and others due to spelling errors in the authors' names. The Scopus results were compared with the WOS results, generating 422 papers in common across the two databases [see Table 1: Scoping review search process].

Table 1. Scoping review search process.

	Web of Science (WoS)		Scopus	
	All	Date Filtered	All	Date Filtered
Metropolitanisation	82	26	49	20
Metropolitan governance	1340	634	2183	718
<i>Total 2014–2019</i>		<i>660</i>		<i>738</i>
In Scopus only				296
Relevant		49 items		+ 17 items (***) star
Total inclusion		56 articles, book chapters, and books		

Abstracts for all 660 WOS articles were first read and ranked by two researchers according to the same three-star system discussed above. Abstracts that received two and three stars from both researchers made the final cut ($n = 49$). After duplicate items in Scopus were removed, an additional 296 items—mainly books and book chapters—that only appeared in the Scopus search were analysed following the same ranking process as the WOS articles. This provided an additional 17 items—twelve articles and five book chapters—of high relevance to our study. Our review thus includes 56 articles that have a central focus on metropolitan governance in locations across the globe. These articles represent the disciplines of geography; urban studies; regional and urban planning; environmental studies; political science; public administration; economics; area studies; development studies; and sociology, as well as a wide range of geographical locations. While we have attempted to obtain global coverage, discussion in the English language literature of metropolitanisation and metropolitan governance is heavily dominated by work on European and North American cases. Our search was completed by including English-language, digital, and publicly available grey literature that either defines or demonstrates approaches to metropolitanisation, as well as texts that fall outside our time window. These latter were selected based on scanning the bibliographies of the included references, identifying papers that were consistently referenced across the work of other scholars, and thus representing classic or foundational studies for our research topic.

3. Situating Metropolitanisation and City-Regionalism as an Approach to Effective Land Management

3.1. Defining Metropolitanisation

Drawing on the literatures we have identified from across diverse contexts, we define metropolitanisation as a horizontal and vertical process reshaping planning, governance, policy, and practice, encompassing the supranational [5], transnational (see [6] on the Greater Region of Luxembourg), and local scales (see for example [7] on public authorities in Michigan). It can be understood from a range of actor-oriented perspectives [8,9] and through temporal explorations of the emergence and experience of metropolitanisation (see [10] on the Brno metropolitan region in a post-Socialist context or [11,12]; also [13] and [5] on the long history of promoting decentralization in Spain, Brazil and France).

Critiques to metropolitanisation vary. These range from the failure to restructure spatial governance boundaries around ecological criteria, such as catchment areas [14], to the overall inability of metropolitanisation processes and governance structures to combat socioeconomic spatial inequalities [15]. Understanding both the opportunities potentially provided by metropolitanisation and the attendant governance shifts to contribute positively to more sustainable land management, as well as the challenges in ensuring that these processes are harnessed effectively, is important given recent calls to deploy these approaches in the service of more sustainable land management [1].

Scholars of spatial planning and governance have long theorised the phenomenon of decentralisation (or recentralisation) as a creation of new state spaces [16,17], as a type of discursive construction around relations of capitalist production and consumption [18–21], and have also highlighted the potential negative implications for equity and justice [22]. These theorisations help focus attention on: the dynamics that underpin recent and current land management; how particular approaches to economic development have fostered sprawl and the continued consumption of land at ever greater distances from metropolitan centres; and the types of governance shifts and new actors that may—or will play—a role in more sustainable future approaches.

3.2. Rationale for Metropolitanisation

Planning practitioners and other stakeholders increasingly suggest that the metropolitan scale, as a subregional but supralocal layer, can combat the negative externalities—some of which are outlined above—produced as cities escape and spill-over their administrative boundaries (see [21,23,24]). Such shifts do not necessarily undermine the importance of national states whose authority is being reconfigured [25]. Instead, these changes acknowledge the perceived power and capacity of the metropolitan scale, irrespective of spatial context, to be the most appropriate and effective one at which to engage with an increasingly interconnected and internationalised economy. This form of ‘metrophilia’ [26] has produced a distinctly ‘city-regional’ focus in economic and other public policies. The growing desire to think at a metropolitan scale reflects the need to better manage intensifying urbanisation, uneven development, and the increased focus on (often already successful) cities as critical nodes in a deeply intertwined global economy [27,28]. Despite aspirations and rhetoric to the contrary, the focus on the metropolitan as a new state scale has created new, and reinforced existing, axes of inequalities, and challenges progress towards more sustainable forms of urban development. Developing appropriate metropolitan governance structures and approaches could significantly contribute to the more effective and equitable management of land through coordinating the kinds of land-use decisions that are most often made at the local scale. However, the character of these changes requires careful deliberation and decision-making. Which form of metropolitan governance might best support more sustainable land management remains a challenging question, and despite a significant push for metropolitan governance across a range of contexts, the international experience to date would suggest limited correlation between any particular form of metropolitan governance and more sustainable outcomes.

3.3. City-Region and Metropolitan Areas and Their Governance Arrangements

The terms city-region and metropolitan region are often used interchangeably. There is limited consensus in their definition when examined cross-nationally. In this paper, metropolitan refers to the city and its contiguous urban area comprising economic, infrastructure, and tied networks and relationships. We focus on this subregional but supralocal level as a commonly recognised and deployed scale through which attempts at land-use coordination, the promotion of compact development, strategic rethinking of brownfield lands, and the adoption of enhanced quality of life measures are often fostered. Given the growing size and complexity of many city-regions, the challenge of coordinating functions and governance across an entire and diverse city-region encompassing urban, semiurban, and rural areas is simply too complex.

In dynamic economies, expansive growth means that planning, infrastructure development, and governance structures struggle to keep up as cities grow [29]. The uneasy and unstable balances between the positive and negative effects of urban agglomeration can lead to dysfunction that potentially deters private investment, reduces urban productivity, constrains further growth, and sharpens social and spatial inequalities [30,31]. Thus, the search for governance fixes at an appropriate scale becomes more pressing. In many cases, the most pragmatic fix has been at the metropolitan, which represents a new mesoscale between the local and the wider (city-)regional sphere. The OECD [3], European Com-

mission [32], and others, argue that governments should improve urban governance and efficiency by allocating powers to this mesoscale. In line with a broader urban agenda, and the recognition of the emerging reality of a world of large cities, the direction of recent policy directives from the EU, France, and Germany shows an increasingly positive construction of the metropolitan scale of governance [5] with well-functioning institutions positioned as critical to the success or failure of city-regions and metropolitan areas [21]. The search for new governance and institutional arrangements typically occurs amongst a thicket of multiple overlapping and disparate local governments, each responsible for distinct functions, often with competing priorities for land-use and infrastructure development, and each having to respond to the varying demands of local constituencies [33].

As such, the task of city-regional and metropolitan actors and politics is to overcome such recurrent tendencies toward ‘ungovernability’ [21] (p. 116) that often manifest in outcomes that are economically, environmentally, and socially unsustainable. Political leaders and policymakers face a twofold challenge. First, they need to achieve a consensus between multiple and varying spatial units of government [34]. Fixing and maintaining effective metropolitan-wide governance and leadership requires the identification and mobilization of ‘civic capital’ [35]. Second, and crucial to their resilience, actors working within metropolitan governance structures—and the spatial and administrative units within them—must negotiate, adapt, and evolve when the core city-region expands or contracts spatially, socially, environmentally, and economically.

The search for governance arrangements and new actors extends beyond city jurisdictions. More or less formal metropolitan governance is often the result, although these may not extend to the entire city-region, which can often be too extensive (e.g., the London commuter area includes Greater London and much of Essex, Surrey, Kent, and Hertfordshire in Southeast England) or economically dominant (e.g., Dublin, Ireland accounts for more than 50% of national GDP) to make governance at that scale politically palatable and practical.

Two key elements underpin the push for metropolitan governance structures within broader city-regional debates. First is the need to organize economic activities and the workings of labour markets, as well as transport and other infrastructures. This urban-centred economy is underpinned by the concentration of jobs, people, and opportunities [36,37]. Matching this geography, decision-making and policy formulations need to operate at the spatial level at which the economy works, and people live their lives to make effective policy decisions, including how to maximise land use without compromising future development and well-being. Second, how effectively policymaking and land management operates is shaped by the interrelations amongst constituent governance units within the cities and regions involved, particularly in the area covering the city and its immediate hinterland or the metropolitan area. Such relations can involve cooperation and collaboration, as well as competition and rivalry, the pooling and sharing of powers and resources, and territorial politics centred on questions of collective provision [38]. The challenges for those responsible for promoting and delivering more sustainable land management approaches and outcomes is to identify if, and how, these relationships can be harnessed to deliver for the common good. There is growing evidence of dissent at the ‘city-centric’ nature of political-economies that emphasize the critical importance of urban concentration and density and the relative neglect of diseconomies and costs, as well as other geographies beyond the metropolises [26,39]. In smaller states, the heavy economic weight of capital cities can underpin resistance to meaningful governance reform that might aid more sustainable policies and practices and even foster ‘metro-phobia’ [40]. However, given the widespread acceptance that effective and equitable land-use management—particularly in areas where there is significant jurisdictional fragmentation—requires structured and meaningful cooperation, the metropolitan scale offers much potential.

Drawing lessons from the experiences of metropolitanisation and the introduction of new governance forms across a diversity of contexts is critical to overcoming structural barriers to metropolitan governance, identifying and mitigating its limitations, and enhancing the potential for it to enable more effective governance of land use. In the next section, we

examine a number of themes derived from the literature that exemplify the relationships between metropolitanisation, metropolitan governance, and effective and efficient (or not) land management.

4. Themes

Our scoping review identified several dominant trends within current research on metropolitanisation and metropolitan governance, illustrating the complexity between sustainable land management and these themes. This includes the new search for spatial and institutional fixes and the growing concern for the coordination of governance and decision-making driven by previous failures of land-use planning and their consequences.

4.1. *Metropolitanisation as a Response to Previous Poor Governance of and Use*

For many decades, the political imperative around city-regions has been sustaining economic growth. The growing prominence of city-regional thinking has been a key part of 'roll-out' neoliberalisation, with state intervention at a variety of scales enabling particular constellations of economic and political activity central to wider economic growth strategies [41]. Arguably, then, metropolitanisation and the push for metropolitan governance fixes are attempts to sustain this dominant approach and redress its recurrent crises. Within Europe, France has the longest history of formally engaging metropolitan policies, with Germany following in the 1990s. Initially, metropolitanisation and metropolitan framings were seen as a solution to support more balanced regional growth (France) and minimise regional inequalities (Germany). More recently, a discursive shift has occurred that is positioning this new state space from a development-oriented and strategic perspective. Thus, in France, the 1960s goal to balance the growth of Paris by transferring resources to secondary cities, and to remove fragmentation by balancing distribution across cities, was later replaced with a focus on metropolitan cooperation and cluster policies [5]. In Germany, planning policies prior to the 1990s did not engage metropolitan regions as a scale for economic development, as more distributive spatial development was the goal. However, this was adjusted from the mid-1990s onwards, as spatial planning and economic development began to focus on sustaining growth [42], and the metropolitan arena was viewed as the spatial scale which could mitigate the worst effects of jurisdictionally fragmented urban regions through some form of overarching coordination of land-use, transport, and economic activities. The constraints created through fragmentation and lack of strategic coordination are evident in various contexts outside of the French and German cases, including the Boston metro region [43], and in Ireland, where some of the worst aspects of the Celtic Tiger collapse were firmly rooted in poor coordination at a subnational but supralocal level [40].

4.2. *Neighbour Effects and Increased Inequalities*

As has already become clear, cities' administrative boundaries rarely match the extent of urbanisation, functional economic geography, or the perceptions and identities of citizens [21,44]. In a monocentric city-region, single, strong core areas can attract disproportionate levels of high-profile investment in jobs, infrastructure, and real estate, and displace enabling and supporting activities, including waste disposal, other utilities, affordable residential areas, and congestion to the urban fringe or beyond. While planning for, and the development of, critical urban infrastructure is core to the effective functioning of cities, these land uses are often marginalised spatially and in policy terms.

The downsides of agglomeration are often felt most strongly in hinterland towns and places that become suppliers of labour and dormitories of cheaper housing, as the travel-to-work area expands ever outwards. Seaside towns or attractive rural areas can resemble adjunct leisure sites for the core city, with significant implications for them as living communities. In situations where policies are locked into servicing the needs of dominant metropolitan areas, governments can become trapped into concentrating investment into these cores to maximise their contributions to national growth and defer

the point at which the diseconomies of agglomeration kick-in, even though this stymies potentially beneficial dispersal and deconcentration to hinterlands [45]. Fragmentation of city-regional governance can lead to inequitable land management that potentially enables environmental injustices and creates poor neighbour effects.

At a national scale, prosperous city-regions often find less difficulty in securing resources, even during periods of austerity and recession, when their position in national hierarchies can be reinforced. In their analysis, Savitch and Adhikari [46] highlight how public authorities disproportionately champion advantaged metropolises or those that can drive economic development. This type of prioritisation is evident in the City Deals program in England that granted money and some devolved powers to cities that submitted innovative economic development proposals [47]. Funding competitions of this sort demonstrate a shift away from metropolitanisation as an equalisation tool to a more asymmetrical ‘winner takes more’ devolution of political power and resources [47] (p. 221).

Evidence shows that since the 1990s, when inter-regional redistribution in many countries was abandoned or diluted in favour of more growth-oriented strategies, social and spatial inequalities have increased [22]. In some cases, such emphases have exacerbated spatial inequalities, producing more ‘left-behind’ places [48]. The scale and nature of these growing and persistent inequalities, many of which result from divergences between fast-growing and politically powerful city-regions, and elsewhere, have become a distinct threat to future prosperity and social cohesion and stability [49]. In the UK, the dominance of city-regional narratives over more than two decades underpins regional development despite the evidence suggesting that this approach exacerbates rather than ameliorates pre-existing inequalities [26].

Managing the relationship between core cities and their wider regions to ensure more integrated economic development through spatial and land-use planning and other broad policies is critical. Even where they appear on some dimensions as progressive and successful, cities can generate significant negative impacts on other places in their sphere of influence. Despite the apparent success of the Greater Manchester city-region in the UK, for example, postindustrial towns in the wider city-region like Oldham and Rochdale continue to struggle [50]. Investment into the city centre has generated limited, if any, trickle-down benefits to such neighbouring places and, in the housing and labour market, entrenched their economic and social distance and disconnection. Elsewhere, Henderson [51] cautions against the homogenisation of the metropolitan area and, through the example of Melbourne, argues for the necessity of understanding processes occurring at a sub-metropolitan scale.

The management of ‘neighbour effects’ within city-regions is a perennial and increasingly recognised problem [52], resulting in the establishment of new metropolitan governance mechanisms to address issues through collaboration on shared problems such as affordable housing and transport [44]. How this unfolds in practice is variable, as dis-incentives—such as competitive funding models—prevent the types of collaboration that might foster more sustainable land management practices and governance that extend across administrative boundaries.

4.3. Common Challenges and Place-Dependent Processes

Attempts to deal with the mismatch between the functional urban area and administrative structures generally involve governance reform for many central and local governments. Key advocates, including the OECD [3] and European Commission [32], do not promote a one-size-fits-all model, but rather acknowledge that any reform needs to be cognisant of local specificities, or, in the words of new work on regional development, ‘place-based’. The configuration of city-regional and metropolitan governance is shaped by state structure (e.g., federal, unitary), political actors’ predilection for formal or informal arrangements, and the presence of strong primate cities. It can emerge through voluntary pooling of resources or result in the creation of new metropolitan-scale institutions. The

creation of new forms of metropolitan governance are not always straight-forward and can be challenged or resisted for a variety of reasons.

In federal systems, state or provincial governments typically play a crucial role, while in unitary states, central government is often decisive. In Germany, with a decentralised settlement structure, *Länder* governments have created planning regions, while local governments have created intermunicipal associations for various tasks, such as public transport, waste management, or land-use planning. While there is a general promotion of metropolitan governance arrangements in Germany, these take diverse forms in large cities such as Stuttgart, Hannover, and Munich, and in more polycentric regions such as Ruhr/Rhine-Ruhr [53]. In Australia, state governments similarly dominate metropolitan governance in a political system in which local councils have limited powers and resources. Although there are periodic claims made for the efficacy of dedicated metropolitan-scale governments, Australia's urban structure, with its population concentrated in a handful of state 'capital cities', means that these have tended to be resisted by state governments, which have few incentives to devolve power to the metropolitan scale [54]. Nevertheless, Henderson [51] reports how local authorities in northern Melbourne have pursued informal collaboration arrangements to agree to infrastructure deals with the Victorian and Commonwealth governments.

However, a more decentralised state apparatus is not a guarantor of the emergence of effective metropolitan governance. Spain has undergone 40 years of decentralisation, with the Spanish Constitution of 1978 establishing three tiers of government: central, regional, and local. This has led to a high and homogenous level of decentralisation with strong regional centralism and standardised regulation at the local level. Except in the case of Barcelona, efforts at metropolitanisation have not been fruitful. In fact, an official designation and definition of the metropolitan does not exist and the Spanish government neither provides incentives for the creation of metropolitan areas nor places the implementation of a metropolitan scale on the political agenda [9]. The lack of a metropolitan sensibility in Spain is attributed in part to the coordination of sectoral agencies by a higher level of government, negating the need for an additional layer of governance [11]. This sits alongside a reluctance by local municipalities to give up their high level of political autonomy and elite bargaining power [9], similar to the case in metro-Boston, where home rule is a major impediment to more effective metropolitan structures [43]. The effective coordination of land-use and land policy becomes significantly challenged, as a lack of vision and alignment beyond the immediate locale becomes much harder to generate.

This challenge also exists in other political contexts. In unitary states, patterns of metropolitan governance are shaped by different forms of intermunicipal cooperation and central government. In Ireland, the primate city, Dublin, lacks any form of metropolitan authority, while central government is very active in urban governance through a range of national agencies. Four separate local authorities govern the urban area, while the metropolitan area includes parts of three other counties, and the wider city-region includes the remainder of these counties, and at least four in addition. The lack of a metropolitan governance structure to manage this city-region reflects an antiurban bias in Irish politics, which means that there is significant central government activity *in* Dublin, but there is comparatively little government *of* Dublin as a metropolitan entity [40]. France is typically viewed as a highly centralised country with a dominant capital city in Paris but containing several layers of local government (*millefeuille territorial*) and more than 36,000 municipalities. Since 2010, the French government has legally instituted 15 metropolitan regions (*métropoles*). These range in size of population from 7 million in the case of Métropole du Grand Paris to 213,000 in the case of Brest Métropole, and have variable devolved powers, introducing a type of asymmetrical devolution without precedent in the French system [55]. In the UK, a system of asymmetrical devolution of metropolitan governance also operates (Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are governed by devolved parliaments). Within England, London has been governed by a directly elected Mayor and assembly since 1999. Since 2010, a number of Combined Authorities, some governed by directly elected 'metro-

mayors', have been introduced in several provincial cities in England. However, land-use decisions through local plans remain largely a matter for local government, in common with most OECD countries [1]. While there is a general trend towards more intensive metropolitanisation and experimentation around more effective metropolitan governance structures visible across the Global North, and it is comparatively more mature than in less developed countries, its ability to address planning and land-use challenges is mixed. Therefore whether or not intervention at the metropolitan scale can meaningfully address pressing issues around land management, as suggested by some [1], is as yet unclear.

5. Discussion and Implications

Given its prevalence, and a growing impetus among policymakers for metropolitan-scale thinking, a key question arises in terms of how the search for new forms of metropolitan governance in response to the processes of metropolitanisation can support more effective governance of land use. The literature from across a range of settings seems to point to the centrality of collaborative working relationships on land use issues in effectively addressing wider societal and policy challenges. Yet, despite this, collaboration and effective metropolitan-scale governance is not always an easy task or readily implemented.

5.1. Political Culture and Identities

As indicated above, one key line of resistance is related to the social and economic inequalities generated by increasingly polarized forms and geographies of economic development. In the face of persistent agglomeration diseconomies in city-regions, and a shifting policy emphasis towards issues of inclusion, liveability, well-being, and environmental sustainability, the recent trajectories of metropolitanisation—including the emergence of new metropolitan governance structures—are likely to become increasingly challenged and potentially resisted. Growing evidence exists of a disconnect between growth imperatives and issues of social and environmental justice. Indeed, Cho, Hong Kim, and Kim's [56] study on US MSAs demonstrates that neither centralised nor decentralised government structures are effective in narrowing income gaps: addressing one (income inequality) may aggravate the other (economic growth), and vice versa. However, without some coordination above the level of local government, disconnected land-use policies that thwart effective and connected infrastructural development will continue, and strong opposition from local residents and communities to specific forms of enhanced land-use efficiency—e.g., increased densification—will prevail.

The ability to introduce governance reforms that might support better land-use planning can also be determined by political culture. In Mexico, the absence of a collective ability to mobilise a range of actors in support of a metropolitan scale is related to wider political identities. Here, political power is heavily concentrated in the Presidency, and any potential diminution of its role is resisted [12,57]. Metropolitan governance does not exist as a conceptual, much less practiced, category. Recognition of Mexico City's influence on the region or the federal government, as well as the city's functional links, go unacknowledged in urban development plans. The low institutional capacity of local government to take on additional responsibilities inhibits the development of the metropolitan as a scale of importance and ensures that its emergence is heavily resisted [57]. Leitner and Sheppard [58] argue that in Jakarta, Indonesia, its variegated trajectory of urbanization and metropolitanisation can only be understood in the context of the city's peripheral position in the global economy and its wider socio-spatial dynamics. This wider political framing is therefore critical to what kinds of decision-making are made and for whom.

5.2. Scales of Governance

Another key challenge is related to the democratic deficit that occurs from upscaling decision-making and policymaking from lower tiers of government to higher tiers. Mesoscales of governance are, by definition, further removed from the local constituents they serve, meaning that local voices have less connection to the governance decision-

making and appeals process. Beel, Jones, and Rees Jones [15] pointedly argue that the creation of this scale is an act of depoliticisation, with the elite growth model presented as the only option, closing potential lines of resistance. This limits any emergent metropolitan identity which relies on community buy in and the development of civic capacity. Societal acceptance is necessary if there is to be legitimacy in this new form of governance. Legitimacy is critically important for instituting the metropolitan scale which, although necessarily a top-down effort, only gets momentum from local support [59]. Without it, a disconnect can emerge between the discursive and legal construction of the metropolitan scale and power struggles at the local level as it becomes operationalised [60]. Yet, the benefits of more strategic and coordinated planning will be felt most acutely at the local scale, where land-use decisions and outcomes have immediate impact. Ironically, by scaling up decision-making to a mesolevel, where coordination can help enhance efficiency, the citizen experience of the urban environment—through decreased traffic congestion, more connected public transport, regional scale public green infrastructure, and greater accessibility to key amenities—can be enhanced. According to Nelles [35], for scaling up to occur successfully, it is necessary to accumulate civic capital at the metropolitan scale. This process is highly uneven, and its outcomes uncertain, but nonetheless crucial.

5.3. *Urban Hierarchies*

The metropolitan scale is constructed of municipalities, with a divergence of resources and power depending on the size, scale, and positioning of the city-region within urban hierarchies. While dominant understandings of metropolitanisation have considered it as a way to address the diseconomies of urban agglomeration in very large cities, and thus to ‘champion’ already successful cities, the process is increasingly harnessed by second-tier cities to advance their relative competitiveness and power in national urban hierarchies.

Cardoso [61] highlights how second-tier cities can construe metropolitanisation differently from first-tier cities and see value in working together to achieve prominence, to amplify their voice, bring legitimacy, and tap into a network of decision-makers [51] that is often not possible when they work independently. In other words, there is strength in numbers and scale. Research on Porto, Antwerp, and Bristol [61], Ireland [62], as well as twenty-two first-tier and seventy-one second tier European cities [63], demonstrates that second-tier cities might construe the development of metropolitan governance apparatuses more positively than first-tier cities. These cities typically have higher levels of voluntary collaboration and cooperation and the ability to increase institutional capacity at the metropolitan scale to achieve a more powerful voice, gain legitimacy, and increase influence.

For example, in the United Kingdom, the Northern Powerhouse idea is intended to build competitiveness and act as a counterbalance to the London city-region. Similarly in Ireland, the southern and the northern and western regional assemblies are attempting to build collaborative arrangements between the four smaller cities to develop a counterpoint to the dominance of the Dublin metropolitan area. While there is evidence that more homogenous metro areas may generate significant inequalities between the core city and hinterlands, metro areas built around second-tier cities tend to have a less concentrated, and therefore more balanced, functional, and land-use structures [61]. Whether they can act as a mechanism to transform in-between spaces, and how they might foster different sets of dynamics between settlements at different scales, are open questions given the limited evidence to date on how these processes are unfolding in practice.

5.4. *Metropolitanisation through an Ecological Lens*

A final opportunity, drawing on research from different contexts [14], is related to the synchronisation of the public, private, and third sector for more sustainable development. Rather than construing metropolitan growth and governance as anathema to rural development and wider prosperity, the shift away from a ‘winner takes all’ mentality could leverage metropolitanisation to protect the rural sphere. This ecological construction—one

that moves the discourse away from growth-first and competitiveness toward the metropolitan scale as a bulwark against the development and enabler of ecological resilience—is hindered by the public sector construction of metropolitanisation as centrally aligned with economic growth. In this context, private and civic actors are moving in the right direction, and government needs to catch up, promote, and not thwart this institutional change. The recent EU Green Deal under the von der Leyen Presidency of the European Commission may help bring these issues into greater balance in the coming years, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, which is forcing radical and unprecedentedly rapid change in both policies and practices related to mobility, urban accessibility, and quality of urban life. The pandemic and climate crisis have changed the context within which particular land-use decisions become more or less acceptable. The importance of social and cultural values in land-use policy, and the need for more ethical decision-making, is something that received relatively limited attention in the literature. If new forms of metropolitan governance structures are going to be deployed in the service of more effective land-use policy, then the adoption of an ecological lens must be central to how they are both constructed discursively and implemented.

6. Conclusions

To fully understand the relationship between sustainable land management, the processes of metropolitanisation, and its attendant metropolitan governance reforms and innovations, we must examine the contextual (place-based) and institutional framings within which land use is planned and governed. How can the health, prosperity, sustainability, and well-being of cities and their hinterlands be secured, and what role does political culture play?

There is general consensus that more sustainable land management requires effective coordination beyond administrative boundaries, and that the metropolitan scale may be the most appropriate through which to enable strategic change. The need to organise and coordinate infrastructure, labour markets, and the economy to enhance human well-being, and minimize further land take and degradation through sprawl is widely accepted. However, the jury is out on the most appropriate mechanisms through which this can be achieved. Further investigation is necessary to determine whether formal metropolitan governance structures or softer, collaborative, voluntary power-sharing might better close the gap between the spatial level at which the economy works and decision-making and policy formulation. Either way, relationships between policymakers, city-regional authorities, private, and civic actors will be disrupted, and adaptation, including the rescaling of powers, resources, and crucially financial architecture, will be needed to meet these challenges. Resistance from the political classes to such change may be challenged by a more politicised citizenry—particularly in the Global North—demanding greener, cleaner, and fairer models of economic growth as part of the idea of ‘building back better’ in the aftermath of the 2020 pandemic. Approaches to urban development and land management that specifically address climate challenge, prioritise sustainability, and support better quality of life, require a significant and dramatic reframing of land value, use, and policy. It is likely that there will be more emphasis on the importance of social rather than economic and physical infrastructure, with urban planning and governance returning to its historic concerns of ensuring public health and collective provision of essential or ‘foundational’ services such as care and food. What might the long-term implications of changing environmental and social values mean for the policy choices we make that shape how we govern and manage land use?

On the one hand, these discussions are complicated by the fuzziness of the metropolitan as an idea and practiced scale. Where does its sphere of influence begin and end? What kinds of environmental protection and conservation policies might be needed and who decides? Such questions are of particular significance for city-regions that either contain or are surrounded by formal greenbelts or protected natural areas. They are serious challenges for metropolitan areas that sit within larger regional governance structures with

a strong rural power base. However, they also open significant possibilities, particularly for metropolitan areas based around second-tier cities, to reimagine new relationships between different settlement and land-use types. What is the capacity of these types of metropolitan areas to redistribute opportunity, particularly for the in-between spaces? What mechanisms, tools, or approaches might make this possible? The implications at the wider city-regional scale might be a redefining of the relationships between urban, semiurban, and rural areas, if new actors, policies, and initiatives adopt a more circular approach to land use that prioritises re-use and more compact growth. This, however, risks exacerbating inequalities between central and other areas, and falling foul of ‘city-centric’ critiques. How can we simultaneously focus on sustainable land management (compact growth, re-use of brownfields, minimising new land take) and support more economically, socially, and spatially equitable forms of working and living?

Perhaps the answer lies in greater regulation of land use and more powerful development control. However, this requires alternative funding models at the local level that remove the incentive from local authorities to chase development levies. Strengthening local government funding, and thus shifting the power imbalance between developers and local authorities, might be one of the key mechanisms through which central governments can deliver on climate action and sustainability targets. Metropolitanisation is a crucial determinant of how land is used and, consequently, it shapes the prospects for sustainable development, the reduction of territorial inequalities, economic development, and the rights of future generations. Steering and more strongly directing metropolitanisation processes through either formal metropolitan governance or other tools could provide a framework for effective spatial planning, linking the regulation of land to broader fiscal and public expenditure objectives and setting the incentives for market and other actors. As this review demonstrates from a range of international perspectives, there is no silver bullet for more sustainable management of land at the metropolitan scale. The practice of metropolitan governance—whether formally or informally—frequently falls short of its promise and needs to reach a substantially more mature state to effectively contribute to sustainable land management.

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