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The rise of the city region – exploring alternative models of sub-national governance

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Abstract

In recent years a growing number of countries have embarked on reforms designed to strengthen the arrangements that they have in place for city region, or metropolitan, governance. This paper, which draws on a recent research project carried out for the UK Local Government Association (LGA), is divided into five parts. First, it discusses the main reasons why national governments are seeking to reform city region governance. Second, the main reform options currently being considered in different countries are considered. These range from merger of relatively small units of local government into larger units, through various forms of 'pragmatic' collaboration (including the introduction of a metropolitan tier of governance), through to models that reject the very idea of metropolitan reform and advocate, in line with public choice theory, the promotion of self-interested competition between small municipalities. Third, the paper considers the criteria that might be used to appraise different models of city region governance. A fourth section provides cameos of four respected models of metropolitan governance: 1) Auckland Council, New Zealand, 2) Greater London Authority, UK, 3) Portland Metro, Oregon, USA, and 4) Stuttgart City Region, Germany. These examples, which are chosen to illustrate different reform strategies, are evaluated in the light of the six criteria set out in section three. A fifth, and final, section explores the key themes that emerge from the analysis.

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Introduction

Viewed from an international perspective, it seems clear that city regions are 'on the rise'. The evidence shows that, in the last twenty years or so a growing number of countries have embarked on reforms designed to strengthen the arrangements they have in place for city region, or metropolitan, governance.ⁱ Research studies, carried out in different continents and contexts, suggest that this movement to strengthen city region governance, sometimes described as the 'new regionalism', should now be recognised as an established international trend (Ahrend and Schumann 2014; Ahrend et al 2014; Brenner 2004; Hambleton and Gross 2007; Heinelt and Kuebler 2005; Jouve and Lefevre 2002; Kantor et al 2012; Norris 2015).

The steps currently being taken by the UK central government to raise the profile and influence of metropolitan governance in England provide but one illustration of this trend. On 4 May 2017 the citizens of six city regions in England were invited to go to the polls to elect 'metro-mayors' to exercise place-based leadership of the selected city regions.ⁱⁱ We will return to consider the UK metropolitan reform efforts shortly.

Countries across the world are striving to adapt their sub-national governance arrangements to take on current and emerging challenges, not least the explosive population growth of cities and city-regions and the growing interconnectivity of urban and non-urban economic geographies. It follows that there are opportunities for fruitful international exchange of experiences on topics like metropolitan civic leadership, the modification of local/central relationships, the design of effective city region governance and the invention of new ways of working with citizens, local businesses and other stakeholders. The author's recent international, comparative book suggests that, in response to the challenges now facing societies, many cities are developing new forms of place-based, inclusive city leadership (Hambleton 2015).

This paper considers the reasons why national governments are seeking to reform their metropolitan governance arrangements and identifies the main reform options being considered and/or implemented. By drawing on a recent international study of sub-national governance reforms, the paper identifies six criteria that could be helpful to those wishing to appraise alternative models of city region governance (Hambleton 2016). It then examines four respected models of city region reform – drawn from four different countries - and provides an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of these governance models using the six criteria. A final section considers key themes for the future study and development of city region governance.

1) Understanding the driving forces for metropolitan reform

The reasons why particular nation states choose to reform their sub-national governance arrangements reflect national circumstances, socio-cultural traditions and specific political imperatives. Nevertheless, it is possible, at a 'surface level' at least, to identify three related sets of driving forces that

appear to be influencing the moves to strengthen city region governance that are now taking place in different countries and contexts.

The rise of challenges that reach beyond individual municipalities

Traditional structures of local government, while they can enable locally elected politicians to speak with authority on behalf of well-defined place-based communities, can find themselves ill equipped to take on challenges that reach beyond the limits of individual municipalities. For example, in many city regions, rapid urbanisation means that the boundaries of local authorities designed in a different era now appear anachronistic. Pressing challenges like transportation, housing, economic development and the creation of sustainable cities require effective policy making arrangements covering relatively large areas as well as local responsiveness.

Place-based international economic competition

In our rapidly globalising world it is increasingly the case that localities need to be able to compete with localities in other countries – to attract investment, talented people and visitors. Technology too has played a critical role, opening up new sites of commerce and reshaping the economic boundaries between urban and non-urban areas. It follows that local governance arrangements need to be designed to ensure that localities can compete internationally. On the whole, this suggests that it is desirable to, either, create larger units of local government, and/or introduce collaborative arrangements that enable small local authorities to pool resources so that they can compete internationally.

The need to address growing economic and social inequalities and climate change

Globalisation is creating increasingly unequal societies, and the global climate change challenge is recognised by governments across the world as urgent. Some countries are re-designing their metropolitan governance arrangements to ensure that sound spatial planning leads to the creation of inclusive, healthy, sustainable cities. Sound strategic planning implies the need for elected local authorities that can lead and shape the socio-economic geography of entire city regions. An important argument here is that very small municipalities almost certainly lack the geographical dimensions, and organisational resources, to even up life chances for disadvantaged groups in society.

These three driving forces may, in any given situation, all be in play at one and the same time. Given that these various pressures for change are clearly in tension, if not outright conflict, it follows that discussion of any city region reform effort needs to be nuanced and should, in particular, be mindful of the underlying power struggles that are inevitably in play. The public narrative presented by those proposing particular strategies for city region governance reform, be they governments, Royal Commissions or other organizations, such as policy think tanks, provides only a partial picture of the actual

dynamics of metropolitan reform. Alongside consideration of the presentation of arguments in the public discourse, let's call this the 'surface level' of policy making, deeper power struggles are in play. Thus, a central government may claim to be introducing metropolitan reforms to enhance the ability of localities to respond to the three main driving forces set out above whilst, in reality, it wishes to pursue very different political objectives.

A good example of mismatch between stated government policy relating to city region governance, and the actual delivery of policy, is provided by current developments in England. In a string of high-profile announcements, the UK government has said that it wants to devolve substantial power to sub-regions within England when close examination of the evidence suggests that the government is imposing a model of decision-making that is leading to a remarkable centralisation of power (Hambleton 2017). The introduction of so-called 'combined authorities' led by newly elected 'metro mayors' is not leading to the creation of powerful units of territorial governance, as ministers claim. In support of this counter narrative we can note that the new metro mayors have no tax raising powers, trivial budgets in relation to the challenges faced, and that they have no constitutional protection from central government interference. The secretive 'devolution deals' agreed to date appear to be more like contractual arrangements in which local leaders are expected to be accountable 'upwards' to distant central government officials, for the delivery of specific programmes and projects as set down by ministers, rather than being accountable 'downwards' to local citizens (Sandford 2016).

2) Metropolitan reform options

Options for the reform of city region governance lie along a spectrum. For simplicity it is helpful to imagine three ways of bringing about effective cooperation and strategic planning across areas that are bigger than the existing territorial units of local governmentⁱⁱⁱ:

- Merge existing units of local government into larger units
- Pragmatic adjustment
- Promote self-interested competition

In any given setting there may be overlaps between these three strategies. However, for the purpose of analysis, it is helpful to separate them out.

Merge existing municipalities into larger units of local government

This route to reform, which is usually described as 'city-county' consolidation in North America, is emerging as a favoured option in parts of the USA (Carr and Feiock 2004). This route to reform has also been followed in the UK. For example, back in 1969 the Royal Commission on Local Government in England stressed that local government needs to do four things:

- Perform efficiently a wide range of profoundly important tasks concerned with the safety, health, and well-being of people in different localities
- Attract and hold the interests of its citizens
- Develop enough inherent strength to deal with national authorities in a valid partnership
- Adapt, without disruption, to the unprecedented process of change in the way people live and work (Redcliffe-Maude 1969)

While the Government of the day did not accept the Commission's recommendation that 58 unitary authorities should be created outside the metropolitan areas, the Local Government Act 1972 reduced the number of elected local authorities in England from over 1,300 to around 400. In effect the Act created a smaller number of more powerful local governments. As we shall see below, the metropolitan reforms introduced in Auckland, New Zealand also fit very well with the 'merger' option. In 2010 the New Zealand Government created a large unitary authority, dubbed by the press a 'super-city', to govern the city region of Auckland.

Pragmatic adjustment

A second way of producing effective collective action for large areas is through inter-local agreements, coalition building and/or the introduction of an additional tier of government designed to focus on strategic issues, for example, environmental protection and/or economic development. Pragmatic adjustment aims to strengthen the governance capacity of metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas without abolishing any existing elected local authorities.

There are many ways of bringing about pragmatic adjustment and these vary considerably across nation states. For example, in the USA many metropolitan areas have Councils of Governments (COGs). These are voluntary associations of local governments that function as a forum for regional policy dialogue. Local authorities in the metropolitan area are usually represented on the board of the COG by an elected official, such as the mayor or a member of the local council. Some COGs include representatives of other local and regional authorities, as well as representatives of private sector associations

In many American metropolitan areas there are Metropolitan Planning Organisations (MPOs). The federal government encourages this approach to collaboration by, for example, requiring that any federal funds spent on transportation infrastructure in a metropolitan area must be channeled through a local MPO. However, independent research on US metropolitan governance suggests that both COGs and MPOs are not, in reality, all that effective in tackling present and emerging city regional challenges (Norris 2015.) Power remains very fragmented and this limits the capacity of the city

region level of governance to take action. Portland and Minneapolis-Saint Paul are exceptions to the dominant pattern of metropolitan governance in the USA. We will refer to the Portland Metro approach to city region governance shortly.

The Greater London Authority is also profiled below as it, too, provides a respected example of pragmatic adjustment. In this case the upper tier of local government, sitting above the London boroughs, is directly elected – with a directly elected mayor and an assembly of 25 members. A further example of pragmatic adjustment, presented later, is the Association of the Region of Stuttgart (Verband Region Stuttgart, aka VRS). Again there is an elected regional assembly. In this model there is no directly elected mayor. Instead, the assembly selects a chair from its ranks.

Promote self-interested competition

A third approach to city region governance tries to make a virtue out of governmental fragmentation. From this perspective, small units of local government should behave as if they were in a marketplace, and they should compete with one another to attract residents and businesses. Self-interested competition, so the argument goes, enables citizens and businesses to ‘vote with their feet’ by finding localities that offer attractive packages of services and tax burdens. This ‘public choice’ theory of local government has a long tradition in the USA, and there is an interesting body of scholarship examining these ideas (Ostrom et al 1961; Peterson 1981; Tiebout 1956).

However, the conditions assumed by public choice theory bear little resemblance to reality. Most citizens and businesses in a given city region are not, in fact, very mobile, and the theory disregards many important considerations – for example, the feelings of attachment people may have to the place where they live, the value of local social networks and the costs of constantly uprooting and moving. The theory, as it stands against the very idea of collaboration between units of local government, offers little that is relevant to dealing with the modern city regional governance challenges outlined above.

3) Criteria for appraising models of city region governance

In 2015 the Local Government Association (LGA), the association representing all elected local authorities in the UK, became concerned about the over-centralised approach to the reform of sub-national governance being developed for England by the UK central government.^{iv} There were concerns that so-called ‘devolution policy’ might, in practice, lead to a centralisation of power in Whitehall. In addition, elected city leaders were troubled by the fact that ministers appeared to be wedded to one particular type of metropolitan reform – the introduction of a directly elected ‘metro mayor’ heading a city region ‘combined authority’ – despite the absence of any research evidence justifying such an inflexible stance.

Early in 2016 the Association invited the author to prepare an international review of models of sub-national governance found in other countries. The purpose of this study was to widen the conversation about devolution in England, and to help councils think through how to design successful executive governance arrangements for ‘combined authorities’ (that is, groupings of existing local authorities). The author worked closely with members of the City Regions Board of the LGA, that is, a group of senior council leaders from the big cities of England. The study was completed in less than six months and was published in July 2016 (Hambleton 2016).

Early on in the study it was decided that the criteria for appraising different models of city region governance needed to be defined and agreed. Building on the shift in focus, observed in the academic literature concerning local government, from government to governance, the growth of partnership working with a focus on the wellbeing of places and a series of conversations with senior councillors, six criteria were identified as helpful for those designing and implementing sub-national governance arrangements. These are set out in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Criteria for assessing city region governance	
Civic Leadership	<p>Does the governance model provide for effective place-based leadership?</p> <p>Leadership includes the capacity to develop a vision for the combined authority coupled with a governance arrangement that can ensure effective and accountable delivery of this vision.</p>
Effective Decision Making	<p>Does the governance model support high quality decision-making processes?</p> <p>The importance of creating sound arrangements for the development of deliberative local democracy is essential.</p>
Transparency and Efficiency	<p>Does the governance model make it clear (to other councillors, professionals and the public at large) who is making decisions, on what issues, when, why and how?</p> <p>Transparency is fundamental not only in building trust and confidence in the political process, but also in ensuring efficiency.</p>
Accountability	<p>Does the governance model ensure that decision-makers are held to account?</p> <p>More specifically, are sound arrangements in place to ensure that there is effective scrutiny of decision-making by those seeking to hold the executive to account (non-executives, the public, other parties)?</p>
Public Engagement	<p>Does the governance model provide for effective public engagement in decision-making?</p> <p>The creation of combined authorities should ensure that</p>

	public debate about important public policy choices. Do the processes of decision-making ensure the inclusion of the citizen voice?
Business engagement	Does the model provide for effective involvement of the voices of business interests? What role will Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) play in the governance arrangements? How will the authority assist local businesses?

Source: Author

These criteria, or principles of good city region governance, were agreed with the City Regions Board of the LGA, and it may be that they will be of interest to reformers in other countries and contexts. Previous experiences with local government reorganisation, in the UK at least, suggests that agreeing a set of principles of good governance can help elected members identify important strategic choices. These can, in turn, lead to specific suggestions on how to design the formal structures and procedures of good devolved governance.

The LGA asked the author to identify respected examples of city region governance from around the world, to appraise them against the six criteria set out in **Table 1**, and to present advice for councils on the important strategic governance choices they would face in 2016/17 and beyond.

4) Exploring good governance models on the ground

The study for the LGA had to be executed within a very short space of time. There was neither the time, nor the resources, for an extensive international comparative research project. The author therefore deployed the approach used in his recent study of innovative place-based leadership in different countries, cities and contexts. At the heart of the evidence gathering in the study for the LGA is the idea of an 'Innovation Story' (Hambleton 2015 pp 27-31). In short, an Innovation Story employs engaged scholarship and has the following characteristics:

- **Short.** Busy practitioners do not have time to read lengthy case studies. An Innovation Story provides the reader with a concise summary but by citing sources and providing web-links offers the reader a way of investigating further if they wish.
- **Factual and practical.** An Innovation Story needs to be based on evidence, and should provide practical knowledge that stands up to scrutiny.
- **Inspirational.** Innovation Stories are not intended to 'prove' that the approach presented is 'the right' way to lead change in the modern city. Rather a good Innovation Story enhances understanding and stimulates a creative response from those hearing the story.

By using an extensive international network of contacts the author identified four internationally respected examples of city region reform.^v These examples have been chosen because they are recognised as world leading, and because they illustrate reform models from across the spectrum of metropolitan reform options outlined in Section 2) above. In this section the following four Innovation Stories are presented and the reform efforts are assessed against the six criteria of good city region governance outlined in Section 3):

1. Auckland Council, New Zealand
2. Greater London Authority, UK
3. Portland Metro, Oregon, USA
4. Association of the Region of Stuttgart, Germany

This section provides rather a lot of detail and busy readers may wish to glance through this section.

1) Auckland Council, New Zealand: Summary

- Long-established local authority boundaries were holding the city region back
- Outdated local authority structures were reformed
- A vision for the future of the city region was created
- A directly elected mayor model has worked well
- Special arrangements to support excluded groups were introduced

In 2010, the Royal Commission on Auckland made recommendations with a view to consolidating a fragmented local governance structure. As a result, the New Zealand government abolished eight local authorities (seven territorial authorities and the Auckland Regional Council) and replaced them with, what the press called, a 'super-city', the Auckland Council, led by a directly elected mayor.

Regional and strategic planning, the council's budget and regulatory functions are now the responsibility of the governing body with local boards having responsibility for decision making about local services including, management of parks, libraries, community facilities, and are responsible for identifying local community priorities and preferences. Functions of the new council were given to a number of Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs) with appointed boards of directors, including transport, water and wastewater, economic development, facilities management and urban development. The CCOs operate separately, but are accountable to the governing body, which sets their direction and monitors their performance. New requirements for Auckland Council include the development of a thirty-year spatial plan, the establishment of Auckland Transport, the consolidation of wholesale and retail water and wastewater supply into a single entity.

An outline of the city region governance structure is provided in **Table 2** and an assessment of the performance of the model against the six evaluation criteria is set out in **Table 3**.

Table 2: Details of Auckland governance and scrutiny arrangements	
Governance structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is led by a directly elected Mayor with twenty councillors from 13 wards • There are 21 elected local boards with 5 to 9 members (149 in total) • The Mayor has some executive powers including; appointment of the Deputy Mayor and establishing committees of the governing body. • The Mayor also has statutory responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote a vision for Auckland ○ Provide leadership to achieve this vision ○ Lead the development of region-wide council plans ○ Ensure the council engages with all Aucklanders
Executive arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Auckland Council powers are vested in the Auckland Council. The directly elected mayor has a high public profile but has comparatively few executive powers. (The Mayor proposes the budget, for example, but still requires majority support to have it adopted by the governing body) • There is statutory provision for the mayor to establish a mayoral office, with a minimum budget of 0.2% of the council's annual operating budget. • Executive authority is delegated from the Council to the Chief Executive who is appointed by the governing body. • The Chief Executive is a professional officer who is appointed on merit. • The Chief Executive appoints and employs all staff of the council organisation, but not Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs).
Elections and voter turnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government elections held every three years using postal voting with a 'first past the post' voting system, • In 2010 voter turnout was 51% falling to 36% in 2013 (national average of 42%)
Scrutiny arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Auditor-General (as an officer of parliament) provides independent assurance to both Parliament and the public and has a statutory to oversee local authorities' ten-year budgets. • Functions (such as financial, regulatory, legal and employment) are delegated by the Council to the Chief Executive, and senior officers and are recorded in a delegations register. • A committee of council reviews the performance of the Chief Executive on a quarterly basis • There is an Audit and Risk Committee and a CCO Governance and Monitoring Committee

Table 3: Assessment according to the six criteria of good governance	
Civic Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auckland Council balances effective regional governance with responsive local decision making. • The governing body and the local boards are responsible, and democratically accountable, for the decision making of the Auckland Council as a whole. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Mayor has a specific role relating to the development of council plans and promoting a vision for Auckland. ○ Whereas local boards provide a vehicle for place-based leadership of different communities in Auckland.
Effective Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This model provides for strong strategic leadership by the directly elected mayor, coupled with responsiveness to localities within the metropolis via the network of local boards. • Moreover, it has been designed to ensure all voices are represented in the decision-making process, especially in relation to metropolitan-wide issues. • Naturally there are conflicts of view on policy and priorities, but on the whole these have been resolved through deliberation and discussion.
Transparency and Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings of Auckland Council are held in public, as are the meetings of local boards. • Roles and responsibilities are explicit and are set out clearly on the Auckland Council website. • However, one of the criticisms of the amalgamation has been that it is difficult for the public, and firms, to navigate multiple, complex planning and decision making structures.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As with any elected representative structure, accountability is ultimately through the ballot box, with elections taking place once every three years. • New Zealand has well-established arrangements for local government audit and monitoring, however the governance structure is perceived by some Aucklanders as putting 'too much power' in the hands of unelected boards. • Another controversial feature of the Auckland Council has been the inclusion of the Independent Māori Statutory Board (IMSB) in the governance structure, which was legislated for at the amalgamation.
Public Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auckland Council has made particular efforts to engage with the public in its decision-making processes, with effective public engagement is a statutory responsibility of the Mayor. • The metropolitan and local decision-making structure enables engagement on issues of region-wide significance as well as on discrete local issues.

<p>Business engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Business Leadership Group has been established to ensure a stronger working relationship between the council and the business sector. • The business community has been largely positive about the amalgamation, especially its ability to deal with one council, with one voice. • The Council has had a strong focus on being business friendly, with a key account management approach being put in place for larger consenting customers • There is also a strong focus on business attraction, especially internationally, through the council's economic development agency.
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2) *The Greater London Authority: Summary*

- First ever directly elected mayor in UK local government
- A strategic metropolitan authority with the London Boroughs continuing to provide most local government services
- Introduction of a congestion charge in 2003 regarded as a very successful innovation at home and abroad
- High level of visibility for the directly elected mayor
- Important scrutiny role for the London Assembly

The GLA was created in 2000 and is a strategic metropolitan authority with powers over transport, policing, strategic spatial planning, housing, economic development, and fire and emergency planning. Since its creation the focus of the organisation has shifted from primarily policy formation to a greater emphasis on direct responsibility for delivery of outcomes, particularly around housing and land. For example, the Localism Act 2011 provided the Mayor with powers to establish Mayoral Development Areas resulting in the creation of the London Legacy Development Corporation (the site of the London Olympics) and Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation.

There are three main functional bodies that work under the policy direction of the Mayor and the Assembly including:

- Transport for London (TfL) – covering public transport, main roads, traffic management and administration of the congestion charge
- Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime – overseeing the Metropolitan Police service
- The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority – administering the London Fire Brigade and coordinating emergency planning.

The total budget of the GLA Group in 2016/17 is £15.9 billion, comprising a revenue budget of £11.1 billion and a capital budget of £4.8 billion. The budget provides for some £800 million to be raised from council tax precept income. Other sources of income include fares, charges, government grants and an element of retained business rates income.

Table 4: Details of Greater London Authority governance and scrutiny arrangements	
Governance structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below the level of the GLA the 32 London Boroughs and the City of London continue to provide the majority of local government services. • To promote co-ordination between borough level service-delivery and pan London policy making there is a range of largely non-statutory partnership boards in place. These operate under the auspices of a Congress comprising the Mayor and the Leaders of the London boroughs • Discussions are ongoing regarding the devolution of further powers to the GLA and/or the GLA working in concert with the London boroughs. This will likely have implications for joint governance arrangements between the GLA and the boroughs.
Executive arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor has a number of formal executive powers relating to: the budget; policy; and appointments of senior staff (that is, mayoral advisers, but not senior officers). • In addition, the Mayor also has a substantial influence over the work of the GLA Group of agencies although, in practice, day-to-day leadership is delegated to deputy mayors. • However, the Mayor is not a free agent. He or she needs to listen to and respond, to some extent at least, to the London Assembly and the voices of other stakeholders.
Elections and voter turnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections for the Mayor of London and for the London Assembly take place at the same time once every four years. • Voters receive three ballot papers: one to vote for Mayor of London and two for the London Assembly. The voting system for the Mayor is the Supplementary Vote with voters asked to express a first and a second preference. • For the London Assembly elections voters have two votes: one for their constituency Assembly Member (representing their geographical area within London); and one London-wide Member. • Fourteen members represent constituencies and eleven members represent the whole of the capital. • In 2016 the voter turnout for the GLA election was 45%.
Scrutiny arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The London Assembly holds the Mayor and mayoral advisers to account by publicly examining GLA policies and programmes through committee meetings, plenary sessions, site visits and investigations. • The Mayor also has a statutory duty to consult the Assembly on a number of strategies, the GLA's budget and specific appointments • In addition, the Assembly questions the Mayor ten times a year at public Mayor's Question Time meetings. • Twice a year, the Mayor and the Assembly Members hold a 'People's Question Time' where members of the public can raise questions relating to the Mayor's statutory functions.

Table 5: Assessment according to the six criteria of good governance	
Civic Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no doubt that the GLA model of metropolitan governance underpins very high profile city leadership. • Furthermore, successes, such as attracting the Olympics and securing funding for Crossrail, are unlikely to have happened in the absence of a directly elected champion for the city. • In addition, the London Assembly has provided a strong platform for civic leadership with Assembly Members championing a range of issues on behalf of Londoners and making a significant policy impact in areas such as air quality.
Effective Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rules and guidelines developed by the GLA relating to procedures and decision-making are extensive. • There are a large number of protocols and requirements relating to ethics, competency, codes of conduct, and whistle-blowing, and these are openly presented on the GLA website. • Naturally there are conflicts of view on policies and priorities and sometimes these conflicts are intense, but by and large the model provides for effective decision making.
Transparency and Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The model of governance is clearly set out on the GLA website and the GLA operates with a high level of transparency when compared with other parts of the public sector. • Roles and responsibilities are explicit and London Assembly meetings and Mayor's Question Time meetings are conducted in public. • However, Assembly members on the GLA Oversight Committee have expressed concerns about the lack of transparency in the working arrangements for parts of the GLA Group.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process of direct election of the Mayor and Members of the London Assembly ensures that political representatives are held to account at the ballot box. This is an important strength of the GLA model of governance. • In addition, the separation of powers between the executive (the Mayor) and the London Assembly is intended to ensure that the Mayor is held to account.
Public Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the public are able to observe GLA decision-making as it takes place, and to contribute their views at 'People's Question Time' meetings. • In addition, London Assembly Members play a vital role in representing the views of citizens to the Mayor and mayoral advisers.
Business engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GLA is very active in collaborating with business interests to promote London internationally and to promote economic development and economic opportunity within London.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Enterprise Partnership for London, the London Enterprise Panel, which is chaired by the Mayor, focuses on regeneration, employment and the skills agenda for London. • It runs the London Growth Hub, a one-stop shop providing a range of support services to London businesses.
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3) Portland Metro, Oregon, USA: Summary

- Reforms in 1978 created a metropolitan level of government above the level of the existing municipalities
- No directly elected executive mayor
- A directly elected president, who does not have independent powers, works closely with the six directly elected councillors
- A directly elected Metro Auditor provides independent scrutiny
- High level of transparency and strong public involvement

Voters approved the creation of a regional government, the 'Metropolitan Service District', to serve the Portland metropolitan area in 1978. Metro now serves more than 1.8 million people within Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties, and the agency's boundary encompasses Portland, Oregon and 25 other cities although not the most distant rural areas of those counties.

Metro is widely recognised as a highly successful model of regional governance in the USA, a country where metropolitan governance is, on the whole, not well developed. Metro has a strong track record of open meetings and public involvement in decision-making, particularly amongst those who do not participate in traditional meetings or open houses. Metro employs 1,600 employees, including park rangers, economists and planners. The council may impose, levy and collect taxes and can issue bonds. Any broad-based taxes of general applicability on, say, income, property or sales, requires the approval of the voters of Metro before taking effect. Current revenues for Metro in fiscal year 2015/16 were budgeted at £255 million (\$370 million USD).

Forty percent – or nearly £101 million (\$147 million USD) – are enterprise revenues generated by Metro's activities, especially for solid waste and from visitor venues. Metro budgeted £41 million (\$59 million USD) in local property taxes and £14 million (\$21 million USD) in excise taxes. About 11% of Metro's revenues are from federal, state, and other local government transfers. The remaining earnings are from interest earnings and bond sales.

Table 6: Details of Portland Metro governance and scrutiny arrangements	
Governance structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Metro Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ provides region-wide land use and transportation planning guidance ○ manages growth, infrastructure and development issues that cut across jurisdictional boundaries. ○ manages and controls certain aspects of urban development, ○ works with local partners to conserve historic neighbourhoods, spur economic development and accommodate growth ○ serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organisation (MPO) for Transportation ○ runs various regional attractions, for example, the Oregon Zoo and oversees the region's solid waste system. ○ determines the 'urban growth boundary' and to sets out a vision for the future of the area.
Executive arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Metro powers are vested in the Metro Council which comprises a directly elected President, and six Councillors, • The President appoints all members of the committees, commissions and boards created by the Council, but does not have powers that are independent of the Council • The Metro Council appoints two officials: the Chief Operating Officer and the Metro Attorney. The Chief Operating Officer is responsible for the day-to-day operations of Metro and hiring all of the employees (except for the Metro Attorney and Metro Auditor). The Metro Attorney handles all litigation on behalf of the agency. • The Metro auditor, elected region-wide is responsible for oversight of Metro's financial affairs and for conducting performance audits • The Council meets regularly in meetings that are open to the public.
Elections and voter turnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections employ a 'first past the post' system. • The President of Metro is directly elected, as is the Metro Auditor, and they both serve a four-year term. • The six Councillors, elected to represent geographical districts in the Metro area, also serve four-year terms. • The voter turnout at the last Metro elections in 2014 was 40%.
Scrutiny arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The directly elected Metro Auditor serves full time and may not be employed by any other person or entity while serving as Auditor. • They undertake continuous investigations of the operations of Metro, including financial and performance auditing. • The Auditor does not perform any executive function, but provides an important scrutiny role and can make published reports to the Metro Council on any matter relating to the performance of the organisation, and provide

	<p>recommendations for remedial action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition, Metro publishes quarterly management reports. The final report for each year includes a 'Balanced Scorecard', which views the organization from six distinct perspectives: financial performance, internal and external customer service, business process efficiency, employee learning and growth, sustainability and diversity. • There is a complete separation of powers between the executive and the scrutiny functions.
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Table 7: Assessment according to the six criteria of good governance	
Civic Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Metro model underpins highly visible political leadership of the metropolitan area. • The process of direct election ensures that the President is a visible and well-known public figure • Unlike a directly elected mayor model of governance, the President does not have personal authority to take executive decisions, rather the Councillors also play an important civic leadership role. • While the President is 'first among equals' the senior political leadership of Metro is collective: the seven members of Metro Council share the political leadership task.
Effective Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in the greater Portland area are civically active and the local political culture places a high value on public participation. • To enjoy public support decisions made by the Metro Council need to be sensitive to this political context. • The fact that high-level decisions have to be agreed by a majority of the Metro Council ensures that perspectives of different localities are presented and recorded.
Transparency and Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The model of governance is clearly set out in the Metro Charter. • Roles and responsibilities are explicit and the conduct of Metro business in public Metro meetings means that the model has a high level of transparency. • The independent, directly elected Metro Auditor provides a check on the activities of Metro Council. This individual has the legitimacy and resources to examine issues relating to effectiveness and efficiency.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The President, the Councillors and the Auditor are all answerable to the citizenry at the ballot box. • In addition, the separation of powers between the Metro Council and the Auditor means that the Metro Auditor can provide an independent, third party review of the effectiveness of the agency.
Public Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metro has extensive arrangements for public involvement. These are set out in a <i>Public Engagement Guide</i>, published in 2013.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has been designed to assist community members who want to engage with Metro staff seeking useful ideas and federal agencies wanting to verify compliance with legal requirements.
Business engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The business community is effective in engaging with Metro on issues where there is a clear link to business, economic development, and employment. • In particular, Metro has active relationships with business in issues around land use and development, transportation planning and funding, and solid waste regulations and operations.

4) Association of the Region of Stuttgart: Summary

- Directly elected regional governance introduced in 1984
- Existing municipalities remain
- No directly elected mayor
- The members of the Assembly appoint the Chair of the Assembly from their own ranks
- Particularly strong business involvement

Established in 1994 the new region of Stuttgart is one of the first successful efforts at metropolitan reform in Germany, replacing a relatively ineffective regional planning association with a new, directly elected system of regional governance: the Verband Region of Stuttgart (VRS). The VRS is responsible for regional spatial planning, landscape framework planning, regional transport planning, economic development and parts of waste management. It covers a population of 2.6 million, encompassing 179 municipalities, five counties and the city of Stuttgart

The annual budget of the VRS is £225 million (290 million euros). The funding comes from a diversity of sources: a contribution from the Land of Baden-Wuerttemberg, three different levies (association, transport, waste) from its member communities, income from running the regional rail system (the S-Bahn), as well as project funding for which the VRS applies regularly to higher levels of government, the EU and to private sector sponsors.

Citizens elect an 87-member regional assembly and a wide range of political parties is represented. The assembly appoints a chair from its ranks to lead the assembly for a five-year term. The VRS works closely with the city of Stuttgart, the counties and the municipalities and has been particularly effective in helping to build new regional networks for entrepreneurs and those active in the creative industries. It has also been active on the international stage – the VRS was the first region in Germany to establish an office in Brussels in 2002 and is an active member of the European Network of Metropolitan Regions (METREX).

Table 8: Details of Stuttgart city region governance and scrutiny arrangements	
Governance structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The VRS is governed by a directly elected regional assembly, which meets five or six times a year. • It is responsible for the following tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive regional planning including setting a mandatory framework for local land use plans • Landscape framework planning to cover land, water and climate change mitigation • The development of a 'landscape park' • Regional transport planning and regional public transit • Parts of waste management • Regional economic development and tourism marketing • In addition, the assembly has the right to voluntarily take on tasks in the fields of culture, sports, events and trade fairs at the regional scale.
Executive arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair of the assembly is chosen by the members of the assembly, but has little independent executive power. • He or she prepares the agendas for the assembly meetings, and also the agendas for the three committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Economy, infrastructure and administration, ○ Transport/mobility ○ Planning. • These committees may make decisions on minor issues, but their main role is to prepare policy papers for decision by the assembly. • The assembly decides the policies of the association and also sets the budget. • The Chair proposes the Executive Director of the association and the assembly appoints this person for a period of eight years. • The Executive Director leads the administration, represents the association and implements the decisions of the assembly. He or she participates in the work of the assembly, including the three committees, acting as an adviser.
Elections and voter turnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Assembly has 87 seats with representation related to population size • Elections are held once every five years using a system of proportional representation. • Elected councillors do not represent a county, municipality or any other geographical constituency. Rather they are elected to represent the region as a whole. • The voter turnout at the last elections in 2014 was 53%, almost exactly the same as in 2009.
Scrutiny arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work of the administration is under the political control of the assembly. • The Executive Director and the officers of the association are held to account by the assembly.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Land of Baden-Wuerttemberg ensures the work of the association complies with the law.
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Table 9: Assessment according to the six criteria of good governance	
Civic Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The VRS model of government provides high profile and visible leadership for the region of Stuttgart, balancing leadership at the regional level with leadership at lower geographical levels. • Members of the assembly are elected, this provides political leaders with the legitimacy to take tough strategic decisions. • However, public leadership responsibilities are dispersed with the city, the counties and the municipalities all autonomous local government units who retain responsibilities for most local government services.
Effective Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These arrangements have improved the quality of metropolitan decision-making considerably, shifting the local political culture away from territorial disputes towards an attitude that is more focused on problem solving for the wider area. • While decisions can be taken on the majority principle an implicit understanding has grown up that all decisions should attract either unanimous support or at least substantial majorities. .
Transparency and Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assembly meets five or six times a year and these meetings are public. • Likewise the three committees of the assembly also meet in public. • The combination of a directly elected assembly and a lean planning administration means that, in most cases, the decisions of the assembly are implemented relatively swiftly.
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members of the assembly are answerable to the citizens at the ballot box. • While the counties and municipalities have no direct veto power over decisions made by the assembly it is usually the case that more than half of the members of the assembly are, at the same time, members of a county or municipality. • This helps ensure local government is influential within regional governance.
Public Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opinions are divided on how successful arrangements are for public involvement in the work of the VRS. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ On the one hand, the transparency of decision-making and the existence of a variety of informal networks including networks of churches, sports and a regional development association, suggest that public involvement is good. ○ On the other hand, access to the various networks is not necessarily open to all, and it is also the case that citizens tend to be more concerned about local issues

	<p>than with region-wide policy making.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, the process of direct election gives citizens a clear opportunity to shape the character and priorities of regional governance.
Business engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The business community plays an active role in the work of the VRS. • The Chamber of Commerce and other business organisations operate with the same geographical boundary of the VRS and this is considered a major strength.

5) Emerging themes for international city region governance debates

The previous section sets out details of four very different models of city region governance drawn from New Zealand, the UK, the USA and Germany. The four city regions presented – Auckland Council, Greater London Authority, Portland Metro and the Association of the Region of Stuttgart – are, on the whole, seen as positive examples of city region governance. These areas are seen as city regions that are breaking new ground in relation to how to advocate the power of place in a world that has a tendency to ignore local concerns and priorities. In these city regions locally based civic leaders have pushed forward reforms and their achievements in strengthening place-based power should be celebrated.

Given the important differences between these four governance models, it is important to record that no single approach to city region governance, no matter how effective in a given socio-political context, is likely to be directly applicable to all city regions. It follows that city regions, in different countries and different contexts, need to design their own solutions to their own particular city regional and socio-political challenges.

However, a number of key lessons from this research can be identified for discussion at the EURA Conference in Warsaw. The pointers below, drawn from the study for the LGA in the UK, suggest some of the topics that could be discussed.

- The international evidence shows that different cities/city regions have adopted different models of city leadership and that no one model is superior to the others. In particular, cities across the world can and have thrived without a directly elected mayor.
- In local governments across the world there is huge variation in the way powers are distributed between the Executive and the Assembly. Combined authorities in England, and other areas with devolved governance arrangements, will wish to develop their own ideas on this power sharing relationship. It would also be wise to build in opportunities to review the balance of powers in the light of experience.
- There is room for combined authorities in England and other areas with devolved governance arrangements to invent new ways of presenting

issues and public policy choices to their citizens. The *Public Engagement Guide* published by Portland Metro in particular provides an excellent example of good practice in relation to transparency and efficiency.

- Devolved areas wishing to ensure that councillors with different kinds of experience are able to exercise senior leadership roles may feel that mayoral models have limitations. That question aside, it is clear that combined authorities, whether they have directly elected mayors or not, can invent an array of new arrangements for ensuring inclusive leadership in their constitutions. There are opportunities for creating innovative arrangements for a wide range of voices to be heard.
- International experience suggests that a much more open scrutiny process is likely to be both more effective in delivering results, and more attractive to citizens.

More broadly, it seems clear that it is enormously important for urban and regional scholars to maintain a sharp focus on who is gaining and who is losing from metropolitan governance reform efforts. The rise of the city region can, perhaps, provide underpinning for those who want to support place-based power against the impositions of uncaring, place-less power. But, in some countries at least, there are risks that measures, claimed by their authors to be designed to strengthen city region governance, are, in truth, designed to weaken place-based power rather than strengthen it.

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Endnotes

ⁱ In this paper the words 'city region' and 'metropolitan' are used interchangeably to denote relatively large territorial areas of governance, areas that reflect the broad socio-economic geography of these areas (and, as part of this, the general travel-to-work dynamics of these territories), rather than the municipal boundaries of particular administrative units of government.

ⁱⁱ The six areas in England that elected so-called 'metro mayors' in May 2017 were: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; Greater Manchester; Liverpool City Region; Tees Valley; West of England; and West Midlands.

iii These distinctions draw on an international study of big city regions: Kantor P., Lefevre C., Saito A. and Thornley A. (2012) *Struggling Giants. City region governance in London, New York, Paris and Tokyo*. pp 270-277. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

iv The report for the LGA focuses on city region governance in England. Legislation relating to the development of local governance in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is devolved to political organs in those parts of the UK and changes in those areas are not considered in this paper.

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