

## The role of appropriate governance in delivering competitiveness, sustainability and resilience in Metropolitan Cork

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Urban governance in metropolitan areas is too often considered solely through administrative or political lenses whereby jurisdictional boundaries tend to be established to reflect manageable territories or established political units. Spatial planning in metropolitan contexts, which includes concerns around environmental, social and economic issues at the city, metropolitan and city-region scales, often advocates new governing spaces to replace established administrative and political units. The administrative and governance structure for Ireland's cities has not evolved in line with economic, demographic, social or political developments and there has been no substantial reconfiguration of the ways in which Ireland's metropolitan areas cities are governed. The evolution of Ireland's principal cities from relatively small scale and compact provincial centres with localised urban fields into larger metropolitan areas with more complex functional and economic characteristics was not accompanied by any sophisticated attempt to revise governing arrangements to reflect such changes. This resulted in fragmented urban governance and no reliable mechanism to allow administrative boundaries to evolve in line with urban growth. The challenge is not only one of establishing appropriate boundaries for addressing environmental, functional and economic issues but also one of effectively managing the relationships between the territorial dimensions of spatial planning. An effective city region needs to plan, coordinate, influence, and even control the development of its constituent region. The challenges of climate change and a sustainable economic development require a more proactive approach both in respect of defining appropriate governance spaces and managing the relationships between these territories.

This paper will address these challenges by exploring the opportunities for establishing a new urban governance regime in metropolitan Cork, within the context of current proposed reforms to local government structures in Ireland. These reforms indicate recognition at an official level that the current administrative arrangements for Ireland's principal urban areas are no longer suitable in light of social, environmental and economic realities. Recent history in Cork City and County demonstrates both a need and an opportunity to reconsider the appropriateness and efficacy of existing administrative arrangements given the scale and character of growth in the city region in the last 30 years. The government's current proposed reforms provide an important opportunity to investigate how the pragmatic task of delivering suitable governance arrangements interacts with the territorial, environmental and economic forces at the metropolitan level and demonstrates the difficulty of delivering appropriate solutions using traditional political methods. The research considers the diversity of approaches being advocated for the different cities within the proposed reforms and assesses the extent to which these various approaches actually reflect the real governance challenges in these places. It suggests that the proposed amalgamations of city and county councils in certain urban locations

exemplify the dominance of administrative inertia and political protectionism as the preferred measures for boundary changes and suggests that the approach proposed in the case of metropolitan Cork might provide a more useful template for effective and meaningful reform of urban governance in an Irish context. The paper argues for a reconfiguration of the administrative map of Ireland based on need as opposed to expediency and illustrates how this new territorial framework needs to be fashioned in order to promote contiguous, functional territories at the metropolitan, regional and national level and how each tier of this hierarchy has remits appropriate to spatial needs.

Using a case study of the development and management of Cork as a city region over the past 30 years, the research considers the particular governance arrangements that have emerged within the city region and how these have addressed three broad issues. Firstly, it examines the reasons why the Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP), widely recognised as a model sub-regional strategy based on inter-authority partnership, has struggled to influence the location of population growth in a way that supports sustainable transportation modes and settlement patterns. Secondly, the research reviews the effectiveness of the CASP approach as a way of directing employment activity to support the development of a vibrant and economically sustainable city in the face of continued inter authority competition and national economic imperatives. Thirdly, the paper assesses the extent to which the case for more appropriate and effective governance arrangements for cities can be reinforced by a consideration of the city's wider physical and natural environment, its topography and landscape setting, and how these can help to define and legitimise new territorial arrangements at the metropolitan scale. Finally the paper will consider the usefulness and appropriateness of the Cork Metropolitan area as a new territorial and governance proposition for the city region.