

## **Cooperative Metropolitan Governance in Melbourne?**

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## **Cooperative Metropolitan Governance in Melbourne?**

Australia's large (capital) cities are metropolitan areas in which diverse needs, players and topics have to be coordinated. Mostly, this is done by the state government or by (groups of) local councils. However, there are no regional authorities dealing with metropolitan issues such as pressures of growth or sustainable development. As many actions to deal with metropolitan problems go uncoordinated or are ineffective, the question is whether there are better ways to deal with metropolitan governance and what could be elements of an improved governance structure.

This paper analyses the Melbourne metropolitan area from the viewpoint of 'cooperative regionalism'. Cooperative regionalists argue that effective metropolitan governance is a result of cooperative arrangements based on negotiation processes between a variety of policy-relevant actors. Drawing on an analysis of policy documents and on interviews with stakeholders the Melbourne metropolitan area is examined with regard to the factor of a shared regional vision and strategy which is considered to be crucial for better metropolitan governance. The attitudes around the metropolitan growth strategy, the absence of ownership of and resistance to it, and the problems of its implementation indicate that metropolitan governance in Melbourne needs to be improved. The paper will highlight what steps could lead to better metropolitan governance in Melbourne and what it might look like.

## **Cooperative Metropolitan Governance in Melbourne?<sup>i</sup>**

In December 2008, the Victorian State Government released a planning update for its metropolitan growth strategy *Melbourne 2030* (DPCD, 2008a). Among other changes, this update announced an outward expansion of the urban growth boundary justified by predictions of substantial population growth, particularly in the designated new growth areas. Two days after the announcement, the state-appointed but independent Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability published a State of the Environment report for Victoria, the culmination of five years' work (CES, 2008). This report called, among other things, for a halt to urban growth, and for the urban growth boundary to be fixed and imposed.

This incident highlights the importance of coordinated metropolitan planning as an essential means for achieving more coordinated and better development and what happens when there is no communication and cooperation between the different regional actors. Occurrences and contradictions like this lead to confusion, resistance and debate about the right way to proceed. In contrast, regional players with common aims, acting in concert are much more effective in implementing strategies due to reduced resistance and debate after the strategy has been decided, leaving more energy to be spent on the implementation. Therefore, good governance structures and metropolitan strategies supported by all arms of government, as well as by public and private stakeholders, are crucial to build the future of a region.

### **The Need for Metropolitan Governance**

Australia's large cities are metropolitan<sup>ii</sup> areas characterised by urban dispersion, functional specialisation and spatial mobility. In the last few

decades, the majority of urban growth in Australia occurred on the fringes of cities which leads to the expansion of the metropolitan areas into the peri-urban areas, which hold high strategic, spatial, economic and environmental significance (Low Choy, Sutherland, Gleeson, Sipe & Dodson, 2008; Buxton et al. 2006). Many of the problems of suburbanisation, urban growth and sustainable development cannot be resolved at the local level, because they concern several municipalities and are caused over the whole metropolitan area. Thus, governance on a regional level is of considerable importance and the coordination of cities and their hinterlands is an essential element in making metropolitan areas more effective (Berger, 2003).

This is acknowledged by a resurgent interest in metropolitan planning (Bunker & Searle, 2009; Gleeson, Darbas, & Lawson, 2004). Most Australian capital regions have developed new planning initiatives and metropolitan strategies in order to deal with continuing growth pressures and to achieve a more sustainable development. These metropolitan planning efforts raise important questions about governance structures, measures of effectiveness and responsibility.

The controversy described in the introduction indicates that in Melbourne governance capacity as well as the structural preconditions for it are weak or non-existent. Therefore this paper will examine metropolitan governance structures in Melbourne, consider what problems exist and seek to find ways to better metropolitan governance.

### **Cooperative Regionalism as Approach to Metropolitan Governance**

While from the 1950s to the 1990s the debate about metropolitan governance focused on administrative efficiency and local service provision

for city regions (Brenner, 2003; Swanstrom 2001) in the 1990s a new view on metropolitan governance developed which has been labelled 'new regionalism' (Frisken & Norris, 2001; Swanstrom, 2001; Savitch & Vogel, 2000) or 'new metropolitan governance' (Brenner, 2003). The current debate has moved to more diverse topics, including economic development, socio-spatial equity, ecological problems, urban growth and the revaluation of the regional level as a governance level (Wheeler, 2002; Norris, 2001b; Savitch & Vogel, 2000). The new regionalism covers these various areas, but comprises several strands of analysis that concentrate on different themes. Therefore the term new regionalism can be assessed as ambiguous and controversial (Gleeson, 2003; MacLeod, 2001). At least five strands of analysis can be distinguished within current research (Haughton & Counsell, 2004; Brenner, 2002; Wheeler, 2002) that could be labelled as follows: 'competitive regionalism', 'cluster regionalism', 'territorial regionalism', 'redistributive regionalism' and 'cooperative regionalism'<sup>iii</sup>.

Of these five strands the cooperative regionalism approach deals with the organisation and the governance side of metropolitan governance (Heinelt & Kübler, 2005a; Savitch & Vogel, 2000). The other strands are mainly concerned with the competitiveness of regions (MacLeod, 2001; Norris, 2001b; Lovering, 1999), regional industrial clusters (Rainnie & Grant, 2005; Scott & Storper, 2003; Amin, 1999; Cooke & Morgan, 1998), territorial relations and rescaling (Amin, 2004; Brenner, 2003b; Keating, 1998) and socio-spatial equity issues (Fürst, 2005; Rusk, 2003; Katz, 2000; Orfield, 1997). While these strands and their issues are important, the focus of this paper is governance coordination and it will thus take the cooperative regionalism approach as framework.

Cooperative regionalism draws on empirical research which found that metropolitan problems are often dealt with by “purpose-oriented networks of cooperation involving municipalities, governmental agencies from various levels, as well as private service providers” (Kübler, 2005: 10).

Proponents of cooperative regionalism therefore argue that effective metropolitan governance is a result of “cooperative arrangements based on negotiation processes (...) between a variety of policy-relevant actors” (Kübler, 2005: 10), rather than of institutional consolidation, hierarchy or competition (Frisken & Norris, 2001; Wallis, 1994). These scholars claim that several paths may lead to effective area-wide governance and that there is not *one* single concept that fits every region (Kübler & Schwab, 2007; OECD, 2001). They emphasise that negotiation and voluntary cooperation is essential to successfully govern a region, and that whether this is happening through a regional government or a loose network depends on the particular actors and constellations of each region (Norris, 2001b; Lefèvre, 1998). It is, however, acknowledged that without any steering central authority there is no certainty that regional problems will be really addressed within networks of cooperation and that a minimum of institutionalisation is necessary (Fürst, 2003; Savitch & Vogel, 2000). This implies a new role for government, rather than its disappearance.

Critics of this approach doubt the relevance of cooperative arrangements in regions, and argue that parochial attitudes and competition are stronger than the advantages of cooperation (Fürst, 2005; Wheeler, 2002; Norris, 2001a). Others argue that cooperation will occur around non-controversial functional rather than divisive issues (Norris, 2001a). However, it seems that, where the advantages of cooperation are acknowledged, actors

cooperate further than the non-controversial issues and that parochial attitudes can be overcome (Kroen, 2009).

Different factors that contribute to the success of building effective metropolitan governance have been mentioned in the literature. These factors can take on a different form in different regions as there is no one-size-fits-all approach, but overall they are favourable for good metropolitan governance. The following represents a list of different factors mentioned in the literature (Heinelt and Kübler, 2005a, 2005b; Kübler, 2005; Fürst, 2005; van den Berg and Braun, 1999): (i) cooperative active behaviour; (ii) shared regional vision and strategy; (iii) political leadership; (iv) balance of networking and institutionalisation ; (v) incentives and support.

Because in Melbourne the regional growth strategy is of high importance for the development of the metropolitan area and has recently been updated, and because the strategy is the only document which deals with the whole metropolitan area, this paper will concentrate on the factor of a shared regional strategy and vision in its analysis. This factor connotes that a distinct vision and well elaborated strategy are prerequisites for governing urban regions because of strong interdependencies. A shared regional vision and strategy is seen to ensure that all actors agree to common overall objectives and that, in order to make the strategy meaningful, all actors should have a sense of ownership of it (van den Berg and Braun, 1999).

### **A shared regional strategy and vision for Melbourne?**<sup>iv</sup>

Melbourne's current metropolitan strategy '*Melbourne 2030 – Planning for Sustainable Growth*' is a long-range strategic plan to manage growth and change across metropolitan Melbourne and the surrounding region (DOI, 2002). Released by the state in 2002, its objective is "to establish a more

sustainable, equitable, prosperous and accessible city for current and future generations” (Audit Expert Group, 2008: 4). The strategy plans for the capacity to absorb new households as a substantial population growth is forecasted until 2030. The growth is planned to be managed by a twin strategy: an urban growth boundary (UGB) and designated growth areas place greater controls on outward expansion at the urban fringe, while an activity centre policy aims to capture more residents and jobs in strategic locations within the established urbanised area (DOI, 2002).

However, as mentioned previously, in December 2008, the state government released an update of *Melbourne 2030* called ‘Melbourne @ 5 Million’ (DPCD, 2008a) which makes some changes to the strategy. This update occurred in response to new population projections which forecast substantially more growth than planned for in 2002 (Victorian Government, 2008). One of the main changes is the announcement to expand the urban growth boundary significantly (a third time since the release of *Melbourne 2030*) in order to cope with the growth and to maintain housing affordability (DPCD, 2008a). This indicates a change of priorities and a difference in interpreting liveability; from an emphasis on battling urban sprawl and its consequences to an emphasis on keeping housing affordable and maintaining the status quo. Thus, the aims of *Melbourne 2030* have been changed somewhat through the update.

When the metropolitan strategy was first released, it was generally well received from planners, developers and even environmentalists (Millar, 2008; Low, 2002; George, 2002). Despite the good reception at its release, in the meantime *Melbourne 2030* has generated much public and academic debate and considerable criticism of both the plan and its implementation

(Audit Expert Group, 2008). Opponents of the content argue that the plan leads to an increase of land and house prices, can cause damage to established suburbia through uncoordinated infill development and is used to implement 'inappropriate' high-density development (Audit Expert Group, 2008; Birrell, O'Connor, Healy & Rapson, 2005; SOS, 2009). Other critics argue, in contrast, that the plan and its implementation are not consistent enough and that it still supports roads and low-density development, in particular at the fringe (Buxton, 2008; Goodman & Coote, 2007; Mees, 2003). There is also the perception that not even all state agencies pursue *Melbourne 2030*, and that there seems to be no common understanding of what the strategy is thought to achieve (Buxton 2008; Councillor and Chair MTF, interview 17/05/07; Whittlesea Director Planning and Development, interview 05/07/07). Therefore, by now, many actors criticise the lack of implementation (Millar, 2008; Audit Expert Group, 2008).

A review of the strategy which had the aim to assess the progress of implementation and to examine whether new development reflects the aims of the strategy took place in 2007. It consists of an analysis of the 2006 census (DPCD, 2007) and of a report from the expert group that conducted the audit, which draws on comments from a public submission process (Audit Expert Group, 2008). The expert group recommended three 'imperatives' to be addressed in order to achieve a successful implementation of *Melbourne 2030* (Audit Expert Group, 2008: 6). These imperatives show that currently responsibility for implementation is not clear enough, a clear understanding and a whole-of-government approach are lacking, the funding is inadequate and that broad-based support from the local communities and local governments is absent.

The state government has responded to the audit with 'Planning for all of Melbourne' (Victorian Government, 2008). As specific actions to respond to the three imperatives of the audit, the document proposes the establishment of Development Assessment Committees (DACs), a Planning and Development Industry Round Table and a new Melbourne 2030 Implementation Unit. The DACs are intended to decide over planning permits in areas and matters of metropolitan significance. This includes the 26 principal activity centres identified in *Melbourne 2030* (Victorian Government, 2008). The state government intends to improve the partnership between the state and local governments through the DACs and to offer a place where decisions can be made together in order to achieve better and quicker planning decisions (DPCD, 2008b). The Planning and Development Industry Round Table is planned to include planning professionals and the local government sector, in order to provide advice to the Minister for Planning on continual improvements to the planning system (Victorian Government, 2008). The establishment of the Melbourne 2030 Implementation Unit is expected to improve the issue of responsibility by having one unit that monitors and backs implementation.

The DACs are the most criticised element of the new government actions. Some local governments contend that the DACs weaken democratic decision-making, as the councils have less power to decide for their own communities (Houston & Millar, 2008). Buxton (2008) claims that the DACs will not change the lack of progress in the established outer areas while progress is already on the way for the inner and middle suburbs. Overall, the success of the DACs will depend on whether they will be really

conducted in partnership and establish compromises, or whether the state will use its stronger role to influence decisions based on its own interests.

Another criticism of the state's response to the audit is that it ignores several of the audit's suggestions (Buxton, 2008). Regarding the three imperatives from the audit, the state particularly neglects the need for an improvement in public support. The response states that communities will be engaged early in the planning process and in planning for growth, but there is nothing similar to the Planning and Development Industry Round Table and no activities are specified for public education or community engagement to explain the importance of *Melbourne 2030* (Victorian Government, 2008; Audit Expert Group, 2008).

Not a direct response, but released shortly after the audit is the planning update 'Melbourne @ 5 Million' (DPCD, 2008a). As described earlier, the main change of this update is the expansion of the urban growth boundary and it also announces a focus on six newly designated Central Activities Districts (CADs). The CADs are thought to offer CBD-like employment and will be one level 'above' the principal activity centres (DPCD, 2008a).

In particular, the announcement of new growth areas and the expansion of the UGB have led to disappointment among many actors, and it reinforces the impression that the state does not support its own strategy, or that, at least, the political will to implement it is lacking (Moncrief, 2008). In a – not representative – poll in *The Age* conducted on the day the new UGB was announced, 88% of participants thought that the state government has given up on Melbourne's urban sprawl where as only 12% did not think so (The Age, 17/06/09). While this poll cannot be regarded as representative it indicates the impression many people have from the boundary's redrawing.

Even though the state government claims that the update is consistent with *Melbourne 2030* (Premier of Victoria, 2008), the expansion of the UGB cannot really be brought in line with the objectives of *Melbourne 2030*, as this set up the UGB as a clear boundary to stop urban sprawl on Melbourne's fringe and envisaged higher densities for the city and the outer suburbs. With the change of the boundary and the announcement of new growth areas, the state government walks away from this aim of a clear sprawl-stopping boundary.

The change to the UGB can be seen as necessary because of the strong population growth (DPCD, 2008a), but it also may be necessary because not much has changed in the urban growth patterns since the release of *Melbourne 2030* (DPCD, 2007). The development in the growth areas has not been much denser, and growth has not been channelled much more into the activity centres (Buxton, 2008). Therefore, the lack of implementation and political will has led to the need to redraw the UGB and will also lead to the pressure to change the UGB again because land owners will speculate for the next expansion and will also lobby for it.

In 2007 several interviewees interviewed with regard to *Melbourne 2030* and also the program Transit Cities expressed the perception that the political will for the implementation of *Melbourne 2030* is lacking, although funding is made available (Whittlesea Director Planning and Development, interview 05/07/07).

"It's basically that the political will is missing. If they would want to implement the policies outlined in *Melbourne 2030*, wouldn't you then be re-aligning other policies supporting it? That has not been done." (Councillor and Chair MTF, interview 17/05/07)

Melbourne @ 5 Million shows that the interviewees were right with their assessment. With the extension of the UGB, the state has selected the way of lower resistance and has given in to resistance to high-density development in established suburbs, a (perceived?) housing affordability crisis and a growing population.

### **Evidence of metropolitan governance in Melbourne**

Regarding metropolitan governance it can be said that the metropolitan growth strategy *Melbourne 2030* is the main expression of metropolitan governance in Melbourne as it is the only strategic document which deals with the metropolitan area. Apart from that there are no cooperative arrangements on the metropolitan level or actors working solely on a metropolitan level (Kroen, 2009). Most actors either work and cooperate on a state level or on a sub-regional level.

It can also be said that the strategy is not shared. It is based on a degree of cooperation to the extent that local governments have been involved in its development, and public workshops have been conducted. However, there is criticism and resistance towards the strategy by the public and also local governments, due to a perceived and existing lack of consultation, resistance against the ideas of *Melbourne 2030* and a lack of communication about the ideas underlying the strategy (Kroen, 2009). In particular the lack of consultation is a problem; the Audit Expert Group (2008) states that *Melbourne 2030* is seen as the state's plan and not as a strategy from and for the whole of the metropolitan area despite the consultation program that has been undertaken. Mees (2003) furthermore argues that opposing opinions have been ignored and overruled in the consultation program, and thus no meaningful consultation has taken place.

Despite support for the content by many, already in the beginning ownership of the strategy by some local governments and also residents was lacking. Furthermore, the perception that the strategy is considered as one policy among many by ministers and departments (Councillor and Chair MTF, interview 17/05/07). Therefore, even though it is obvious that not all steps of the strategy can or will be put into action in the beginning, the impression now prevails that the implementation of *Melbourne 2030* is seriously lagging behind schedule or that the strategy is not implemented at all. The lack of implementation also caused dwindling support from academics and professionals who now are disappointed with the strategy and/or its implementation. This situation has led to heated public debate about the strategy and more and more public criticism.

The lack of consultation also means that municipalities, which should be main actors for metropolitan governance, are not participating in it in Melbourne as they are not involved in decisions about it. This leads to less effective metropolitan governance because local governments are only consulted and involved in its development to a small extent, but have to implement governance activities and are influenced by the consequences.

At the same time, responsibility for metropolitan governance is scattered in the state agencies, with many of them pursuing their own narrow agendas in the implementation of metropolitan governance (Anonymous, interview 25/07/07; DOI Public Transport Division, interview 30/04/07). The interviews revealed that many of the state players still think in silos, and that the overall vision or aim of the metropolitan strategy is often missing in their actions. Even though this is an assessment of the interviewees, it

indicates the lack of whole-of-government support and of the view of the metropolitan strategy as a driving force of regional development.

This shows that metropolitan governance in Melbourne is not very effective because there is no ownership of the regional strategy, resistance against it and therefore problems with its implementation. It is not a shared strategy and actors rather think in silos and inside their boundaries than in ways of one metropolitan area. Metropolitan governance can be seen as ineffective due to the dominance and control of the state government and the lack of consultation, leadership and political will are the greatest barriers for effective metropolitan governance in Melbourne.

It has to be acknowledged, however, that metropolitan governance with regard to planning and development in Melbourne is not totally absent. The fact that a metropolitan strategy has been developed gives hope that the importance of governing the metropolitan area and planning for its future is understood, and that the capability exists to develop such a strategy. The content of the strategy, and in particular its update through the audit response, shows that there is awareness of the need for the regional coordination of urban development. The execution of a review and evaluation is a positive point with regard to metropolitan governance that helps identify weaknesses and needs for actions. However, the update of *Melbourne 2030* in December 2008 casts doubts on this awareness or the understanding of the urgency.

Overall, to really achieve the objectives of *Melbourne 2030*, much more effective metropolitan governance and political will are needed. To what extent the new actions for the implementation of *Melbourne 2030* announced in 'Planning for all of Melbourne' will help for the better

effectiveness of metropolitan governance remains to be seen, but the *Melbourne 2030* update from December 2008 indicates that the strategy is not considered the main policy for regional development, or at least, that the state walks away from some of its essential objectives. Furthermore, in a climate where criticism is already abundant, more cooperative and inclusive activities have to occur to improve metropolitan governance and the implementation of the metropolitan strategy.

### **More effective metropolitan governance in Melbourne**

So what could be done to help achieving more effective metropolitan governance in Melbourne? Some elements that could help the effectiveness of metropolitan governance are communication and education about metropolitan issues and objectives, a collective need for action, voluntary and flexible cooperation structures, and an umbrella organisation for the metropolitan area.

Better communication regarding the aims and objectives of the regional strategy is needed in Melbourne because ownership of the strategy is lacking. Education and communication about the regional strategy and its contents can improve ownership of it and help to develop a *shared* strategy. Good communication also supports cooperative behaviour because if the intentions and actions of actors are clear to other actors and they feel informed, then they are more likely to participate and support these actions. Better communication is an activity that needs to be initiated by the state, as the state is the main actor for the regional strategy. A public participation strategy is required in order to reduce resistance. That is, the state explains what exactly it is trying to achieve and how, why this is important and how individuals and actors, such as local governments, can

contribute to this; and individuals, local governments and other actors have the opportunity to voice their concerns and receive a response. It is crucial that the state shows that it is listening to the other actors and that it takes their suggestions seriously into account. If a public debate like this does not happen the resistance towards the strategy will stay. There might still be resistance after the public debate, but compromises should be possible and resistance should also be less once the goals and concerns have been discussed and addressed.

To get regional actors to address a 'collective need for action' in a region can also help to achieve more cooperative behaviour, more political will, and with this, hopefully a better implementation of a regional strategy (Fürst, 2007). A collective need for action can be an exceptional crisis for the whole region which requires that all actors in the region approach it together. In Melbourne, the need to deal with the substantial increase in population and urban growth as well as the need to react on climate change and peak oil are collective needs for action. Actions are needed on the form of future urban growth to avoid furthering mobility problems and to minimise impacts. There is awareness and debate about these difficulties in Melbourne. What is necessary is the emphasis that collective action is needed for these problems and structures for this collective action. The emphasis can come from various regional actors, the structures would best be offered and organised by the state. To work on solutions to these problems together would enhance metropolitan governance and regional consciousness.

Voluntary and flexible cooperation structures can support more networking and cooperative behaviour in a region as these structures can convince

regional actors to try regional cooperation, without having to commit to it from the beginning (Kroen, 2009). It might be better or more useful at a later stage of the cooperation to establish more binding and reliable cooperation structures, but as a start voluntariness and flexibility are good incentives. Later, a coordinating agency can allow for more institutionalisation and greater reliability of the cooperation, while retaining flexible networking structures. In Melbourne, these voluntary and flexible cooperation structures could be established by the state or by the local governments themselves.

The state government could introduce a forum for the metropolitan level, where all municipalities participate and can discuss common problems and joint actions. This could be similar to the existing regional management forums (Wear, 2008), but with coverage of the whole metropolitan area. It would be possible to either have a forum where only the local governments participate, or a forum where representatives of state departments, and maybe even other actors, such as representatives from non-governmental organisations, also participate.

The local governments can also establish voluntary and flexible cooperation structures themselves. They could establish a forum for information exchange and joint projects which local governments can participate in if they want to, but where they can also distance themselves for certain projects. This already happens between some local governments but not for the whole metropolitan area. Reasons for this can be that the advantages of cooperation on the metropolitan level are not recognised yet or that there is the perception that the state deals with the metropolitan level.

If greater reliability is wanted, the state could also establish a coordinating agency. This can be an agency with certain tasks for the metropolitan area, such as regional planning, transportation planning and regional data collection. In addition to these tasks, it can fulfil the role of a gathering point and of an organisation concentrating on the regional level and urging cooperation between the actors. This coordinating agency could also be set up by the local governments in Melbourne. It could organise tasks of the local governments on a regional level, such as garbage collection or provision of local infrastructure, such as community facilities. However, it would be important that the state acknowledges this forum or agency because it will be difficult to impossible to work against the state.

Overall, an umbrella organisation for the metropolitan area would be able to improve metropolitan governance, no matter how it is organised because it would offer the opportunity of a regional viewpoint, situated between the local and state levels. An umbrella organisation could facilitate cooperation and communication between the different stakeholders. Several commentators have argued for a metropolitan authority like this (Buxton, 2008; CES, 2007; Spiller, 2006 cited after CES, 2007) and with the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) a metropolitan planning authority has existed previously (McLoughlin 1992; Dingle & Rasmussen 1991). However, citing legitimacy problems the state put an end to it in the 1990s; arguably power struggles have also played a decisive role for this decision. The experiences mean that many actors in Melbourne are sceptic about a new metropolitan authority, but they do not mean that a democratic metropolitan authority is not sensible and feasible in the Melbourne region.

The suggested actions would affect most of the metropolitan governance factors positively and help to establish more effective metropolitan governance in Melbourne. In sum, the suggestions imply that a regional agency concentrating on the city region could improve metropolitan governance in Melbourne. This means that the state has to share power for the metropolitan area and should open up to regional cooperation between the municipalities. Furthermore, the state government has to stand by its regional strategy and should show the political will to implement it. It could start with establishing a regional management forum for the whole metropolitan area and work with this. Local government would have to consider region-wide issues and might have to give up some power.

It is clear that currently there are some impediments to this. One crucial impediment is the 'bad start' or the stalemate of the *Melbourne 2030* with the resistance against it. Another important impediment is Melbourne's history with a metropolitan planning authority and also existing power structures. These hinder particularly the establishment of a regional authority. However, these are hindrances that can and need to be overcome.

## **Conclusions**

Overall, the case of Melbourne shows how important a regional vision and strategy can be. It has, in particular, illustrated how crucial it is that the strategy is shared by all regional actors. Furthermore, it demonstrated that a review and evaluation of the regional concept and its implementation can yield critical results, and is an essential element. However, in this context, the Melbourne region has also illustrated that political will is an essential element of metropolitan governance. As one interviewee stated: "the policy

base is very good (...) but the implementation is poor" (Councillor and Chair MTF, interview 17/05/07). The analysis of Melbourne made clear that the lack of political will is a huge barrier for effective metropolitan governance.

Overall, it can be concluded that to express and develop regional objectives, a shared regional strategy is vital, and good communication structures are essential. A coordinating agency can serve as a first point of reference for metropolitan governance, and can mediate, organise and coordinate regional activities. The involvement of local governments – and also other actors – into metropolitan governance seems to be crucial in order to gain their support and to give them ownership of regional activities.

Coming back to cooperative regionalism, it seems that one main reason why metropolitan governance in Melbourne does not work that well is the lack of negotiation and mutual cooperation between actors on a regional level. This supports the ideas of cooperative regionalists. How could negotiation and cooperation then be improved? As the state government casts serious doubts on its political will to implement its own strategy, it looks as if local governments are the actors that have to start and advance metropolitan governance in Melbourne in order to push the state to take the concerns of regional actors into account. It is also possible that actors, other than public ones, will have to start or demand better metropolitan governance. These actors need to push for regional cooperation and debate about metropolitan issues. The certainty of vision that comes from developing a consensus in the region around goals and directions and the strategies to achieve them can strengthen political will and leads to good metropolitan governance.

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## **Interviews**

DSE, Director Business and Special Projects, 25/04/07

DOI, Staff Public Transport Division, 30/04/07

DSE, Manager Transit Cities, 02/05/07

VicUrban, Development Director, 03/05/07

Dandenong Development Board, Executive Officer, 08/05/07

Ringwood, Director Major Projects and Infrastructure, 08/05/07

DOI, Director Transit Cities Program, 10/05/07

Frankston, Urban Strategy Manager, 15/05/07

Councillor and Chair Metropolitan Transport Forum, 17/05/07

DSE, Regional Director, former Transit Cities Manager, 18/05/07

DSE, Project Officer Transit Cities, 21/05/07

Staff, Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, 21/06/07

Whittlesea, Director Planning and Development, 05/07/07

One anonymous interviewee, 25/07/07

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> This paper is based on research for my PhD thesis, in particular chapters 4 and 8.

<sup>ii</sup> In this paper the terms ‘metropolitan’ and ‘regional’ will be used interchangeably and refer to metropolitan areas as well as city regions and their functional areas in general.

<sup>iii</sup> These labels were developed by myself as most authors refer to their research only as ‘new regionalism’ and no overall acknowledged labels exist. The labels refer to the main issue the research is engaged in. Because the strands are strongly interrelated, it is difficult to clearly distinguish between them, but these labels offer a starting point and overview.

<sup>iv</sup> This analysis is based on 14 interviews conducted in the Melbourne region between April and July 2007, and also on further documents and secondary data.