

Spanish metropolitan areas and the case of Madrid

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Abstract

The paper presents the Spanish general context on metro areas, its extension and the difficulties to define it. In a second step, it goes deeper into a model of metropolitan governance the institutional consolidation in the case of Madrid.

The rules of the game. Metropolitan areas legal definition and its consequences

In formal legal terms, a metropolitan area in Spain is a voluntary mechanism which can be set up (or not) by an Autonomous Community to better structure its territory. The normative idea behind is that coordinated action among municipalities leads to a more effective and efficient delivery of outputs, because these localities are interlinked. When they exist, they are organizational structures created to coordinate specific services and policies (transportation, infrastructures, environment, physical planning, etc.). The regional government, by creating a formal structure of this type, acknowledges the existence of “integrated networks of municipalities in big urban agglomerations which have economic and social linkages” (art. 43, 7/1985 Act on Local Government).

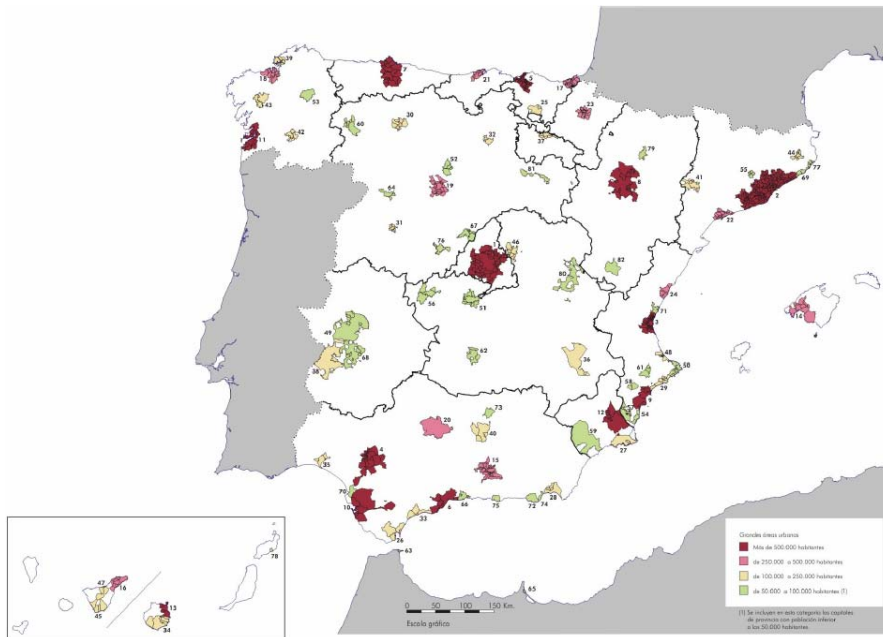
Very few regional governments have made use of this prerogative and when they have exerted it (i.e. Barcelona, Valencia) it has been for very limited purposes. It is understandable if we consider that an additional layer of government would represent a competitor for an institutional actor (the Autonomous Community) still in phase of development and reinforcement in the Spanish political system. Then, we face in this field a paradoxical and odd situation, the legal provisions for institutional consolidation of metropolitan areas, far from contributing to the emergence and spread out of this kind

of governmental arrangements, have hampered them because the actors responsible to initiate the process have not incentives to do it.

The fact that there are almost none metropolitan areas in the formal legal sense of the term does not mean that the country has been alien to the global (territorial-functional) trend of metropolitanization (Alba & Navarro 2005) or that Autonomous Communities do not recognize the existence of these spaces in their territories. As early as in the 1940's the first institutions to coordinate metropolitan matters were enacted. *Gran Madrid* in 1944, *Gran Bilbao* in 1946 and *Gran Valencia* in 1949 represented models of institutional consolidation of metro areas at that age. Before the 1980's the metropolitan reality was centred on the five or six biggest cities in the country. Already in our days, the implementation of the model of Autonomous Communities that has contributed to the emergence of new urban centralities, together with the suburban settlement all over, have both expanded the number and variety of metropolitan spaces. Contrary to what one could think when we look at the literature on metro areas, there is "metropolitan life" beyond Madrid and Barcelona. At present, central government acknowledges in its studies the existence of 27 urban areas above 200.000 inhabitants (Ministerio de Vivienda 2005), 25 of them formed by several municipalities (ranging from 2 to 165 units). The methodology and indicators to build the list can be improved (Feria 2004) and there is still an open debate on the definition of a MA in physical/functional terms. But it has been conformed using, among other indicators¹, the information provided by regional governments about their own vision on these kinds of spaces in their territories. It can be perceived that there is some resistance to name them as "metropolitan areas". Except for the cases of Madrid, Valencia and Alicante, they use close and varied expressions: "*región metropolitana*" for the case of Barcelona, "*aglomeración urbana*" in the andalusian Sevilla, Málaga and Granada, "*comarca metropolitana*" in the case of Zaragoza or "*area urbana*" in the rest of situations. But the fact is that they really are urban regions in the sense of constituting each of them a set of localities interlinked by economic, social and working mobility ties.

¹ Basically demographic dynamics and commuting.

Figure 1 Urban Areas in Spain



Source: Ministry of Housing (2005) *Atlas estadístico de las áreas urbanas en España 2005*.

Additionally to the scarcity of systematic statistical analysis applied to the whole country to identify metropolitan areas, there is a frustrating absence of case studies (except for Madrid and Barcelona) on the governance arrangements –formal or informal- put in place in metropolitan areas to increase their policies’ effectiveness. Nevertheless, if we have to hypothesize on the answer chosen by each metro area among the different models at hand -doing nothing, annexation by the central city, institutional consolidation or cooperation through stabilised networks (Goldsmith 2005)- it could, in principle, be predicted that it will varied along a continuum which has at one extreme the option of doing nothing and at the other the answer of establishing strong non institutionalized cooperation networks. This is so because, on the one hand, annexation (or amalgamation) is not a feasible option in political terms² and, on the other hand, the institutionalization solution (through the formal legal formula) faces all the limitations we have referred above. The density of the cooperation network (and then, the point in the continuum at which each MA would be placed) will mainly depend on political variables, specifically political leadership and arrangements within political parties.

Table 1.- Spanish Metropolitan Areas

² For the same reason that they are reluctant to create metropolitan areas, here again the resistance of regional governments to create a potential competitor for political power would explain the unfeasibility of the alternative.

MAs	Total Population	Number of municipalities	Central city Population	% Central city/ MAs population
Madrid	5.135.225	52	2.938.723	57,2
Barcelona	4.391.196	165	1.503.884	34,2
Valencia	1.359.743	45	738.441	54,3
Sevilla	1.160.241	24	684.633	59,0
Bilbao	895.769	35	349.972	39,1
Asturias	799.971	18	467.573	58,4
Málaga	762.468	8	524.414	68,8
Zaragoza	655.050	14	614.905	93,9
Alicante-Elx	570.938	6	285.580	50,0
Cádiz	577.756	6	316.636	54,8
Vigo-Pontevedra	545.711	14	280.186	51,3
Murcia	523.970	10	370.745	70,8
Las Palmas	492.876	4	354.863	72,0
Mallorca	432.743	8	333.801	77,1
Granada	444.121	30	240.661	54,2
Tenerife	374.720	6	188.477	50,3
San Sebastián	383.043	13	178.377	46,6
Coruña	369.709	10	236.379	63,9
Valladolid	374.083	17	316.580	84,6
Córdoba	308.072	1	308.072	100,0
Santander-Torrelavega	304.620	8	180.717	59,3
Tarragona-Reus	289.053	15	202.135	69,9
Pamplona	283.631	18	183.964	64,9
Castellón	250.247	6	147.667	59,0
Vitoria	216.852	1	216.852	100,0
Algeciras	202.078	4	101.468	50,2
Cartagena	199.227	2	184.686	92,7
MEAN	826.041	20	461.125	64,3
Total number of municipalities 540				

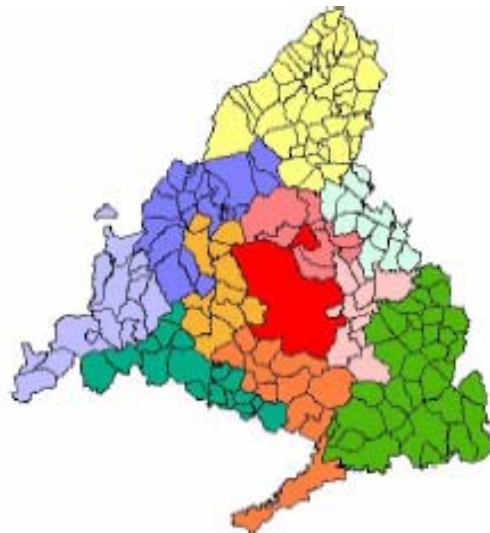
In this general landscape a different model of metropolitan governance has appeared. We are referring to the case of Madrid. Here, a regional government (the Autonomous Community Government) exists, performing over a territory which coincides more or less with the boundaries of the metro area. The formal institutionalized existent government serve as structure to govern the metropolis, just because it overlaps with the region boundaries and has the typical competences connected to metropolitan issues. The rest of the Spanish MAs have not replicated this model and up to date, this is the only exception in the national panorama so far.

We will analyze the cases of Madrid and Barcelona. The first as a model of strong institutionalization and the second as a model of cooperation network. Being the two most populated metropolitan areas in Spain, they have similarities in their territorial and socio-economic components and sharp differences in their models of governance. Analyzing them comparatively will lead us to a better understanding of when, why and how they evolved to different ways of metropolitan arrangements. A further step would be trying to compare the effects of each model on the effectiveness coordination of policies.

Madrid. A regional/metropolitan government

Madrid is a city and the capital of the State since 1561. Later on, in 1833 the limits of the province³ were established and it was named the province of Madrid⁴. When the decentralization model based on the State of Autonomies was built in the early 1980's, the province of Madrid was constituted as the Autonomous Community of Madrid. Today Madrid is a city and the capital of the State (red area, figure 2), a province and an Autonomous Community (whole area figure 2).

Figure 2. The Autonomous Community of Madrid and the city of Madrid



³ A “provincia” corresponds with the administrative decentralisation of the territory made up in the 18th century following the French model of “Departments”. Spain was divided in 49 provinces.

⁴ With few exceptions, provinces were called following the name of the main city in the area. These main cities were established as the capital of the province.

On top of that, Madrid is a metropolitan area as well. Its development started under the authoritarian regime of General Franco. The years after the end of the civil war were times of urban reconstruction and migration from rural areas to big cities. People started setting around the central city of Madrid forming a functional metropolitan space. The answer from the central government at that time was amalgamation. Through the establishment of the public body “*Gran Madrid*” the central government launched a policy of urban planning coordination for the whole area. One of its actions was to annex to the city of Madrid thirteen of the surrounding municipalities between the late 1940’s and early 1950’s (Aravaca, Canillejas, Fuencarral, Hortaleza, El Pardo, Barajas, Vallecas, Villaverde, Carabanchel Alto, Carabanchel Bajo, Chamartín de la Rosa and Tetuán). This meant increasing the surface of the city from 68 km² to 607 km². These old towns, which are now districts of the municipality, still preserve their own identity even though they have lost their local autonomy. Their former town halls are now the District Boards (*Juntas de Distrito*) with few powers to exert. However, still Barajas, El Pardo, or Carabanchel, etc. represent more villages or different municipalities than a neighbourhood of Madrid for its inhabitants.

Later on in the 1960’s, the country started getting out of the autarchy imposed by the regime and a period of economic expansion began. The metropolitan phenomenon started to spill over the borders of the enlarged city and a public body was created again in order to exercise some coordination in very specific issues. The COPLACO (*Comisión de Planeamiento y Coordinación del Área Metropolitana*) focused its action in urban planning issues. It comprised 23 municipalities (including Madrid city). The Commission was mainly formed by representatives of the central State Ministries. In addition the body brought together the Mayor and three representatives of the city of Madrid plus two more Mayors of the rest of the municipalities.

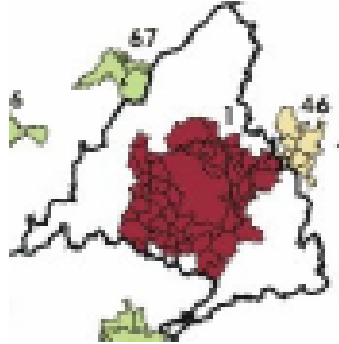
Two major traits define these two experiences of metropolitan coordination. The first one is the focus on urban planning as the almost only content of its action. The second is the interventionist role played by the central authorities in the design and implementation of the metropolitan policies. Both are easily comprehensible if we understand what kind of state and local entities existed at that age. Municipalities did not provide many services or policies by themselves. Urban planning was one of these few

and then the obvious candidate for coordinated action. The other potential public issues for a metropolitan agenda (transport and infrastructures, economic development, culture, etc.) corresponded either to policies underdeveloped or just not provided (the Welfare State in Spain takes off in the 80's), or offered by the central level of government in a strong centralised system.

The situation varied completely after the change of the political system. Right after the approval of the 1978 Constitution –founded over the principles of a parliamentary monarchy and territorial autonomy- Spain started its devolution process and the building of the State of Autonomies. A quasi-federal state emerged in which political power and public action is highly decentralised among Autonomous Communities (AC). These regions have their own Parliaments, capacity to enact laws and play a very important role in the design and implementation of public policies. Regional governments have in fact emerged as the main public actors of the new political system. The Constitution did not close the list of AC but led the different territories to organize themselves to ask for autonomy. In few years (1979-1983) 17 AC were constituted and their autonomy charters approved. Madrid was the last one and, unlike in the rest of the cases, it was not so obvious under what formula it was going to obtain its own statute. The constitution did not include the possibility of a special regime for the capital of the state and its metropolitan area, a kind of “federal district” that would have been a suitable solution. The option of an own Autonomous Community was finally decided for Madrid (Piñar Mañas 1983). A regional government – the Autonomous Community of Madrid- with strong powers on, among other areas, transports, education, health, culture, housing, urban and territorial planning, etc. (at the same level and with the intensity as in the rest of AC) emerged for a territory in which the city of Madrid represents around 55% of its population and the metropolitan area (red area figure 3) covers 90% of its inhabitants. Under these circumstances we can confirm that the regional government of Madrid functions *de facto* as a metropolitan – institutionally consolidated- government. Even though there was not a deliberate intention of producing this output (the establishment of a metropolitan government), the historic events led to this result and it allows us to analyze (two decades after the establishment of this government) a case in which governance is channelled through a directly elected, accountable government. This has brought positive effects in terms of

public legitimacy, the identification of clear competences and the existence of a public administration structure to implement the policies adopted.

Figure 3.- Madrid Metropolitan Area. 2006



Source. Ministry of Housing

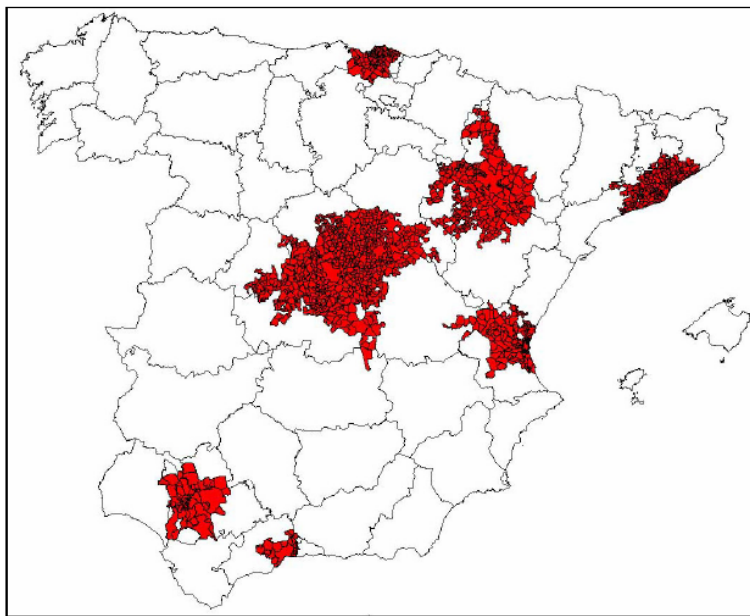
Madrid city and Madrid Metropolitan Area

As a metropolitan area, Madrid is the biggest and the most populated one in the country with more than 5 million inhabitants. The last years' growth has been mainly due to the arrival of immigrant population coming from other countries. The metropolitan ring can be easily separated in two areas; the more industrial/lower-income per capita South and East municipalities and the more prosperous West and North communes.

As a city, Madrid is also the first in the ranking as well with its more than 3 million inhabitants. Between 1996 and 2001 the central city slightly decreased in terms of population, following the national pattern of suburban settlement and people leaving the city because of high housing prices in the centre. Madrid shares with the rest of the Spanish cities its structural traits. They have, in general, been characterized by high levels of density and compact structures of their core areas (1,778 inh/km²), by the complexity of uses and by combination of people and groups belonging to different social status but living relatively close together. In spite of this, the current metropolitan dynamics (dispersion of population and the activities on the territory and the specialization of the different areas) is determining a very important modification of these characteristics. The land has become more and more split in uses (industrial,

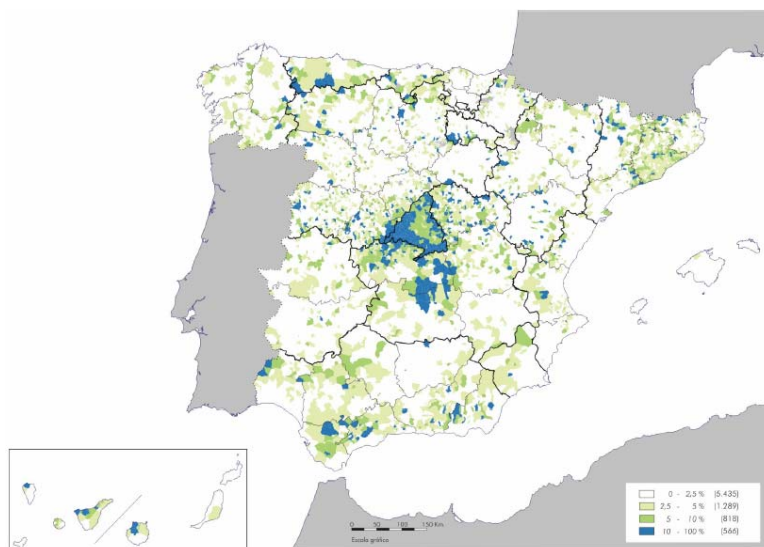
residential, service industry) which trigger needs to commute. In our days, the dispersion of the urbanization, together with the increasing internal specialization of the metropolitan areas, determine that many citizens commute further and further away. There are some studies based on working mobility showing that the functional metropolitan area of Madrid extends to four other surrounding provinces (see figure 4) and is the most expanded one in the country. It is also the area in which people employs more time in commuting (figure 5, in blue municipalities in which a high proportion of population employs more than 60 minutes to get the work place).

Figure 4.- Metropolitan Areas in Spain 2001 (based on functional criteria)



Source: Roca Cladera 2001

Figure 5. Time employed in commuting



Source: Ministry of Housing (2005) *Atlas estadístico de las áreas urbanas en España 2005*.

However, regarding the central city of Madrid, no phenomenon of acute social duality seems to have taken place as in the American cities. For the time being, far from having become a place where only sectors with very high rents or very low rents settle, Madrid is a quite diverse city with wealthy and deprived neighbours quite close the ones from the others. Its big size allows this variety. In fact, Madrid city is a metropolitan area in itself if we consider that it is made up by several municipalities which were amalgamated sixty years ago. As such, a pattern consisting on the ageing of the population in the central districts has been identified. This is due to the housing market situation and the extraordinary difficulties to access to this good for broad sectors of the population. This economical situation affects specially to big cities and is one of the main causes of the exiting of young population from the urban centres to the periphery of the city or the suburban area.

Governing the metropolis

Madrid is a case of metropolitan space where the option of institutional reform has been applied in a varied but a clear way. Governmental consolidation has been achieved, in a first step, through the amalgamation of suburbs to the central city in the 1950's and, in a second step, through the establishment of the regional government which is a *de facto* metropolitan government.

Its effects in terms of governance are the expected. Clear powers⁵, identifiable institutions, accountable elected officials and appropriate budgets are the strengths of the system. Metropolitan policies are beneficiaries of it, especially those connected with transport and all kind of infrastructures. The economic expansion and prosperity of the region could be an indicator of this success. Yet it is still too concentrated in the centre of the core city (probably because the working force is specialized in services) and this makes life quite for citizens of the metropolitan area who spent a non negligible part of their day in commuting.

⁵ To the extent that the division of powers between the central state and the Autonomous Communities can be defined as "clear". In fact, due to the lack of definition of "who does what" issue in the Constitution, the Constitutional Court has spent two decades in delimiting the sphere of each level of power. The field is not still closed.

Madrid has a very effective public transport system for the metropolitan area, a network of public health and education services in process of being evenly spread out through the area, a common physical and urban planning for the whole metropolitan spaces and common services on water distribution and treatment. These are some of the outputs of a metropolitan government formal institutionalized established.

Apart from the formal regional/metropolitan institutions, some other actors can be identified. On the public actors side, we cannot minimize the importance of local governments in the governance of the area. On the one hand, Madrid MA is like a solar system with a huge city in its centre. The municipality of Madrid (3 million inhabitants in a MA of 5 million inhabitants) is a key actor in the politics of the area, always fighting for more powers against the institution who constitutionally has them and do not want to renounce to them, the Autonomous Community. Recently, the central government has approved the draft of the special statute for Madrid, based on its condition of capital ("*Ley de Capitalidad de Madrid*", diciembre 2005). Since it means more powers for the city it has created some opposition on the side of the Autonomous government. This tension between the two institutions has a structural condition and it cannot even be mitigated by the fact that the same political party (the conservatives) have been governing in the city and in the region for more than a decade.

On the other hand, there are very important "planets" in the system as well. There are three municipalities in the region of around 200.000 inhabitants (Alcalá de Henares, Fuenlabrada and Mostoles). Six more cities have populations between 100.000 and 200.000 inhabitants (Alcobendas, Alcorcón, Fuenlabrada, Getafe, Leganés and Torrejón). Except for Alcobendas, the rest of them belong to the more industrial South-East axe, and have been traditionally governed by the socialist party. This means that, when acting coordinated, they can influence the regional decisions on metropolitan policies that affect them. This has been the case of the design of the public hospitals network in the region.

In the side of private actors, some works have identified the existence of a neo-corporatist model (Rodriguez 2002). According to this view, a stable alliance between the regional representatives and a few corporate actor from business and unions sectors has been consolidated, while other organized actors (professional associations, NGOs,

etc.) have been underrepresented. Due to the variety of the policy networks and its level of specialization, further research is needed in order to identify the density, vibrancy, actors, openness and closeness of each network. We are probably here in front of the weakness of the system and it refers to how decisions are taken. When broaden the focus beyond formal institutions and assessing democratic quality in metro governance, “it should not only consider the lines of accountability of decision making bodies but also the ways in which these decisions are reached (majority vote, negotiation, deliberation) as well as the relation between the state agencies and non-governmental actors” (Heinelt, Kubler 2005). In this respect, some general traits of the Spanish system apply in metropolitan governance: the “statist” design of policies, the weakness of interest groups, the lack of deliberative tools implemented by the government (specially when they govern under majority), etc. (Gunther, Montero, Botella, 2004). To what extent and how exactly these general features of the Spanish Political system apply in the case of Madrid constitutes the research challenge ahead.

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