

Introductory Notes

Meyer Burstein
Executive Head
Metropolis Project (CIC)
Ottawa, ON K1A 1L1

This special issue of the Canadian Journal of Regional Sciences is devoted to the Metropolis Project. We are grateful for the opportunity we were provided and we would like to acknowledge the many individuals who helped us to produce an issue in such a short period of time.

Thanks are due to Dr. Carl Amhrein for suggesting the opportunity; to Dr. Bill Anderson, the acting editor of the Journal, for his patience and guidance; and to the Directors of the Canadian Centres of Excellence for their organizational help -- Dr. Marie MacAndrew, Dr. Morton Beiser, Dr. Baha Abu Laban and Drs. David Ley and Don DeVoretz.

Over and above these individuals, we need to recognize a number of persons without whom this issue of the Journal could not have been produced. First and foremost, there are the contributors who responded to our call for articles and accepted our requests for revisions with grace, notwithstanding the impossibly short deadlines; second, there is our academic editor, Dr. Jeffrey G. Reitz, whose heroic efforts, impeccable scholarship and dedication ensured the quality of our enterprise; and, finally, there is Jean Viel, a Senior Coordinator with the Metropolis Project Team in Ottawa who tirelessly coordinated and masterminded the entire production process, writing hundreds of e-mails and tracking every phase of the enterprise with a zeal to be found only in space missions.

This special issue of the Regional Sciences Journal is organized into two distinct sections: The first section consists of articles by researchers who belong to one of the four Canadian Centres of Excellence. The articles are grouped under three broad themes: Urban and Regional Diversity; Ethnicity and Economic Institutions; and Community Participation, Identity and Social Institutions.

Together, the articles are an eloquent testimony to the scope and quality of research produced under the Metropolis Project -- all the more impressive given the fact that it is still early in the life of the Project and researchers were given, literally, one month to respond. The second section consists of a series of commentaries by noteworthy individuals who have interesting and important perspectives to offer on the emerging relationship between research and public policy. Collectively, their writings constitute a wake-up call both to academics and to policy practitioners. Not only do their views argue for a change in focus, more importantly, they suggest that everyone - researchers and policymakers -- will need to change the way in which they do business. This will require cultural adjustments on both sides.

A Metropolis Primer

In order to contextualize the articles and commentaries, a brief description of the Metropolis Project is provided below:

The sharp curtailment in public spending beginning in the early nineties forced governments everywhere to ask themselves fundamental questions about what business they were in, whether their interventions were essential and whether they could form strategic alliances that would rationalize scarce resources and leverage help from other sectors. In the case of research, it was concluded that further investments in knowledge were needed but that this knowledge could be produced through new alliances with universities, research institutes and think tanks rather than through direct increases in the size of government research units. It was also felt that by bringing external knowledge to bear on complex, strategic issues, particularly on issues that cut across several jurisdictions, more comprehensive treatments and, ultimately, more robust public policy would result. Issues involving immigration and ethnic diversity fell into this category.

Metropolis is one of the leading examples, in Canada, of a structured systematic attempt to promote the use of academic knowledge in order to improve policy formation. The Project, which is international in scope, is dedicated to improving our understanding of how migration is affecting the world's cities and how changing urban processes are affecting the integration of ethnically diverse populations. The ultimate aim of Metropolis is to help policy makers and other stakeholders to meet the challenges posed by migration and to capitalize on the opportunities it presents. The Project's goals are:

- to focus research on key areas of relevance to policy;
- to promote sustained collaboration around the production and use of scientific knowledge among academics, policy makers, community organizations and other public and private institutions;
- to provide governments with objective information on which to base policies

and to present a range of solutions and practices drawn from national and international experience;

- to encourage domestic and international comparative research;
- to expand research opportunities for both students and professors.

Support for the Metropolis Project is provided by a partnership of federal departments and the SSHRCC. These include Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), Health Canada, Human Resources Development Canada, Solicitor General Canada, Status of Women Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Statistics Canada. Based on this support, four Centres of Excellence were created in April 1996, headquartered in Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver. Each Centre involves a consortium of major universities, fifteen in all, bringing together several hundred researchers. The Centres work closely with local and national stakeholders including federal departments, provincial ministries -- Quebec is a key participant - municipalities, service delivery agents, NGO's and private sector representatives. These stakeholders participate with academics in setting strategic directions for research, in shaping individual projects and in deciding where to allocate resources.

Internationally, Metropolis takes the form of partnerships with numerous countries and international organizations in North America, Europe and elsewhere. Participating academics and policymakers are united by the belief that to be successful in the twenty-first century, cities will have to develop a capacity to successfully manage migration-related issues. They further believe that academic knowledge will play a vital role in shaping public policy. The emerging Metropolis program of international comparative research is being promoted through a series of international conferences and seminars that bring together senior officials, leading academics and other stakeholders.

The Future

A recent independent review of the Metropolis Project concluded that “ ... Metropolis ranks among the very best [*policy-research projects*] at this stage of its implementation. Metropolis has delivered on its first year commitments... A knowledge partnership has been established. [*And*] the concept of Metropolis as an innovative way to relate research and policy has caught the imagination of a broad range of interested organizations..... [*Also*] a large volume of work is in the pipeline”.

This assessment reflects the considerable evolution that Metropolis has undergone in the past eighteen months. Investments have been made in networks, in communications, in management structures, in educating participants and in developing systems for passing information from one generation of researchers and policy analysts to the next. The challenge now lies in activating this

infrastructure and creating new patterns of behaviour.

A critical issue that Metropolis will have to come to grips with if it is to realize its potential concerns the need to extend the intensity of contact between the Centres and federal policymakers. Deeper relationships are needed if the Project is to achieve continual improvements in matching research to policy. As well, more effective methods are needed for communicating research so it is accessible to policymakers. Specially tailored research 'products' including teleconferences, structured abstracts and synthetic reports will need to be created and matched to different policy requirements.

There are no templates to guide Metropolis participants in their effort to develop a more dynamic, more "client-centred" policy-research model. Success, now as in the past, will depend on dedication, on creativity and on a willingness to learn and to compromise. It is a very positive sign that the participants remain committed to experimentation, to collective action and, above all, to improving how public policy is carried out in this country.