

Aalto University School of Engineering, Department of Built Environment
Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture, Department of Architecture
Demos Helsinki
Finnish Environment Institute SYKE
Jyväskylä University
MAL network
Newcastle University
Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Technical Research Centre of Finland Ltd VTT
University of Manchester
University of Tampere

Executive summary

Urbanization and regionalization of Finnish cities is largely a product of the recent decades. Finnish development is unique in some ways: urban sprawl is a combination of planned and unplanned dispersion, and peri-urbanization processes are creating new landscapes in the urban fringes, affecting the interaction between cities and surrounding regions as well as the vitality of those regions. Yet both happen without the existence of dense, heavily populated central cities. Similarly to other European countries, sprawling development, enhanced by migration, puts pressure on sustainability and accessibility and accelerates segregation. Increasing multi-locality and multiculturalism challenge the existing thought and planning models. Furthermore, local economies struggle to remain efficient and competitive, urban governance has difficulties in recognizing citizens' everyday life, and urban development continues to operate in silos, lacking policy integration.

BeMInE aims to enhance the integrative capacities for urban planning, in order to develop not only new tools and better evidence bases, but also more usable, democratic, and effective concepts and practices, supported by an improved understanding of the premises, frameworks and capacities for integration. In close collaboration with stakeholders and local actors, BeMInE aims to provide a deeper understanding of the ambiguities and dynamics of Finnish urbanization, as well as visionary and anticipatory strategic planning.

Aims and scope

BeMInE aims to build upon the existing Finnish MALPE city-regional planning approach, which includes land use (M), housing (A), transport (L), services (P), and economic development (E). Going beyond solely addressing current major issues within the MALPE approach, BeMInE aims to enable capacity for developing and evaluating different development scenarios of sustainable Finnish urbanization and regionalization. Consequently, this project will contribute to achieving the objectives of the program by aiding Finnish urban regions and the government in reconfiguring their current MALPE-coordination into a more integrated and strategically astute governance of urban regions. In order to achieve evidence-based and societally significant answers to all four SRC programmatic questions, BeMInE has identified four interrelated themes of Finnish urbanization:

- urbanization trends,
- model development,
- governance rationalities, and
- political agencies.

The expected results from BeMInE are threefold. The first set of results includes analysis and findings for supporting decision-making. The second set includes direct policy and planning recommendations. The third set includes delivering a practical strategic decision-support toolkit. In addition, the project results will be documented in the scientific publications of the highest standard, as well as in broad audience publication channels.

Hypothesis

BeMInE hypothesizes that the current MALPE work has several problems that hinder it from gaining strategic and integrative foresight in steering Finnish city-regional development towards a more sustainable future. This is due to the lack of knowledge on the urbanization dynamics, lack of concepts and models of urban phenomena, and failures in dealing with crucial institutional path dependencies and institutional ambiguity. BeMInE aims to bridge these gaps

- 1) by producing knowledge on the dynamic interconnections between agglomeration, migration and mobility, and innovation activity processes, and peri-urbanization and fragmentation processes of Finnish urbanization;
- 2) by re-conceptualizing and -modeling urban phenomena and development, in order to support city-regional planning and decision making;
- 3) by providing insights and policy recommendations on the restructuring of governance relations and rationalities in the MALPE work, in view of the ongoing Finnish local and regional governance reform and related challenges; and
- 4) by providing related insights on how to unravel the institutional ambiguities of MALPE governance and manage their consequences to political legitimacy.

Methodological framework

To these ends, BeMInE will deploy a range of scientific methods, from GIS-based and statistical modelling, through qualitative actor-oriented and governance/policy-focused interpretive analysis, to co-ordination and co-creation methods. Research methodology is integrated into three Work Packages (Urbanization trajectories, Knowledge, institutions, and concepts, and Integrative envisioning and co-ordination) with four Project Phases (Path dependence analysis, Reconfiguring urban development and governance, Toolkit development, and MALPE transformations). The fourth Work Package is responsible for project management, coordination and dissemination.

Interaction procedures

Interaction with a range of stakeholders is an in-built part of the project management and research activity, deploying novel means of interaction. The most important stakeholders are recognized, including MALPE actors such as urban regions and cities, ministries, regional authorities and private and voluntary sector actors. There are four planned levels of interaction. These levels span from interaction among research partners and their cooperation networks, through interaction among research consortium partners, interaction with practical collaborators, and interaction with relevant decision-makers at local/regional/national levels of government. In addition, five co-creational Urban Forums, four partner-level workshops, and five co-creation workshops are planned for enhancing continuous co-creation throughout the project's duration. Besides in-person interaction, BeMInE will establish channels for virtual interaction.

Attainment capacity

In order to enhance interaction, the consortium includes the national MAL-network and Demos Helsinki as partners. The members of the MAL-network include 16 Finnish urban regions, key ministries and governance agencies involved in the MALPE work. Demos Helsinki is an expert organization in interaction and envisioning, with experiences in Finland and abroad.

The expertise in the consortium includes twelve partner groups of renowned experts, from Finland, United Kingdom and Norway. The partners have expertise covering spatial planning and transport planning, planning geography, regional studies, public administration, political studies and urban and regional economics. Consequently, the partners have a range of expertise in both quantitative and qualitative analysis, ranging from the local and regional levels to the national level, and further to international comparative approaches.

More information

Principal Investigator prof. Raine Mäntysalo
Department of Built Environment, Aalto University School of Engineering
raine.mantysalo@aalto.fi p. +358 50 512 4525

Project Coordinator Vesa Kanninen
Department of Built Environment, Aalto University School of Engineering
vesa.kanninen@aalto.fi p. +358 50 512 4632