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# **Metropolis Position paper #UCLGCongress**

**Local Action For the People**  
Assembly Track

Position papers 04

## **UCLG WORLD CONGRESS 2019 ASSEMBLY TRACK METROPOLITAN POSITION PAPER**

### **1. Key messages**

The world at the metropolitan scale: rethinking city borders and jurisdictions for better quality of life for all

### **2. Current context and state of challenges**

Our planet is advancing towards a metropolitan era characterised by major conurbations of unprecedented complexity and diversity. The challenges raised by the urbanisation process are becoming plain to see in metropolitan areas with at least a million inhabitants. Today, more than 1.6 billion people live in these large metropolitan areas, which are expected to account for 40% of the total world population by 2050.

In addition to the demographic aspect, major metropolises are focal points for much of the world's well-being, economic activity and innovation. The GDP of some of these metropolises is greater than that of a number of nation states, as they rank among the top worldwide economies – Seoul, Paris and Mexico City have each overtaken the economies of countries such as Sweden, Austria and Chile. They are home to government bodies, leading companies, universities, research and cultural centres and the main civil society organisations; and they are nucleuses for a large proportion of the talent and creativity, technological innovation and artistic output worldwide. Major metropolises are globally connected and they have the ability to structure and galvanise the territories around them at a local, national and regional scale.

On the other hand, metropolitan spaces must deal with serious threats. The increasing pressure to achieve economic growth and competitiveness is giving rise to negative externalities that are having an adverse impact on sustainable urban development. While the benefits generated in a metropolis are not fairly distributed between all its dwellers, the inequalities between and within metropolitan spaces are intensifying. Metropolitan spaces become the ultimate arena of market segmentation in every domain of life, from housing to goods, services and jobs. In almost every metropolis of the world, it is possible to see growing social, economic and ethnic segregation, which is mostly visible in the ghettoization of communities and translates into varying forms of gentrification.

Such models of consumption cannot be sustained. Seventy per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions are generated in metropolitan spaces, which are themselves extremely vulnerable to the consequences and natural disasters linked to climate change. Due to worsening consumption patterns and agricultural production schemes, growing figures related to urban growth have made food and water provision a crucial matter. Food security, water provision and waste management bring to the table another key aspect of the urban agenda: rural-urban linkages, where no good solutions have been found, despite their importance.

The challenges faced by metropolitan citizens do not only reside in visibly physical spaces, and we find ourselves in a moment in which the rights of citizens are repeatedly violated in the digital sphere. As hubs for massive electronic transactions, the metropolises of the world are faced with large scale digital threats: every day there are cases of misuse, false information, concentration of power, and censorship of freedom of expression. Citizens' personal information is marketed without their consent; "black box" algorithms are used to make unaccountable decisions; social networks are used as a tool for harassment and hate speech, to subvert democratic processes and public opinion.

The outcome of the convergence of global and metropolitan challenges, thus, is that a significant part of the new generation of global agendas linked to sustainable development focus on large conurbations and has a decisive impact on the policies that are implemented. Consequently, metropolitan areas are the setting in which some of the planet's most pressing problems can be solved.

Different approaches can be identified in metropolitan efforts to align public policies to global agendas. The degree of local autonomy directly affects the capacity to address metropolitan challenges and implement the 2030 Agenda. While in Northern European countries municipalities have a high degree of financial autonomy and enjoy competences in health, education and environment, local governments of most African, Asian and Latin American countries lack the necessary powers, financial, technical and human resources, and are thus highly dependent on national and regional policies. These structural weaknesses limit their ability to mobilize their own resources and generate new responses to challenges at the metropolitan scale.

The lack of coordination between the different institutions that share SDG-related competences also clearly affects their implementation. Research on 58 metropolitan spaces where 69 members of Metropolis are located shows that less than half (43%) count on a metropolitan governance structure. When the complexity of layers of local governments operating in the same metropolis generates competition for resources among them, it becomes more difficult to create an enabling environment.

Even though large cities are the type of local government that has proved most active in the SDG implementation process, sometimes even ahead of their national governments, they stay unnoticed when states report on national achievements according to the 2016, 2017 and 2018 Voluntary National reviews (VNRs). This lack of visibility is more worrying, inasmuch as a big percentage of the challenges included in the 2030 Agenda are materialized and tackled in the laboratory of the big cities.

### ***3. Key policy priorities in the following areas***

The combination of the 2030 Agenda with the abovementioned challenges should serve to explore and capitalize the contributions of different metropolitan areas to sustainable development, through the definition and implementation of innovative, holistic and efficient solutions. Nevertheless, a lot of work needs to be done to create legal and institutional enabling environments (improved decentralization and financial schemes, amongst others) as well as new multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms, as well as financing for sustainable investments, that allow for quality metropolitan public policies and ways of doing.

Reducing fragmentation in large cities and increasing a metropolitan approach of governance are key objectives for Metropolis. New and improved governance arrangements and structures for the cross-level coordination, improved core city and peripheral cities governance and better allocation of resources, as well as the development of instruments to encourage greater participation by social partners in order to enhance the legitimacy of policies would dramatically help reduce territorial inequalities and promote more polycentric and integrated corridor approaches to metropolitan governance.

### ***Right to the City and Inclusive Territories***

Public urban space is a site where many inequalities are reflected and staged. The way people experience public space is shaped by the dimensions of each person's identity. Racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, and ageism often result in exclusion from, and/or discrimination in, public spaces. The design of metropolitan areas can reinforce gender dichotomies, thus, although the notion of a public space suggests inclusivity, it can be very excluding.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG), including sexual violence and harassment, is an everyday phenomenon in public spaces such as streets, parks, markets, public transport and other public venues in metropolises around the world, which results in gender exclusion in metropolitan public spaces. The threat of VAWG limits women's and girls' movements, work, health, education, and leisure choices, and their ability to benefit from the opportunities cities offer – essentially their right to the city, and their right to be equal citizens. Other factors, such as race, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, further shape how women and girls experience public space and place them at risk of violence. When these factors intersect, women may face additional discrimination, harassment and oppression. Often, the exclusion women and girls experience is associated with lack of safety and fear. They may choose not to enter certain spaces for fear of harassment or assault. In order to take responsibility for their own safety in public urban space, they often employ sets of safety strategies.

Metropolitan governments should be taking responsibility for the safety of all in public space. As often people cross cities boundaries in their day-to-day life, such as commuting to work or school from and to areas outside the main city centers, when considering initiatives that address public urban space it is important to address how policies are integrated across a metropolitan territory.

### ***Territorial Multilevel Governance and Sustainable Financing***

Major challenges in regards to local implementation are laid in institutional and financing mechanisms enhancing to address the challenges in metropolization.

Large metropolitan areas are different from other cities and towns and these differences have implications for metropolitan public finance. The most obvious difference is that they have a much larger population. Their population is also more concentrated and more heterogeneous in terms of social and economic circumstances, often with a relatively higher proportion of immigrants and in-migrants. Metropolitan areas are important generators of employment, wealth, and productivity growth and are often the major economic engines of their country.

Most innovation occurs in large cities and metropolitan areas where people can reap the benefits of close proximity, often referred to as "agglomeration economies." Big cities also serve as regional

hubs for people from adjacent communities who come to work, shop, and use public services that are not available in their own communities.

Services local governments provide in metropolitan areas and how they pay for them are inextricably linked to governance. Firstly, an effective metropolitan governance structure is needed and, second, to set out an appropriate fiscal structure. For a metropolitan area to succeed, each tier of government needs to know what functions it is responsible for and it needs adequate powers and financial resources to perform those functions.

### ***Opportunities for All, Culture and City Diplomacy: Keys to Sustainable Development and Peace***

Enabling an environment offering metropolitan areas the necessary human, technical and financial resources to develop adequately transferred competences is necessary to enhance integrated approaches to sustainable development. Those approaches should guarantee an adequate coordination across levels of government and between territories while enhancing transparency and accountability, improving citizen participation and the involvement of local stakeholders in governance, fostering gender equality, and strengthening social cohesion.

### ***Safer, Resilient and Sustainable Cities Capable of Facing Crisis***

As cities define metropolitan-scale objectives to achieve their resilience goals, it is crucial they consider their specific conditions, and build on existing strengths and assets. Many different metropolitan governance models exist. While cities can and should take inspiration from one another, they must tailor lessons and best practices to their own concrete needs and capacities. Each city's particular context gives rise to conditions that shape what kind of metropolitan structure and stakeholder coordination can and should be sought.

Some challenges most clearly require action at the metropolitan scale: the impacts of climate change, inadequate transportation, and lack of affordable housing, not only transcend traditional municipal boundaries, but efforts to address them reverberate across municipal territories and affect shocks and stresses among neighboring municipalities. In other instances, shocks and stresses may not seem to trigger metropolitan scale solutions, but should. This is the case of public health management, and security and social cohesion concerns, which rely both on interventions that address underlying stresses and the operation of interrelated systems. Building resilience requires an assessment of a city's systems and how shocks and stresses operate on and within them. To best address them, cities are creating new partnerships and collaborations. This includes a renewed appraisal of at what scale they should be addressed and with which partners. Some sectors and challenges more naturally require a metropolitan scale.

## ***4. Policy strategies and tools***

This part provides a set of strategies proposed by members of Metropolis executive committee, which have the potential to be replicated by the rest of the membership, as well as by other levels of local and regional governments that are part of the UCLG constituency.

The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona brings the proposal of prioritizing policies aimed at public spaces. The concept of **metropolitan public spaces** encompasses a variety of elements of public ownership or public domain, which serve as the ideal scenario to provide services, equality and

opportunities for everyone. It includes the creation and/or preservation, as well as the sustainable management, of green and blue spaces (e.g. rivers, beaches, urban forests, parks, gardens), of spaces of exchange (e.g. markets, squares, street furniture, libraries, sports facilities), and of mobility infrastructures (e.g. pedestrian and cycling facilities, massive public transport, private vehicle regulation). Planning and designing high quality public spaces guarantees more egalitarian, resilient and environmentally sustainable cities. Public space is also a space for activity, transformation, innovation and exchange that leads to a freer, fairer, healthier and more advanced society.

Seeking the incorporation of human rights principles such as privacy, freedom of expression and democracy into digital platforms, the Barcelona City Council calls all Metropolis and UCLG members to endorse the principles of the Coalition of Cities for Digital Rights, created jointly with UCLG, EUROCITIES, New York, Amsterdam and UN-Habitat. The **defense of digital rights** should be a priority for the major cities of the planet, which can take the leadership starting with public digital services and infrastructures. While committing to fight climate change, enable social inclusion and foster sustainable economic growth, major cities should also commit to the defense of digital rights in order to create a more egalitarian, just, non-discriminatory society, where people see their privacy respected, where participation is facilitated, and where the rights to internet access, transparency and accountability are recognized.

From the Gauteng Province comes the focus on **decreasing social exclusion and fragmentation** by addressing issues of poverty, inequality, unemployment, migration, racism, xenophobia, digital exclusion, spatial exclusion and disability. These issues can be addressed by leveraging on the strengths of regional and provincial governments to enable conversation on social exclusion including: the research on quality of life, the establishment of observatories, as well as dialogues on migration and youth unemployment.

The People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality reinforces its commitment to **urban innovation, which can be boosted worldwide through peer learning and city-to-city cooperation** focused on the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Faced with an unprecedented level of urbanization and the need to address the new challenges posed by the location of the SDGs and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, which imply major financial challenges for local governments, the Municipality of Montevideo proposes to continue strengthening a **broad mechanism that brings together different actors to facilitate access to financing for metropolises**.

Finally, the City of Montréal calls local governments to take action on migration policies, as this is a local and global issue that presents both opportunities and challenges, and because their voices are increasingly being heard on the global stage and taken into consideration to advance courses of action and collaboration. Last but not least, Montréal also calls the constituency to mobilize for COP 15 on the Convention on Biological Diversity, since local governments are key actors in biodiversity, being both part of the problem and part of the solutions, aware of the impact of their action both on the well-being of their communities and for the planet as a whole.

## **5. *Links with global agendas and continental mechanisms***

As general and down-to-earth recommendations, the abovementioned policy strategies can be smoothly linked to nearly all global agendas, and especially the ones below, whose implementation at metropolitan scale has already been identified to be feasible, as pointed out at the Metropolis Observatory Issue Paper 2 (2017):

- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- The Paris Agreement
- The New Urban Agenda
- The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
- The Addis Ababa Action Agenda
- The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation

## **6. *Key recommendations and actions by the international local and regional governments movement***

1. Localizing the SDGs
2. Coalition of Cities for Digital Rights
3. Community of Practice on Transparency and Open Government
4. Milan Urban Food Policy Pact
5. Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation
6. Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
7. Global Compact on Refugees
8. Fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

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