

## NEWS



Metropolitan Governance

## Metropolitan spaces are accelerating their great transformation

Wednesday 27/10/2021

2020 brought urban life to an abrupt and painful halt, at least for a few weeks. Although problems in urban areas are longstanding, **the Covid-19 pandemic has shown the need for an urgent change in the urban model.** The world is coming to understand that we need more and better public spaces, and that recovering our pre-pandemic pace of life is simply not enough anymore. It is time to rebuild, but also to rethink cities and metropolitan spaces, and do things differently.

In order to move forward with innovative solutions that transform our urban spaces for current and future generations, we published the Call to Rethink our Metropolitan Spaces last year. One year on from launching this process of reflection, with support from Metropolis members and over twenty affiliated organisations, we wanted to show how this transformation has already become a reality, with no end in sight for the changes. Over a week in November, under the framework of the 13th Metropolis World Congress, we will continue the debate by putting forward **innovative solutions that can transform metropolitan spaces over the long term**.

From 8-13 November 2021, Metropolis—in collaboration with the city of Guangzhou, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC), and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)—will hold its 13th World Congress in a hybrid event that will include the Metropolis Policy Debate. Mayors of the cities and metropolitan areas in the Metropolis network will meet for joint reflection on the topic **“Novel solutions that can transform metropolitan spaces in the long term”**, in response to the profound and historic transformation that urban spaces are undergoing as a result of the climate emergency, the Covid-19 pandemic, and other crises. In addition, they will provide first-hand testimonies of how cities are already implementing profound transformation in a number of different aspects.

The Congress will also host the World Mayors' Forum, under the topic “Moving Forward Together, Modernising Global Urban Governance” and the 5th Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation.

The Congress will feature multiple parallel sessions in which representatives of cities and metropolitan spaces around the world, experts, and delegates from international organisations and companies, will engage in a debate on topics such as public health, new infrastructure, reducing poverty, climate change, how to build a resilient city, and urban renewal through relevant urban practices, experiences and proposals.

## City transformation that takes children’s needs into account

Given that about a third of the 4 billion people living in urban areas are children (UNICEF, Child Friendly Cities initiative), there is no denying that, in order for metropolises to undergo the successful transformation process mentioned above, any actions taken must be carried out with a **child-friendly approach**. In order to achieve this objective, Metropolis launched an initiative last July, Metropolis Through Children’s Eyes, with the aim of promoting children’s creative expression through drawing, while identifying the trends in how they imagine the future in their metropolises in response to the upheaval caused by the pandemic. Since its launch, more than 800 children between 5 and 14 years old who live in cities in the Metropolis network have sent us their drawings, showing their vision of the city they imagine in the future. During the Congress, we will present some reflections resulting from the contest and we will announce the names of the winning



This initiative is based on a concept recently coined by Metropolis—governance by empathy. The pandemic has made us rethink the city and public space from a human scale, while demanding means of governance that guarantee collaboration, co-creation and care for all citizens, including, of course, children.

## The transition to green living and healthy metropolitan spaces

There is no doubt that cities urgently need to change in response to the climate crisis. **Rethinking the city** is the cornerstone of the Congress.



The **Strategies for Urban Regeneration Seminar** will share the results of the pilot project titled “Revitalisation strategies through urban projects”, which aims to achieve the strategies and processes for reinvigoration carried out by cities through the analysis of five specific topics: urbanism, urban design, participatory processes and the project management in terms of financing, regulation, and governance. Meanwhile, the Healthy Cities: Challenges and Opportunities subforum will address the challenges and opportunities facing healthy cities, with the goal of developing approaches to turn these cities into more resilient metropolises.

Indeed, in October 2016, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (UN-Habitat III) included “resilient cities” as an innovative aspect of the New Urban Agenda. The subforum on **Building diverse, inclusive and resilient urban governance systems** will cover the topic of how to build diverse, inclusive and resilient metropolises. More specifically, we will look at how to modernise urban governance taking into account the fundamental role that new technology and infrastructure plays in urban governance during the post-Covid-19 era in the subforum titled Modernising urban governance with new technologies and new infrastructures.

## Innovation in metropolitan governance

The pandemic has also shown us that traditional city boundaries are becoming less important, and coordination between different areas and levels of government at a metropolitan level is essential in order to guarantee sustainable spaces, services and infrastructure, as we will explain in the Joint session between Metropolis and UCLG on territorial and urban systems.

Urban and/or metropolitan governance and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are closely related, and we will see this in the Sustainable Development Goals and Urban Governance subforum. The SDGs are undoubtedly a call to action for all countries to eradicate poverty, and during the subforum titled Metropolis' role in fighting poverty and supporting less developed regions we will focus on the role cities play in fighting poverty, while sharing best practices, experiences and perspectives from cities in this pressing task.

## Asia in focus: innovation accelerates possibilities for the future

Over recent decades, Asia—the largest and most populous continent on the planet, where the majority of Metropolis members are located (there are currently 75 Asian members)—has faced an urbanisation on an unprecedented scale, with the emergence of new types of metropolitan cities. Based on data from the recent **Asian Metropolitan Report**, the Congress will offer an open debate on the current and future state of metropolitan spaces in Asia, with the intention of inspiring decision-makers and practitioners in Asia to metropolitanisation.



And, speaking of Asia, cities in China and elsewhere, including Guangzhou—the host city for this year's Congress—have been actively exploring innovation in metropolitan governance. This is shown in the

Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation (the Guangzhou Prize)—co-sponsored by UCLG, Metropolis and the city of Guangzhou—, which aims to recognise innovation in improving the social, economic and environmental sustainability of cities and regions and, in doing so, advancing the prosperity and quality of life of their citizens. The 5th Guangzhou Award ceremony—which has received **273 project submissions from 175 cities in 60 countries**—will draw the Congress to a close.

In short, **cities and metropolitan areas must promote a new framework of innovative, coordinated, green, open and shared development**, while taking advantage of the historic opportunities offered by the technological revolution and industrial transformation, promoting a “green recovery” of the world economy, and forging synergies for sustainable development. The 13th Metropolis World Congress looks to the future.

---

## **Additional information**

Under the framework of the Congress, some closed-door meetings will also be held: the Regional Secretary meeting, the Metropolis Board of Directors meeting, and the Metropolis Executive Committee meeting.

The Congress will be streamed live on the Congress platform, which can be accessed with prior registration. For more information, please contact the Metropolis Secretariat General, Agnès Charlotte Bickart, Senior Manager for Institutional Relations and Asia Portfolio.