

bilateral meeting with UCLG and National League of Cities

27 Apr. 2023

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UCLG included me in two important meetings: a meeting of the Global Task Force with Ambassador Nina Hanichigian, Special Envoy at the US Department of State for City Diplomacy; and a dinner between the leaderships of the National League of Cities and that of UCLG, where I was included. More about those below.

In addition, I had about 10 scheduled bilaterals and countless informal greets and interactions, which were very useful.

Altogether, well worth the trip.

United States of America

- The meeting with **Ambassador Hanichigian** was useful, and we now have a very good direct line to the State Department and an agreement to follow up with a virtual meeting to discuss Metropolis and what we can do with/for them
- I have had a few conversations about the **absence of American cities** in our membership. The model of fee-paying membership and the nature of our activities (both Metropolis and UCLG) are not an easy sell to American cities. By the way, I had a useful conversation with Leanne Holt from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and she confirmed that Montréal is very much the exception, and other Canadian cities are actually not much easier than the US ones. US cities (and anglo-Canadian ones) are active in ICLAI, C40, Mayors Migration Council and more; they are not as internationally active as others in broad terms, but they definitely are not closed to international cooperation and activities.
- For American cities, the issue of a fee was mentioned as a clear hurdle. My conclusion is that we need to find mechanisms that can unlock the potential of work with – and eventually membership of – US cities. The same membership-attraction tactics and narratives that we use in elsewhere seem somehow inadequate. We might try to come up with creative ways to have the fees collected and make the participation real. Emilia even suggested that they could somehow do away with fees collection altogether if that is the price to have Americans in the room; I discussed with Claudia López and others, and we agree that for Metropolis this would be unfair (to have Bamako pay but not, say, Chicago), and potentially destabilizing.
- UCLG's bet is to revive the participation of the **National League of Cities** in their activities, which was important in the past. The dinner with their top leadership went really well in terms of atmosphere, although it did not result (despite the best attempts by Carolina Cosse, UCLG president) in any clear plans for action. My impression is that the National League of Cities – whose CEO has been really active in UCLG, and even occupied Emilia's post briefly – will see UCLG as their key partner. Therefore, perhaps we can tap into their network occasionally, but probably not establish a full partnership from Metropolis.
- What we can certainly do is multiply contacts, invitations, and include **American cities** on a case-by-case basis in activities and projects. We will launch some additional invites to the Brussels Urban Summit. For now, only the San Diego metropolitan authority has confirmed attendance.