

NEWS



Metropolitan Governance

Metropolitan talks in pandemic times

Tuesday 28/04/2020

Amid unprecedented and continuously evolving health, human, and economic crises, metropolitan areas are hit harder. More than ever, they need common solutions and win-win agreements between different levels of government and sectors of society.

Yesterday, the Cities Alliance invited Metropolis to join the latest edition of “**Metropolitan Talks**”, a cycle of activities of the Mexican National Metropolitan Network (Renamet) to discuss the contributions of metropolitan governance mechanisms in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 11, “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. Amid the pandemic, the last webinar had the theme “**Metropolitan Governance: answers and challenges in face of COVID-19**”.

In Mexico, where more than 60% of the population live in 74 metropolitan areas across the country, about 40% of the COVID-19 cases are concentrated in just six metropolitan territories. Such a trend is not exclusive to the Mexican context: the current pattern of **urban growth** is observed across Latin America and the Caribbean, and also in other parts of the world where population growth is concentrated and characterized by a **disorderly territorial expansion** that generally exceeds population growth. This phenomenon has led to the emergence of cities made up of more than one administrative entity, bringing with it the challenge of **inter-municipal governance of hybrid territories** (urban-rural) and with municipalities that differ in both capacity and resources.

Seeking to advance towards **collective metropolitan responses** with major incidence and impact in pandemic times, participants of this Metropolitan Talk were driven by questions such as: which forms of coordination are emerging from the COVID19 crisis? How can they be reinforced and/or scaled up?

“We have to think as we do, and inaugurate new alliances and new forms of coordination”, responded **Senator Patricia Mercado Castro**, one of the meeting’s speakers, who brought up the importance of **public space as a vital element of urban life**: instead of closing public spaces, we should be able to manage them orderly, she said.

Lia Brum, Metropolis Observatory Officer, shared insights on possible pathways towards **responses on metropolitan scales**, which go beyond the immediateness required by the outbreak. She brought the example of the hundreds of initiatives rapidly uploaded to the platform **Cities for Global Health**, by local governments of all sizes and all parts of the world. Although the vast majority of responses identified arise from municipal scales, she sees a high potential of scaling them up, especially the ones from local governments in the periphery of major cities. *“The context drives us to overcome management barriers and seek new ways of **collaboration beyond jurisdictions**, the same way as the virus does not understand borders”*, she said, inspired by the speech of **Cid Blanco**, metropolitan governance expert with vast experience in Rio de Janeiro and other metropolises in Latin America, who had stated: *“the basic principle of metropolitan governance is communication”*.

Ana Claudia Rossbach, an expert from the **Cities Alliance & Urban Housing Practitioners Hub (UHPH)**, moderated the talk, which also featured as speakers the architect and social activist for women's rights **Ana Falu** (who authored the **Metropolis Issue Paper “Egalitarian metropolitan spaces”**); **Fernando Páez**, Chief Operations Officer of **World Resources Institute (WRI)** in Mexico; as well as metropolitan governance experts and representatives of different departments of the Mexican national and regional governments.

The online meeting counted on the participation of 26 Mexican states, as well as stakeholders of the country's metropolitan areas, federal and local legislators, state and municipal officials, representatives of

the civil society and academia. Broadcasted live through Facebook, it reached 32,879 people and registered 3,522 live interactions, with more than 10.000 reproductions. The full conference can be now watched through this link.

Organized under the leadership of Cities Alliance, Mexico's Ministry of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development (SEDATU), the Urban Housing Practitioners Hub (UHPH), and the Network of Researchers in Housing and Habitat in the Americas (RIVHA, for its acronym in Spanish), Renamet's Metropolitan Talks started being convened in October 2019, as part of the celebrations of World Metropolitan Day, and promote initiatives to ensure the continuity of work on metropolitan scales.

With information from the Government of Mexico.