

NEWS



The new #CitiesAreListening space moves from exchanging ideas and recommendations to action

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Over the past few months, Metropolis, UCLG and UN-Habitat have hosted a series of online Live Learning Experiences (LLEs), adding up to more than 40 hours of idea sharing and featuring case studies from over 130 cities and regions. These online sessions brought together mayors and experts from all over the world to discuss mobility, technology, gender equality, housing, culture, peace, local democracy, public services, accessibility, and other key challenges. On 9 September the next phase in this process—**#CitiesAreListening Experiences**—was presented during a **brainstorming session to explore participants' priorities in an eventual post COVID-19 world**, discussing what the constituencies of local and regional governments need to move forward.

Throughout the session, participants acknowledged the inherent risk that our societies are currently living in. **While COVID-19 is the most pressing challenge, other risks such as the climate emergency and the potential of urbanisation were highlighted as the most important trends for the future.** Participants argued in favour of the need to interact and think in a different way in the coming years, using the knowledge shared during the pandemic and beyond.

“We now need help to showcase and highlight the concrete policies we have been implementing. And **we also need to find spaces to exchange the political and technical policies we are implementing**”, declared Laia Bonet, Deputy Mayor of Barcelona.

Luz Amparo Medina, Director of International Affairs at Bogota City Council, stated that: **“We need your support to provide evidence of local political processes for the type of change that we want to introduce”**. Meanwhile, Shi Qi, Director of the Centre for International Friendship Cities of Xi'an, affirmed: **“I hope we can pay attention to solidarity, culture and food”**.

In addition, Puvendra Akkiah, Manager of the Integrated Development Plan for eThekweni Municipality, made reference to the SDGs, arguing that: **“Post-recovery plans have to be rooted in implementing the SDGs**. We need to look at the bigger picture—how can we work closer to find solutions? How can we start to re-build confidence post-Covid? How do we advance the safety agenda?”.

The #CitiesAreListening initiative is an integral part of our current work on rethinking our metropolitan spaces, as is the Cities for Global Health platform. This platform was launched “to document all these experiences”, as Octavi de la Varga, Metropolis Secretary General, stated during the session. This initiative—which currently includes more than 650 examples of crisis and emergency management initiatives from 34 countries and over 100 cities, under the slogan “First-hand experiences to rethink our cities following the pandemic”—is now helping to create a space to share plans for reimagining new metropolitan areas.

“The aim of #CitiesAreListening to rethink and take practical steps is very positive. We have to move from exchanging (recommendations) to action”, Octavi De la Varga

As De la Varga went on to add, we also “...need to develop new proposals [...] For this reason, we have launched a Call to Rethink our Metropolitan Spaces [...] Through this Call we acknowledge that we need to join forces with other actors [...] The aim of #CitiesAreListening to rethink and take practical steps is very positive. We have to move from exchanging (recommendations) to action”.

“We need to rethink urban spaces, and it has to be about the whole city and all citizens”,
William Cobbett, Cities Alliance

This key message was reiterated by Mohamed Mezghani, Secretary-General of the International Association of Public Transport (UITP): “Post COVID-19 gives us the opportunity to rethink cities, by providing accessible pedestrian streets. [...] **We need to adopt positive communication, based on science and data.**” “We need to rethink urban spaces, and it has to be about the whole city and all citizens”, stressed William Cobbett, Director of Cities Alliance.

The speakers at the session—a total of over 20, including members of our network: eThekweni Municipality,

Barcelona, Bogota, and Xi'an—had the opportunity to share their views on rethinking urban spaces.

Over the coming weeks, exchanges between cities and partners will continue in the new #CitiesAreListening space, which will be the start of a journey to define joint actions, advocacy and tools.

For more information:

- [Read the full press release here](#)
- [Visit the Cities for Global Health platform](#)
- [Visit the Live Learning Experience archives](#)
- [Watch the Live Learning Experience video](#)