Challenges and opportunities of digitalisation in metropolitan spaces

The global health crisis has highlighted the role that local governments play in many aspects, as they have largely been in charge of managing the Covid-19 emergency. Furthermore, and due to the changes brought about by the pandemic, we are in the process of rethinking the city in terms of planning, mobility, public space and immediate access to services. Digital technology can help us to rethinking processes, which offers essential new components for the coordination and integration of efforts in urban areas[1].

During the last years, several forms of e-governance emerged as very useful and popular, increasing transparency and enhancing the quality of public services[2]. The importance of digitalisation has been reckoned internationally, as it shows the fact that 5 SDGs are related to it (4, 5, 8, 9 and 17).

ICTs can help to build a metropolitan governance of everyday life through more inclusive governance that incorporates the feedback of residents and puts people at the heart of its action and policies. However, they can also create a digital gap among people and generate new dimensions of inequality in metropolitan spaces.

The gender digitalisation gap is one of the most alarming. ICTs reproduce existing power relations and the resulting gender inequalities in society, with lack of access to know-how,

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[1] Metropolis, World Association of the Major Metropolises. (2020). *Metropolitan development practices and policies: a critical look*. Metropolis, World Association of Major Metropolises.

[2] Bettencourt, L. M. A. (2019). *Issue Paper 08. The digital transformation of metropolises*. Metropolis, World Association of the Major Metropolises.

particularly in urban areas where 45% of women said they didn't use the internet because they don't know how to, compared with 36% of men.

Local and regional governments are key in promoting digital rights, capitalising digital technologies and providing equal opportunities for everyone, independently from gender socio-economic status, age, ability, ethnicity or educational level.

Regarding this, We feel the urge to give technical and political city officials a space for sharing their experiences, concerns, and ideas. That urge has impulsed the Metropolis learning forum, which will pave the path for global knowledge sharing. Rather than a one-way conduit for information sharing or a repurposed business conferencing tool, the peer-to-peer will enable discussion between city officials, allowing them to learn from each other while creating a community.

On the occasion of the celebration of the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day on 17 May, we will organise a webinar on the challenges and opportunities of digitalisation in metropolitan spaces. This event will gather members who will share their experiences on how their administration is adapting to this new digital.

At the same time, in this event we will launch live the Metropolis learning forum on digitalisation, in which members invited to the session will have started the debate in all or some of the questions available at the forum:

- Which are the challenges and opportunities of the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in metropolitan spaces?

- How can local and regional governments better leverage digitisation, particularly in regard to furthering equity, prosperity and sustainability?

- Has Covid-19 been the turning point to make visible the barriers generated by not having access to the internet?