

International Seminar: “**Metropolitan Policies and Indicators of Social Cohesion**”

CONCLUDING REMARKS by Eva Garcia, Senior Researcher at CIDOB

The objective of the seminar was to reflect on how we can better understand the metropolitan reality to design public policy that truly tackles the challenges and needs of those territories and, above all, the needs of the population that lives within them.

With this objective in mind, we established that advances in the collection of empirical data in metropolitan areas are still very much needed, as is the development of new measurements. In particular, we focused on those measurements that relate to people’s well-being. The analysis of said well-being was obtained from the analysis of:

- 1) quality of life
- 2) social cohesion
- 3) citizen participation

For those, we mostly focused on gaining greater knowledge of the **system of metropolitan indicators** developed by **Metropolis** with a methodology created by **LSE Cities**. This work took up most of our reflection time.

However, in terms of data, we also had the opportunity to be presented with brief updates on the work of:

- The **Gauteng City-Region Observatory**
- The **AMB’s** quality of life survey
- The **Re-City Observatory**
- The **Metropolitan Indicators System** developed by **IERMB**

These presentations made up the bulk of the different panel discussions, especially the first two. On the other hand, the third and last panel was aimed at conveying a deeper knowledge of the mechanisms of citizen participation that can be encouraged within

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different metropolitan spaces. With regards to this topic, we had the privilege of listening to:

- on the one hand, a historic-conceptual depiction of participation within the Catalan territory (with this forming the base of the future creation of a set of indicators that bring together participation and governance)
- on the other hand, the experience of the Office for Public Consultation of the City of **Montréal**
- and lastly, the experience of **Urban Brussels**, with its Sustainable Neighbourhood Contracts

Within this document, I shall not try to sum up the variety of debates we had throughout these three panels, as many diverse topics were tackled. However, what I would like to do is underline some of the **ideas that came out of said debates**, almost as headlines. In particular, I will refer to:

- The first problem has to do with **the difficulty of measuring** a construct, that is **metropolitan territories**, whose borders are unclear and change in function of the criteria we adopt to define them (whether this an administrative criterion, or a demographic, physical or functional one).
 - Furthermore, an element of complexity must be added to the above, i.e. the fact that the metropolitan territory is one that is constantly changing, it is not a static object, which means that whatever definition we adopt will need to take into account this **dynamic character of metropolitan territories**
- The second difficulty I wanted to point out is that of **finding available data on metropolitan areas at the global level**, and because of this the different initiatives we were able to learn about today play an important role.

- Once the obstacle of data availability is overcome, other difficulties are added, and I'm thinking mostly of three:
 - the extent to which these data are **comparable**
 - the extent to which **they really reflect the metropolitan reality** when observed from the bottom-up (most of all when the data come from global observatories)
 - in what way we manage to **interpret these data** in order to create a narrative, thus trying to reconstruct the reality that was fragmented through one indicator or another
 - Last, but not least, how all **this empirical knowledge relates to the design of public policy**

And it is necessary to involve citizens in this design. That is to say, we must work within a framework of co-production of policy driven by **mechanisms of citizen participation**.

Without further ado, I would like to thank all the people who joined us for today's seminar. Thanks also to Metropolis for offering us to co-organize this session. We believe that it is very positive to build such synergies with the institutions in our local environment. Here's hoping we can continue to work in this direction.

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