

International seminar: **Metropolitan social cohesion policies**

Concept note

Context

Metropolisation

The urbanization process that is transforming our planet is amply described by a large number of documents, studies and publications. However, sources rarely mention the fact that as a result of this transformation, another process is transforming our surroundings, surpassing all existing decision-making frameworks: **metropolisation**.

Today, more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and this is expected to reach 60% by 2030 and 66% by 2050. But if we take a look at the data published in GOLD-IV, we can see how metropolitan areas alone account for 41% of this world's urban population, as well as a large part of world economic growth (60% of world GDP) and some of our main social and environmental challenges. Today, our urban reality expands beyond the physical, administrative and political boundaries of cities, creating a much wider urban continuum.

This urban continuum (in terms of economy, population, mobility, social issues...) is too large to be governed and managed by traditional decision-making spaces. Although there are adaptation processes involving the creation of different models of metropolitan governance, in most cases there is no space for coordination. Consequently, even though metropolitan territories exist, we have neither the tools to manage them nor sufficient data to know what is happening in them.

Metropolises: territories of wealth and inequality

This process of metropolisation is the product of globalisation and, as we have already explained, our great metropolises are the hubs that guarantee the flow of people, knowledge and wealth. As a result, they grow in population, in extension and economically. But this growth does not simply imply an equitable distribution of the benefits and the wealth generated; it also generates a set of negative externalities. This is worsened by the absence, in most cases, of a governance space in that territory.

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This is observed when the central areas of the city concentrate investment and undergo gentrification processes, attracting highly qualified personnel and expelling the working and middle classes. Other metropolitan areas, however, undergo processes of decadence or marginalization, with the resulting increase in unemployment, poverty and difficulty in accessing public services. Similarly, in the metropolises of the Global South, settlements and informal economic activities continue to grow, receiving the majority of the most vulnerable population without guaranteed access to land, decent housing and basic resources and services. This polarisation leads to the emergence of "dual" cities, which tend to foster social and territorial exclusion.

There is a risk that the balance between negative and positive externalities might counterbalance the progress made, and that we are not building inclusive and sustainable territories, but exclusionary, fragmented spaces that generate inequalities. This is why we can affirm that **one of the main challenges** that larger cities and metropolitan areas have to face **is the contradiction between their important role in the global economy and society and the unequal distribution, within their own territories, of the benefits of this role.** A first step towards addressing this problem could be to design metropolitan governance spaces that guarantee horizontal and vertical policy coordination with different actors (public sector, private sector, academia and citizens).

The data: a mandate from the Global Agendas

The lack of data, and in our case the absence of metropolitan data, prevents the identification of existing opportunities and problems. As a result, we cannot design or plan adequate policies that improve citizens' quality of life and boost economic growth. Over fourteen times, the **New Urban Agenda** mentions the need to provide data that are reliable, accessible, updated, inclusive, disaggregated, at different scales, comparable and open. Similarly, the **2030 Agenda 2030** (in **ODS 17**, and more specifically in goals 17.18 and 17.19) calls for "timely, reliable and high-quality data broken down by income, sex, age, race, etc." as well as the creation of new indicators to measure the impact of public policies. This is the only way to design, plan, monitor and evaluate policies that reduce inequalities and negative externalities that further fragment metropolitan spaces.

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Objectives

The aim of this seminar is to analyse **the impact of the emergence of metropolitan spaces on governance, social cohesion and the quality of life of their inhabitants**. How can these new spaces for metropolitan governance also create metropolitan identities and **get citizens involved** in their construction? What data and studies do we have on **inequalities and the lack of social cohesion** in metropolitan areas? How can we go beyond quantitative data and analyse the **conditions and quality of life of the metropolitan population**? In order to do so, we will mobilize the experiences of governments and institutions that work on these kinds of issues with data on a metropolitan level.

We cannot answer these questions without the necessary tools. Therefore, during the seminar we will use the opportunity to present the Metropolis metropolitan indicator system. This is **an open database on a metropolitan scale, which when completed will incorporate data from more than 140 Metropolis members**. It is an innovative project that will allow us to bring metropolitan data to the surface and make it available to everyone, to identify global and regional trends, as well as to observe the work that remains to be done in the construction of a data system on a local and metropolitan level that is up to date and that incorporates a gender perspective. With its **38 indicators**, this project includes information from the **58 metropolitan spaces analysed**, amounting to **more than 2,204 pieces of data**.

Format

The format of all three panel discussions will prioritize debate and the exchange of ideas and experiences. Our objective is to encourage the participation of experts in each topic, and after a brief introduction and presentation of a case study, we hope that most of the time is spent on debate and dialogue between experts. Each panel is scheduled to last an hour and a quarter.

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