

Workshop Post-Habitat III: the contribution of cities and metropolitan areas

13th and 14th November 2017

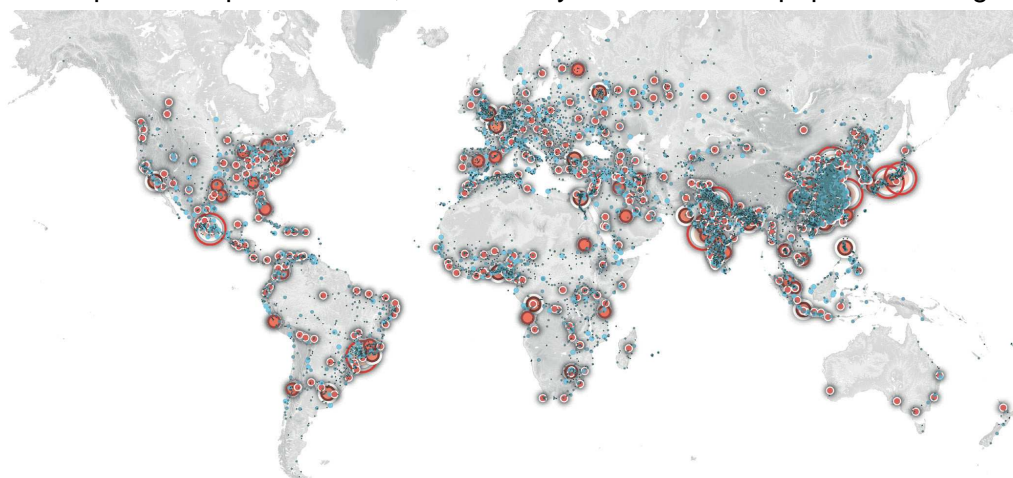
Organizing: Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB), with the collaboration of the Barcelona Institute of International Studies (IBEI), the World association of the major metropolises (Metropolis) and the Euro-Latin American Alliance of Cooperation among Cities (AL-LAs).

1. GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THE WORKSHOP

The process of urbanisation in the world is stable and growing: in less than a century, nearly four billion people will live in urban areas (United Nations, 2016). This trend is expected to grow in the next two or three decades, with 2.4 billion more residents in urban areas. Regions that are currently rural will start to transition towards urban societies, leading one of greatest transformations in human history, with all the advantages and disadvantages that entails.

According to the latest Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD IV), 1.6 billion people (41% of the total urban population) currently live in metropolitan areas, defined as dense urban settlements over one million inhabitants. Over 600 million new inhabitants are predicted by 2030. The Asia-Pacific region dominates the global urban system, since it is home to 47% of the world's urban population and 45% of the metropolises in the world. Following behind are Latin America and the Caribbean, which have 13% of the urban population and 14% of the metropolitan areas, and Africa, with 12% and 11%, respectively. The rest is divided among the other regions.

World map of metropolitan areas, intermediary cities and % of population living in small towns



Source: GOLD IV Report: Co-creating the urban future. Edition 2016, pages 28-29.

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Metropolitan areas are spaces of innovation and of generation of wealth, culture and opportunities, accounting for 60% of the world's GDP. However, although human development rates are higher in urban areas than in rural ones, this quality of life is threatened by two main problems, which are related: social inequalities and environmental problems.

The challenge of social cohesion is shared: there exist major inequalities in urban areas, not only in relation to income per capita, but also to access to services and goods (education, healthcare, housing, drinking water, food, electricity, etc.). No real equality of opportunity exists: it varies by social origin, gender, country of birth and ethnic group, to name a few variables. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages is a challenge concerning all urban areas in the world. While these inequalities are found in the Global North, they are amplified in the Global South: urban areas have turned into the battlefield for human rights and specifically the 'right to the city'. This is a large concept that applies to all kind of urban settlements and includes all the rights in the city (right to housing, to mobility, to basic services, to culture, to freedom and to participation, among others). The universal 'right to the city' or even the 'right to the urban' has a renewed interest after the approval of New Urban Agenda arising from the Habitat III Conference held in Quito in October 2016.

Environmental problems are the second issue in urban areas. The Rio Conference in 1992 had warned of the importance of sustainability, and since then local Agenda 21 initiatives have been developed to try to reduce the amount of urban waste, recycle and produce clean forms of energy. However, CO2 emissions have not declined and the quality of the environment has worsened in the air, water and soil: premature deaths from pollution are starting to become an indicator of a problem that requires global and not just local action. Various initiatives and forums held on the global scale have stressed the need to achieve greater sustainability, like the 21st Climate Change Conference (COP 21) that approved the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. All agreements share the idea that the next 20 years will be critical for finding new models of production and consumption and we must lead the transition towards more sustainable urban areas. Furthermore, natural disasters are devastating in urban areas. We need to plan for them, adapt infrastructure to combat their effects and boost resilience, especially in the most vulnerable areas.

Social inequalities and environmental problems are undoubtedly related. The lack of access to drinking water or clean air entails a decrease in the quality of life and life expectancy. People who inhabit the most polluted areas in unhealthy conditions are often the poorest, with less equality of opportunity. This vicious circle particularly occurs in the countries of the Global South, where

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urbanisation processes have taken place in a more disorderly way and with a heavy dose of informality, leading to a lack of legal recognition of the place where people reside. Moreover, in many developing countries, environmental variables are not taken into account and urban concentration is linked to major air pollution. The gap between rich and poor is often reflected in segregated urban communities populated by private housing estates (gated communities, condos, etc.) and by informal settlements (shanty towns, slums, *favelas*, *villas miseria*, etc.). How to remake these settlements to achieve greater equality and environmental quality is the main challenge of the Global South, where the welfare state has begun to develop in an incipient way. As stated in the GOLD IV report, by 2050 the population of Africa is expected to increase by 800 million people. There are also predictions of major growth in India and China, countries with great inequalities and environmental problems. Therefore, we must avoid polarisation not only between urban areas, but also within them.

The urban areas of the countries of the Global North share these concerns. As covered in the Urban Agenda for the European Union adopted in Amsterdam in May 2016, issues related to social inclusion and sustainability are a priority for European urban areas. Also prominent are the subjects of welcoming immigrants and refugees in cities, the circular economy, job creation in local economies, the digital transition and innovation in public administration. Indeed, economic development is another challenge for all urban areas: how to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. In the Global South, another challenge is added: fighting child labour.

In brief, achieving sustainable, social and economic development are the main challenges facing urban agglomerations. Many documents and academic studies agree on one aspect: improving urban governance is necessary. That is, providing urban areas with the adequate financial, legal and political tools to build fairer and more inclusive societies. As highlighted in the Montreal Declaration on Metropolitan Areas approved in Montreal in October 2015, in general urban areas enjoy no political recognition. Moreover, they lack the financial resources to meet urban challenges. Achieving these goals is complex due to the institutional configuration of the territory: urban areas are embedded in a multilevel governance structure that includes multiple administrations and governments, ranging from municipalities, second tiers of local government, subnational governments to national governments. In this regard, the political and legal consideration of the municipality and of the urban area is crucial: if it is an important level of government (with competencies and funding), if it plays a prominent political role in the country (high turnout in the elections), etc. To sum up, political recognition of urban areas requires acceptance by higher levels of government, which are those that legislate and determine their capacities.

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References:

UCLG (2016) GOLD IV Report: Co-creating the urban future. Edition 2016 (Chapter 1 on Metropolitan Areas) <http://www.gold.uclg.org/reports/other/gold-report-iv>

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (2016). World Cities Report <http://wcr.unhabitat.org/main-report/>

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2. WORKSHOP PROGRAM

13/11/2017

Post-Habitat III: the contribution of cities and metropolitan areas

Session open to the public

Venue: IBEI

09h30 – 10h00

Coffee – Arrival and registration

10h00 – 12h30

Plenary session open to the public

Opened by **Alfred Bosch Pascual**, Vice-president of International Relations and Cooperation, AMB.

Paulius Koulikasuskas. Director UN-Habitat Europe

Jacqueline L'Hoist. President and founder COPRED- Consejo para Prevenir y Eliminar la Discriminación de la CDMX

Patricia Rodríguez. Director Plan Maestro de la Habana

Inaugural conference by **Salvador Rueda**. Director Agència d'Ecologia Urbana de Barcelona

Panel session and colloquium with those attending the conference

After this session open to the public, the following activities are exclusive to the international experts invited to the workshop.

12h30 – 14h00

Transfer and lunch at AMB headquarters

14h00 - 17h00

Workshop initial session, closed to the public

Welcome by Mr. **Ramon Torra**, AMB manager.

Panel session, presented and conducted by Dr. **Mariona Tomàs**, Professor of Political Science at the University of Barcelona and expert in metropolitan governance, urban policies and local government.

This initial session of the workshop consists of a joint meeting of all the experts, to raise the key general issues that will be discussed in depth in subsequent sessions.

The following questions will be raised:

- Are your cities working on the issues of the New Urban Agenda or the SDG (give examples)?
- Do you think there is citizen participation in the development of SDG or the issues of the New Urban Agenda (give examples)?
- Are local governments able to implement these objectives? For instance, in terms of funding and the position of cities in the multigovernance political system.

Venue: Sala de Plens (AMB)

17h00

Transfer to the hotel

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The second day of the workshop will be dedicated to discuss the main challenges facing urban areas: sustainability, urban and metropolitan planning, social cohesion and competitiveness and local development. Although we know that these challenges are interrelated, participants will be divided into four groups in order to discuss in depth the several topics. At the end of the day participants will gather in a plenary session.

Topic 1: Sustainability

Climate change, quality of the air, mobility, natural resources (energy, water self-sufficiency, etc.), urban ecosystems.

Topic 2: Urban and metropolitan planning

Housing (formal and informal settlements), urbanism and planning, public space, mobility.

Topic 3: Social cohesion

Social segregation, accessibility to equipment, gender gap, ageing population, digital gap, social inequalities, safety, right to housing.

Topic 4: Competitiveness and local development

Economic competitiveness, hyperconnectivity, unemployment, informal economy, circular economy, innovation.

We ask the participants to answer the following questions, illustrating the answers with **examples** (best practice or a failure):

1. Which are the needs and challenges in your city/agglomeration regarding this topic (1,2,3,4)?
2. Which are the policies that are being made in your city in order to enhance sustainability/ urban and metropolitan planning/ social cohesion/ competitiveness and local development?
3. Which are the obstacles to design and implement these policies?
4. Who are the key actors involved?
5. Which is the position of this topic (1,2,3,4) in the global agenda, from the point of view of cities/agglomerations?

Schedule:

Venue: IBEI

09h30 – 11h00 **4 parallel meetings (Topic 1, 2 3 and 4)**

11h00 – 11h30 **Coffee**

11h30 – 13h00 **4 parallel meetings (Topic 1, 2 3 and 4)**

13h00 – 14h00 **Lunch**

14h00 – 16h30 **Closing session – Farewell drink**

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