Rethinking the ecosystem of international city networks

Challenges and opportunities

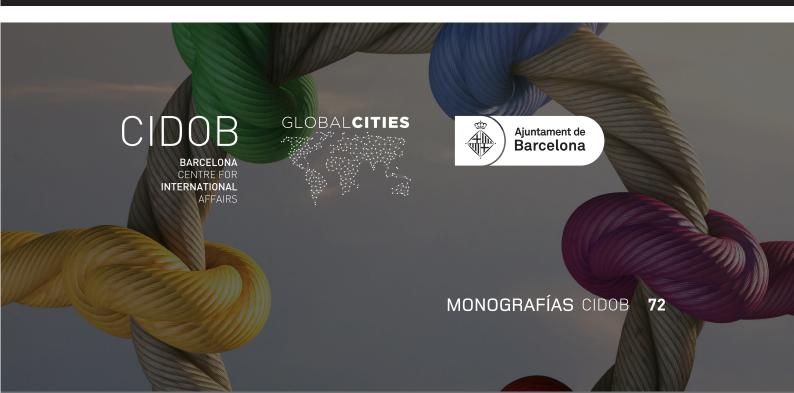**Agustí Fernández de Losada and Hannah Abdullah (coord.)**

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SDGs and Habitat III and facilitated the contributions from local constituencies to the United Nations process.

INTRODUCTION

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In recent years, cities have consolidated their position as major players on the international scene. Yet, their ambition to project themselves internationally and to influence global agendas is not a new phenomenon. Cities have operated through organised networks for decades. The first international organisation of cities, the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), was created in 1913. Towards the end of the past century, the regional integration processes of the 1990s engendered a proliferation of city networks, especially in Europe but also in Latin America, Africa and Asia. In 2004, the founding of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) as a platform for international municipalism marked a turning point.

Since then, city networks have played an important role in defining and implementing some of the main global agendas. Today, their involvement in the COP, the United Nations Conference on Climate Change,[1] their success in adding a territorial dimension to the UN 2030 Agenda, and their participation in the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, are good examples of how city networks are making their voice heard. That new measures to tackle global challenges now take cities' needs, interests and aspirations into account is a sign of what has been achieved. While much remains to be done, cities have gained a seat at the global table.

However, at the same time, the growing prominence of the urban question on international agendas has caused a reconfiguration of the ecosystem of city networks that is not always coherent. Multiple platforms have emerged that promote initiatives related to cities and that try to engage with traditional international actors, especially governments and international organisations, but also civil society and the private and knowledge sectors.

This reconfiguration of the ecosystem of city networks brings with it both risks and opportunities, especially for traditional networks that until recently occupied this space almost exclusively. The risks are tied to the diffusion of efforts and the lack of complementarity and coordination. All of this potentially translates into communication problems with the

1. Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

international organisations behind the major global agendas. However, these diverse efforts to promote the international presence of cities also present opportunities to open up spaces for fostering alliances with different actors that are central to promoting better urban policies.

This CIDOB Monograph seeks to analyse the changing dynamics of the ecosystem of city networks over the past years, focusing on how the main platforms operate, what influence they have on global agendas, what services they provide to their partners and how they coordinate their efforts. By zooming in on the strategies networks have been developing to enhance their influence and make their operations more effective, the volume examines in more detail the added value they provide. In short, the objective is to identify the challenges and opportunities posed by the reconfiguration of the traditional ecosystem of city networks as a result of the increasing importance attributed to urbanisation processes on international development agendas; an "urban turn" in international policy discourses that is in part the fruit of the work of traditional city networks over the past three decades.

The origin of this volume was a roundtable seminar on "Rethinking the Ecosystem of International City Networks: Challenges and Opportunities" held as part of CIDOB's Global Cities Programme on July 3rd 2018. The seminar brought together a broad range of actors involved in city networking: academics that critically analyse the phenomenon, representatives of city councils that are members of city networks, representatives of United Nations (UN) programmes that specialise in decentralised cooperation, and representatives of major regional and international city networks and platforms, including Eurocities, the Euro-Latin American Alliance of Cooperation among Cities (AL-LAs), MedCities, Cities Alliance, the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC), the World Association of the Major Metropolises (Metropolis), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) and 100 Resilient Cities (100RC).

Volume structure

The variety of actors who participated in the seminar is reflected in the contributions to this volume. More theoretical and critical approaches sit side by side with the more applied perspectives of practitioners and policymakers.

The first section, **Unpacking and rethinking contemporary city networking,** consists of four longer chapters that flag up the major trends and tensions in the ecosystem. Each chapter suggests possible ways forward to meet the challenges posed by the increasing density and diversity of organisational forms that have emerged to network cities. The question of what risks and opportunities this new plethora of networks poses in terms of the ability and capacity of cities to leverage international agendas and offer democratic solutions to complex global problems is the backbone of all four chapters.

Agustí Fernández de Losada, Director of CIDOB's Global Cities Programme, analyses the different types of city networks that make

up the contemporary ecosystem, charting how traditional networks of public membership have come to exist alongside a range of multi-stakeholder public–private city platforms. Some of today's most powerful international platforms, such as C40 and 100RC, are privately financed and led. Together with the multiplication and diversification of actors involved in international city networking, the large-scale investment of private capital and interests is fundamentally reshaping the ecosystem and has created an increasingly competitive dynamic. Fragmentation and the lack of a unified municipalist voice are often the result, making the dialogue with other international actors, especially multilateral organisations, increasingly difficult. Fernández de Losada argues that in order to not reverse the growing recognition of cities as legitimate actors in international governance, the ecosystem needs to move towards a cooperative dynamic that reinforces synergies and complementarities between different networks and platforms, especially those with the greatest capacity for advocacy. In particular, more collaboration is needed if networks and platforms want to move beyond the symbolic recognition of cities and local governments in multilateral forums and global agendas and towards actively shaping them so that they respond to local challenges and problems.

Continuing where Fernández de Losada leaves off, **Jean-Pierre Malé**, former Director of the Observatory of Decentralised Cooperation, discusses ad hoc strategic alliances between cities – which he calls "cities fronts" – as an emerging form of city networking that is proving an effective method of bringing local issues to the table of global governance. Malé identifies two types of cities fronts. One is reactive and emerges from cities mobilising against specific policies imposed by higher levels of government (e.g. the Sanctuary Cities movement in the United States, which opposes Trump's migration policy); and the other is proactive and emerges from cities mobilising against major global issues and dynamics that directly affect local life and require an urgent response (e.g. the "Cities for Adequate Housing"[2] declaration presented at UCLG's New York Executive Bureau during the UN High-level Political Forum in July 2018). In contrast to established forms of city networking, these cities fronts are not only temporally limited and structurally light and flexible, they are also based on a shared political will to upscale local problems and concerns that require solutions from the international community. For Malé, the short-term actions of cities fronts complement the medium- to long-term advocacy initiatives of major representative networks, which are aimed at the formal recognition of cities within the global governance system, but which have so far largely failed to promote actual policy or structural changes in this system.

Giovanni Allegretti, Senior Researcher at the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, examines how the different types and generations of city networks are responding to new ideas on demodiversity and growing demands for citizen participation in urban decision-making processes. This approach throws into relief larger issues and questions around the networks' organisational structure and governance models. The first half of the chapter traces how at the start of the twenty-first century the common view among city networks of participatory practices as "a cross-cutting methodology of action" was partially reformulated to constitute a "goal in itself" in specific contexts. One example is the World Social Forum, where participatory practices were linked

2. https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/cities_por_adequate_housing.pdf

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with concerns about social inclusion and poverty reduction, as well as debates around the "right to the city" following the 2008 financial crisis, which linked participation with human rights-based approaches to urban governance. While the issue was mostly promoted by structurally "light", short-lived and multi-actoral networks that were closely linked with social movements, it was also taken up by some of the traditional structurally "heavy" networks. The second half of the chapter moves on to analyse how the new generation of privately funded and led city platforms (introduced in the chapter by Fernández de Losada) have approached the question of citizen participation and by extension that of equal representation in management positions. It is argued that while the hybrid membership composition and flexible governance structures of the platforms make them ideal candidates to lead innovation on these issues, they have so far failed to grasp this opportunity.

In her contribution, **Maruxa Cardama**, formerly a Senior Policy Specialist at Cities Alliance, and now Secretary General of the Partnership on Sustainable Low Carbon Transport, provides us with the perspective of a long-time practitioner deeply involved in the international municipalism movement. Her chapter calls for a self-reflexive and critical debate about the future of the ecosystem of city networks that should not only include local and regional governments and their networks, but also other urban stakeholders from the private and knowledge sectors and civil society organisations. Only by involving the full diversity of actors engaged in city networking can more synergistic and complementary ways of operating be formulated. Yet, Cardama also points out that with the growing privatisation of city networking and the dilution of the democratic founding values of the municipalism movement, it is important that traditional networks of local and regional governments seize the opportunity to lead and set the terms of the debate on the future of city networking before other less democratic forces do so. The chapter closes with some insightful reflections on the opportunities that a synergistic and democratic reconfiguration of the ecosystem could entail with regard to broader issues and questions on how to tackle the current crisis of democracy and the challenge of localising global sustainable development agendas.

The remainder of the volume consists of shorter opinion pieces by representatives of city networks, city councils, and UN agencies. The second section, **Challenges for a new global governance: city networks on the international stage**, addresses the fundamental question of how city networks are contributing to revising the UN's global governance system and what role they should play in a revitalised system built on notions of multi-level and networked forms of governance. It opens with a piece by **Emilia Saiz**, Secretary General of UCLG, in which she argues that the holistic and participatory paradigm of development put in place by the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has not only paved the way for the recognition of local governments as implementers of global agendas but also for their inclusion in the definition of future policies and agendas. Global agendas can only aim for a renewal of democracy and provide people with a sense of control over the future of their planet if they manage to effectively connect with and accommodate the "local dimension". **Johannes Krassnitzer**, International Coordinator of UNDP's ART Initiative, which promotes sustainable development at the local level, discusses how networks of local

and regional governments are emerging as one of the most catalytic actors in promoting the recent paradigm shift in global development governance by fostering networked governance approaches that privilege multi-actor partnerships over individual action. Especially in the area of development cooperation, city and region networks are transcending established hierarchies and categorisations of traditional and non-traditional development actors. **Felip Roca**, Director of International Relations at Barcelona City Council, expands on the new role of city networks as key drivers of a revised global governance system, arguing that this role also comes with new responsibilities. Networks need to move beyond the advocacy narrative of traditional international municipalism towards more technical discourses that can demonstrate the actual capacity of local governments to tackle global challenges by defining better indicators and other instruments of public policy.

The third section, **The role of new city platforms**, provides insights into how city platforms such as C40 and 100RC seek to connect with the traditional ecosystem of city networks and how they define their role in this ecosystem. **Emmanuelle Pinault**, Programme Director of City Diplomacy at C40, provides a short overview of the organisation's mission, history and governance structure, pinpointing seven features that "make the C40 model unique". **Lina Liakou**, Managing Director for Europe and the Middle East at 100 Resilient Cities, explains how the new platforms have emerged to support cities in their responses to global challenges not only by connecting them globally but also by providing them with the expertise of the non-profit and private sectors. For example, 100RC works closely with financial institutions to help the market understand the value of investing in high-resilience projects. The contribution of **Arnau Gutiérrez Camps**, Deputy Director General for International Affairs, Networks and Multilateral Organisations at Madrid City Council, sheds some light on how the city councils of major capitals such as Madrid see their participation in traditional networks and the new platforms as complementary.

The question of complementarity is addressed in more detail in the final section of the volume, **How to move towards complementarity between networks,** with contributions by representatives of traditional city networks, composed of and financed by local governments. **Octavi de la Varga**, Secretary General of Metropolis, raises the paradox that while city networks are becoming increasingly important actors in international governance, the ecosystem is showing signs of exhaustion and ineffectiveness. Largely, this is the result of a lack of coordination and collaboration between individual networks and platforms, which can only be overcome by a collective effort to align the agendas of different networks. **Anna Lisa Boni**, Secretary General of Eurocities, approaches the issue with more caution. While – like other authors in this section – she argues that the busy calendar of competing local government events and summits is not sustainable and ways of merging events need to be found, she is sceptical of efforts to forcibly systematise the ecosystem of networks. For Boni, systematisation is bound to result in further specialisation, which in turn will reproduce "silo-approaches" to urban policymaking that have proven ineffective in tackling today's complex global challenges. **Marina Canals**, Secretary General of the International Association of Educating Cities, addresses the role of local governments in the conundrum of how to move towards greater com-

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plementarity between networks. Joining a network implies much more than paying the membership fee. City councils have a responsibility to actively engage in the networks they form part of and make them integral to their international relations strategy, rather than treating them as a mere marketing "label". Active and engaged members can also assist the different networks they form part of by identifying synergies and opportunities for collaboration. The section closes with a piece by **Xavier Tiana**, Secretary General of MedCities, in which he details how an established network like MedCities, which is strongly rooted in a specific region, is building complementary partnerships with other city networks and development organisations that share its interest in strengthening Euro-Mediterranean relations.

The volume concludes with a piece by **Eva Garcia-Chueca**, Scientific Coordinator of CIDOB's Global Cities Programme, in which she proposes a future research agenda that puts into question the assumption that the participation of cities and their networks in global governance is per se positive. In particular, she points towards the fact that city diplomacy tends to amplify the voice of certain cities: mega cities and those located in the northern hemisphere. This bias has created a hierarchy of cities and reproduced older colonial power relations. For Garcia-Chueca the role of cities as new global political actors is positive only in so far as city diplomacy constitutes a democratic voice that fosters the democratization of global governance. Crucially, to become such a transformative force, city networks need to become more transparent and create democratic governance and membership structures that can accommodate the full diversity of urban territories.

UNPACKING AND RETHINKING CONTEMPORARY CITY NETWORKING

TOWARDS A COOPERATIVE ECOSYSTEM OF CITY NETWORKS

Agustí Fernández de Losada

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In a globalised environment sovereignty no longer resides solely with nation-states. The planet's major challenges are shaped by global dynamics that can no longer be nationally regulated but need to be managed at the international level. But it is cities that have to deal with many of the consequences of these challenges, often without clear competences, without resources and feeling the urgency of citizen pressure. In response to this situation, cities attempt to influence the international political agenda, promoting legislative frameworks that better respond to their needs, and seeking to acquire the resources needed to deploy their competences.

The desire to influence international agendas has strengthened in recent years as the importance of the urban phenomenon has grown. The urbanisation process underway at global level, combined with cities' central role in tackling certain global challenges, such as climate change, inequality and human mobility, has made them central to the development of effective solutions (Fernández de Losada & Garcia-Chueca, 2018). As a result, multilateral bodies are much more open to dialogue with city representatives and seem more receptive to their needs.

It is in this context that international city networks – the platforms through which cities have for decades driven their political influence strategies – have gained recognition and begun to proliferate in every region of the world. From a once simple ecosystem formed of what may be called public membership networks, concentrated mainly in Europe, a complex one has evolved, in which these longstanding networks coexist with multi-actor networks operating at global level.

But the profusion of international-level networks is provoking tensions in the ecosystem. These tensions originate in the dispersal of efforts despite resources being scarce; the saturation of an overabundant supply of services; and the lack of effective answers to the most pressing problems cities face. The risk is real of entering a period of stagnation in which especially large cities and their mayors disengage from networks. Such cities possess the resources necessary to begin

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speaking for themselves before international bodies, while forming occasional, one-off alliances.

Beyond the structural and functional problems the ecosystem of networks is facing, its capacity to effectively influence international agendas is also at risk. Cities and their networks must seek more than recognition: they have already achieved this. They must transcend symbolism and rhetorical exercises (Fernández de Losada, 2018), and shape the international political agenda so that it responds effectively to local challenges and problems, providing solutions that can prompt transformations. This means going beyond the traditional approaches focussed on influencing state-defined agendas to elevate the political priorities of cities to the international arena, setting the political pace from the local level.

This is no easy task and it is first necessary to ensure all actors with a stake in the issue – and networks in particular – are oriented towards strategic, synergistic and effective action.

Cities have spent decades promoting networks that can secure them the critical mass needed to acquire international legitimacy, visibility and strength

I. The rise of international city networks

International networks are the most effective channel for promoting the political interests and influence of cities. Faced with the difficulty of operating alone in the international arena, cities have spent decades promoting networks that can secure them the critical mass needed to acquire international legitimacy, visibility and strength. At the same time, these networks function as spaces for exchanging experiences, transferring knowledge and boosting shared projects.

City networking is not a new phenomenon. The first city network, the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) was founded in 1913; the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)[1] was formed in 1954 and the World Federation of United Towns and Cities (UTO) in 1957. But the rise of city networks to the international stage took place later, at two separate moments in time.

The first was in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s (Fernández de Losada, 2004). A number of policy changes and initiatives promoted a new interest in cities: the consolidation of the principle of local autonomy introduced by the Council of Europe, the formalisation of social and economic cohesion[2] as a competence of European institutions,[3] the promotion of structural and cohesion funds and the creation of the Committee of the Regions.[4] This was the start of a progressive and highly significant proliferation of networks of different types. The European map of city networks grew ever larger, and became increasingly complex and diverse. New networks emerged alongside the CEMR, ranging from generalist ones – like Eurocities[5]– and thematic ones –like Polis[6] and Platforma[7]– to territorial ones – such as the Union of the Baltic Cities[8] and MedCities[9]. All sought to influence the European political agenda, to open up spaces for knowledge transfer and mutual learning and to promote transnational projects. Despite similar initiatives arising in other regions – e.g. FLACMA (1981) and Mercociudades[10] (1986) in Latin America, and CityNet[11] (1987) in Asia – Europe remained the heart of the municipalism movement.

1. http://www.ccre.org/
2. In 2008, the Treaty of Lisbon incorporated a territorial dimension, and economic, social and territorial cohesion began to be spoken of (articles 174 to 178 of the TFEU).
3. Single European Act, 1986.
4. Maastricht Treaty, 1993.
5. http://www.eurocities.eu
6. https://www.polisnetwork.eu/
7. http://platforma-dev.eu/
8. http://www.ubc.net/
9. http://www.medcities.org/es
10. https://mercociudades.org/
11. https://citynet-ap.org/

The second moment, which was global in scope, came about with the declaration of the *urban age*. At the turn of the century, cities began to play more important roles at international level and became linked to some of the main global agendas. Municipalism made headway on the international stage as a transversal movement and its gradual institutionalisation gave it visibility and greater recognition. The creation of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG),[12] the global association of cities that emerged out of the merging of the IULA and the UTO in 2004, marked a turning point.

All of this had two major consequences.

On the one hand, global agendas started to increasingly address the urban and territorial. The inclusion of SDG 11 in the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda is the most significant example of this, and resulted in international organisations establishing channels of dialogue with local governments. Other significant milestones were the recognition by the UN's Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC) of local and regional authorities as a Major Group and the creation of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF) as a mechanism for coordinating the voices of local governments in international political processes.[13]

On the other hand, platforms that are based on heterogeneous partnerships and that approach our global urban reality from a different perspective began to proliferate and coexist alongside the traditional public membership networks. Those, such as Cities Alliance,[14] characterised by its multi-stakeholder composition, were followed by networks sponsored by major philanthropic foundations, such as C40 (funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies),[15] and those which emerged around personalities such as the Global Parliament of Mayors,[16] which is promoted by Benjamin Barber.

II. A complex ecosystem

Over the past three decades, the ecosystem of networks has become ever broader and more complex, and doubts about its effectiveness have become louder. Recent studies estimate that over 200 city networks operate at international level today (Acuto and Rayner, 2016). The table below provides an overview of the different types of networks operating at global level, their members, functions and the resources they possess.

Over the past three decades, the ecosystem of networks has become ever broader and more complex, and doubts about its effectiveness have become louder

12. https://www.uclg.org/
13. https://www.global-taskforce.org/
14. https://www.citiesalliance.org/
15. https://www.c40.org/
16. https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/

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Type of network	Type of member	Resources	Activities	Examples
Generalist global public membership networks	Local and regional governments	Fees Funding partners Grants	Political influence Knowledge Knowledge transfer Communication Agency	UCLG, Metropolis
Regional generalist public membership networks	Local and regional governments	Fees Funding partners Grants	Political influence Knowledge Knowledge transfer Communication Agency	CEMR, Eurocities, Mercociudades, MedCities, Union of Baltic Cities
Networks linked to cultural communities	Local and regional governments	Fees Funding partners Grants	Political influence Knowledge transfer Communication	CLGF, AIMF, UCCI, CIDEU
Specialised global public membership networks	Local and regional governments	Fees Funding partners Grants	Political influence Knowledge Knowledge transfer Communication Agency	ICLEI, Sharing Cities Alliance, OIDP
Thematic regional public membership networks	Local and regional governments	Fees Funding partners Grants	Political influence Knowledge Knowledge transfer Communication Agency	Polis, Civitas, Platforma, ACTE Coalición LAC
Mixed or multi-level publicly led networks	Local and regional governments International organisations National governments Civil society organisations Private sector	Grants	Political influence Knowledge Knowledge transfer Communication Agency	Cities Alliance, CityNet
Privately led networks	Local and regional governments Philanthropic organizations Academia	Philanthropic contributions Grants Fees	Political influence Knowledge Knowledge transfer Communication Agency	C40, 100RC, Global Parliament of Mayors

Source: author's own compilation.

The so-called "traditional" or "public membership networks" – whose membership is formed exclusively of local and/or regional governments – have dominated the international political landscape for decades. This is true for Europe, where platforms such as CEMR and Eurocities enjoy great recognition and have become key actors in the negotiation of policies with a territorial dimension. In other regions and at global level, UCLG has been the indisputable reference point for the various United Nations (UN) agencies.

The panoply of public membership networks is very extensive. There are those that operate at global level, including UCLG, Metropolis[17] and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability,[18] and others, like Eurocities, Mercociudades, MedCities, that operate regional. Some address their members' interests from a generalist perspective, engaging with the broad range of local public policies, while other specialise on one specific issue. Some even operate within the cultural and linguistic geographies

17. https://www.metropolis.org/
18. https://www.iclei.org/

of the old European colonies: in the Ibero-American context this includes the Centro Iberoamericano de Desarrollo Estratégico Urbano (CIDEU)[19] and the Union of Ibero-American Capital Cities (UCCI), the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) operates in the territory of the Commonwealth, and the Association Internationale des Maires Francophones (AIMF) stretches across the former reach of *la Francophonie*.

The activity of most of these networks is focused on advocacy, knowledge creation, learning and, to a lesser degree, the development of initiatives on the ground (what might be called "agency action"). Their governing bodies are democratic in nature (elected) and representative, they have larger or smaller teams of professionals, and their budgets are above all sustained by the fees paid by their members and the grants they receive, whether from their own members or from multilateral bodies.

Alongside the public membership networks, multi-actor platforms exist that are characterised by diverse leaderships and mixed composition. The case of Cities Alliance is one of the most important, as it is configured to bring together public and private operators with a shared interest in urban policies. The alliance is led by a UN agency (UNOPS) and is made up of other multilateral bodies,[20] national governments,[21] city networks,[22] international civil society organisations,[23] private sector entities, foundations,[24] universities, research centres and knowledge networks.[25]

This kind of platform tends to have a more technical profile and to focus its activity on generating specialised knowledge (urban policy in the case of Cities Alliance), favouring exchange of experiences and knowledge transfer and the development of pilot initiatives in the field. Nevertheless, in recent years it has also encouraged political advocacy – especially in the contexts of the 2030 Agenda and New Urban Agenda. Yet, because of the difficulty of defining a common stance with such a heterogeneous membership its role is still somewhat fuzzy.

But the ecosystem of city networks has been most profoundly shaken by the appearance of what may be called "privately led city platforms". These organisations emerged around philanthropic institutions and influential individuals strongly committed to strengthening the role of cities as first-order actors in managing and resolving some of the principal global challenges.

An interesting, though unique, example is the Global Parliament of Mayors. Launched by the US academic Benjamin Barber following the publication of his book, *If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities* (2013), it defines itself as a governance structure where mayors from all continents can exchange experiences and solutions relating to the challenges they have in common. Currently comprising just under 30 mayors, it has the support of a prestigious advisory committee of academics and representatives from think tanks, city platforms and the private sector.

Nevertheless, it is the philanthropic foundations that have gained most notoriety. For some years now, they have placed attention on the process of urbanisation in which the planet is immersed, and on the need to strengthen the leadership and capacities of cities and their governments. In this context, particularly noteworthy are C40, backed by Bloomberg Philanthropies,[26] and 100 Resilient Cities (100RC),[27] launched by the Rock-

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The ecosystem of city networks has been most profoundly shaken by the appearance of what may be called "privately led city platforms"

19. https://www.cideu.org/
20. The World Bank, UNCDF, UN-Habitat and UN Women.
21. Germany, Brazil, Chile, Ethiopia, the United States, the Philippines, France, Ghana, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Sweden and Switzerland.
22. UCLG, Metropolis, ICLEI, C40, CLGF.
23. Slum Dwellers International (SDI), AVSI Foundation, Habitat for Humanity International and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO).
24. The Ford Foundation and Omidyar Network.
25. Erasmus University Rotterdam, the International Institute for Environment and Development and the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN).
26. C40 has three strategic funders: Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and Realdania.
27. https://www.100resilientcities.org/

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efeller Foundation. These two initiatives have solid philanthropic backing, powerful teams, effective communication strategies and great capacity to influence and intervene in the public policies major cities promote at global level. But just as the two initiatives have different origins, so their approaches to intervention diverge.

C40 emerged in 2005 as a city network driven by then mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and soon had significant backing from the Clinton Climate Initiative. Nowadays its financing is backed by philanthropic funds and its governance structures are clearly public–private. The network's president is the mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, and its board of directors, led by Michael Bloomberg, contains a majority of representatives of private foundations that guarantee the organisation's strategic funding.[28]

100RC, on the other hand, was not conceived as a city network but as a platform created by the Rockefeller Foundation with the aim of helping participating cities promote resilience strategies. Its funding, like its management, is private, and cities participate as the recipients of a service. To a degree, 100RC operates according to a multi-actor rationale, as it creates a platform in which cities that need to promote resilience strategies are connected with private companies that can provide solutions.

But what has disrupted the ecosystem of networks is not the private nature of the leadership of these networks or platforms. It is their capacity to mobilise cities, to influence the public policies they promote, to mobilise resources, to project themselves onto the global scene and to communicate their results. As noted above, both operate with very considerable financial and human resources, which give them a competitive advantage over the traditional public membership networks, even the largest ones. Without needing to pay fees, these platforms provide cities with highly qualified pluridisciplinary teams. While C40 has a team of 174 professionals and 100RC has 97, UCLG only has 35 staff at its central office, ICLEI 66 and Metropolis 13. They also receive technical support – from the resilience strategies 100RC produces for its cities to the pilot projects C40 promotes– and spaces to exchange experiences and transfer knowledge.

Similarly, both C40 and 100RC have great capacity to project themselves onto the international scene and take centre stage at meetings that end up shaping the political agenda. The mayors meeting in the framework of the UN Conference on Climate Change (COP 21) in Paris, and Urban 20 promoted in Buenos Aires in connection with the G20 summit, are good examples of the capacity C40 has to shape the agenda. Also very important is their ability to communicate with and, through the most innovative channels, reach the most relevant actors, whether from politics, academia or the professional or private sectors. A clear sign of this is the number of Twitter followers the two platforms have: C40 has 83,341 followers and 100RC 84,718, while UCLG has 26,426, ICLEI 28,219 and Metropolis 17,098.

However, the new platforms do not have the representativeness or coverage of some of the major traditional networks. C40 brings together 96 cities from more than 50 countries and 100RC 97 cities from 49 countries. By contrast, UCLG's coverage is much broader: it represents a universe of over 240,000 cities, metropolises and regions and over 175 national local government associations located in 140 countries.

What has disrupted the ecosystem of networks is not the private nature of the leadership of these networks or platforms. It is their capacity to mobilise cities, to influence the public policies they promote, to mobilise resources, to project themselves onto the global scene and to communicate their results

28. Two members of Bloomberg Philanthropies, one from Realdania, one from the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and one from the Clinton Foundation, as well as three representatives of cities.

III. Does the international ecosystem of city networks need rethinking?

The complexity that characterises the current ecosystem of city networks poses major challenges and numerous questions for international municipalism. The risk of duplicating efforts is great: this may result in already limited resources being wasted, and a loss of efficiency, the consequences of which are difficult to manage. Further, the dynamics of the ecosystem seem to point more towards competition between networks rather than a search for complementarities and synergies, which has severe effects for the ecosystem.

On the one hand, there is the risk of impairing the dialogue with other actors operating on the international stage, particularly multilateral bodies. The creation of this dialogue is one of the major achievements of city networks and it cost a great deal of resources. It is clearly linked with the recognition local governments have attained on the international stage today.

On the other hand, this multiplication of efforts produced a covert (because no one admits it) competitive environment that generates fragmentation and leaves cities faced with a vast range of services: services in the form of political representation before international bodies; observatories; spaces for learning, exchange and knowledge transfer; technical assistance, pilot projects, impact studies, strategies and plans of all sorts. What is on offer is at times overwhelming.

This has a range of consequences. On the one hand, though it may seem contradictory, this results in endogamy. Because of the abilities required to participate in international forums (languages, knowledge of international agendas and diplomatic practice, etc.) and the time constraints of highly demanding local agendas, which are often incompatible with the profusion of international events, the participants in these forums tend to be repeated: teams from the networks' secretariats, representatives of large cities and local leaders who champion international municipalism. The risk is therefore of impoverishing the contributions and the resulting political message.

Equally, in a context of very limited resources, despite slight advances having been made (joint organisation of events, shared stances, etc.), the networks and platforms compete to attract participants for their events, to intervene in the large international forums, to obtain international funding for their projects and activities, and so on. That this competitive mindset continues to prevail over cooperation results in dispersion and undermines the many benefits that could grow out of synergistic action. All of this is provoking a progressive disconnection, particularly among the local leaders and mayors with the most complex agendas, who cannot find the solutions they need to the serious problems they face in these forums. The strategic dimension is missing.

This disconnection is worsened by the fact that cities' capacities to influence global agendas remain limited. In certain cases this produces frustration. Advances have been made, but national governments continue to set the political agenda and the contributions from international municipalism remain more symbolic than effective.

> The dynamics of the ecosystem seem to point more towards competition between networks rather than a search for complementarities and synergies, which has severe effects for the ecosystem

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The ecosystem of city networks thus faces a double challenge. On the one hand, at an internal level, there is the risk of disengagement, with the most important cities questioning the effectiveness of the networks and choosing other paths. In parallel, externally, voices that are critical of international municipalism are being encouraged from sectors linked to traditional diplomacy, which has for years resisted recognising cities as legitimate actors in the international system.

The tensions in the ecosystem are leading many voices to consider the need to revise or rethink it. This is an exercise that should be encouraged, always bearing in mind the risks involved in moving towards simple and more effective frameworks that are less rich, potentially more complex and possess less legitimacy. Proposing Cartesian operations aimed at ordering and reducing the number of existing networks and platforms seems neither realistic nor does this approach align with the principle of local autonomy. At any rate, this has been done before, and a "common house" for international municipalism already exists – the UCLG.

Not risking the richness of the ecosystem in no way means denying the need to improve the ways of working within it. It seems fundamental to advance towards cooperative frameworks that set competitiveness aside and strengthen the synergies and complementarities that may exist between different networks, especially those with greatest capacity for influence.

At global level, the commitment to strengthening the GTF seems more pressing than ever. As a mechanism of coordination and consultation that encompasses the main networks of local governments operating at global level, it is a valuable attempt to show the desire to act jointly in one voice to influence the main global agendas. It is a voice that must be rich with nuance, as it represents highly disparate governments and realities.

But beyond strengthening the GTF, the networks and platforms of cities should begin to coordinate themselves to develop political influence strategies and information campaigns, to organise events, establish knowledge creation mechanisms, promote shared projects and create international financial resources. The international municipalism agenda is so intense that it runs the risk of becoming ineffective and irrelevant.

If the large networks operating at global level (UCLG, Metropolis, ICLEI, C40, etc.) shared forums and events it would save time and resources and would increase the visibility of cities on the global stage. If, in parallel, they jointly spearheaded knowledge platforms, influence strategies and communication campaigns, they would strengthen their message and credibility. And if they coordinated their efforts to mobilise funds designated to financing projects, it would help share efforts, encourage specificities, avoid duplication, and focus on strategic challenges.

IV. Transcend the symbolic and shape the political agenda

As well as progressing towards the consolidation of cooperative mindsets, cities and networks must also begin to reflect on where to direct their political influence endeavours on the international stage. They must find a

way to go beyond rhetorical and symbolic stances that are closely connected to their need to exist and to have a seat at the global table, and commit not only to influencing the agenda but also to shaping it.

Global agendas are defined by states. Like the other actors operating at global level, city governments and their networks aspire to influence this process of definition with limited room for manoeuvre. It is essential that they do so based on the implications for their local reality of any decisions made in those frameworks. Nevertheless, it is even more important to seek to shape the international agenda by upscaling local priorities to global agendas, where they are absent.

A good example of this is the effort underway to consolidate access to adequate and affordable housing in the UN[29] and European Union (EU) agendas. This city-led endeavour has benefitted from significant international alliances with, for example, the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, and aims to influence international agendas as a means of influencing national regulatory frameworks.

It is increasingly common for cities to bring issues of contestation with their national governments to international governance structures (whether the EU or the UN). The housing agenda is a good example of this, but there are others. Another is the political alignment of European "refuge cities" and US sanctuary cities against their national governments on the issue of refugees and migrants. In the US, cities have also reaffirmed their commitment to the Paris Climate Accords following the Trump administration's withdrawal from them.

These kinds of ad hoc initiatives will only become more prevalent, meaning a different scenario is being sketched out that cannot be ignored by the networks. Supporting cities to settle some of the challenges they face, which often lead to confrontations with states on the international stage, may be a good opportunity to again connect with what most concerns mayors. Supporting cities in their efforts to intervene in tackling challenges like the financialisation of cities – and its consequences in terms of access to housing, consumption and local business – climate change and migration, contributes to cities being able to propose effective, transformative solutions.

But setting the agenda means building alliances with other operators and possessing the resources to construct the arguments based on verifiable evidence. In this sense it is necessary for networks to continue advancing in the joint work they carry out with international organisations, national governments, civil society, the private sector and, in particular, with universities and research centres.

V. Conclusions: recover coordination and build alliances to transcend the symbolic and help cities set the international agenda

Though the world is moving towards a scenario of shared sovereignties, cities must not lose sight of the fact that national governments continue to play a central role on the international stage. They have the capacity to promote legislative processes, handle the main budgets, are members

Cities and their networks must find a way to go beyond rhetorical and symbolic stances that are closely connected to their need to exist and to have a seat at the global table, and commit not only to influencing the agenda but also to shaping it

29. https://citiesforhousing.org

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For international agendas to offer the solutions cities need, a powerful and effective ecosystem of networks is required. That means the ecosystem must resolve the dysfunctions and tensions that threaten to demobilise international municipalism and lead cities to conduct their external action via other means.

of the international bodies, and have had a monopoly on international relations for over 300 years.

In this context, raising local political priorities in order to find accommodations on international agendas is no easy task. Neither is ensuring those agendas provide effective solutions for cities. That is to say, solutions that go beyond the symbolic, that propose regulatory and operational frameworks that respond to their real interests and needs, and that serve to improve the capacities to tackle the challenges they face. This is particularly true, as has been shown, when cities and their national governments address these challenges from diverging or openly conflicting political perspectives.

Making this accommodation viable and ensuring international agendas offer the solutions cities need requires a powerful and effective ecosystem of networks. That means the ecosystem must resolve the dysfunctions and tensions that threaten to demobilise international municipalism and lead cities to conduct their external action via other means.

The current diversity of the network of ecosystems must not be seen as a weakness. Risks are involved, particularly those of dispersal, but the richness must be tapped. As argued above, networks of cities should set aside the competitive mindsets that still guide their operations and develop cooperative frameworks in order to join forces, encourage synergies and propose shared work programmes that effectively respond to the expectations of cities and other international operators.

But advancing towards cooperative frameworks is not enough. Cities and their networks must continue to empower the alliances they have been forging over time: with universities and knowledge centres, with the private sector, with civil society organisations and with international entities. And, although it is sometimes more difficult, with national governments. But above all, they must continue forging alliances with citizens and connect them with their international agenda. That is a challenge they are still a long way from rising to, but it will be fundamental to keeping the international action of cities and their networks anchored in reality.

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THE EMERGENCE OF CITY ALLIANCES AND FRONTS: TOWARDS NEW FORMS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE?

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I. Introduction

CIDOB's seminar *Rethinking the ecosystem of international city networks: Challenges and opportunities* held on July 3rd 2018[1] focussed on the "ecosystem" of city networks to examine this form of collaboration between local institutions, which is undoubtedly one of the clearest and most striking expressions of the progressive internationalisation of local governments (LGs).

To complement the work done in the seminar, this paper seeks to bring to light certain emerging forms of relations between LGs, which I will call "strategic alliances" of cities or "fronts". Although they share certain features with networks, these alliances exhibit particular characteristics that distinguish them from the familiar networks, both in their goals and their modes of action. To address this phenomenon, I will examine their genesis and distinguish two types of front.

II. The first kind of front: cities mobilising against a state or international policy

First of all, a front's creation may result from the repudiation of a policy that a state or international body is seeking to impose. The most notable recent examples of this are the US LGs that have opposed Donald Trump's migration policy (Sanctuary Cities) and the cities and federated states that have refused to abandon endeavours to fight climate change despite the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. In both cases, the transversal resistance of a large number of cities and territorial governments arises in opposition to national government decisions.

The same kind of reaction – beginning at local level –arose in Europe against the European refugee policy, bringing about the so-called "Refuge City" movement. Stimulated by a highly active citizens' movement, a number of cities have declared themselves ready and willing to receive significant numbers of people fleeing from war. They oppose the European Union's closing of borders and transferring of responsibility for the problem to countries such as Turkey and Libya, and stand up to

national governments (NGs) that do not apply the minimum agreements on refugee reception.

Other examples of this kind are beginning to emerge. In Spain one example is the front of cities opposed to the so-called "*regla de gasto*" expenditure rule established by the People's Party government, which imposes drastic limitations on LGs' spending capacity, even when their accounts are in surplus. This economically absurd rule worsens the chronic deficits in local finances and strengthens NG power. In this case, cities are not fighting against a national policy that is sectoral in nature, but against one of their endemic structural problems: excessive centralisation of public resources.

It should be underlined that the different examples mentioned illustrate the progressive awakening of a deep opposition between the rationales of nation-states and of LGs. This issue, which has significant political and strategic implications, is undoubtedly one of the mainsubjects the municipalist movement will have to address in the near future.

> While states have competences that focus on issues of geostrategic control, power and competition over global resources, LGs principally deal with issues linked to the organisation of human settlements and the coexistence of people in a territory

It does not fall within the scope of this paper to develop this issue in its full extent. But at the risk of simplification, it may be pointed out that, while states have competences that focus on issues of geostrategic control, power and competition over global resources, LGs principally deal with issues linked to the organisation of human settlements and the coexistence of people in a territory.

These differences in perspective and competence between the two levels of administration explain why the agendas established by states revolve around issues of security, control of the movement of people, international trade, flows of finance and other "macro" issues. "Local" issues, on the other hand, such as housing, social inclusion, the provision of basic public services, managing diversity, citizen participation and other subjects that fill the day to day of local institutions are lesser priorities.

> Cities are losing interest in merely occupying "a seat at the global table" (and thereby legitimating state-set global agendas) and seek, on the other hand, to exert direct influence to change the content of the agendas, and thereby highlight the different strategies and rationales that arise from the practice of local public administration

Increasing awareness of this gap means cities are losing interest in merely occupying "a seat at the global table" (and thereby legitimating state-set global agendas) and seek, on the other hand, to exert direct influence to change the content of the agendas, and thereby highlight the different strategies and rationales that arise from the practice of local public administration.

These reflections, which should be explained and developed in another framework, lead us to identify a second kind of cities front, which is emerging from "local" problems.

III. The second kind of front: cities mobilising against a common risk

Beyond cities' possible resistance to specific policies imposed by other administrative levels, a second situation that may provoke the creation of a cities front is the realisation of a serious and imminent risk posed by certain phenomena that affect them directly. The trigger factor here is not an external fact, but emerges from within the cities themselves and is directly linked to citizens.

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THE EMERGENCE OF CITY ALLIANCES AND FRONTS:
TOWARDS NEW FORMS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE?

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A clear example is the recent mobilisation of a significant group of cities to attempt to stop the speculative practices of financial capital in the real estate field, which culminated in a political declaration presented by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) at the High-Level Political Forum held at the United Nations headquarters in 2018. That document warns of the threats affecting urban housing and the rights of citizens to continue living in their city and asking states to give more competences and resources in this field to local institutions.

This emerging front focuses on the defence of housing. It proposes to resist what the signatory city administrations consider to be a genuine aggression against urban life provoked by the uncontrolled activity of large international investment funds, which ignore the social and human meaning of housing and reduce it to the status of a good used for speculation and gentrification, which profoundly alter the lives of neighbourhoods and threaten citizens' rights.

The value of this example is that it should be considered the precursor of other fronts that may arise at any time in opposition to the multiple perverse effects of economic and financial globalisation and the application of neoliberal policies on the human, social and productive fabric at global level. Indeed, the free movement of capital and states' loss of power – or their submission to the dominant rationale – leave territories at the mercy of many other disruptive and destabilising phenomena, such as:

a) Embrittlement of the productive fabric – due to the growing penetration of large multinational companies – which prompts frequent and abrupt delocalisation, along with the crisis of local-level activities with roots in the territory;
b) Tourist saturation at international tourism hubs, with negative effects on the quality of urban life and the right to the city of inhabitants, due to the lack of regulation and control of this activity;
c) Local territories competing with one anotheras part of a global cities market oriented to attracting foreign resources via the granting of a rangeof facilities and advantages to international investors to the detriment of inhabitants;
d) Increased social inequalities and divisions in the city through induced phenomena such as gentrification, mass unemployment, social exclusion, urban violence, gender discrimination and drugs, etc.;
e) Growing issues with coexistence and the problems of social exclusion linked to mass emigration and refugee flows;
f) Accelerated privatisation of basic public services (water, health, education, etc.) and of many urban activities of a collective nature (security, transport of people, freight delivery, etc.);
g) Pressure from large technological operators to invade the markets cities potentially represent for their products;
h) Corruption in local management fuelled by profits linked to urban growth, land requalification, public purchases and trading in influence, etc.;
i) Atmospheric and noise pollution due to the submission of LGs to the interests of certain sectors such as private car manufacturers.

This indicative list does no more than point out some of the main problems facing cities to which they cannot respond individually due to a lack of resources and recognised competences.[2]

The recent mobilisation of a significant group of cities to attempt to stop the speculative practices of financial capital in the real estate field, should be considered the precursor of other fronts that may arise at any time in opposition to the multiple perverse effects of economic and financial globalisation.

2. *To these subjects might be added, transversally, the need to find new forms of local governance, to improve the quality of local democracy and to achieve effective citizen participation to overcome the crisis in the current political representation system.*

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It should be specified that we have not included the more technical issues each city must address in this list that do not necessarily have the same political and strategic ramifications such as water purification and management, waste handling and recycling, urban mobility and other classic recurring issues of local administration. It must be recalled that at this more technical level, the thematic networks can provide valid responses by detecting good practices and promoting horizontal exchanges between cities. But this line of work – which is necessary – normally lacks the capacity to tackle the general causes that explain these phenomena and mean they are repeated in almost all the world's cities and therefore challenge the LGs as a group. Clearly, the key points we have indicated above demand more strategic and "political" responses than mere horizontal exchanges between cities.

IV. Three decisive factors in creating a front

Setting out from the above examples, three factors can be highlighted that are usually present in the emergence of strategic city alliances: The first is the realisation of a serious problem that directly affects local life and requires an urgent response. As shown above, such a problem may be caused by the imposition – by the national government or international bodies – of a specific policy or the worsening of certain phenomena that threaten cities' social and political balance.That is why fronts arise, in many cases, in a reactive manner, out of a feeling of aggression and a defensive position expressed by LGs.

The second factor lies in the existence of a common political will – and a degree of trust and complicity – between the LGs that form the initial core of the protest. This does not, of course, mean strict homogeneity in terms of political parties, but relatively similar political and strategic foundations allow a common stance to be quickly adopted, without having to go through long processes of analysis, reflection and consensus-building. In this case, the capacity to react immediately to problems and aggression is the fruit of long, prior work of rapprochement and the building of common platforms between like-minded LGs and the demonstration, at the same time, of a recognised leadership that allows the mobilisation and search for instruments to be speeded up.

Third, and connected to the previous factors, the finding is underlined that on many occasions the creation of a cities front is supported by social movements, citizens' groups and civil society organisations that mobilise around the government and prompt it to seek partners and allies to attempt to resolve urgent local problems through specific actions in the international sphere.

V. Where are city alliances headed?

Faced with the mentioned problems and challenges, the policies of change introduced at the local level in Europe tend to revolve around subjects with established political content, such as:

• The desire to change the city model and place it at the service of inhabitants;

- The effective participation of inhabitants in decision-making and the empowerment of neighbours ("re-neighbouring" the city);
- The fight against real estate speculation through the promotion of social housing and rent control;
- The remunicipalisation of privatised basic services;
- The policies of reunifying the urban social fabric and reducing urban and social differences between neighbourhoods;
- The fight against the different forms of exclusion and discrimination in the city (gender-based violence or against LGBTI groups, etc.);
- The active policies of reception and integration of migrants and refugees;
- The imposition of rules on transparency and accountability;
- The clean-up of the public procurement policy, with the introduction of ethical and political conditions;
- And the decoupling of municipal institutions from the interests of large companies (open source software, etc.).

This list, provisional and incomplete, sets out just a few of the possible focuses of cities' joint struggle. At the moment, these attempts are generally presented in a localised manner, city by city, according to the political will and objectives of each local government. Nevertheless, some mayors sense that this systemic fight absolutely requires an international dimension and support from or effective collaboration with other cities. Hence, all these lines of political transformation, which emerged and were promoted at local level, are liable to generate the creation of new cities fronts and provide them with consistency in the short and medium term.

VI. Unique, more flexible forms of organisation

Considering everything mentioned above and based on the first examples of cities fronts, we may conclude that the tools arising from these new dynamics differ substantially from established forms of city networking and city networks. These incipient forms possess a series of singularities that I highlight below:

- In order to act, the front does not consider it necessary to have previously recognised representativeness or to bring together a specific number of LGs;
- Indeed, it seeks to act out of political, social and ethical legitimacy, without at any time seeking formal representativeness or attempting to express a unified or agreed position on behalf of the LGs;
- It is sufficient for a smaller group of leading cities to be formed that manages to mobilise to formulate proposals or demands and trigger joint actions;
- The group's aim is not expressed in terms of general demands, such as, for example, local autonomy and the right to the city, but in the form of action that focuses on a specific issue on which influence is sought;
- The cities front does not intend to establish itself as a permanent institution, but to act as a temporary alliance whose only raison d'être is to denounce and garner influence in relation to the central issue;
- The initial core group of cities may transform or grow over time. Electoral changes or the general political situation may make the composition of each alliance vary over time, as these organisations are essentially defined by their objectives;

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- The composition of each front tends to be different. They are essentially ad hoc alliances that crystallise around a specific demand or a message to be spread. The main driving force and effective leadership may differ according to the issue raised;
- The creation of a cities front is not necessarily limited to the institutional sphere. Support is usually given (or sought)from citizens' platforms and civil associations;
- Efforts are made to design unique, innovative solutions, which have a clear meaning, are highly media friendly and conspicuously groundbreaking.

In particular, efforts are made to make the issue prominent in the media and on social networks, acting in a coordinated way with the civil society and social activism organisations that mobilise around this issue.

When this work has borne fruit in various cities and the LGs are ready to act with the support of citizens, the time comes to demonstrate that a group of cities can organise itself to tackle it. The aim is to oblige states, international bodies – and also city networks – to take up positions, and to attempt to provoke changes in legislation and in the division of competences between the different levels of the administration to grant better effective power to the LGs. Specifically, attempts are made to roll back the neoliberal rationale in one specific aspect and field.

VII. Cities fronts and established forms of city networking: Opposition or complementarity?

The LGs involved in these new processes often feel that "traditional" forms of local government international action – both the networks and the mechanisms of global influence – do not respond to their needs or problems and cannot provide effective support or responses in the short and medium term.

Indeed, thematic networks arise as good tools for *exchange* between LGs, but not as instruments of structural *change*. They have played a key role in creating relationships between cities in different countries, creating a culture of horizontal exchange between them, identifying and spreading good practices and stimulating the improvement of local public policies. They have therefore more than fulfilled the role they initially proposed for themselves, which is surely the reason for their success and multiplication. Nevertheless, the absence of a clear political and strategic definition and the desire to bring together the largest number of cities possible has produced significant internal heterogeneity and often led these networks to limit themselves to technical and sectoral change without attempting to promote major changes of policy or working models in their field of activity.

On the other hand, though the influence-seeking activities the representation networks promote to achieve the recognition of the LGs as international actors have secured certain positive advances, they have been slow and sometimes limited to issues of a formal nature. Indeed, the idea that to gain influence over the problems that concern cities it was necessary first to acquire access to international forums and the spaces that belong to the global governance system produced a very

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long-term influence strategy with uncertain effects. Global agendas are designed by states according to their interests and are far from being able to truly reflect local problems.

These observations show that traditional forms of international action are not really suited to occasions when LGs need urgent joint action or when the seriousness of the problem they suffer requires profound change in established rules or international governance mechanisms. One can thus see how three spaces are gradually sketched out that are probably complementary.

The first is that of the networks, whose main functions are to encourage relationships between cities at international level, horizontal exchanges between them and the improvement of local public policies in certain sectors. The second – still in construction – is that of the cities fronts and alliances, which aim to place immediate pressure on NGs and international bodies to resolve certain serious problems or to abolish specific policies. As has I have shown, this is a space of direct political influence that highlights the potentially conflictive relationship between cities and national governments. The third space is the global activity of networks that ,in order to represent cities as a group, attempt in the medium and long term to gain recognition as international actors and to be able to formally express themselves within the global governance system.

The new emerging space of cities fronts and alliances is destined to gain importance in the near future. It does not exclude the other forms of actions, but neither does it prioritise them or consider them a necessary starting point. It is the awareness of a political urgency to resist the aggressions that threaten the social and civic fabric that leads cities to seek these new forms of action. Out of this need and to this end, the voice of cities and citizens seeks to gain access through direct action intended to shake up the existing institutional framework and accelerate global changes.

Hence, this type of activity, which is more political in nature, supplements the existing forms of action and allows the possibility to be glimpsed that key issues of local life may be recognised as priorities and thereby transform international agendas.

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CITIES, CITIZENS AND DEMODIVERSITY: AN OVERVIEW OF TWO GENERATIONS OF CITY NETWORKS

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I. Introduction

International municipalism is not a new phenomenon, but its recognition remains an ongoing process. During the last decades, increased urbanisation rates (up to 50% in 2007: see UCLG, 2016), the rearrangement of decentralisation frameworks in many countries and the new role of local authorities as engines and guarantors of local development have established cities as important political protagonists.

The beginning of the new millennium was characterised by two diverging but complementary trends. On the one hand, networks advocating for the recognition of cities as pivotal political and diplomatic actors tended to merge to strengthen their position vis-à-vis states and the United Nations. On the other, new thematic networks fostering peer-to-peer learning, pilot experiments and knowledge exchange started to grow and multiply at both national and international levels.

As Marx recognised (2008), city networks have received little attention as a meaningful research topic, despite their growing relevance for the formulation of best practices and the debates about climate change and multilevel governance (Taylor and Derudde, 2015; Le Galès, 2002). The issue certainly deserves further attention, especially since interdisciplinary perspectives such as Actor-Network Theory have enriched International Relations and Political Science (Acuto, 2014; Cudworth and Hobden, 2013). Analysing city networks from this perspective could help disrupt traditional political binaries (democratic/autocratic, rural/urban, etc.) and enrich the understanding of their continuous shifting and "material-semiotic" nature (where relations are simultaneously material – between things – and semiotic – between concepts they work on), as well as the effects of technological agency on them (Barrinha and Renard, 2017).

We start by observing how important – at least in the rhetoric of many city networks –the declared need to open urban decision-making processes to citizens now seems to be, paying attention to inclusion, enhancement of differences and the demodiversity of social actors. The overview of city networks from this perspective will act as a prism

> In the rhetoric of many city networks the declared need to open urban decision-making processes to citizens seems to be gaining in importance

for reading larger dynamics of evolution in the panorama of city networks, their organisational structure, governance models and decision-making processes. We will mainly focus on multilateral networks of pluri-continental scope, using different examples as "mirrors" to better understand certain issues.

II. Which networks prioritise citizen participation?

In the last decade, demands to open territorial and urban decision-making processes and policies to the direct involvement of citizens has grown fast, making the word "participation" a buzzword whose meanings are often ambiguous and diluted (Allegretti, 2017). City networks tend to view participatory practices as a cross-cutting methodology of action, rather than a goal in itself. However, at the start of the new millennium, global events such as the World Social Forum (WSF) brought together informal networks of local and regional authorities that placed great emphasis on taking citizen participation seriously, linking it with broader concerns of social inclusion and poverty reduction policies. They generally had a short life span, as was the case for national networks such as the Italian Rete del Nuovo Municipio, created during the WSF and shaped as a multi-actor space to allow the participation of cities, universities, NGOs and individuals, with differentiated fee policies (Allulli, 2006); and the Red Estatal de Presupuestos Participativos in Spain. Both died around 2011, following local elections in which centre-left parties suffered a strong defeat. A similar destiny struck the Red FAL (Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion and Participatory Democracy),created at the Porto Alegre WSF in 2001, whose demise coincided with the 2011 WSF in Dakar. The network, with few activities during the year and an informal structure (in which different members had asymmetric resources), was always weak, even in the perception of its active members (Allegretti and Marx, 2009).

The three above cases were all shaped as "multi-actoral" and "hybrid" networks (Cattan, 2007; Perulli et al., 2002), whose activities mixed advocacy and peer-to-peer exchanges of practices, adopting principles of action-research. They all tried to open a space for dialogue with civil society and research institutions, hoping their presence in internal governance could guarantee their functioning in periods of political changes. Shaped as "networks of ideological affinity", politically oriented and often "exclusionary" of different visions, their persistent fragility was especially due to their politically unbalanced nature, which made their members hyper-sensitive to political changes in their home countries. The continued low recognition of cities as agents for political diplomacy did not help: in fact, membership payments and travel costs for participation in annual reunions were difficult to justify (Marx, 2008). However, their stories have been useful – as a caveat– for other latecomer networks such as RAP, the Portuguese Network of Participatory Municipalities. Created in 2014 in connection with article 2 of the Portuguese constitution (which considers the promotion and deepening of participatory democracy *not just a means, but a mandatory goal of the State of the Rule of Law*), opened membership up to local institutions of every political colour, welcoming other types of actors as "observers" or collaborators in specific activities.

Social Forum (WSF) brought together informal networks of local and regional authorities that placed great emphasis on taking citizen participation seriously, linking it with broader concerns of social inclusion and poverty reduction policies

Some of the thematic networks that emerged from the WSF and its atmosphere of dialogue and collaboration between local governments and social movements escaped decline by reinventing their structure and they survive today. The FAL set the impulse for creating the Committee on Social Inclusion and Participative Democracy of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).[1] Another, more paradigmatic example is the story of the FALP (Forum of the Peripheral Local Authorities). Conceived in 2001 and formally shaped in 2003 within the WSF framework, it originated in a highly ideological environment. However, FALP was able to gradually reinvent itself and open up to a wider range of cities than those initially involved, taking advantage of the consolidation of metropolitan areas (and changes in their governance structures) in the last decade. In 2006, the FALP took on a more formal structure, giving birth to UCLG's Committee on Peripheral Cities,[2] which is committed to rethinking notions of centrality, marginality and distribution of powers in relation to the goal of increasing citizen participation in urban governance.

In the last decade, other project-bound and thematic city networks have made participation a central concern, including Cities of Tomorrow (co-funded by the Bertelsmann Foundation in early 2000), Partecipando (linked to an URBACT project coordinated by Rome)[3] and networks promoted by the European Union's URBAL programme, which supported cooperation between European and Latin American cities (especially networks 9 and 10 on participatory budgeting, local finances and urban planning).[4] As these networks did not survive beyond their specific funding schemes, they can be described as "comet networks", characterised by a "push" approach, which planned strategies and actions on the basis of pre-defined topics (Hopp and Spearman, 2004). By contrast, other "comet networks" that placed particular emphasis on participation emerged from "pull" dynamics, often as informal single-issue platforms that responded to "urgencies" or "emergencies" and took a reactive approach. The most prominent example is the Network of Local Authorities for the Promotion of Public Services,[5] created in 2004 amid protests against the privatisation of public services promoted by the AGCS/GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and the Bolkestein Directive. It was dissolved following the approval of the Services in the Internal Market Directive 2006/123/EC. Other contemporary networks of this type, born out of "political urgency" and bridging social movements and cities, are SET: Red de Ciudades del Sur de Europa ante la Turistización (Network of South European Cities against Turistification), Cities for Adequate Housing, City of Sanctuary and Fearless Cities. The latter presents itself as a "global municipalist movement … radicalizing democracy, feminizing politics and standing up to the far right".[6]

An exception to these dynamics is the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (OIDP), created in 2001 as a result of an URBAL project, which has 1092 members (including 512 local governments and 41 local government associations),[7] and which recently started close collaboration with United Cities and Local Governments. OIDP is a *conjunction ring* that brings together networks that value citizen participation as indispensable for a certain political/ideological progressive vision, as well as networks for which participation is a methodology for an approach to development oriented at goals of efficiency, efficacy and sustainability of public policies and terri-

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1. https://www.uclg-cisdp.org/sites/default/files/Working_Plan_2008_2010.pdf
2. https://www.uclg.org/en/organisation/structure/committees-working-groups/peripheral-cities
3. See the "European handbook for participation": http://urbact.eu/files/partecipando%E2%80%93-european-handbook-participation.
4. http://www2.portoalegre.rs.gov.br/urbal9
5. http://www.brianzapopolare.it/sezioni/economia/20051023_riso-luzione_liegi.htm
6. http://fearlesscities.com/
7. All data from November 15th 2018.

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torial management. Its creation as part of an EU- funded project of cooperation among cities (with other social institutions admitted as external partners) marked its nature. Its members are mainly EU and Latin American cities,[8] NGOs (300) and research centres (113). Yet, its annual best-practice award has attracted cities from more than 92 countries. Still not formalised into a juridically recognised body, OIDP is today a multi-actor network that depends largely on support from Barcelona and the cities that host its annual meetings. While it does not offer services to its free-of-charge members, it collaborates with other networks (e.g. UCLG, Educating Cities, Participedia) in the organisation of peer-to-peer learning events that are open to different actors. At present, its juridical formalisation and the possibility of introducing membership fees are under discussion. They could dramatically reduce the number of active members and end the discussion of participatory democracy, which is often felt to be a "minor issue".

Since the 2008 financial crisis, dialogues between the above-mentioned networks and international platforms that connect different actors around the "Right to the City" and human rights advocacy have intensified. This perspective, from which the "weak topic" of participation can be reframed and strengthened, was promoted by platforms that united cities around the promotion of "Human Rights in the City",[9] the formulation of the European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City,[10] and the Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City.[11] Examples include the FALP and the activities of Human Rights Cities which are linked with the UCLG committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights (CISDP-DH).[12]

Participation has been an important issue in a series of platforms (often not even called "networks") consolidated over several decades around single issues, as in the case of the mono-actoral network of Healthy Cities, a long-term international development initiative started by the World Health Organization in 1986 that today involves 1,000 cities worldwide and almost 30 national subnetworks (Tsouros, 1995; Boonekamp et al., 1999). Another single-issue network with citizen participation as a central focus is the Creative Cities Network (UCC) created by UNESCO in 2004, which now has 180 members in 72 countries.

Today we can distinguish between two major types of networks:

- those we could call "heavy networks", usually formalised as juridical entities, with stiffer structures and clearer and more accountable governing procedures, homogeneous membership (generally limited to representatives of administrative entities) and which attempt to rely mostly on self-funding through membership fees;
- "lighter networks", often informal, that tend to communicate through less expensive technologies (Facebook or Twitter accounts, webinars, etc.), have more flexible structures, governing bodies and procedures that are more "misty". Their sturdiness and duration are fuelled by asymmetries among participants (relating to different capacities to invest resources and weighting in the network's functioning), which increases their risks of fragility and volatility in the case of changes of political geography in members'countries.

8. The first annual meeting in Africa took place in Matola (Mozambique) in 2016.
9. See, for example: http://www. righttothecityplatform.org.br/
10. https://www.uclg-cisdp.org/en/right-to-the-city/european-charter
11. https://www.uclg-cisdp.org/sites/default/files/CISDP Carta-Agenda_ ENG_0.pdf
12. https://www.uclg-cisdp.org/

Obviously this division cannot perfectly cover all existing cases, as experience and ICT technologies tend to favour hybrid/mixed formats of functioning, and variable geometries that include flexible "light" spaces within a globally "heavy" structure. United Cities and Local Governments represents this complex typology well. Its creation in 2004 – a joint-effort by larger "generalist" networks (the International Union of Local Authorities, United Towns and Metropolis) – marked an important inflection point in the evolution of city networks. Conceived as an "umbrella organisation" (both for individual cities, local and regional governments, and their national associations), UCLG favoured a soft transition in the geography of city networks. It allowed networks to be kept alive that were active in relation to regional institutions (e.g. CEMR - the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, Eurocities, The Congress of the Council of Europe, MedCities, FLACMA - La Federación Latinoamericana de Ciudades, Municipios y Asociaciones Municipalistas, or Mercociudades), as well as networks with thematic focuses and other transregional leagues linked to new funding schemes or the colonial legacies of certain countries.[13] Its welcoming structure (with both territorial-based and thematic clusters) stimulated and facilitated the convergence of previously existing informal networks (e.g. FALP or Human Rights Cities) but could not prevent a sort of "bureaucratic stiffness". Within this complex structure (where rigidity and fluidity of flows seem to live together in relative harmony), citizen participation is an important cross-cutting issue, as well as a thematic focus of some of its committees, which offer important spaces for peer-to-peer learning between local authorities, as well as organising open events where cities and regions dialogue with other actors from civil society which – in the formal structure – only seldom enter as observers or consultants.

III. A new generation of city platforms on the global stage

In the last decade a new group of actors has emerged on the international stage whose role and visibility was dramatically increased by the Paris Convention on Climate Change (2016), the Habitat III Summit (2016) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015). This new generation of city platforms – which mainly focus on localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – have two main factors in common: (1) given their multi-actor make-up they can barely be defined as city networks; and (2) their thematic orientation and functioning structure are usually defined by their private funders, often philanthropic foundations later joined by other powerful organisations, including international institutions from the Bretton Woods or UN systems, private enterprises and – more rarely – knowledge-based actors. Prominent examples of this new generation include the BMW Foundation, which maintains the Responsible Leaders Network, and 100 Resilient Cities (100RC). The latter, created in 2013 by the Rockefeller Foundation, expanded through a tight selection of city applicants, looking for innovative mayors that act as catalysts for change and have a history of building partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders.

Another example is the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40), an alliance of 96 large cities created informally in 2005, which is characterised by a complex variable structure. C40 became an incubator (or

13. Réseau des villes francophones, Commonwealth Local Government Forum, Forum of Local Authorities of Portuguese Speaking Countries, as well as more restricted networks as UCCI - Unión de Ciudades Capitales Iberoamericanas or UCCLA.

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umbrella) for 17 thematic networks (covering mitigation, adaptation and sustainability topics), including the "Compact & Connected" Cities Network funded by the Ford Foundation. In its concern for climate change C40's work overlaps with other historical networks like ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) created in 1990, or the Cities Alliance, created in 1999. Cities Alliance is the oldest of the new city platforms. It constitutes a global partnership of organisations from different sectors, including bilateral and multilateral development agencies, governments, NGOs, international associations of local authorities, foundations, private sector companies and knowledge institutions.

If the new platforms and partnerships are sometimes viewed by older and more traditional networks as competitors, this is due to three main reasons:

- the centrality of powerful private actors leads to suspicion that *hidden agendas* exist beyond their commitment (e.g. a monopoly or unfair competition in the provision of services and technologies to member cities);
- that participants are generally chosen "on invitation";
- the appearance of new platforms and partnerships is leading to a renewed fragmentation of the ecosystem of city networks, undermining local authorities' efforts to show cohesion in fighting to be recognised as indispensable in achieving the SDGs, international diplomacy and multilevel governance.

From the perspective of the new platforms, networking among cities is more a means to achieve other goals. However, one might assume that their commitment to improve accountability and democratic procedures has the potential to improve dialogue between cities and citizens. Yet, when examined more closely, the new platforms do not seem interested in providing direct channels of communication with citizens. Although citizens are the beneficiaries of policies and training actions, these are usually formulated by the platforms themselves (only in limited cases are they co-designed or co-managed by citizens). Further, while civil society at large is present in some managing structures, its representatives are limited to well-organised, powerful actors from the private and knowledge sectors and NGOs. No democratic innovations like citizens' panels or similar tools based on random selection have been experimented with. The leading approach seems linked to representation: mayors tend to be the representatives of their cities (in some exceptions, vice-mayors or councillors are named on the managing boards), and visible organised actors from the private sector and civil society somehow "represent" citizens (even if they have no bottom-up mandate for that).

That said, compared with older networks where cities are the main actors and the only ones admitted to sit on the governing board, the governance structure of the new platforms is richer in demodiversity. In networks sponsored by philanthropic foundations, cities are only one actor among others – including political and social leaders – so that hybrid participation could in theory extend from their activities to their managing structures (although this is rarely the case). Gender mainstreaming can exemplify this potential: in the new platforms, where the representation of cities (through their elected mayors) is not strictly necessary, the composition of board members can be more easily

The commitment of the new city platforms to improve accountability and democratic procedures has the potential to improve dialogue between cities and citizens.

decided by criteria of equality that guarantee a gender, age and ethnic balance, as well as a balance between member cities from the northern or southern hemisphere. By contrast, the governing structures of traditional networks reproduce political inequalities, because the mechanism of choosing cities and the prevalence of middle-aged men at the top of most public administrations, making even "affirmative action" difficult.

The accountability of governing structures and rules of election do not differ much between the two generations of networks. In both, there are alliances whose governance rules are misty and others that clearly expose all their procedures for naming management boards (e.g. UCLG) and take care to make very detailed reporting, as happens with the meetings' minutes and proceedings that are consultable online on the Cities Alliance website.[14]

In the new generation of platforms, the available resources to advance innovations and disseminate best practices in specific human settlements could represent an opportunity to enlarge the diversity of local authorities and typologies of cities at the forefront of networks. Yet, such diversity remains an unexplored challenge. Just like the more consolidated networks, new alliances tend to privilege the visibility of large cities in their governing bodies: huge cities and metropolitan areas – which have more resources for diplomatic missions and continuous commitment –are given centre stage. While their mayors and image are more visible and easier to communicate, the new alliances offer them added visibility and more resources for innovating policies, often asking for a continuous commitment of their top-ranked officials in the networks' main activities in exchange.

Further, smaller cities, especially rural ones, can benefit from some projects of the new platforms and be a "target" of their activities. However, smaller cities are rarely invited to be at the forefront of the governance of the new platforms: their visibility often continues to be confined to "dedicated networks", such as those on peripheral cities or intermediary cities. This trend – which tends to confine innovative practices in small cities to the level of national networks[15] – is a missed opportunity for enriching the world panorama of innovative polices as well as for valuing the real diversity of living environments. Further, it fails to recognise that "urbanity" is not a homogeneous feature (many rural, open and low-density spaces exist even inside compact cities), and that the diffuse hybridity of living settlements could be an important resource for sustainability. Avoiding terms like "city" and "urban" in the names of networks could be a start. In fact, the debate on the "Right to the City" provides a caveat: that such terms can be misunderstood or felt as an "excluding barrier" in many contexts (Meyer, 2009; Garcia and Allegretti, 2014).

Summarising, the main specificities of newcomer alliances (often having a decade of experience) are linked to the variable geometry of their funding structures and partnerships, as well as to the importance they give to innovative experiments, dissemination of best practices and collaboration with technical experts and the private sector. Their presence undoubtedly enriches the range of actors on the global scene, with this variety sometimes being represented in their governance structures. Thanks to their hybrid nature and lack of the bureaucratic stiffness that

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14. http://www.citiesalliance.org/Meeting-Reports

15. In Italy, the so-called "Riace model" (for revitalising small settlements abandoned by inhabitants through the activities of immigrants and refugees) has been defended and emulated by small cities' networks such as La Rete delle Città in Comune or La Rete dei Comuni Solidali. Other experiences – in the defence of cultural and environmental values – could be: "Associazione dei Comuni Virtuosi", "Rete di cittá libere dai Pesticidi" or "Associazione Borghi Autentici".

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cages older networks, they can allow for more demo-diversity among their members and rebalance some inequalities visible in traditional alliances, like the representation of women in governance structures.

However, their potential is halved by several weaknesses:

The accountability of governance is rarely increased in relation to pre-existing networks, although it is made more urgent by the richer plurality of member/partner typologies, which can raise new ethical ambiguities and conflicts of interest.

The dialogue between networks and citizens is not improved. If the centrality of citizen participation in public policies is a "mantra" of almost any action aimed at increasing sustainability and resilience of urban development and managing strategies, the new networks seem to have no strategy of communication with citizens, except for the mediation of individual cities in their territory. Citizens are seen as beneficiaries of policies and projects, but not as actors that can improve the governance of city networks or the ideas of technical experts.

These global partnerships tend to privilege large, visible cities, missing out on the opportunity to invest private funds in innovations that can directly benefit small- and medium-sized cities, give more cohesion and strength to their alliances, and value the diversity of human settlement typologies. The same unfulfilled potential characterises the dialogue between urban areas and rural territories and different levels of supra-municipal government.

IV. An open window on the future

From the above we can conclude that in both generations of platforms, citizens barely exist as targets of the communication of city networks, unless their aggregations attain the status of powerful global stakeholders. One of the few exceptions is the Responsible Leaders Network sponsored by the BMW Foundation. However, this is not enough to rescue the centrality of citizens' involvement that the consolidated generation of networks has been unable to promote (not even the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy!). From this perspective, there is no difference between the more consolidated mono-actoral networks and the new generation of hybrid global partnerships. By choosing not to experiment with new types of "affirmative action" that could give more visibility to weak actors with limited access to resources and small territories on the international stage, new city networks have failed to fully play their role of innovators. Is this lack of courage part of a cost-recovery strategy for invested resources (albeit in terms of visibility for the sponsored cities)? Or is the "megalopolitan" part of the inhabited world still considered so much more important that it continues to lead to very uneven action at the administrative and governance level of city networks? That said the new global networks play a positive role as catalysts feeding a new energetic environment of emulations and challenging consolidated networks to renew their recruitment strategies, increase the demodiversity of their governing bodies, modernise their outreach techniques and augment the spaces devoted to peer-to-peer learning.

In both generations of platforms, citizens barely exist as targets of the communication of city networks, unless their aggregations attain the status of powerful global stakeholders

The dysfunctionality of new forms of competition among more traditional networks and the new hybrid generation of sponsored networks is for now just a threat, but if this threat becomes real it will severely weaken the international municipalism movement. By contrast, their pro-active collaboration could strengthen the movement. Forms of collaboration between the two generations of networks already exist. Examples include the joint programmes of C40 with ICLEI or the Cities Alliances; the Covenant of Mayors twinning programme established for cities, regions and provinces by a partnership with the new EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (2008), a platform of 7,755 cities; and the consolidated networks of Eurocities (1986) and Energy Cities (1990) which today represents over 1,000 cities in 30 countries. As the environmental domain well exemplifies, "urgent" urban issues certainly help to make the two generations collaborate proactively, and could also help find creative ways to rescue some advantages of the above-mentioned "comet networks", whose main virtues were informality and the strong capacity for dialogue with civil society (and especially radical social movements).

Another urgent urban issue that several world cities are struggling with is the problem of housing shortages linked to mass touristification and land speculation. In response to this problem Barcelona City Council drafted a "Manifesto of Cities against Gentrification" in early 2018,[16] which was subsequently presented at UCLG's New York Executive Bureau in the framework of a UN High-level Political Forum under the title "Cities for Adequate Housing - Municipalist Declaration of Local Governments on the Right to Housing and the Right to the City". The special session (which had the support of the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights - OHCHR) paved the way for the creation of a network of large cities concerned with housing issues, which signed the declaration[17] and cohered around a dedicated website.[18] UCLG supported the network with a campaign promoted through a new flexible tool called "Wave of Action",[19] and has now created a new Community of Practice on Housing[20] that hosts joint discussions on how to implement the declaration and realise the right to housing in different contexts.

In the long term, the declaration implies a global call to action, mobilising multi-stakeholder networks committed to declaring the central role of cities and their representatives to enforce the right to housing. The events that followed the declaration, and its insertion into the activities of first-generation networks, show that we are in a phase of transition in which both consolidated and new networks are changing their skin and organisational forms simultaneously – in a relationship of mutual learning – in order to strengthen the capacity of cities to localise the 2030 Agenda, and to act as "effective" producers of meaningful policies in the face of global multilateral institutions.

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THE EMERGENCE OF NEW CITY PLATFORMS ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE: THE IMPERATIVE OF RECONFIGURING THE ECOSYSTEM OF NETWORKS

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Decades of pioneering municipalism, the progressive recognition of the transformative potential of urbanisation and the gradual empowerment of cities and regions as major players in the national and international arenas have witnessed the blooming of organised networks of local and regional governments. The panorama has dramatically evolved since the municipalism movement began in the 20th century. Today we are witnessing an increasingly varied and complex ecosystem of city and region networks. In this convoluted environment, it is often hard to grasp the ultimate raison d'être, the distinctive results and the governance and accountability mechanisms of individual networks as well as of the municipalism movement as a whole. In order to fully understand the great challenges and opportunities of the current ecosystem, it is essential to open spaces for bold interrogation by voices both within and outside the system that are questioning its strategic development. For, ultimately, without a reconfiguration of the system that addresses its critical challenges and the viability of individual networks the municipalism movement is at risk in the long run.

In order to fully understand the great challenges and opportunities of the current ecosystem, it is essential to open spaces for bold interrogation by voices both within and outside the system that are questioning its strategic development

I. One thousand flowers blooming: Efficacy and efficiency

The phenomenon of networks is not new. Cities and regions have self-organised into networks since the early decades of the 20th century; formally joining forces to raise awareness about their needs and assets, defend their interests, find solutions to common challenges, learn from like-minded peers, and generate a critical mass that can put pressure on national governments and multilateral organisations to facilitate spaces of dialogue. Through these networks, cities and regions have also proudly upheld their ambition for international projection, and successfully advocated for their engagement in the definition and implementation of global agendas.

The proliferation of city networks over the past decades has evolved in parallel to a series of trends with profound geopolitical repercussions. Key developments include the crescendo of multilateral processes towards global agendas; the consolidation of regional integration processes; the

questioning of the nation state; the strengthening of international munici-palism; and the growing understanding and recognition of urbanisation as a major demographic trend with lasting socioeconomic and environmental impacts.

The very significant increase in the number and variety of city networks, particularly in the last fifteen years, has unfolded in a predominantly organ-ic manner and, at times, as a political response to the national, regional or international politics of a given context. This evolution has resulted in a profound transformation of the so-called ecosystem of networks.

While this transformation need not be a problem in itself, what is problem-atic is that the interaction between networks is not always as synergistic as needed and the impact of the whole ecosystem is not completely coherent with the spirit of the municipalism movement.

The inconvenient truth is that, more often than we like to admit, out-siders struggle to decipher which networks they should approach for membership or collaboration. At the same time, insiders can hardly follow the overlaps between the missions, membership composition, work pro-grammes and flagship events of the different networks. The distinctiveness of each network's mission, objectives and specific outputs often gets blurred in duplicative approaches. The dispersion of efforts and the limited shared narrative and coordination across networks around major cross-cut-ting issues weaken the collective impact and, at times, create confusion among the targeted national or international interlocutors. In the interest of individual and collective efficacy and efficiency, the missions and man-dates of networks need to have an enhanced spirit of complementarity and coordination.

Parallel to this individual analysis, it will be necessary to take a step back and interrogate the *modus operandi* of the ecosystem of networks in its entirety. Such an interrogation involves raising complex and intertwined questions that demand an upfront and open-minded discussion as well as a fresh outlook. Is the trade-off between diversity and overall efficacy of action and impact unavoidable? What mechanisms and forums need to be developed to foster coherence of action between the different networks? What is the role of actors external to the ecosystem in all this? Further, is the growing number and variety of networks a response to actual needs – and if so, whose needs? Or, is it a *be-careful-what-you-wish-for* scenar-io? Is it the victory of long-time municipalism activists or an attempt to control the movement by external forces? Is it a guarantee of technical specialisation and depth or a deafening cacophony? Does it occur in syner-gistic coexistence or does the law of the jungle rule? Those of us who have proudly participated in and promoted the networks movement for decades and who are familiar with its successful trajectory and struggles know that simple *yes* or *no* answers to these questions would not do the movement justice.

II. An ecosystem squeezed between the risks of implosion and external manipulation

Among the matters that need facing collectively and for which a collec-tive narrative is required are those around the notion of "ecosystem".

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A quick search of Wikipedia reminds us that "ecosystems include interactions among organisms, and between organisms and their environment". As we examine the interactions between the networks in the ecosystem, it is worth noting that lately one frequently hears city representatives express their frustration about the saturated calendar of *high-level*, *world* or *global* conferences, congresses, summits, assemblies and a long etcetera of flagship events that are organised by the different networks their city belongs to.

We could limit our thinking to some immediate answers to this frustration; for instance, recommending to the world secretariats of the largest international networks that they step up efforts towards enhanced coordination in events programmes. However, I would argue in favour of also calling on the individual and collective responsibility of the member cities/regions that give life to these membership-based creatures that are the networks. Could we say that, nowadays, the average city/region which decides to join a network has a mid-term strategic plan for doing so? Despite the decades of city network proliferation on average I do not think we can. It is still common to see cities and regions from varying latitudes and development levels assess the strength of their internationalisation strategy or their capacity-building plans in merely quantitative terms – i.e. the number of networks they are part of – with no similar attention given to analysing the strategic objectives of each membership. Could we say that, nowadays, the average city/region which decides to engage in the governing mechanisms of a given network is moved by reasons exclusively linked to the collective mission of such a network? I am sure many are, but I am not sure this applies to all the cities/regions that end up fulfilling a governing role in a given network.

In a membership organisation, members gain as much as they invest. It is of vital importance for a city/region to be strategic and also honest and realistic about its expectations, ambitions and contributions when joining networks. And it is vital that the governance of these networks is ruled by strict standards of service to the common mission and democratic accountability.

As we examine how this ecosystem of networks is doing in terms of interactions between the networks and their environment, we should note that – deterred by not understanding who does what, or who to fund for a specific type of work, or how collaboration between networks takes place – national governments, multilateral entities, philanthropies, private sector actors and academia increasingly choose to bypass the networks. Instead they work directly with cities and regions. Often, they do this on the basis of random criteria and samples that defeat the purpose of better understanding how to unleash the potential of local and regional government action. In other instances, this bypassing of networks to work directly with cities and regions responds to the logic of *divide and conquer* by pulverising the *critical mass* factor.

In any ecosystem, species come in different sizes and fulfil different roles across the chain of functions that underpins the viability of each and every organism. So-called *umbrella species* are selected for providing conservation-related decisions. Protecting them typically contributes to indirectly protecting the many other species in the same habitat. Things have become rather complex in the ecosystem of networks on this front.

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The traditional large networks consisting solely of local and regional governments, which conventionally occupied a big, prominent space in the ecosystem, have witnessed the arrival of *another kind of big* with significant individual convening power and ability to attract resources, both financial and human, at considerable scale. These are *new* networks or initiatives propelled by philanthropy and formed by megacities and/or global cities; as well as *new* networks with a heterogeneous membership base of governments at all levels, civil society and United Nations system entities. The community of networks is not always able to answer questions about the contribution of these *new* networks to the *traditional* ecosystem and their overall complementarity with a shared vision.

The intense focus on so-called *umbrella species* has resulted in unintended consequences, for instance the (at least partial) neglect of secondary cities. This neglect has extended to the limited tailor-made attention to the capacity and resources needs of secondary cities and the disregarding of their potential in building the system of cities that is unquestionably needed to scale up transformative solutions and overcome inequalities within countries. Ironically, more recently there have been additional turns of the screw of this unintended consequence that contribute to further saturating the networks ecosystem and add up to the list of external factors putting pressure on it. As this neglect for secondary cities gets gradually acknowledged new networks, initiatives and platforms focused on this typology of cities pop-up. International consultancy firms have also begun to seize the business opportunity and a long list of multilateral entities with more or (often) less extensive track records of urban experience seek to work with and in secondary cities.

Wikipedia also tells us that "ecosystems can be of any size but each ecosystem has a specific, limited space". An argument widely shared by all networks is that cities are laboratories of integrated and multi-stakeholder solutions to address the inextricably interlinked social, economic and environmental aspects behind urban and territorial development. Peer-to-peer exchange and learning, as well as support for replicating practical solutions, are among the key services regularly offered by networks to attract local and regional governments. Still, the ecosystem is falling short on optimising the potential that a synergistic interaction between *traditional* and *new* networks provides for in terms of greater integration and smart partnerships with other stakeholders from the private sector, the field of knowledge production or civil society organisations.

Ecosystems are controlled by both internal and external factors. In recent years, philanthropic institutions, bilateral development agencies and multilateral entities or funds have gained increasing influence in the ecosystem of networks and its internal dynamics. They have also established multiple platforms and initiatives related to cities outside the networks ecosystem which enjoy strong profiles, marked dynamism and robust resources while possessing less clear governance and accountability structures than the so-called *traditional* networks. With the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on cities and human settlements (SDG11) in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that guide the 2030 Agenda and increased recognition of sub-national action in climate change adaptation and mitigation we can only expect these trends to achieve new heights.

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It is important that the community of networks can identify, interrogate and communicate the consequences – both negative and positive – of these external influences. This will equip the community with a knowledge base from which to curate informed, bold and constructive interaction with philanthropy, bilateral development agencies and multilateral entities or funds concerning the role of each actor in enabling local and regional action towards sustainable human development.

What does it mean nowadays to further democratise the governance of both *traditional* networks and *new* networks or initiatives to make them more transparent and accountable? And to whom should each type of network be accountable? Is it possible to define a distinct but complementary role between *traditional* local government-based networks and *new* multi-stakeholder-based or -oriented networks? And if so, what is the shared narrative that can be used to define this? What can the differences between these two types of networks mean in terms of the strategic development of the networks movement in the coming decades? These are some of the questions that remain open to debate. It would not be possible or smart to address them only from within the inner circles of the networks ecosystem.

III. The contemporary *raison d'être* and the new frontiers of the ecosystem

Science has proven that ecosystems are dynamic per se. It is certainly not desirable to spend energy putting a cap on the number of networks that see the light of day. And it is probably pointless to expect that we can plan the development of every single network. However, I believe that the aspects addressed above constitute a wake-up call for the networks movement and imply the need to reconfigure its ecosystem.

Guided by the individual and collective success stories and learning accumulated over decades by the different networks, it is crucial to identify the strategic evolution and the new parameters that define the contemporary *raison d'être* of both the networks movement as a whole and each existing network individually. From these fundamental aspects, we will be able to openly debate, gain understanding of and communicate the contemporary taxonomy of networks, the distinct contributions each makes and the interactions between them. It could be argued that almost any classification would be reductionist and distort the complex reality. Less arguable are the risks behind sticking our heads in the sand or limiting the ability of the networks movement to redefine itself and self-organise from the maturity of its achievements.

Over decades, city networks have, among other success stories, offered thought leadership and coordination mechanisms whose terrific impacts have embarrassed and even challenged the results obtained by national governments and multilateral entities. Additionally, city networks have provided the platform for the actual participation of local and regional governments in the negotiation and consultation phases towards international agreements. With the strategic critical mass obtained through these networks, the realities, assets and needs of local and regional governments are being increasingly reflected in international and national agendas.

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City networks can play a thought-leadership and stewardship role, reminding us that the defence of democracy and the need to adapt its *modus operandi* in this convulsive 21st century is a global emergency that cuts across the east, west, north and south of the globe.

Thanks to the shared vision of the municipalism movement and the collective efforts of networks, finally it is widely understood that cities and regions must have a seat at the international and national tables that debate global/national challenges and seek concerted global/national roadmaps for local impact. City and region networks can be essential to the immense work that lies ahead. To do this, they must rekindle the pioneering and adventurous essence of the municipalism movement that inspired them. Key to this rekindling will be not to yield to the siren calls of those expecting networks to operate in a fortress secluded from other actors; resisting any temptation to emulate forums of national government or multilateral entities in *grandeur*; and thriving amid dynamic efficacy and healthy competition for innovative thinking and action.

The interrogation of the new frontiers of the movement deserves exhaustive deliberation from within and outside the movement, but this is not the primary objective of this chapter. However, the networks "geek" in me gets a kick out of thinking about the great opportunities offered by the imperative of reconfiguring this ecosystem. The paragraphs that follow aim to throw some food for thought into the much-needed upfront and open-minded debate this chapter is calling for.

Radical ideologies, populism, xenophobia and inequality are intense forces that are rocking the foundations of democratic values and fuelling the disconnect between institutions, governments and citizens from the local to the national and multilateral levels. The link between the work of networks and the matters that are close to the fears and joys of citizens needs further elucidating and enabling; the decay of democracy from local community life upwards needs counterbalancing; the human rights, solidarity and social cohesion values that are so intrinsic to the DNA of the municipalism movement need protecting. These overarching goals may guide us in finding some of the next frontiers for our movement.

City networks can play a thought-leadership and stewardship role, reminding us that the defence of democracy and the need to adapt its *modus operandi* in this convulsive 21st century is a global emergency that cuts across the east, west, north and south of the globe. City networks can contribute to preventing the negative forces mentioned above from impregnating institutional and political life with their narratives and these being accepted as the new dialectical normal. City networks can provide a trust space for defining a new democratic agenda for local communities anchored in a contemporary social pact between institutions, governments and citizens.

As unprecedented urbanisation rates shape the development of middle income, emerging and least developed countries and we increase our understanding of how urban livelihoods react to, adapt to and mitigate global challenges, there is wide recognition that synergistic and complementary action by different spheres of government is very much needed to overcome the most pressing challenges facing humankind in the 21st century. In the wake of paradigm-shift global agreements such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Climate Change Agreement, it is commonly agreed that the universal

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Sustainable Development Goals and the global climate action roadmap must be *localised*. That means they must be translated into concrete actions for territorial development and positive impact on local communities. These global agendas will fail to deliver any real positive transformation for people and the planet if there is no empowerment of local and regional governments and ownership by citizens. There is also increased understanding that *localising* global agendas means giving local and regional governments a leading role in the process, as well as commensurate resources.

City networks have a crucial role to play in helping national governments, donor agencies, the private sector, philanthropy, academia and multilateral entities understand that the landscape of sustainable urbanisation across the globe requires a diversity of development models and pathways that is far from being identified and even further away from being fully enabled with adequate institutional, legal and financial frameworks.

An ambitious 2030 Agenda that leaves "no-one, no place and no natural ecosystem behind" can only be achieved with a new paradigm of intergovernmental governance, fiscal and financial systems based on the principle of multi-level governance and mindful of the overall decline in official development assistance. However, the international recognition of urbanisation and cities as drivers and agents of transformation so far is not reflected in global governance structures, such as the United Nations. Though the clear improvements over recent years in terms of sub-national government, other stakeholders and civil society engagement in global governance structures are unquestionable, the overall configuration remains trapped in a 19th and 20th century logic of nation-states.

Beyond the important task of maintaining the seat at the national and international tables, city and region networks can offer thought leadership for defining and operationalising such a new paradigm within both national contexts and multilateral spaces such as the United Nations or the multilateral development banks. Networks can also identify what internal changes the ecosystem will need to implement in order to effectively engage in the possible different scenarios of these new paradigms – because the current internal modus operandi of the ecosystem will not suffice.

In the quest for prosperous, just and environmentally respectful livelihoods and communities, local and regional governments are facing complex and integrated challenges that call on the responsibilities and abilities of many other actors. City and region networks will continue to provide crucial help in the identification of local government capacity and ownership gaps. At the same time, they can step up efforts towards concrete action between countries, cities and companies. They can champion the knowledge-policy-practice interface across knowledge producers, policymakers and practitioners. Networks can focus on the curation of safe spaces for positive social and institutional innovation or behavioural change in collaboration with social scientists. They can pioneer systems-thinking approaches that, while enabling cross-departmental collaboration and breaking silos in local administrations, also foster technical specialisation and depth.

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Since the establishment of the pioneering city and region networks in the first half of the 20th century, governments at all levels, multilateral entities and certainly the municipalism movement have harvested success stories and concrete results thanks to this network approach. The proliferation of an increasing number and diversity of networks has resulted in a certain cacophony and is taking a toll in the overall efficacy, efficiency, coherence and legitimacy of both the individual networks and their ecosystem. There is no need to fall into alarmism or to demonise either the original municipalism movement or the network approach. The time has simply come to invest adequate efforts into consciously understand and explain how the ecosystem of networks has evolved over the past decades; what can its strategic development be in the decades to come, and what would coherent reconfiguration look like? What is the contemporary raison d'être of the networks movement? Which of its old characteristics no longer exist and how can undesirable gaps can be filled? What opportunities and challenges – intended and unintended – do its new characteristics bring? How can different networks facilitate partnerships with other constituencies and stakeholders? What are the external actors that enable, influence or even distort the municipalism movement in the 21st century? How can the overall movement of networks (and each individual network) remain transparent and accountable in the face of the current turbulent socio-political climate? Addressing these questions collectively will not only consolidate the maturity of city and region networks as vehicles to facilitate a place at the national and global tables. It is also fundamentally linked to the long-term survival of a good number of individual networks and, ultimately, of the whole ecosystem.

In a sector which over the past decades has been intellectually nourished by a group of highly committed activists and fellow-travellers, it will be tempting to shoot the messenger. Remaining open to and encouraging reflections from other stakeholder groups outside local and regional governments and the secretariats of their networks will be crucial. We should seize the opportunity to discuss and organise a contemporary ecosystem of city and region networks in our own terms before other forces with less democratic and altruistic aims start doing it for us.

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CHALLENGES FOR A NEW GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: CITY NETWORKS ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

- WE NEED TO RETHINK THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE MODEL IN ORDER TO BUILD A FUTURE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

  Emilia Saiz

- TOWARDS NETWORKED GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS FOR DEVELOPMENT

  Johannes Krassnitzer

- NETWORKS OF CITIES OR NETWORKED CITIES? EIGHT THESES

  Felip Roca

WE NEED TO RETHINK THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE MODEL IN ORDER TO BUILD A FUTURE FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Emilia Saiz

Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments

There is a critical shift in the current paradigm that we will all need to embrace if we want to put in motion the type of transformation required to reconcile sustainable, resilient, inclusive, just and peaceful societies. We will need to accept that development models conceived from the perspective of governments alone will no longer have the support of populations that are more global in mentality and ambitions than in their actual capacity to act.

The multilateral system, which is perceived to be in decline, is, however, still producing some of the most visionary and engaging agendas. One of these, the 2030 Agenda, is seen as the basis for a new global social contract. Yet, the credibility of the system is at stake and will be greatly damaged if we are not able to deliver.

We need to seize the unprecedented opportunity offered by the 2030 Agenda and its universal scope. We should redefine development, placing the bridging of inequalities at the centre of every single policy. To do so, a different set of actors will need to be seated at the decision-making table. Local actors, communities and their leadership are essential if we want to avoid further polarisation of our societies.

While visions will be increasingly global in this intertwined world of ours, agendas will need to recover the local dimension if we want people to have a sense of control of their own future, as well as the sense of security and accountability that goes with it. Strong, accountable local governments are an instrumental piece of this puzzle and can be true beacons of renewed democracy, solidarity and creative societies that care about the legacy they have received and the one they need to preserve for future generations.

This is also why the international action of cities and local governments should be understood not only as an important instrument for visibility and profiling in international investment indexes, but as an important step in defending the interest of communities in a world where market logics, international guidelines and trade agreements are forces that end up shaping our cities.

Revitalised international governance should definitely include representatives of local governments in the definition of international policies, and not only call upon them to implement when other spheres of government have failed.

This urban era should not be thought of as simply an era of global cities, but also from a much broader perspective that includes smaller and intermediary cities. Indeed, the specific weight and transformational potential big cities have is undeniable and should be clearly taken into account when addressing many of our pressing challenges. However, fostering a strong system of cities in which small and medium-sized cities are empowered and developed will be even more strategic in order to make the rural-urban continuum a reality and in order to guarantee sustainability.

All of the above is the reason the international municipal movement continues to struggle to secure a seat at global tables. Now, an additional question may be: What are those tables that we need to sit at?

With all of its shortcomings and, to a certain extent, all of its "broken promises", the United Nations System remains the only global mechanism where universality, inclusion and accountability are somehow guaranteed. It is the space where global public agendas are set, and is therefore a space in which local leaders should be represented.

Local governments do not have the ambition to decide on every topic at the United Nations table, but we do have the rightful aspiration to provide inputs on issues that affect cities and communities, such as how to shape sustainable cities, what kind of national urban policies we should promote, what type of financing mechanisms we need for sustainable infrastructures, or what kind of governance systems we need for basic resources such as water management, as well as a long list of challenges that are not limited to city boundaries but that are of crucial importance for territories.

One could approach the problem in phases that would not represent a total overhaul of the system but rather a gradual transformation. It should be possible to open up seats for local governments at the inter-agency discussions on the implementation of the SDGs, and it should be possible to transform current advisory boards into compulsory consultation mechanisms, where draft policies are presented before being submitted for adoption. All in all, we would like local governments to have a specific chamber or colleague that can inform the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on urban and municipal perspectives *before* drafts enter into discussions by member states.

The danger of missing out on the energy that a constituency – such as the one that represents local and regional governments – has is that hundreds of thousands of local leaders might grow detached from global agendas. This carries consequences such as the loss of the global values that unite us around the principles of the United Nations Charter, with us, the people, at the centre. In another scenario, many of the UN policies outside of the Security Council could become irrelevant if civil society and local actors mobilise around other initiatives.

The century-old movement that United Cities and Local Governments is the inheritor of will continue its course in fostering exchanges, learning and defining joint positions for cities and local governments around the world.

Cities will continue to gather and deploy solidarity beyond geographical and political boundaries, sometimes to answer the calls of their communities and sometimes as the candid expression of the human potential that is being driven in cities and has shaped the many man-made miracles that have brought our generation to where we are.

In fact, global networks of cities, which are true voluntary membership organisations, have already set up a global mechanism of representation – the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments – which is convened by the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments and which ensures political representation worldwide beyond logos.

I can only hope that our articulated capacity to think and act can be put to use for the good of humanity, and that global governance will be strengthened through strong local governments to the benefit of a global citizenship. We already live this global citizenship as clients and users of global applications but there is still an urgent need to translate it into actual rights and the capacity to define our destiny.

EMILIA SAIZ

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TOWARDS NETWORKED GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS FOR DEVELOPMENT

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For more than 400 years, nation-states have been the legitimate subject of global governance, with distinct achievements such as the United Nations or the European Union. Today, the increasing complexity of global challenges makes it impossible for national governments to address these issues alone. Today's global governance arrangements need to favour flexibility over rigidity, consider voluntary measures over binding rules and privilege partnerships over individual actions. Considering real and perceived democracy deficits and the rapidly changing geopolitical context, it is an imperative for global governance arrangements to constantly adapt by readjusting strategies and approaches to solutions and develop new tools and measures to deal with issues.

Recently, networked forms of governance have been increasingly applied as they allow for more flexibility and participation in the overall governance processes. These flexible global governance arrangements need however to be subjected to rigid democratic political accountability. Multiple spheres of governance – local/sub-national/national/regional/global – must mutually support the democratisation of decision-making at all levels. They must be designed to be sensitive to citizen and societal demands and be conceptualised as a form of organisational alliance in which relevant policy actors are linked together as co-producers in such a way that they are more likely to identify and share common interests. This creates synergies based on trust, shared knowledge, reciprocity and mutuality. Such processes will allow more and more spaces of cross-sector connection to emerge – either at the individual or group level – and inform citizens and promote their active participation in public affairs. This will have significant implications for policymaking and implementation, and, to that end, development.

In 2015 the world community defined Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for all. Since then it has been adapting its respective global governance arrangements. The newly introduced principle of universality, as well as the 2030 Agenda's focus on multilevel governance arrangements, obliges all counties and territories to implement the goals and work jointly in a global partnership for achieving the SDGs. This is a true paradigm

shift and an opportunity to rethink governance systems, including those for development cooperation: from traditional development cooperation, where Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members provide aid to developing countries, to including newly emerging powers and, more fundamentally, to shifting towards a networked governance approach that transcends levels as well as formerly valid categorisations of traditional and non-traditional development actors. Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) and specifically their networks – in all their manifestations – are emerging as one of the most relevant of these new actors. This means a large leap forward from traditional decentralised cooperation projects to an integrated networked way of cooperation, where the development cooperation logic and principles shall be replaced by a networked way of cooperating across actors, levels and sectors. The action of cities and regions will not replace the role of nation-states within the 2030 Agenda, but it can help overcome the conceptual prison of solely nation-state-centred international relations and governance systems.

The 2030 Agenda is an attempt to strengthen multilateralism in a world where "multipolarity without multilateralism" is becoming more and more fashionable. The civilising, universal and indivisible 2030 Agenda places human dignity and equality at its centre and, consequently, demands the broadest participation by all actors, including states, civil society and the private sector. Public institutions at all levels are central to implementation, as they formulate, implement, monitor and review the policies and laws that give life to the SDGs. Parliaments (national as well as local) also have a critical role. Not only can they legislate to implement the SDGs, they also exercise oversight over budgets and can hold the executive to account. The accompanying – perhaps "glocal" governance systems – need still to be finalised, with LRG networks taking on a catalytic role.

Much is said about the importance of political leadership in making the 2030 Agenda a reality. If we want to change the current global governance system to allow LRGs and their networks to assume this catalytic role, it is important to remember that the United Nations is an association of nation-states: changes can therefore best be promoted and piloted through UN member states. One way to push for a more strategic role of LRGs in these new global governance arrangements (we are still talking about many often-overlapping systems) would be to capitalise upon the political leadership of likeminded nation-states. LRG networks could put more emphasis on lobbying national governments, thereby complementing their direct efforts with the UN System.

In the realm of achieving the 2030 Agenda various global governance regimes are currently being put in place; all are meant to finally contribute to the greater good of universal sustainable development. International agendas are very meaningful for forging alliances, mobilising around certain topics and putting issues up for international debate. However, the world community is struggling when it comes to translating these debates into concrete and harmonised action. This trend is also mirrored within LRGs and their networks. The tendency towards the fragmentation and potential silo-ing of matters could lead to several parallel tracks, with international organisations and foundations creating and funding their own thematic city networks. Consequently, the international ecosystem of city networking can be hard to navigate not only for international organisations but even for LRGs themselves.

One way to engage with these complexities is to develop more flexible and less hierarchical global governance arrangements for development. International organisations and city networks need to revise their ways of operating and collaborating. The management of a networked environment requires a whole set of competencies and capabilities, separate to and beyond those expected of hierarchical governance arrangements. Problems of higher complexity require networks of greater heterogeneity and demand a certain level of social capital to enable effective collaborative processes. Only high enough levels of trust between partners and well-targeted incentives for cooperation will allow these new systems of governance to be built. These two issues are worth focusing on in the future.

In response to these challenges, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is currently revising its way of functioning as well as its anchorage within the overall UN development system. It strives to better respond to complex systemic or structural challenges across the three dimensions of sustainable development. To do so UNDP will promote national and sub-national SDG platforms that will create value by facilitating mutually beneficial exchanges between interdependent actors, utilising network effects to discover, develop and apply integrated solutions to big systemic challenges.

Similarly, city networks might need to readjust their ways of collaboration among members and with external partners to be able to influence and finally make better use of such new global governance arrangements. On the one hand, the catalytic international policy advisory and lobbying functions need to be closer linked to the actions and demands of individual members, multilateral ways of engagement need to be promoted across levels and geographical segregation needs to be reconsidered. On the other hand, international organisations can learn a lot from city networks as they are already closer to a networked reality than the more monolithic UN organisations.

If we want to address increasingly complex global challenges, we need to strive for a networked way of engagement, favouring inclusive relationships that allow a wide array of diverse institutions and actors to meaningfully contribute to the SDGs. We all need to understand that individual and unilateral or multipolar actions will not be able to address the complex and systemic development challenges. Today we have a shared vision and common values – all encompassed in the 2030 Agenda. What we need is a more strategic alignment between network actors, thus facilitating the achievement of collectively desirable outcomes. UNDP, in close cooperation with the overall UN System, strives to facilitate and enable such networked governance systems for development in the future. Local and Regional Government networks are crucial partners in this endeavour.

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I. The century of cities

The growing recognition that the 21st century will be the century of cities reflects something evident: today's major challenges and global issues ultimately play out at the local level, which is also the main generator of solutions and responses. However, the important work city networks have done over the past few decades has also greatly contributed to this recognition. The success of this work has produced a self-applauding political discourse at both local and state levels around the world. Further, it is reflected in the emergence of new and powerful city networks boosted by North American philanthropists, which are generally reluctant to move away from spaces with real leveraging power. At the same time, however, it leaves local governments with a difficult inheritance. They have been elevated to the category of leading actors without being suitably recompensed in the form of increased competences and resources, and without being offered new models of more plural and inclusive governance that allow them to live up to this greater responsibility.

II. Marking a new period and new responsibilities

Networks are thus largely responsible for the repositioning of cities as key actors in the major organisations of world governance, such as the United Nations, the European Union, the OECD and others. However, this achievement also includes new responsibilities for city networks. We need to move away from the traditional local discourse – one that is thorough and necessary and which has argued in support of cities as key international actors – to engage in a more specific discourse that highlights the central role of local governments and signals the beginning of a new period. It is time to define better indicators and other instruments of public policy to demonstrate the extent to which cities are key players in tackling the new global challenges. This is fundamental for providing a serious, critical, constructive and, above all, localised response to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In a more or less consistent way, this need has been vindicated by the New Global Urban Agenda and defined

from a regional perspective within the European Urban Agenda. The new period should represent a Copernican Shift in which networks take on new responsibilities in order to remain useful actors for cities.

III. Information and knowledge management.

Local public administrations are the first point of contact with citizens. The amount of information and knowledge they receive and process on a daily basis is enormous. Managing this knowledge and, above all, capitalising on lessons learnt in order to be able to share and enrich them exponentially should be at the heart of any city network. And although this need is known and widely discussed in endless forums and meetings, useful results are taking too long. Perhaps, if the structure of the networks allowed for more effective knowledge management, cities wouldn't need to group spontaneously to work on specific and timely issues. These informal groups of temporarily networked cities provide agility that traditional – often more bureaucratic – structures do not offer. But, at the same time, these kinds of spontaneous alliances lack the appropriate tools to carryout the proper follow-up of initiatives. Traditional networks should be able to provide these by creating true knowledge banks that act as catalysts for exchanges and good and bad practices.

IV. Networks within "the network"

 This need to reorient the functioning of networks might seem eminently technical at first glance, as it has focused specifically on the need to improve the capacities of local government. But this is not enough. It is increasingly essential to offer spaces that are politically appealing to members in an environment where *how something is communicated* comes before *how it is done*. And here we find an important time-lag. While many of these organisations spread the philosophy of networking many years before the internet appeared, they have failed to respond to the challenges posed by social networks. New technologies and new communication channels should offer spaces that create opportunities to increase links, exchanges and debate between the members of city networks. They should also allow the networks to connect more easily with citizens, who are often oblivious to the work they do, thereby improving transparency and accountability. Dialogue with citizens is fundamental given that the vast majority of the funding that has traditionally sustained city networks comes from public funds.

V. Renewal from within

It will be difficult for networks to introduce the change required without revising their mindset and routines. Though successful at positioning local debates in the international arena, they now face new challenges. If networks and their sub-networks want to remain useful to their members, this generational change is absolutely essential. A clear commitment is required to the rejuvenation and feminisation of their overall management structures, as well as of the middle-management positions. Without this renewal of human resources, it will be difficult

to integrate the new perspectives necessary for the transformation required. The comfort of finding the "usual suspects" in city forums is unfortunately proof of the difficulty of including new viewpoints and ideas for tackling new challenges.

VI. Politically useful cooperation

Today it is widely acknowledged that large cities (and also small and medium-sized ones) share similar issues and problems, and that without collaborating it will be difficult for them to find inclusive, innovative and integrated solutions to global challenges. The challenge ahead of us is to reconsider the ways this cooperation can be optimised. The further we move into the 21st century, the more aware we become of the differences to the last century, when city networks first emerged. Surely we need to listen attentively to what results elected city leaders expect. The fact that they are less and less committed to the governance of city networks might not just be due to their busy agendas...

VII. Learning and legitimising

Perhaps it is necessary to recapitulate and further refine our view on what are currently the fundamental motivations for cities and mayors to seek international projection. Legitimacy and learning are probably two of the main reasons for cities to seek international relations: "legitimacy" of their public policies – because "no one is a prophet in their own land" and initiatives driven by a city often end up being valued by the local population only once they have attracted international interest, or it becomes clear that other renowned cities use similar solutions; and "learning" because, as mentioned above, cities are spaces of applied knowledge which are difficult to understand in the 21st century without constant exchanges with the exterior, that is to say, with other cities with similar problems.

VIII. Competition and survival

Networks will only be able to sustain the interest and involvement of their members if they conduct an in-depth analysis of the current needs of cities and produce ground-breaking proposals and new perspectives on how to tackle them collectively. This is where networks with a more thematic approach – some of them with a strong injection of philanthropic funds – are competing with those that have traditionally specialised in the internationalisation of municipalism. However, sharing thematic knowledge and promoting international municipalism are two sides of the same coin. It is not always easy to combine them and to consolidate meeting spaces in which to offer new inter-organisational proposals – as the Global Task Force coordinated by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) has successfully done. In any case, a fragmented scenario dominated by competition between different networks will make it difficult to provide the necessary context for strengthening local governments. Cities' needs and interests should be placed at the top of the agendas of networks again. They should be the main priority for any city network, above and beyond its survival.

FELIP ROCA

THE ROLE OF NEW CITY PLATFORMS

- C40 CITIES: MAYORS TAKING AMBITION TO THE NEXT LEVEL

  Emmanuelle Pinault

- 100 RESILIENT CITIES, PIONEERED BY THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

  Lina Liakou

- A VIEW FROM MADRID CITY COUNCIL

  Arnau Gutiérrez Camps

C40 CITIES: MAYORS TAKING AMBITION TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Emmanuelle Pinault

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In little more than a decade, C40 has established itself as one of the most influential global network of cities.[1] Gathering 96 of the world's largest cities, which account for more than a quarter of global GDP, C40helps mayors to exchange, design and implement the policies that most effectively address the impacts and causes of climate change.

I. A network of mayors, led by mayors

Mayors are central to C40's history and governance. In 2005, the mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, seeing that the G20 gathering in the UK wouldn't discuss climate change, invited 20 of his fellow mayors to create a working group on the issue. That is how C40 was born. By 2008, the group had doubled in size and during the chairmanship of David Miller, the charismatic mayor of Toronto, C40 began to demonstrate that "*while nations talk, cities act*", rallying in Copenhagen to showcase their progressive climate actions. Michael Bloomberg, the three-term mayor of New York City, who became chair in 2010, turned C40 into a highly professional organisation,[2] and started to support it financially through his philanthropy.[3] Under the leadership of Eduardo Paes, the mayor of Rio de Janeiro, between 2013 and 2015 the network dramatically expanded its membership from the Global South and, ahead of the Paris Climate Conference (COP21), adopted a city diplomacy strategy to engage more effectively in global politics. The mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, was elected C40 Chair in 2016 and during her mandate member cities have focussed on delivering their fair share of the Paris Agreement through the flagship Deadline 2020 programme. Mayoral leadership within C40 is further enhanced through the C40 Steering Committee, a group of 17 mayors elected by their peers in each region, which is the formal decision-making body that sets the strategic direction for the network.[4]

II. The C40 model: seven keys to success

The enlightened leadership of the world's most powerful mayors certainly explains a good part of C40's success, but not all of it: there are other distinctive features that make the C40 model unique. First and

1. The official full name is C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group.
2. C40 work is currently organised in seven regions, 15 policy networks and eight transversal programmes. See www.c40.org for more information.
3. Bloomberg Philanthropies is one of C40's strategic funders, jointly with the British philanthropy CIFF (Children's Investment Fund Foundation) and the Danish philanthropy Realdania. Other philanthropies, national governments and private sponsors support specific C40 projects. This business model allows C40 not to charge membership fees to its members.
4. In October 2018, the mayors of Accra, Boston, Copenhagen, Dhaka, Dubai, Durban, Hong Kong, London, Los Angeles, Medellín, Milan, Nanjing, Paris, Quito, Santiago, Seoul and Tokyo are members of the C40 Steering Committee, with the mayor of Paris serving as chair.

foremost, the single issue of climate change provides a firm clarity of purpose. Second, C40 is driven by an ambitious vision to deliver on the most ambitious goal of the Paris Agreement and keep global warming to 1.5 degrees. This leads to bold policy options based on robust science and data-driven knowledge. Third, global thought leadership is promoted through agenda-setting communications. Fourth, the format of a closed-door club brings exclusivity,[5] social capital and recognition, inside and outside the network (see Hansen and Pinault, 2018). Fifth, a set of underlying programmes of peer-to-peer exchanges and technical assistance for climate action planning and implementation. Sixth, strict participation standards create strong interpersonal relationships, both at political and technical levels.[6] And finally, highly qualified and committed staff have been recruited from the highest levels of city leadership.

III. City diplomacy in the era of ambition

A unique organisation, C40 is nevertheless 100% connected with the ecosystem of global city networks (see Acuto, 2016; Travers 2016), with whom it shares many members. Most of C40's diplomatic activity is undertaken in collaboration with peer city networks like Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), under the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA),[7] the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments,[8] or the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy.[9] Those collective advocacy platforms played a key role in positively influencing the intergovernmental process in the lead up to COP21. Now in the implementation phase of the Paris Agreement, C40 mayors keep leading the way, making bold commitments to achieve emissions neutrality by 2050, establishing sectoral targets on renewable energy, zero-emission transport, buildings and waste by 2030, and championing similar ambition by national governments and other non-state actors. At a time when "*visionary political leadership*", "*radical collaboration*" and "*exponential action*" are the only ways to keep global temperatures to a safe limit,[10] the role of cities and city networks like C40 has never been clearer. It is to push for urgency, ambition, hope and collaboration, for the benefit of all people on our shared planet.

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5. C40 is only open to megacities (with a population of 3 million inhabitants or more within their metropolitan area) and a smaller group of so-called Innovator Cities, which due to their exceptional track record in tackling climate action have been approved as C40 member cities by the 17 mayors which together make up C40's Steering Committee.

6. To remain within C40, cities have to comply with strict participation standards. They must have an expected level of network activity and climate policy ambition. For example, they need to do a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) inventory which follows the globally recognised Global Protocol for Community (GPC) standard, establish set targets to reduce their GHG emissions and report annually on their progress on these targets. Cities that do not comply can be moved into an "Inactive" membership category which limits their opportunities to get access to C40 support and technical assistance, and ultimately they can have their membership annulled.

7. LGMA is one of the nine major groups recognised as observers by the United Nations Convention Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

8. www.global-taskforce.org

9. www.globalcovenantofmayors.org

10. According to Christiana Figueres, former Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention of Climate Change: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/08/limiting-warming-to-15c-is-possible-if-there-is-political-will-climate-change

100 RESILIENT CITIES, PIONEERED BY THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

Lina Liakou

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We are currently living in what many refer to as the century of cities. By 2050, more than 70% of the world's population are projected to be living in urban areas, increasingly turning cities into the focus of the world's economy. At the same time, many of the most pressing adversities and challenges we face today arise disproportionately in urban areas. From the effects of climate change to mass migration, inadequate infrastructure, pandemics and cyber-attacks, cities stand at the forefront of the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Of course, the challenges cities face are rarely of a single dimension. Most cities face a combination of challenges, which can contribute to further weakening the fabric of a city on a day-to-day or cyclical basis. The difficulty of sharing information on what works well without addressing these adversities across different geographies has been a considerable barrier to scaling up existing solutions. This is where networks such as 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) can help.

Cities don't exist in siloes – they are systems where people live, work and play. In such a context, learning from others is vital for developing. Europe as a region has a long tradition of collaboration and partnerships between cities and regions. Numerous important and experienced networks have facilitated advocacy at the European Union, building and leveraging resources and the joint creation of new solutions.

While national governments slowly navigate delicate international politics to reach solutions, city leaders often have to act fast to meet the day-to-day needs of their residents while also ensuring steady long-term solutions. Over the past decade, organisations such as 100RC and C40 have emerged in this context to further support cities by generating connections on a global scale while at the same time leveraging the expertise of the non-profit and private sectors.

Created by the Rockefeller Foundation on the foundation's centennial in 2013, 100RC not only seeks to help individual cities become more resilient, it also supports them in building a new agile model of governance that can address the physical, social and economic challenges they face on a systemic level.

When confronted with a puzzling challenge in their everyday life, most people's first reaction is usually to reach out to a trusted friend or colleague to help generate new ideas on how to solve the problem at hand. In a very similar way, 100RC looks to build an environment where our Chief Resilience Officers (CROs) can do the same on a global scale, drawing help and inspiration from resilience-building efforts in cities from across the globe. This means working with – not for – the city, leveraging the expertise of all actors across the board to break down siloes and create consensus, innovation and ownership in futureproofing the city.

The development of a Resilience Strategy is a hallmark of 100RC's partnership with cities. This process is a way to create a roadmap for the future, articulating a city's long-term challenges, vision and priorities, as well as specific initiatives for implementation that will have a positive impact on the lives and livelihoods of citizens.

Over the past five years of close cooperation with actors across all levels of governance/operation of our member cities, we have learned a thing or two about how we can work together to help cities thrive.

I. Developing functioning cities is not a zero-sum game

At the end of the day, every city in the world is different and requires a vast spectrum of expertise and support to prosper. The source of that expertise is less important, and the city won't care significantly whether it's 100RC, C40 or Eurocities reaching out a helping hand. We all need to work together, ensuring our services are complementary rather than competitive, and most importantly we need to make certain city staff at all levels understand "why" and "to what end" they are partnering with us and how this improves the impact of their work.

II. Cities need to focus on the global and local scale simultaneously

While global advocacy is hugely important in ensuring the voices of cities are heard and considered far and wide, equal effort needs to be focused locally on ensuring municipal staff can leverage resources more efficiently and provide better services for all their citizens. With 100RC, we are partnering with cities in inspiring work on the ground in their communities.

III. Inclusivity at the top of the agenda

Deep and meaningful dialogue with citizens and stakeholders is a critical aspect of creating an effective city for all. Too often, the voices of residents, especially the most vulnerable, aren't integrated into city actions. Because the poor and vulnerable are also often disproportionately impacted by shocks and stresses, their perspective must inform the creation of the policies and programmes that will affect them.

We see the cities in our network doing incredible work and indicating their sustained commitment for the long haul. With over 2,000 specific projects and initiatives globally across a spectrum of published Resilience Strategies, our focus has now turned to ensuring project implementation with high resilience value.

Working closely with financial institutions, the aim is to help the market understand the value of investing in high-resilience value projects. We are also experimenting with new ways of building urban resilience, which can be seen in our recently unveiled schoolyard project in Paris, transforming Paris's schoolyards into urban cooling islands while simultaneously addressing the need for more communal areas for Parisians.

Cities are embracing a central agenda-setting role in addressing the challenges of the 21st century, and urban policies will be instrumental in shaping the next few decades. As we witness many national governments falling victim to partisan politics, it reinforces how important a strong network of cities taking action can be for our collective future. If we get cities right, we can set a new trajectory for a vibrant global future.

LINA LIAKOU

HOW TO MOVE TOWARDS COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN NETWORKS

- ENTANGLED: A REFLECTION ON THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ECOSYSTEM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT NETWORKS

  Octavi de la Varga Mas

- THE FUTURE OF CITY NETWORKS

  Anna Lisa Boni

- CITY NETWORKS: SCHOOLS OF DEMOCRACY

  Marina Canals

- MEDCITIES: THE NETWORK OF MEDITERRANEAN CITIES AND METROPOLITAN AREAS WORKING FOR URBAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

  Xavier Tiana

ENTANGLED: A REFLECTION ON THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ECOSYSTEM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT NETWORKS

Octavi de la Varga Mas

Secretary General, Metropolis

The use of the term "local government network" has become generalised in recent years, regardless of operating model, institutional framework or organisational structure. It has become a common term for referring to the work spaces formed by local governments, whether for political influence, learning or the development of technical projects. And it is to this broad (non-scientific) sense that I will refer in this article when speaking of local government networks, which are present at all levels: regional, state and international.

One of the academics to analyse this process most recently, Michele Acuto, highlights the continual creation of local government networks over the last hundred years of the municipalist movement (Acuto and Rayner, 2016). He also points out that 29% of local government networks are international in nature, a figure that rises to 50% for those created since 2001 (Acuto et al., 2017).

To a certain degree, this should come as little surprise given that the development of the new generation of global agendas (the Aid Effectiveness Agenda; the Paris Climate Change Agreement; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; the 2030 Agenda; the New Urban Agenda) incorporates local governments. In many cases they become the key actors for achieving tangible results at territorial level. This has led cities to strengthen the work of existing networks and/or to promote the creation of new ones – in order to influence their design from the start, or to monitor their implementation and the capacity and instruments they produce for their operation.

On the other hand, the previous process brought about a movement called "A seat at the global table", promoted by the Euro-Latin-American Cooperation Alliance among Cities (AL-LAs). This initiative calls for the full recognition of local governments as international governance actors. And certainly both the academic world and international agencies are to a degree opening up to the recognition of local governments and their networks as actors in the global system.

It is a great paradox that at this moment of opportunity for local governments in the international arena, we may be witnessing the over-burdening of the ecosystem of international city networks. Networks currently have the opportunity to carve out a place for themselves in international governance: they are becoming important instruments for channelling international action (through strategies for political influence), and they have become central to the successful implementation of global agendas (it is notable that the New Urban Agenda mentions city networks and local government associations as facilitating instruments for achieving its objectives). And yet the signs are starting to show of exhaustion and ineffectiveness that call for the revision of the traditional working models.

Some of the factors behind this situation are:

• The explosion of new networks, added to the already existing ones, has required new spaces to be created for articulating the diversity of efforts to tackle global agendas. This is the case of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF) in which most international networks – both regional and global – participate.
• The participation of the same local governments in a multiplicity of networks which, despite having heterogeneous geographical reach and forms of membership, end up addressing the same subjects or focussing on the same agendas (the case of Latin American cities is paradigmatic).
• The appearance in recent years of networks supported by philanthropy (such as C40 and 100 Resilient Cities). This has introduced new levels of funding and activities with great communicative impact that contrast with the traditional membership models in which members pay fees and take decisions by consensus (such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Metropolis).
• Certain important cities do not view network participation as an international strategy tool. This means certain leaderships, instead of channelling proposals through the networks they form part of, set them up directly. They subsequently attempt to work out how to fit them into the networks in a more reactive way and as a legitimising instrument.
• The dynamic of so-called global cities that have the power to lead processes by themselves, without the need to rely on networks.
• The multiplicity of spaces for local governments to meet and debate. They tend to address the same issues and seek to become the global coordinators of mayors' voices around the world: the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments; the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA); the Local and Regional Authorities Forum within the framework of the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF); and the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM) are some examples.

The holding of a large number of annual meetings organised by each of the networks and other actors that continually demand the presence of locally elected officials. By way of example here are some of the most notable events from 2018: the World Urban Forum (Kuala Lumpur, February), C40 Women4Climate (Mexico City, February), UCCI Assembly (San José, Costa Rica, April), UCLG Executive Bureau (Strasbourg, May), ICLEI General Assembly (Montreal, June), Forum on Global Cities (Chicago, June), Local and Regional Governments Forum (New York,

July), the Annual Meeting of Metropolis (Johannesburg, August), Global Climate Action Summit (San Francisco, September), AL-LAS Anniversary (Mexico City, September), the Post-Habitat III Conference (Quito, October), Urban 20 (Mexico City, October), UCLG World Congress (Madrid, November), II World Forum on Urban Violence (Madrid, November), Africities (Marrakesh, November), 11th Ibero-American Forum of Local Governments (Madrid, November), Smart City Expo World Congress (Barcelona, November), XV International Association of Educating Cities Congress (Cascais, November), XVIII OIDP (Barcelona, November), Global Mayors Forum (Guangzhou, December), Mayoral Forum on Human Mobility, Migration and Development (Marrakesh, December), Mercociudades Summit (La Paz, December).

Workspaces made for and by local governments are essential, particularly at a time when the future of humanity is played out in cities. This is where networks, broadly speaking, are the framework for generating knowledge, seeking shared solutions, articulating the voices of the great plurality of local governments and/or developing transnational projects, among others.

Nevertheless, we are faced with inevitable limitations. The capacity of mayors to be present at all forums and meetings is limited. Further, the desire of certain cities to raise issues at the international level, which are not directly included in the global agendas adopted by the international community, or to address them from a different angle, also has limitations. Increasing investment of time and human and financial resources, which are necessary but scarce, must also be borne in mind. It is important in this context to remember that the networks are at the service of the local governments that form them and that their agendas should be developed and promoted by cities' highest officials. Generosity is therefore necessary, especially between networks with shared foundations and values, in order to:

Seek new forms of joint work.

- Design new organisational frameworks and structures adapted to current dynamics (not a matter of fusing or absorbing networks).
- Readjust the various consultation forums and their aims.
- Redefine how the relationship between networks and mayors works.
- Align the different agendas of each network to provide continuity to the narrative developed by elected officials.

Produce strong meeting occasions that promote economies of scale, mobilise different actors without overlaps and have greater impact (in line with the dynamic UCLG and Madrid City Council proposed by organising the UCLG World Congress, the II World Forum on Urban Violence and the 11th Ibero-American Forum of Local Governments in the same week).

We are surely living through one of the most interesting times in global-level municipalism. Now more than ever, local governments are called on to play a key role in supporting the planet's sustainability and human prosperity, and international networks of local governments have the obligation to disentangle themselves in order to be able to support them efficiently and have major impact.

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City networks are an essential part of cities' international action. They may be classified in several ways: by the type of actors that form them, by their geographical reach, by the issues they work on, or by being generalist in nature.

In Madrid's case, the city participates in the principal global network United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and has hosted various meetings of its governing bodies. Created in 2004 by merging a range of networks, UCLG was one of the main results of Habitat II (held in Istanbul in 1996). Its emergence has led to talk of the beginning of a phase of the institutionalisation of cities' international action. This new phase could culminate in securing a seat at the global table for cities, in other words, a specific space and formal recognition of participation for cities within the United Nations system (Salmerón, 2016).

Madrid's participation in UCLG is operationalised via Metropolis, a network for large cities, which only cities with over one million inhabitants can join. Madrid also actively participates in regional networks. Among these, the Unión de Ciudades Capitales de Iberoamérica stands out. This international city network aims to build a model of peaceful coexistence and socially responsible development and to consolidate awareness that permits greater understanding and cooperation between the Ibero-American peoples. Further, Madrid forms part of Eurocities, a notable European-level regional city network.

Of the thematic networks that Madrid participates in C40 stands out. This network of cities for climate action holds the clear view that cities will shape our future. One example is the trend towards restricting diesel vehicles. Without having specific competences on the issue, the banning of the most polluting cars from some of Europe's major cities is having direct consequences on the supply side of the car market (Teffer, 2018).

The role of new platforms like C40 and 100 Resilient Cities is to focus attention on specific issues. Their main contribution to the traditional ecosystem of city networks is in promoting specialisation in fields such as the fight against climate change. Though this type of network has

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been successful in attracting new actors (civil society organisations and businesses) this is no guarantee of success, not least because of the multiplication of actors.

United Nations agencies, philanthropic organisations and universities have been developing their own urban studies initiatives. Notable examples are CIDOB's Global Cities Programme, the Oxford Programme for the Future of Cities, the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative and the City Leadership Laboratory at University College London, which actively collaborates with the World Health Organization. It should, however, be noted that these kinds of initiative involve as many risks as opportunities. To the extent that they contribute to analysing a phenomenon with global reach, the endeavours are positive, but we must keep working to promote complementarity between the traditional networks and the new platforms. The ecosystem of city networks might be categorised as "Darwinist", as the most active, useful and strongest networks tend to expand and play ever greater roles, while the less useful decline and ultimately disappear.

The web of international networks forms an ecosystem that is constantly evolving, but it is not cities that set the pace of its development. Other actors play a fundamental role in this ecosystem: from states and central governments (with their own soft diplomacy dynamics) to companies with eminently commercial motivations. Then there are the numerous think tanks, study centres and public–private consortiums whose aims and motivations are not always transparent.

Hence the importance of differentiating between the aims of the various networks and platforms. Local governments' main mission is to improve their inhabitants' living conditions. When various cities join to create an international network of a public nature, the main goal is to generate positive impacts in their own territories. But as some of these new platforms are led by foundations and private companies, it is crucial to remember the raison d'être of each of these new actors in the international arena.

Despite the shadows these international city networks cast, the added value of the ecosystem they make up is indisputable. As various authors have pointed out, working in networks encourages mutual exchange and learning, allows lobbying systems to be structured, members to be inserted into higher spheres of action, economies of scale to be generated and leadership roles to be secured.

And yet this added value may be said to be inversely proportional to a city's size and capacity: small and medium-sized cities benefit more than large metropolises, as they are able to achieve results that would be unattainable alone. Certain lessons for large cities should be drawn from this:

• Cities like Madrid can and must participate in the international ecosystem by generating direct and indirect positive impacts and addressing the composition and objectives of the ecosystem.
• The generation of economies of scale and securing of leadership roles are less applicable to large cities than to small and medium-sized ones.
• Cities have various types of "power" (or competences).They must use them to align their international strategy with the performance of their duties. Local governments can exercise real and symbolic power over issues by acting with other institutions.

• Metropolises should be particularly selective when it comes to their participation in the ecosystem of international networks, as the benefits to be obtained must align with their own agenda.

That cities are recognised as international actors is a fact. And yet studies of city networks, their governance structures and objectives remain scarce. The potential of city networks should be advancing towards approaches that integrate both local and international dimensions (Acuto et al., 2017).

To conclude, continuous adaptation work is necessary for cities like Madrid. Continuity must be maintained without ceasing to permanently review the international course. This means avoiding fads, recognising initiatives of a markedly business nature, and advancing towards the creation of institutional spaces that enable cities to transfer their agendas to the international ecosystem.

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THE FUTURE OF CITY NETWORKS

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I t has become widely accepted that the twenty-first century will be an urban century. In recent decades, cities' ability and desire to cooperate with their neighbours and internationally, coupled with mass urbanisation across the globe, has reinforced the global power of cities. Following these trends, the number of city networks at European and global level has increased over time and they have become so numerous that cities have gotten to a point where they must make choices.

Each city network has its own specific story and profile and each considers itself "indispensable". So now is a good moment to have a debate about the ecosystem of city networks and the context in which they operate. Do different city networks replicate one another? Do they complement each other? Is it meaningful to identify synergies or similarities? What do we want from this debate, and which direction should it take? Let's take a look at some of the issues on the table.

Before comparing the services and benefits city networks offer to their members – which tend to be the main criteria for joining – it is necessary to take a look at their underlying culture, mission, value base and business model. At first glance, it is tempting to look for similarities or duplications, but when one begins to analyse the many differences between networks, this exercise becomes very complex.

We must make sure that we are comparing like with like. Do we want to look at national, regional (e.g. European) or global networks? The European region is somewhat saturated with networks. But their scope and missions differ. Some are purely thematic networks, others have national networks as members, others are proud of their direct membership affiliation, and others are geographically organised. Most of these networks are composed of cities and supported by cities. Their value base and culture is one of peers and of collective ownership of the organisation, its means and governance. At the same time, in the global arena, new city initiatives and networks are emerging with a new business model that is linked to active support by individual philanthropists or foundations. To cut a long and complex story short: it's a crowded market place. That's why at Eurocities we recently conducted a mapping exercise of similar

networks which is part of a wider effort to develop our future strategy and vision.

Over the past years Eurocities has grown both in membership and influence. We have welcomed new cities to our network and we can look proudly upon our work, for example in achieving an Urban Agenda for the European Union. We are a well-organised association with a large membership, actively engaged across a whole range of the key policy issues confronting Europe's urban areas, and increasingly recognised as a valued player among European institutions.

Yet, for the future it is important to ensure that Eurocities is able to adjust and adapt to fast changing times. In a world that is evolving at great speed, the challenge for Eurocities is how to respond and ensure that the needs and views of Europe's major cities are increasingly heard and heeded in the coming decades. One of our unique features is that we work across many sectors and on a wide range of interconnected issues that cities have to deal with. We have a different value system and business model to some of our "fellow" thematic networks that focus on a narrower set of challenges.

No doubt, it is easy to find areas of overlap when examining the ecosystem of city networks. But the search for artificial synergies and attempts to try and rationalise or downplay this ecosystem are not always very productive. The main point is that the efforts of all city networks contribute to making the voice of cities heard in the world, and this is still needed. The world is in need of inspiration and cities can provide new solutions to the global challenges we face.

Another aspect to consider is whether the lack of complementarity between various networks affects their credibility in the eyes of European institutions or other power brokers. I don't think so. Very often, it is larger institutions that contribute to the plethora of networks by setting up their own city initiative or expert group that does not build on the achievements and capital of existing networks.

City networks are already well placed to help achieve shared goals and to mobilise and utilise resources. In our own work with European institutions, I observe that once these institutions acquire a better understanding of the ecosystem of networks they are able to work with us more closely as partners on an equal footing. Working with us they can receive far better support that is backed by local evidence of how policies impact people than if they work independently or through national governments.

A final important aspect to consider is whether city networks should be more specialised around sectors. At a time of increasingly multi-disciplinary challenges, the answer in my view is no. Specialisation is good, but it reinforces "silo approaches" to policymaking that public institutions at all levels are trying to overcome. The complexity of today's reality needs a more joined-up approach to policymaking that works across sectors and levels of government.

To conclude, mayors are busy people and it is in their interest that city networks create more synergies. Besides organising high level meetings in

their own cities, mayors receive several invitations a month, if not a week, to participate in meetings of city networks. Unless we invent a cloning machine for mayors, we'll not serve the global municipalist agenda by organising competing events. Would there be scope to convene joint summits in a spirit of real partnership and cooperation without one city or one city network trying to outshine others? Because in the end we all work for the same cause, don't we? Our shared goal is to make cities more sustainable and better places to live, work and play for everybody.

ANNA LISA BONI

CITY NETWORKS, AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND *KNOW-HOW*

Marina Canals

Secretary General, International Association of Educating Cities

Humanity is not only living through a stage of changes, but also an authentic change in stages. Individuals must educate themselves for the sake of their critical adaptation to and active participation in the challenges and possibilities opening up as a result of the globalisation of all economic and social processes, so that they can intervene, through their local world, in a complex international scenario, and in order to remain autonomous subjects in the face of a flood of information controlled by economic and political power centres (Preamble of the Charter of Educating Cities, 2004).

Globalisation has brought about an acceleration of time and a shortening of distances. We do not live in citadels anymore but in an interconnected world. In this changing context local governments have also had to adapt to and learn new ways of dealing with new and old problems.

As the closest administration to citizens, local governments have to respond fast and efficiently to new situations and this has brought along with it new ways of organisation and governance. Local governments have understood the benefits and opportunities of managing their matters and challenges in networks of different kinds and scopes. Learning from others' best practices saves time and resources. It is hard to imagine a world without networks, and local governments are no exception. This phenomenon is not new. During the twentieth century, cities invested resources to develop networks and to open dialogue both within their territories and at the regional, national and international levels. However in the past decades there has been a considerable increase in the number of cities, departments and city officials involved in international networks.

The need for spaces to share knowledge, to examine one's own practices, to build partnerships and establish contacts and to protect the common good has led to the creation of a wide variety of formal and informal networks. Some networks focus on specific urban challenges that correspond to the strategic needs and priorities of their founders and promoters. Other networks focus on a specific geographical area

or they establish specific membership criteria, such as size, population and economic indicators. Still others opt for a broader general approach to urban governance issues. But despite their differences, all these networks seek to respond to specific challenges and opportunities and to become useful "tools" with contextual relevance for local governments.

On the one hand, this broad spectrum of networks demonstrates that cities have come to value spaces of exchange that foster collaborations between them. On the other hand, it shows that different cities have different needs and priorities and that they view today's global challenges from diverse perspectives.

The growth of urban populations worldwide has also positioned cities as key players in the formulation and achievement of the Global Agenda. It is with good reason that global institutions, including UN agencies, the World Bank and the European Commission are increasingly relying on cities to tackle the main challenges that affect humanity (sustainable development, poverty, violence, health, housing, etc.) and to progress in the achievement of their goals.

Through the proximity to their territories and citizens, local governments generally have more direct and reliable information about local circumstances and are closer to the needs of the people. Compared to nation states, they work on a much smaller scale, which gives them more flexibility and greater capacity to manoeuvre the challenges we face in this rapidly changing world. It is for this reason that UN agencies have often encouraged the creation of city networks as a way to respond to their goals in a more agile way that is complementary to the work of its member states. In turn, cities have been keen to work more closely with these agencies and to host UN meetings or their headquarters and branches.

It is important to note that participation in international networks is not restricted to big cities: small and medium-sized cities can also become involved. In fact, the latter benefit more from actively participating in networks because it is a way to protect themselves from some of the effects of globalisation, and a way to gain visibility and recognition, to raise their self-esteem and confidence, and to expand their network of relationships and contacts.

Although mayors from large cities can play a powerful role when it comes to setting urban trends in city governance, smaller cities should not be neglected. Like large cities, they are in a position to generate extremely valuable good practices that can significantly improve the quality of life of a large part of the population. We should not forget that while one in eight people live in the world's 33 megacities, close to half of the world's urban dwellers reside in smaller settlements with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants.

Given today's large quantity of city networks, we are faced with a situation in which many cities participate in multiple networks and in which a range of networks deal with similar issues. The downside of this proliferation of activities is that it can result in an overproduction of reunions (e.g. congresses, seminars, meetings, etc.) and outputs (e.g. declarations, charters, policy papers, etc.) that are not always coherent in their

messages and goals. Further, this proliferation of activities is particularly problematic for cities from emerging countries that do not have the necessary resources to participate in several networks or to attend meetings around the world.

We would assume that the more a city is engaged in networks the better. However, this is a simplification of what it should really mean to become a member of a city network. Joining a network is much more than paying the membership fee. It is attending the meetings, sharing knowledge, developing strategies and implementing projects. In the past, the international relations offices of city governments were usually responsible for the coordination and follow-up of a city's engagement in the different networks. By contrast, today the networking culture has been deeply internalised by the entire structure of local governments. Each department wants to build its own international relations.

But, at the same time, joining a city network provides cities with the opportunity to reflect on common challenges, to set shared goals and develop shared strategies and to influence policies. It is through this kind of empowering participation that networks can have a transformative impact on their member cities. If this is not the case, there is the risk of the membership being reduced to a "label" with which a city can associate. This can be useful from a city marketing perspective, but it involves no strategic outcome for the citizenry. Therefore, the true importance of being a member of a city network lies in the process of participating in its internal processes, not in the mere act of joining a network

In this sense, the International Association of Educating Cities understands city networks as schools of democracy; spaces that enable cities to have their voice heard and to develop their own values and opinions, while listening respectfully to other viewpoints. City networks are spaces that offer multiple perspectives and solutions to similar problems. They can contribute to developing a better understanding of specific challenges and contexts and thereby they can help cities to improve their own practices and to make more informed choices. This is important in a time when cities are facing crucial challenges that are bringing changes to the urban environment and in a world where interests and privileges need to be shared better. The possibility to influence and shape the conversation is an opportunity that cities cannot miss. Yet, when choosing which network(s) to participate in, cities need to make sure that the interests of their citizenry prevail over private profit (which is often disguised within networking jargon).

In order to avoid overlap and duplication, some city networks are opting to specialise and focus on specific issues, such as education, the environment, mobility, urban planning, etc. Thematic specialisation has the advantage of allowing for the development of a deeper understanding of a specific issue; and, when the learning approach and knowledge sharing are effective, the network becomes a powerful tool to influence and advance desired outcomes. That said, the challenges faced by cities today are highly complex. Take social cohesion, for example. It can be addressed from an employment perspective, as an urban rehabilitation or an educational policy issue, among others. All these strategies maybe part of the solution. But focusing on just one of them in isolation will not deliver effective or durable outcomes. Therefore, intersectorality

and convergence become necessary in order to find the right balance between a more focused and a broader perspective. This demands a huge amount of dialogue between city networks. They need to share their agendas and jointly find (or build) windows of opportunity that may catalyse the processes of change. Such alliances do not necessarily have to be structured as a network, since they are only required for specific purposes and limited periods of time. But they will definitely have to rely on the trust and generosity of all the parties involved.

MEDCITIES: THE NETWORK OF MEDITERRANEAN CITIES AND METROPOLITAN AREAS WORKING FOR URBAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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MedCities is a regional network of 57 cities and metropolitan areas from 15 Mediterranean countries that works in the field of urban sustainable development. Since its creation in 1991 the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (AMB) – where MedCities has its headquarters – and Barcelona City Council have been important supporters. After many years of working under the umbrella of the administrative system of the AMB, in 2017 MedCities began to operate as an independent association.

At the international level, no common legislation exists to cover the operation of international networks. For this reason, many networks act under national legislations that govern associations. This is a complicated and bureaucratic process with many obstacles. However, at the same time offers greater flexibility in terms of procedures, visibility and the capacity to act in relation to third parties.

MedCities acts as a platform for both projects and capacity building in Mediterranean local governments. The areas in which MedCities has been a significant actor in the region include the preparation of city development strategies, waste management in urban areas, the use of public space, economic development, tourism and the protection and promotion of cultural and natural assets. At the same time, MedCities promotes city-to-city initiatives, international conferences, training and capitalisation activities among its members.

The population of cities and metropolitan areas in the Mediterranean will increase to 22.5 million inhabitants by 2025. Despite recent changes to the decentralisation process in many southern Mediterranean countries – as illustrated by the first Tunisian local elections since the revolution held in May 2018 – local governments in the region remain very weak. To address this problem, MedCities aims to reinforce the role of mayors, elected representatives and technical staff.

MedCities finances its activities through the support of a number of Catalan Institutions (AMB, Barcelona City Council and the Catalan Agency for Cooperation), membership fees, and projects financed by

international institutions such as the European Commission, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ). It also mediates between its member cities and donors that are interested in financing local projects.

The cosmos of international networks is extensive and in recent years new actors, such as philanthropic institutions, have emerged, backed by significant means and a clear will to work on urban and metropolitan projects. MedCities does not aim to compete with these actors. Instead, its closeness to the territory of the Mediterranean and its longstanding working relationship with cities and mayors in the region make it a relevant ally. MedCities is also open to and active in establishing specific partnerships with powerful organisations such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM)[1], United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Cities Alliance and the CPMR-Intermediterranean Commission[2]. Further, the association works with regional organisations, including the Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME) the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED), the Mediterranean Water Institute (IME)[3], and The Mediterranean World Economic Foresight Institute (L'Institut de Prospective Economique du Monde Méditerranéen - IPEMED), and pairs its efforts with other territorial city networks, such as the Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities, the Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities and the Eixo Atlántico.

The Mediterranean region is currently suffering many problems and conflicts. In the global arena mayors and local leaders are increasingly involved in the drafting processes of the large international agreements such as the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III). Unfortunately, what is still lacking is shared political action and leadership by mayors that have shown their commitment to addressing the challenges that our planet and the Mediterranean region in particular are facing.

In the last few years, local governments have received support from big donors and they have also been able to rely on international financial institutions that have increased their lending operations for large urban projects. The problem is that when these institutions act in developing countries, they often do not consider local governments to be reliable partners and prefer to collaborate with national governments and their agencies. This is the case with the Urban Project Finance Initiative (UPFI) of UfM, which aims to identify and finance urban infrastructure initiatives. Among the projects that this initiative has identified the Sfax Taparura project or the Oued Martil in Tetouan stand out, both of which are large projects of urban transformation in which the local governments do not have leading roles.

As indicated above, the question of financing is key for the sustainability of city networks. For many years the European Union (EU) has played a crucial role in the creation and maintenance of city networks through its policies and financial instruments. Unfortunately, the EU financial instruments currently available do not respond to the Mediterranean reality and the work of MedCities. For example, the Med Programme that is financed under the framework of the EU Cohesion Policy only covers the Mediterranean countries within the EU. Similarly, the cross-border

1. The official full Spanish name is *La Asamblea Regional y Local Euromediterránea.*
2. The official full Spanish name is *Comisión Intermediterránea de la Conferencia de Regiones Periféricas Marítimas de Europa.*
3. The official full Spanish name is *Instituto Mediterraneo del Agua.*

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programmes of the European Neighbourhood Policy – such as ENI CBCMED-Cooperating across borders in the Mediterranean – do not allow for the participation of countries like Morocco, Algeria and Turkey. Cooperation in the Mediterranean requires more specific financial instruments to promote partnerships and support local governments in addressing their needs.

The city of Barcelona hosts the headquarters of an important number of city and regional networks (including, UCLG, Metropolis, MedCities, the CPMR-Intermediterranean Commission, Educating Cities, the Ibero-American Centre for Urban Strategic Development (CIDEU),[4] Euroregion Pyrenees Mediterranean [5]) as well as thematic networks. However, we don't make the most of this hub of networks. There is a lack of regular coordination and insufficient appropriation by relevant stakeholders in the city.

City networks are changing the way they work by paying attention to new platforms and players without sacrificing their original aims and principles. However, within this new context city networks will have to evolve, offering added-value services and products and partnering with other networks in order to be competitive and effective.

4. The official full Spanish name is *Centro Iberoamericano de Desarrollo Estratégico Urbano*.
5. The official full Spanish name is *Euroregion Pyrenees Mediterranean*.

XAVIER TIANA

CONCLUSIONS

- CITY DIPLOMACY IN THE POSTMODERN ERA:
  NETWORKS FLOURISH, TERRITORIES WITHER?

  Eva Garcia-Chueca

Eva Garcia-Chueca

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I. Paradigm shift in international relations

International relations today differ greatly from those that have dominated the global scene since the Treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648 and an international regime was established with the nation-state at its centre. Since the end of the 20th century, globalisation has been eroding the nation-state's position as the political unit of reference, along with one of its fundamental attributes: sovereignty. For centuries, sovereignty has been the foundation of many of the state's political functions, such as participation in international relations. As a result of this crisis of the nation-state (Castells, 2003), the global scene has become fragmented, facilitating the emergence of other actors that have come to play increasingly important roles in global governance. It is in this context that cities are becoming new actors in international relations (Oosterlynck et al., 2019), especially once they join transnational networks and platforms in order to operate internationally.

The preceding chapters have shown that this phenomenon has a historical background. The first forerunners of today's international municipal movement date from the early 20th (Fernández de Losada and Abdullah, in this volume) and even 19th centuries (Acuto and Rayner, 2016). But what is really notable is the momentum it has acquired since the 1990s and, above all, since the 2000s. Some authors have analysed the historical evolution and configuration of certain city networks (Alger, 2011). Nevertheless, the existing academic international relations literature on city diplomacy in a broad sense, and on city networks in particular, remains scarce.

This monograph thus seeks to contribute to a debate that is still taking shape and attempts to do so by giving a voice directly to its protagonists. They are the representatives of several of the most influential city networks with the strongest political presence, such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Cities Alliance, C40, Eurocities, Educating Cities (IAEC), Metropolis and 100 Resilient Cities. Three main axes have shaped the analysis in this volume: the role of cities in global governance, the emergence of new city networks, and the opportunities for

complementarity between these and traditional networks. Numerous interesting reflections have been made around these larger questions in the foregoing chapters. And as the introduction provides a panoramic view of the main issues, the focus of this conclusion will be to highlight certain key ideas and close with a provocation or two that may serve to indicate possible future lines of research.

II. The flourishing of city networks

This volume takes it as read that the current ecosystem of networks is remarkably dense and rich: numerous city platforms are working to increase the presence and participation of city governments in global governance. Several authors underline the need to improve dialogue and collaboration between them in order to optimise efforts and gain greater capacity for political influence (Fernández de Losada and de la Varga, among others). The main routes they suggest exploring in this regard are, on the one hand, the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF) as a space for strategic coordination between city networks and, on the other, the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments (promoted by the GTF), as a place for meeting and political debate between elected representatives at local and regional levels. Other authors have emphasised the need to promote a generational renewal of the staff managing these platforms, to improve the communication strategies of the *longstanding networks*, to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the *new generation* of networks (those driven by philanthropic organisations) and to develop indicators and support instruments for the design of local public policies (Roca and Cardama, among others).

These proposals seek to respond to some of the main challenges faced by the current ecosystem of city networks, and to suggest potential opportunities for its improvement. However, the red thread running through the chapters is a strong idea that merits proper consideration. This idea can be summarized as follows: the emergence of cities as new actors in international relations and city networks' participation in global governance (with more or less real political impact) are inherently positive developments. But not everyone accepts this assumption. The realist school of international relations looks with concern upon the fragmentation of foreign policy caused by the increased number of actors participating in international relations (Barbé, 1987). Given these criticisms, should the questions surrounding the challenges and opportunities facing the current saturated and complex ecosystem of networks encourage a critical reflection on the role of cities in global governance? In other words, why should the new protagonism of cities and their networks in international relations be considered something positive *per se*? To what extent does the fragmentation of foreign policy constitute a sufficient argument for questioning city diplomacy?

In order to answer these questions, the focus of analysis must be widened for a moment to take in a macrostructural dimension of our postmodern era. Fragmentation, far from being the exception, has become the rule and the characteristic feature of multiple facets of

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life: it affects society, as Beck (1997) and Jameson (1991) have shown; identity, as analysed by Butler (1990) and Kaplan (1997); and the city, as demonstrated by Garreau (1991) and Augé (1992), among others. The postmodern era is the era of the plural, of diversities and of the emergence of differences (perhaps the rise of authoritarian, populist and far-right regimes across the world is a counter-reaction to this). In the international relations field, especially since the turn of the millennium, this process of *disintegration* of the political units of reference has crystallised not only in the emergence of cities as actors in international relations, but also in the proliferation of actors from organised civil society (especially, as Allegretti also points out in this volume, since the emergence of the alter-globalist movement), among others. Foreign policy fragmentation is thus a translation of a global and multidimensional trend into international relations. This means that such fragmentation is not a specific challenge provoked by hyperactive city diplomacy, but rather an element that must inevitably be faced in the current postmodern era.

This does not mean, of course, that it is not necessary to critically question the idea that it is positive *per se* that cities have become actors in international relations. Otherwise, we would be left with a self-congratulatory debate led by the protagonists of this phenomenon. And this would easily trap us in a lobbying rationale similar to that of non-institutional political stakeholders that are pursuing an even bigger role in global governance. The argument that grants most legitimacy to defending municipalism on the global scene is probably the representative nature of its participating political units. Most of the world's population is concentrated in cities. As a result, local governments become highly qualified to participate in the decisions that will affect the territories they are managing. But they must act in the general interest and avoid pursuing other aims. Herein lies the main added value of city diplomacy vis-à-vis other actors in paradiplomacy (Duchacek et al., 1988); and herein lies the opportunity to take global governance in a more democratic direction.

In short, is it positive that cities have become actors in international relations? To the extent that they contribute to making global governance more democratic, it may be, but not if they merely focus on transferring the interests and concerns of cities to global agendas. If such interests and concerns only stem from certain cities (or groups of cities) and if they do not represent a global democratic consensus built with the participation of the different existing urban territories, city diplomacy will be biased and reproduce neocolonial patterns.

III. More but less representative networks?

The urbanisation currently dominating the planet takes multiple forms, ranging from metropolitan typologies of megalopolises, metacities and city-regions (UN-HABITAT, 2008), intermediary cities with populations of between 50,000 and a million inhabitants (UCLG, 2017) to small cities and "rurban" settlements (Iglesias, 2019). Even within the first group – the metropolitan – it is important to distinguish between the cities at the centre and their peripheries, as they have different

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characteristics. These differences are both demographic – linked to socioeconomic and cultural issues – and institutional, as local government capacity may be of a different order. One example of this centre–periphery contrast is Paris (centre) and Saint-Denis (*banlieue* or periphery at the northern edge of the metropolitan area, which has concentrated many of the historical social segregation problems that have plagued the French capital).

So, given this amalgam of diverse urban typologies, it should be asked which territories city networks represent. With the exception of Metropolis, whose mission specifically consists of representing capital cities and urban areas with populations of at least one million inhabitants, the city networks that have been the subject of this volume are not based around a certain city typology.[1] And yet, although the type of city permitted to join these networks is not determined *a priori*, we observe that, de facto, membership does not necessarily reflect the diversity of contemporary urban fabrics and developments. In fact, it could be argued that two groups exist in the sample of networks represented in this volume. They are related to two underlying tendencies within the ecosystem of city networks that are closely linked to the historical moment in which they were created. We can distinguish between those networks that emerged between the late 1980s and 2004, on the one hand, and those created since then, on the other.

The networks that emerged during the first phase (1986–2004) appear to be more broadly representative. They include cities of various sizes, from capitals and large cities to small municipalities, including intermediary cities. Eurocities (1986), Educating Cities (1990) and UCLG (2004) are in this first group. It is the creation of UCLG that marks a turning point in the configuration of the ecosystem of city networks. From the date of its foundation, a significant shift occurs towards the articulation of networks that are more oriented to forming exclusive clubs of cities or partnerships that focus on mobilising certain cities. Networks such as C40 and 100 Resilient Cities (founded in 2005 and 2013, respectively) are in this group. Unlike the networks from the first phase, this second generation of networks is formed mainly of capitals, large cities or, at best, intermediary cities. C40 is the one that most resembles an exclusive club, which the organisation justifies by arguing that the fight against climate change is down to large cities adopting measures in this field.

In light of this second tendency of city networks, it is necessary to point out one important aspect: to further democratise global governance more reflection should be given to the fact that the new generation of networks is less representative. These networks should broaden the spectrum of governments they work with in order to "leave no one behind," as the 2030 Agenda aspires (UN, 2015). If efforts are directed only at improving, for example, the fight against climate change or the resilience of the most influential cities, a hierarchy between urban territories and between urban citizens will be created. The risks this entails should not be ignored: neglecting the diversity of territories (intermediary, peripheral, small cities and *rur-*

1. Cities Alliance, also analysed in this monograph, is not considered here, as it is not a true network of cities, but rather a multi-actor platform in which city networks also participate (but not cities directly).

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ban areas), and ignoring the unequal power relations between them means privileging large-scale urbanisation. It would also mean missing the opportunity to cater to city typologies that can, on the one hand, stabilise the growth of large cities if they are able to provide sufficient opportunities and services and, on the other, stop the desertification of rural environments. Addressing the rural–urban divide also requires listening to the diverse voices of local governments within the global governance framework.

IV. "Leave no place behind", but also acknowledge North–South power relations

Adapting the slogan "leave no one behind" to the urban context, UCLG advocates for "leaving no place behind" to express its aim to represent not only capital and large cities (Metropolis fulfils this role as a UCLG member), but also to address the needs of other territories. To do this, it organises working platforms (so-called "forums") in which intermediary cities and peripheral cities actively participate. It also supports research on the diversity of urban territories (UCLG, 2017). Educating Cities, as Canals explains in this volume, is another network that benefits from the active participation of highly diverse cities, with even small cities being major users of and contributors to the network. The case of Eurocities is similar.

Networks such as UCLG, Eurocities and Educating Cities can therefore play an important role in "leaving no place behind". However, when it comes to transferring this message to the global governance system, UCLG has a particular responsibility as it is a global network devoted to policy advocacy (among other goals). This is not the case for Eurocities, a regional platform, or for Educating Cities, which focus on facilitating the exchange of experiences, knowledge transfer and influencing local policies.

But the major democratic challenges also concern these networks. Playing host to diverse urban realities is not enough. They also need to put in place sufficiently democratic, transparent and agile internal governance mechanisms. There is a real risk of excessive bureaucratisation and less transparency than is desirable when managing public funds. Also, it has to be noted that a genuine democratisation of the global voice of cities must be based on the participation of different urban geographies, both in the Global North and South, and both in the west and in the east. Relations between countries, like those between cities, are still strongly dominated by an unequal map of power relations that is colonial in origin. In this sense, the mainstream urban voice does not only stem from major cities, but also from the historical power centres located along the Global North–Western axis. The first-generation networks are not immune from this problem. It remains to be seen to what extent the latter, and the ecosystem of networks as a whole, will be capable of overturning the existing global hegemonies between cities so that the message conveyed to the global governance structures is more inclusive and representative.

Neglecting the diversity of territories (intermediary, peripheral and small cities and *rurban* areas), and ignoring the unequal power relations between them means privileging large-scale urbanisation

A genuine democratisation of the global voice of cities must be based on the participation of different urban geographies, both in the Global North and South, and both in the west and in the east.

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Cities have emerged as major players on the international scene in recent years. Yet, their ambition to project themselves internationally and to influence global agendas is not a new phenomenon. Cities have operated through organised networks for decades. The first international organisation of cities was the International Union of Local Authorities, created in 1913. Towards the end of the past century, the regional integration processes of the 1990s engendered a proliferation of city networks, especially in Europe but also in Latin America, Africa and Asia. In 2004, the founding of United Cities and Local Governments as a platform for international municipalism marked a turning point.

Today city networks play a growing role in defining and implementing some of the main global agendas. Their involvement in the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, their success in adding a territorial dimension to the UN 2030 Agenda, and their participation in the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, are good examples of how city networks are making their voice heard. But the increasing importance attributed to urbanisation processes on international development agendas has also caused a reconfiguration of the ecosystem of city networks that brings with it both risks and opportunities.

This volume seeks to analyse the changing dynamics of the ecosystem of city networks, focusing on how the main platforms operate, what influence they have on global agendas, what services they provide and how they coordinate their efforts. By zooming in on the strategies networks have been developing to enhance their influence and make their operations more effective, the volume examines the added value they provide.