DIPLOCAT AGORA 22

International networks of cities and their dynamics

The growing influence of city networks on the global scene

GLOBAL DEBATE - 17th November 2022

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Report by Mariona Tomàs, professor of Political Science at the University of Barcelona and host of the event.

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Contents

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1. Context

Currently, more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas. A 2018 United Nations study estimates that by 2050 the figure will reach two-thirds. This same study points out that, in the coming years, 600 cities will represent nearly 65% of global GDP growth. This explosion in the economic power of cities is not surprising that cities are also taking on a prominent role in areas of foreign policy, as was evident during the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

DIPLOCAT organised a series of two talks on "The rise of cities on the international scene" to better understand this phenomenon, following the suggestion of Barcelona City Council as a member of the consortium. The series aimed to analyse why and how cities act in international environments, what dynamics are created between them, what networks are derived from them and, above all, measure the impact of the work that is done from these networks.

The first session, which took place in December 2021, dealt with the role of local bodies in the post-pandemic context. During that debate, it became clear that the pandemic was a turning point both in the functioning of the international system and in its involvement. A series of accelerated changes had to be instituted, some of which have remained and will surely remain. For example, it has led to urban innovations at the municipal level, fostered international cooperation between cities and intensified collaboration and solidarity between them.

That debate also identified complexities, often invisible, of the post-Covid reality, such as the growth of social inequalities and the negative influence in cities of the so-called predatory formations, in the words of Saskia Sassen, such as the large multinationals and the financial sector. In any case, the different administrations had to learn to deal with the pandemic, and with 90% of cases registered in urban environments, cities ended up taking over from states in certain areas of international relations.

The second and last session is the one we summarise for you here, which with the title "International networks of cities and their dynamics" took place at the Institute for Catalan Studies in Barcelona on 17th November 2022.

2. Presentation

Laura Foraster i Lloret, Secretary General of DIPLOCAT, welcomed the participants and attendees, thanked them for their participation and presented the session topic and the aim of the series. According to Foraster, the growing prominence of cities is indisputable and it is not foreseeable that it will stop. This prominence also extends to the international arena, as was seen during the Covid-19 pandemic, in which cities took over from states, taking advantage of the fact that they are on the front line of communication with citizens. Since the current global challenges affect both the national and local levels, it is important to maintain an exchange of good practices and regular dialogue between the world's cities. This is why it is necessary to assess the capabilities of city networks and to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

This new role of cities can be seen in the fact that the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a specific urban goal on inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities, and 169 goals that depend entirely on the actions taken by local governments. Therefore, as Laura Foraster pointed out, no one doubts that today's global challenges require broad and diversified responses.

International issues such as climate change, migration, health or security become domestic issues that primarily affect life in cities. This is where the creation of international networks and the exchange of best practices with other cities in the world becomes vitally important.

The ecosystem of international networks of cities is complex and diverse, since one or more networks have been created for each set of problems. In fact, according to recent studies, it is estimated that in 2021 there were more than 200 operational networks of cities. This is a trend that has grown exponentially since 2001 due to the great interest of local authorities in this type of initiative. In this context, and given the greater relevance of the local area, a need arises to evaluate the networks and to determine their capacity and impact, the main object of this conference.

3. Rethinking the role of city networks in the International sphere

Inaugural conference

The person in charge of giving the introductory talk was Agustí Fernández de Losada, senior researcher and Director of the Global Cities program at CIDOB, the Centre for International Studies and Documentation in Barcelona. The speaker has extensive experience in issues related to cities and international relations, both in the Barcelona Provincial Council and the United Nations, and also in different entities such as the European Commission.

After thanking the invitation, Fernández de Losada explained that he would base his talk on one article made at the CIDOB with a rather provocative key. In this study, eight relevant cities from different regions of the world, which are highly active in the field of networks, were analysed and the international ecosystem of city networks was examined from a critical but mostly constructive perspective.

First, the speaker says that there is a broad consensus that cities play an important role on the international stage, as the world becomes urbanised, especially towards the south and east, with its specificities. In addition, cities are the laboratories of some of the key challenges facing humanity today and more linked to globalising processes: climate change, technological change, human mobility, economic speculation... Cities operate in a context of interdependencies: globalisation. Therefore, cities appear on the international stage not out of whim, but because it is part of their responsibility. Cities are also called upon to operate as recognised actors in this scenario and they do so to try to defend their interests and promote them in front of international agendas. In Europe it is very clear: what happens in Brussels ends up impacting the local world. Beyond Europe, there are many open issues on the table that are discussed in agendas led by nation states that also have a local impact, such as COP27. Cities go out to learn, access knowledge to solutions, to exchange, to capitalise and legitimise their own experiences, to attract opportunities. Cities also weave bonds and relationships of solidarity. Today, there is a lot of talk about city diplomacy, which is channelled through an intense network of bilateral and multilateral relations within city networks.

These networks of cities are a very useful instrument and fundamental for the diplomatic action or external action of the cities, which allow them to generate critical mass to operate in a scenario that is not

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designed for them. Therefore, having a critical mass of weight to be able to influence is key. All networks make significant efforts and operate almost as a think tanks: they generate knowledge, manage data and information, and build arguments that are fundamental to their advocacy. Networks also mobilise resources, generate alliances with other actors, and many even promote pilot projects, without shying away from risk or innovation. Often these projects could not be done with local resources alone.

Therefore, city networks play a fundamental role, but their ecosystem should be reviewed and rethought. The study led by Michele Acuto from the University of Melbourne points to more than 200 active networks operating in the system of international relations. There are networks that operate on a global scale, such as UCLG or Metropolis; networks that operate at the regional level, such as Eurocities; networks that operate even in environments or in cultural communities, such as the CIDEU in the Ibero-American area, but which has its sister or cousin entities in the Francophone and Commonwealth areas. There are generalist networks, which affect everything, and networks that are more topical. There are networks that have a purely public affiliation, that are made up of local governments, such as UCLG, and networks with more than one actor, or that incorporate entities that operate in the urban area, philanthropies, the private sector, the academia, which even include international organisations, national governments... The ecosystem is very broad and therefore very diverse. It is very rich, but it is very stressed. There is dispersion, and a lot of competition between the same networks and between other network operators. It's not just the networks, there's also the United Nations, UN Habitat, the Global Economic Forum, etc. There are many operators who work on the urban dimension from the perspective of the international agenda. Therefore, there is competition and sometimes there is a lack of coordination and complementarity, despite the efforts that are made.

Several questions arise from this diagnosis. Who establishes the agenda? Is there capacity to measure the impact of the networks' action? Are you responding to the real needs of cities? Is it connecting with the problems that citizens really have? Are the networks, understood as an ecosystem, able to approach it? Do cities act strategically in networks? For example, the city of Barcelona is present in many networks. And the same goes for Vienna, Berlin, Montreal, Buenos Aires, Bogotá, Johannesburg or Sydney. Fernández de Losada questions whether cities really know why they are in each network, why they participate in it and what they get out of it, with the logic of accountability.

The speaker considers it key to strengthen the coordination between the networks and comments that UCLG is making progress in this dynamic. For example, the Global Task Force is an important effort to coordinate dialogue with the United Nations, and therefore, advocacy before this body. He also mentions the participation, led by ICLEI, at COP27. The U20 before the G20 is also a coordination effort between UCLG and the C40, somewhat leading these networks, reflecting an awareness of the fact that it is necessary to move forward in this coordination and collaboration, but there is a long way to go . He cites a case in which, within two weeks, some mayors of major cities attended five international meetings and summits around the world, one after the other, a reflection of the strain the ecosystem is under and of this lack of coordination.

Fernández de Losada emphasises that it would be important to give more consistency to the network's offer and perhaps revise it. The concept of utility, linked to that of relevance, is crucial. Sometimes, the leadership of the networks is not exercised by the cities or the mayors. There are other leaderships that overshadow the legitimate and natural leadership, which has votes behind it, which is that of the mayor. Some networks are overly bureaucratic and inflexible. Many times they have very professional staff but with a lack of experience. They are people who have never worked in a city and who come to work in the world of city networks from other disciplines, with the good that this entails, but also with the difficulties. Also, a large city in Europe or the United States is not the

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same as a large city in Latin America or Asia, or an intermediate city, or a small city. Therefore, having this experience is relevant, as is the configuration of the agenda.

Finally, the speaker underlines the issue of impact measurement. In a spirit of self-avoidance, it's a good idea to ask the questions that will need to be asked and to find out what the main times are for improving the ecosystem, the challenges and the impact that the cities have when it comes to meeting the objective of strengthening the capacity of local governments and urban operators to respond to their own needs. How can leadership be strengthened? How can these local leaders be given visibility? How can progress be made in more relevant agendas that effectively deal in depth with the issues of interest to cities? What can be done so that the cities and their representatives set the agenda? How can we take a step forward and make the networks more open and inclusive, and that they incorporate diverse voices, such as social activism, artists, the business world, the sector of creation, thought or academia?

The networks are efforts backed by local governments and the logic of reasonable governance must be accountability. This is an obligation for local governments and it should be for networks as well. How is incidence, exchange or learning measured? It is very difficult. In other words, the tasks that networks do and the services they offer are difficult to measure. It is very difficult to define indicators that really help to measure the impact. It is very difficult to evaluate in the medium and long term, also when evaluating traditional public policy. If this is already very complex, it is even more so if you try to measure elements such as incidence, learning, exchange, etc. It would be necessary to go beyond the evaluation of processes, whether one or two conferences were held and how many people attended.

The speaker is also in favour of ensuring that the resources that are mobilised reach the cities. City networks have been fighting for a place at the global table for many years. Now they are recognised, but now we need to transcend the rhetoric and move towards public policy, with answers to the problems faced by cities and citizens. Networks have enormous potential to weave and generate agreements among themselves, which are concrete and measurable, that can be made visible and that can be explained. Therefore, along with or in parallel with influencing the COP, the G20, the G7, Mercosur, the European Union and the United Nations, the networks could be used to reach agreements on very specific issues, linked to local public policies, which are tangible and analysable.

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The presenter, Mariona Tomàs, thanked the intervention and emphasised the double dimension of networks: external (if we talk about network coordination, who should do this coordination?) and internal (how is it evaluated?). She gives the example of the European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA), which is the network of metropolitan governments led by the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, which has been lobbying and that he has achieved, little by little, that the Next Generation funds include an item for metropolitan issues. However, these funds are received by the states, which are the ones who distribute them, and in the Spanish case, the Metropolitan Area has not been recognised by the State as a receiving entity.

Felip Roca, Director of International Relations at Barcelona City Council, reacts to the inaugural presentation and comments that people who work internationally in cities have local attributions, a need for the mayor's presence on the territory and at the same time the requirement to be present on an international scale. He mentions the cases of Bogotá and Kyiv. Since things are constantly happening in a city that directly affect the citizens, the international projection is not always well understood. We

need to continue with the awareness work. Networks can help cities better connect with citizens. He also comments that he is very much in agreement with the need to work strategically, but that many times the international relations departments of cities are a segment of a process, for example in the case of knowledge generation. They are catalysts and facilitators, so that technicians are in contact with technicians from other cities and improve what they are doing and, therefore, serve the public. But how do you find the indicators that allow you to know exactly the impact that this action, this aid, has on the other areas? Finally, he shares the idea that city networks are strained. There are new networks, more linked to philanthropies. One of the key issues is funding. Cities must think about how traditional networks are provided with the necessary resources to do the work they are supposed to do.

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On the other hand, Joan Chicón, until recently head of the European and International Relations Service of Terrassa City Council, and speaker in the first debate of the cycle, points out that pedagogy should be taken into account from an educational point of view what a city needs, whatever it is. New government teams are established every four years. Chicón comments that in those municipalities that have their own council in the field of international relations, all of this is something very distant to them and which they have not been involved in because they lack this part of training or education on the usefulness of these networks. The first question they ask, in relation to city networks, is usually: what is the use of this fee we are paying? What do we get from it? How can I "sell", or justify when giving accounts to the public, that this has any value? It is very difficult for the technical professionals to show the importance to the government team and for them, in turn, to transfer it to the citizens. Why don't the city government teams incorporate the lines of action that come out of the world congresses of networks like UCLG in the preparation of their programs? It's not only from their party electoral programs, but also later, when the government teams are configured, in the public policy action program for the next four years. More sectoral public policies could draw from these reflections, documents and conclusions and adapt them. When it comes to accountability, then it would be easier to make the public understand why they are useful and what can be achieved on the international scene through the networks. In terms of coordination: cities that are part of the same network and are part of the same country could coordinate internally so that there is representation in the governing bodies of these networks and use them for advocacy.

4. Exchange of good practices of city networks

Round table

The round table on the exchange of good practices of city networks includes Pablo Fernández, chief of staff of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG); Rosa Arlene Maria, Executive Director of the Ibero-American Centre for Urban Strategic Development (CIDEU); Dorthe Nielsen, Executive Director of Eurocities; and Claire Roumet, Director of Energy Cities. Therefore, four very significant and relevant networks are represented. Two people attend face-to-face and the other two connect online. All four have extensive experience in international networks of cities. Mariona Tomàs introduces

the speakers and explains the dynamics that will follow, based on two rounds of questions: a first more general question about the network they represent and then a more specific question about their impact.

Pablo Fernández begins by explaining that the starting point of UCLG is not the ecosystem of networks, but the international and local ecosystem in terms of local and regional governments. Indeed, the international impact of a mayor's decision is not the same as the role they have as a local entity or political actor in the international context. The role does not exist in real terms, it exists through the networks and the prominence that a local leader can have. Although the impact is enormous, there are many doubts on the international scene about the role of local leaders, especially within member states, within large philanthropies and within the private sector. The second element concerning the ecosystem is that competition and tension from networks may or may not go to other networks. How does this ecosystem present itself in the face of international reality? In which ecosystem can municipal associationism exist? Depending on the contexts, we find a vision of a centralist state while the networks advocate decentralisation and subsidiarity. It is not the same how UCLG, which has its home in Barcelona, presents itself to the Spanish State, the Government of Catalonia and the Barcelona City Council, as how the Association of Local Governments of Gambia presents itself through the mayoress of Banjul. And how these two, in front of the United Nations, may or may not have interference with even local decisions. In other words, it is necessary to take into account the ecosystems where the local government networks are located and how they are or are not stimulated by each other. The ecosystem is gigantic, complex and ranges from local realities, from how a town hall works in a certain national context, how an association of local governments works in a national context and how these work on a regional and international scale.

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In relation to the work of UCLG, Fernández emphasises that the networks are not service providers, but represent political actors who at the same time represent interests, ideas and principles, and the common cause goes far beyond the provision of services. UCLG comes from two international networks, united in 2004. Its work began in 1913, following the first Conference of Mayors of the World, and arose from a movement of associationism, of solidarity, marked at that time by the twinning of cities and dialogue. UCLG is a political organisation, which represents local interests. In this sense it is interesting to consider why. The function remains to bring democracy to the international scene, through democratic representation. The decision-making mechanisms are complex because they try to be as democratic as possible. It's not just what is good for cities to be in a network, but what is good for the network for certain cities to be there to give voice to others, and sets the example of human mobility and the dignity of migrated people to be free. The value of a network like UCLG, for example, is to sit at the same international negotiating table on migration where migration ministers from all over the world, the United Nations and Italy's Minister Salvini meet. This is the value of working in a network and democratically. The network decides that the mayor of the small island of Lampedusa will represent the group of cities to discuss migration and that the collective migration strategy in human mobility issues will be called the Lampedusa Charter for Dignified Human Mobility.

Pablo Fernández also highlights the learning agenda consisting of training trainers, the critical mass of public workers in town halls who will maintain the continuity of certain narratives, who are convinced by certain leaderships. These narratives are the ones that are transmitted and generated through training. Like other elements of value, he adds that cities continue to be supportive and continue to deal with all other cities. Cities have an agenda where the proximity of the local sphere generates empathy in the discussion about public services, local mandates ranging from waste management to housing. Then there is another totally different empathy between these two spheres of government, no matter

how big they are and where they come from, when it comes to the great responsibility in issues like the climate agenda. This is why we need learning and research exchanges.

Second, Rosa Arlene Maria takes the floor and explains that the Ibero-American Center for Strategic Urban Development has been promoting the transformation of cities through strategic urban planning since 1993, after the Barcelona Olympic Games. The network was created because a group of cities wanted to learn from this model and this remains the main goal of the network: to learn together. The affiliated cities share a way of thinking about the city, a way of defining the urban future based on a model that tries to reach consensus among all the actors, defining work axes and long-term projects. The example of Barcelona, which has gone from planning only at a municipal scale to a metropolitan scale and is now beginning to encompass the wider metropolitan region, shows a common challenge, which is the growth of agglomeration, particularly visible in the Latin American cities. There are 150 Ibero-American cities linked to the network that have dedicated themselves to sharing in the network various experiences linked to the challenges that are emerging. The network offers the possibility of permanent technical exchange between professionals who are in charge of the different areas of local government: urban development, environmental management and mobility. This is how a space is generated, a permanent interaction that consolidates the network, not only at the level of the authorities and institutions, but at the level of the technical teams that are working. It's like having a permanently open window to see what's being done and how it's being done in other cities. According to those involved, this is extremely useful even to contrast what one does and what the other does, and where it should be looking, taking into account the different political and social realities of the cities that participate.

In thirty years, seeing and learning how strategy is made, a great flow of knowledge, methodologies and learning has been accumulated, a whole history that is always a reference and that now, for example, in the context of global agendas, forces rethink this methodology to align it with commitments on a global scale. CIDEU offers an opportunity for international positioning based on good practice. It allows these authorities and technical teams to become visible at an international level based on what they are doing and thus they are being defined as benchmarks. Everything that emerges from the networking of this Ibero-American region makes it possible to promote joint agendas and, hopefully, inspire other cities.

CIDEU works with permanent technical cooperation spaces based on two models. On the one hand there are micro-networks of urban strategies which are a set of between eight and ten cities with two or three technicians from each who decide to work on a topic. CIDEU facilitates the network and defines a work agenda. For example: what should we talk about when we say we are taking action on climate change? Depending on the challenge posed, the agenda is defined and learning is shared, both from best practice and the opposite, based on the mistakes and challenges that appear. It is an exercise of working among equals, with people trying to do the same in their territory, who share knowledge directly and exchange the instruments generated by the network. Last year, for example, the topic of gender mainstreaming in municipal management was discussed. There was a general discussion about gender transversal policies, care, the wage gap, etc. We worked for a while with the cities and concluded that there were advances in all these aspects, but when it came to the municipal budget they were lost and the gender approach was not reflected in the budget. Therefore, the cities decided to analyse budgets and taxation with a gender perspective, looking at which instruments are being put into practice and which are the difficulties that appear.

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The second model is that of mentorships, which is similar but is bilateral, between a city that has significant expertise in a subject and that accompanies another that wants to promote some project or some plan in this area. For example, there is now a mentorship between the city of Zaragoza and the city of Monterrey, in which the Ebrópolis planning model, which has been driven by different actors for almost thirty years, is transferred to the Mexican city. Or the city of Huelva, which has asked Bogotá for mentorship to regenerate urban neighbourhoods. The networks dedicate a space to learning, to create capacities that the cities themselves request and that require strengthening their teams. There is a great mobility of professionals, especially in Latin America at the local level, so that every time there are elections, the templates change and this exercise of creating capacities is maintained, focused on the more specific needs of the cities. The subject of urban strategy is complex because it is constantly changing, methodologies are accelerating and the way in which data is managed is becoming more complicated. Therefore, it is necessary to update this thinking permanently and CIDEU offers a specialisation that has been implemented for seventeen years so that cities can acquire these skills. In short, CIDEU is emerging as a close network that is useful in cities, with very agile workspaces because cities need answers and solutions. The aim is to create the conditions for them to meet each other and to facilitate and incorporate this practical learning. In the end it is a collective construction, in which the network as an institution brings these processes together and facilitates them so that they are maintained.

Dorthe Nielsen, Executive Director of Eurocities, a network with 200 members that works to improve the quality of life in cities and ensure that cities have more influence in the European Union, intervenes remotely. The role of the network in Brussels is to make cities' voices heard in decision-making processes, and to help cities access funding. In addition, much of Eurocities' work consists of creating connections between cities, facilitating peer-to-peer exchange and learning. Finally, it also works on the visibility of good practices at the local level, both to inspire others and to help the European Union see what is happening at the local level, bridging the gap between local development and the development of European policies. This includes digital transformation, environment, mobility, climate, social affairs, cultural development in cities and economic development. The network has more than forty working groups where members collaborate and work together to develop solutions for specific problems, or to share common positions towards European policies. Therefore there is a technical part but also a political part regarding the involvement of cities within the European Union.

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Nielsen refers to the recent meeting in Antwerp of a community of experts working on mobility and sustainable transport to discuss the path to zero emissions. Antwerp showed its best practices and a group of representatives of the mayors who lead the mobility of the cities had a political debate with representatives of the European Union. This would be an example of networking and the connection of cities to achieve sustainable urban development and mobility, providing new capacities, learning and skills. Another example of the network's work is connecting local representatives with European politicians, such as Ursula von der Leyen, to discuss peer learning mechanisms and the sustainable reconstruction of Ukrainian cities. Meetings with other Commissioners and Members of the European Parliament or representatives of regions are also arranged. The meetings are very practical and have to do with what the person in charge of public policy does.

In addition, Eurocities also implements several European projects and is currently working on thirty projects funded by the European Union. The flagship project, Eurocities, promoted jointly with Energy Cities, helps to implement the mission of 150 cities to have zero emissions. In relation to the war in Ukraine, solidarity between cities has also been strengthened in terms of hosting refugees. Support

is also given to local initiatives that help implement the European Green Deal. An agenda to build a collective power for cities is being worked on in order to coordinate all these activities and this work. According to Nielsen, the aim is to be able to live together, help and support each other, especially so that the strongest cities can lend a helping hand to those that are not so strong.

Finally, Claire Roumet, Director of Energy Cities, explains that they work on a European scale and with a privileged relationship with European institutions. European institutions have used local authorities and regional authorities to implement their energy agendas. The regional policy of the European Union is one of the main programs of European funds and has helped to expand European culture. Energy Cities has

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a lot of exchange activities and most of the work that is done in Brussels is trying to ensure that there is a positive framework for cities to achieve their goals and missions, working with the complementarity between different networks. Claire Roumet emphasises that it is not a competition between networks but quite the opposite. We need to work on complementarity. Therefore, the more local leaders who have access to this exchange, the better. For example, all work is communicated in French because there is a sufficiently large French-speaking base. In other countries, such as the Czech Republic or Romania, it is translated into different languages. This is part of the history and development of the network.

The question of location is key: the work street by street, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, province by province, over the territory. According to Roumet, cities may not be world leaders in this area because they have many problems that they will have to deal with in the future. Perhaps rural areas are better positioned to reach climate neutrality, to achieve solutions, since the density of cities is a problem in a world in which we want to opt for disconnection. What Energy Cities does is work so that cities have the means to be able to develop. Some time ago, for example, in the fifties, in the Spanish mountains there was the *Casa de la Luz* and it was known where the energy came from. At some point, this link was lost between what we need in terms of natural resources and what we are developing in cities to meet our needs for food, heating, mobility, etc.

The Director of Energy Cities emphasizes that there is a major energy crisis and that this is only the beginning of the problem of the future. We need to change the way we operate, because of the climate crisis we are facing, and disconnecting can be a good starting point, but territories or cities need to be well positioned. This depends particularly on decentralised solutions. For example, German cities all have their own energy company. Barcelona has also done this, to ensure that it controls and has at hand what it needs, such as water and energy, which are the essential resources for a city to survive. Some cities and territories are much better positioned to face these challenges of the future. The role of the network is to make it clear that the energy policy is incorrect and has forgotten that there can also be intermediate actors who can ensure that there is shared prosperity and shared access to resources. Now, in the European Union there are only consumers and producers of energy and there is nothing in between. Municipal companies can, to some extent, mitigate price volatility and excess CO_2 production. We need to go back to the beginning of ecological planning, which is one of the main political axes in which the network works, and we need to give ownership back to the municipalities and let them become masters of resource management again. This has to do with agricultural development within the cities, with the Municipal Agricultural Council. Municipalities once again want to have the tools that allow them to escape from toxic energy.

Next, Mariona Tomàs raises the second question. How do we analyse the impact of networks on citizens? What instruments are there in the networks to be able to evaluate it?

The first to respond is Pablo Fernández, indicating that we need to think about how we evaluate and from where we position ourselves when we do it. The evaluation of a city's international strategy is multiple: incidence, exchange of good practices, capacity for specific topics such as waste management or care strategy. Then, within this care strategy, how is this small part of the entire management internationalised. In other words, according to Fernández, the disaggregated evaluation of the

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impact of the networks cannot be how we evaluate the network as the capacity of the staff it has. Or how we evaluate the network as an ability to mobilize resources. In the case of UCLG, more than 50% of the budget, by statute, must come from the members. This is very different from how we evaluate a network that has a vocation for political advocacy for climate issues in which its ability to generate funds comes from crowdfunding. How we evaluate ourselves is complex and we need to go detail by detail. For example, how do we evaluate the report on inequalities that UCLG presents every three years and its impact both on public policies on inequalities and the impact on the multidimensional poverty discussion that takes place within the framework of the United Nations. These examples show the complexity of trying to generate a metric to evaluate networks. First we need to analyse what we want to evaluate and, on that, how it is evaluated, bearing in mind that not everything has to fit into the logic of the indicators. However, UCLG uses the indicators because many of the projects have funding from the European Union and are subject to evaluations by indicators.

Pablo Fernández explains that in 2016, the concept of "localisation" was brought to the agendas from local government networks and was totally questioned, even grammatically. This word does not exist, it was said. What is localisation and what do global agendas have to do with it? Six years later, in the debates on urban issues at the United Nations, the central theme is location. How do we assess this impact? What are the indicators? The number of conferences members of the networks attend, the reports presented annually to the high-level political forum on localisation? It is very complex to assess its incidence.

Another facet of network evaluation has to do with internal management. Is it a democratic organisation or not? Does it represent the entire group it wants to represent? Are their mechanisms democratic enough to give place and opportunity to all those local entities that want to be part of it and pay their quota? In the case of UCLG there are two evaluations each year and the results are public. Beyond that, it is necessary to debate whether networks can be fully evaluated and how they are being managed to present themselves as a system of networks. How many interactions are there between networks? What agendas are there? What is their duplicity?

Rosa Arlene Maria says that the measure of the impacts varies according to the network. Measuring the impact of a global network like UCLG, which works mainly in political advocacy, is not the same as measuring the impact of a small local network such as a group of Argentine cities for the climate, for example. According to her, it is important to make sure that each network has a well-defined value proposition, that it is well understood what it contributes, that it is able to communicate it properly so that it resonates with the cities and that they can then justify and understand which network to associate with. Which of these offers do they have that suits them best? At the same time, it is necessary to help the networks to position themselves better within the ecosystem and find the best alliances. Each network must define its own mechanisms to measure the impact based on the value it provides. So the first key question is to know what we are measuring. What should we measure? Then, despite knowing the value proposition, there is the issue of indicators, which is how we measure. The most effective are those that are further away from the activity and that are closer to the result: moving from measuring how many activities have been done to how many professionals have been

trained, how many have been able to apply what they learned, and what was able to transform, what ways of doing things were changed based on what was learned. The further away from the activity, the more complex the indicator, but also the more interesting the information it provides.

The second element that Maria highlights is what indicators we measure with. Also, this means you need to measure. It seems obvious, but this means gathering and systematising information, knowing from all the available data which ones provide the most information, designing consultation instruments that are effective, deciding how to process this information. It implies incorporating into the organisation an important element in the form of management. Not all organisations measure, because measuring takes effort, dedication and is an extra burden of work. It also involves important feedback to evaluate the work being done and to be able to move on. It is an exercise that must be efficient. In addition, the network works to strengthen a key actor, which is local governments. If the work is done well, the local government will have better plans, better policies, better action, and it is these actions that will transform the territory. Therefore, the networks do not have the capacity to measure the impact on the ground. Here the unanswered question is: what part of the transformation of the city can be attributed to the network as interlocutor and facilitator of exchanges?

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CIDEU is a network that is being rethought. It has been questioned for a long time how to measure yourself. First, it has defined its value proposition and the differential contribution it makes, which is what costs the most. It is necessary to understand how this value proposition can contribute more and better to the work that local governments do. It has also carried out a very rich self-evaluation exercise with the CIDEU community, with the representatives of the cities that participate actively, representatives of those that do not participate so actively, who also have interesting information to contribute as to why they are not active, with urban strategists, with collaborators, with colleagues from other networks such as UCLG and Metropolis. We have also thought about how CIDEU can be better inserted into the network ecosystem. Work is being done on each pillar of the value proposition to define the most appropriate indicators. What amount and type of connections are made between partners, which cities have played a leading role in events that have allowed them to position themselves there? What percentage of Ibero-American cities has changed the way they plan or manage the city since they are online? How many plans and projects are accelerated because they received very direct knowledge through mentorship, for example? Indicators related to social networks also provide valuable information. There is much room for improvement in how information is sought and interpreted, and how cities communicate and project the importance of networked work through social media.

In recent years, CIDEU has set out to quantitatively improve and systematize information records through activities: how much is the cooperation expenditure, how many cities, how many technicians, how many projects, how many proposals are mobilised. Even more important is the qualitative aspect, which is the most difficult to measure but provides more direct information with feedback direct from the cities. You can generate permanent consultation mechanisms for the spaces themselves without even having to wait for the annual assessment, which is done anyway. You can find out what made them to be in this cooperation space, and what practices and approaches have changed from this exercise. Rosa Arlene Maria concludes that the networks must assume this commitment to be accountable from

the evidence and to measure better. Hopefully, comparisons can be made, not to compare networks, but to be able to better understand the ecosystem based on the evaluations, the impact measurement exercises that each network does. It also highlights that it is an opportunity to improve, incorporate new ideas and new practices in the way the impact of networks is measured.

Dorthe Nilsen says that she agrees with what her peers on the table have said. It is about measuring the impact of the network, where, how and when. At Eurocities, they have developed a very global strategic framework, with short, medium and long-term objectives, and with an annual work program for all activities. They also have indicators that help them see how they are fulfilling these strategic objectives in each of these aspects. The question is what the indicators are, what they show, whether they help to know the degree of fulfilment of the long-term objectives. It should be borne in mind that the long-term goals are configured and agreed with

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all members and are very broad, such as the quality of life for people in the city, cultural diversity, the environment, etc. It is also about city governments being able to address global challenges and global capacity issues. Therefore, indicators that can be quantified are also needed, such as participation in meetings and amendments made. This perspective focused on results makes it possible to establish a link with real development at a local scale, the impact it has. For this, more general data from Eurostat would be needed. The aim of Eurocities is to influence the policies of the European Union and achieve this local impact: to influence regulations and directives at European level that have a real impact in terms of the capacity of cities. It remains a challenge if what interests are more precise indicators of a change in the quality of political leadership, in making cities have a greater impact on the European level.

Claire Roumet adds that we need to stop asking ourselves if cities are important. The cities are ready, they are doing things and now they need the European institutions to commit to it. According to the director of Energy Cities, it is necessary to reverse the position vis-à-vis the institutions: that they not only give them means, but also help them plan this strategic transformation of the territories. In this sense, philanthropic actions have helped in the past to raise the voice of cities, but now they do not know how to adapt to the new scenario, as can be seen with the war in Ukraine. The mayors know where they have to go and what needs to be done to achieve a city with zero emissions, which is one of the European Union programs based on urban transformation strategies with different actors at all levels. European and other funds could finance this regional strategy to transform cities. According to Roumet, this can only be successful if it becomes the first way of financing the city, because currently the European networks are being used as a provision, as entities that provide services to the city, and this must change.

5. Question round

The first question from the audience asks if the indicators are not sometimes used a little abusively, if they are not created to meet a requirement but then are not really used when making decisions. A second question refers to whether it would not be better to deal with the big general issues jointly between different organisations or networks and, in more local issues, to do it individually.

Pablo Fernández answers that there is a mechanism that brings together not all but most of the 37

existing local government networks, called the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments. This group took part in the negotiations to define the new urban agenda as a mechanism to present themselves collectively before the United Nations, to defend the interests of these networks. It is more of an initiative than a network of networks. It is an initiative where the networks are grouped together, where the priorities of each one are discussed and leadership is divided. Before each international negotiation, this working group presents a single voice through a joint statement of all networks, regardless of their participation in the negotiation.

It also refers to the value of network collaboration, the value of dialogue, of continuing to talk. The networks serve to continue giving voice to issues that interest local and government actors where they do not exist. Today, for example, they allow Russian cities to sit at the same table with Ukrainian cities to discuss what is of interest at the local government level, which is nothing more than continuing to provide public services. Regardless of whether they are a political actor and whether they have national interests or not, their mission is to continue talking and collaborating. Another example is when Donald Trump left the Paris Agreement and the cities of the United States continued to have a relevant role in the climate agenda and in the Paris Agreement. Fernández highlights the importance of local multilateralism.

Claire Roumet adds that there are several ways to act together and do more. First of all, to reach common positions, which is what is already being done and is very important to maintain this multilateralism on a global scale and the ties between the different communities. However, in the face of the energy crisis, which affects everyone and affects the international economy, pressure could be exerted on the big companies in Europe, and tell all local authorities to boycott in whole or in part certain energy suppliers, or apply a law that says they will only accept energy from companies that respect human rights around the world. Roumet believes that the potential of networks should be used more to take joint actions and not just to agree on common positions.

Annex. Participants

> PABLO FERNÁNDEZ

CHIEF OF STAFF, UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Pablo Fernández coordinates the institutional relations and alliances of the organization, including the United Nations. Before joining UCLG, he was Head of the Office of International Affairs of the Secretariat of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development of Mexico. In this role, he was responsible for coordinating Mexico's participation in the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, Habitat III, in his capacity as Secretary of Mexico's National Preparatory Committee. He was a Sherpa of the Independent Group of the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of UN-Habitat after the adoption of the New Urban Agenda. He was Technical Secretary of the Assembly of Ministers and Highest Authorities of Housing and Urban Development of Latin America and the Caribbean. Before joining the Ministry, he worked as an advisor to the Mexican Ministry of Social Development on issues related to urban poverty. He also worked as a consultant for the World Fund for the Development of Cities. He has a master's degree in urban design and a bachelor's degree in international relations. He has certificates in urban regeneration (Tokyo Development Learning Center), housing (Korea Human Settlement Research Institute), and regional development (UNAM).

> AGUSTÍ FERNÁNDEZ DE LOSADA

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW AND DIRECTOR OF THE GLOBAL CITIES PROGRAMME AT BARCELONA CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Agustí Fernández de Losada is a Senior Research Fellow and Director of the Global Cities Programme at CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs). He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Law and a Master's Degree in European Studies from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). He also holds a Degree in Public Management from ESADE Business School, (ESADE), and has carried out a research internship at the Freie Universität Berlin (FU). He has worked as a Senior Expert for several UN Agencies, the European Commission national and local governments worldwide, among other public and private organisations. He has previously been the Director of the Barcelona Centre for Territorial Studies; the Director of International Relations at Diputació de Barcelona; the General Coordinator of the European Commission URBAL III Programme Coordination Office), and the General Coordinator of the Observatory of Decentralised Cooperation EU-LATAM. He is the author of political reports and various books, papers and articles on global agendas, public governance, State reforms and modernisation, territorial development, decentralisation and international cooperation. He is a frequent speaker at conferences and seminars, Professor of the Degree in International Relations at Blanquerna - Ramon Llull University and other Universities in Spain, Europe and Latin America.

> LAURA FORASTER I LLORET

SECRETARY GENERAL OF DIPLOCAT

Laura Foraster i Lloret (Barcelona, 1976) holds a degree in Business Administration from the Pompeu Fabra University, a degree in Humanities from the Open University of Catalonia and a master's degree in European Studies from the KU Leuven, in addition to specific training in public diplomacy and electoral observation missions. From 2012 to 2018 she was the executive director of DIPLOCAT and had previously served as chief of cabinet of Josep Huguet when he was Catalan minister of Trade, Tourism and Consumer Affairs (2003-2006) and Catalan minister of Innovation, Universities and Business (2006-2010). Prior to these positions, she worked in Brussels, undertaking various jobs in the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, the Delegation of the Government of the Generalitat of Catalonia to the European Union and the European Parliament. She has been secretary general of DIPLOCAT since 17 December 2018.

> DORTHE NIELSEN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EUROCITIES

Dorthe Nielsen is executive director at Eurocities, the network of more than 200 larger European cities. Working for a greater recognition of and role for cities at EU level in the green, digital, and just transformation, she leads on strategy development and implementation. She coordinates the political positioning of the network to the EU, and sits at the Commission's Fit for Future Platform. Before joining Eurocities in 2011, she worked for the Greater London Authority (EU office) and in Secretariat General of the European Commission. She holds two Master degrees from the College of Europe (BE) in European Politics and from the University of Roskilde in Public Administration as well as a certification in strategic foresight and management.

> ROSA ARLENE MARÍA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, IBERO-AMERICAN CENTER FOR STRATEGIC URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Rosa Arlene María was born in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic. She is an architect with a Masters in Environmental Management and a Postgraduate Planning Urban and Municipal Management from the Dominican Republic's Pontifical Catholic University Madre y Maestra. She especializes in Urban Strategic Thinking and holds a diploma in Climate Change Adaptation from the Ibero-American Center for Urban Strategic Development. She worked as the Technical Manager of the Dominican Federation of Municipalities –FEDOMU in her home country. She was de director of Santiago de los Caballeros' Strategic Plan and a Project coordinator at the Pontifical Catholic University Madre Maestra's Center for Urban and Regional Studies, from which she coordinated the definition of urban development policy lines for 17 Dominican cities. She has contributed to scores of publications and served as a panelist in national and international events. Since 2019, she has been the executive director of CIDEU, a network of cities and Ibero-American entities that drive urban strategic planning processes to achieve sustainable urban development.

> CLAIRE ROUMET

ENERGY CITIES

Responsible for strategic partnership and overall coordination at Energy cities, the European association of cities in energy transition. They seek for a radical transformation of the energy systems and policies, giving our cities and citizens the power to shape a decentralised and renewable energy future. They believe that the energy transition is not just about clean energy or great technologies: It is about a wise use of resources while strengthening local participation and well-being in a democratic Europe. Energy Cities is a community of 1,000 local pioneers located in 30 countries. We trigger a trustful dialogue between city leaders and EU & national institutions to accelerate the energy transition in Europe. I joined the team of Energy cities 5 years ago as Director after a decade as Secretary General of Housing Europe, the Federation of social housing providers. With the team, I have transformed the organisation towards a renewed horizontal governance where we share responsabilities and leadership. I graduated in economics and did a post-graduate in European policies in Strasbourg after a year of econometrics in Mainz, Germany.

> MARIONA TOMÀS

LECTURER IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA

Moderator and speaker

Mariona Tomàs is Associate Professor of Political Science, member of the Research Group in Local Studies (GREL) at the University of Barcelona. Her research focuses on metropolitan governance, urban policies and local government. She is an expert on metropolitan reforms in Montreal, and she has received awards from the Governor General of Canada and the Parliament of Quebec. In 2017, she published a book on the metropolitan thought of Pasqual Maragall. She has studied citizen participation in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area and is now leading a comparative project on metropolitan governance in Spain. She is a member of the Advisory Board of CIDOB's Global Cities Programme and commissioner of the multilevel metropolis of the Barcelona Metropolitan Strategic Plan.
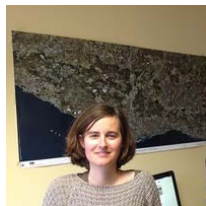
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- Lleida Provincial Council
- General Council of Aran
- Catalan Association of Municipalities and Counties (ACM)
- Federation of Municipalities of Catalonia (FMC)

≫ Entities of the business sector

- General Council of the Official Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Navigation of Catalonia
- Entrepreneurs association Foment del Treball Nacional
- Association of Micro-, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises of Catalonia (PIMEC)

- Confederation of Cooperatives of Catalonia
- Multi-Sector Business Association (AMEC)
- Private Foundation of Entrepreneurs (FemCAT)

≫ Entities of the social, trade union and sports sector

- The Group of Entities of the Voluntary Sector of Catalonia
- Trade union Unió General de Treballadors de Catalunya (UGT)

- Trade union Comissions Obreres de Catalunya (CCOO)
- Football Club Barcelona

≫ Universities, business schools and academic institutions

- University of Barcelona (UB)
- Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)
- Technical University of Catalonia (UPC)
- Pompeu Fabra University (UPF)
- University of Lleida (UdL)
- University of Girona (UdG)
- Rovira i Virgili University (URV)
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