



**International conference**

**“Building metropolitan governance  
in the Mediterranean region”**

**12th and 13th December, Barcelona**



**REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE**

MedCities, together with the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) and European Metropolitan Authorities initiative (EMA), launched a political debate on the processes of metropolitan management and intermunicipal cooperation that are currently underway in the Mediterranean region. This event took place on 12 and 13 December 2023 in Barcelona. 47 participants, including 11 Mediterranean cities or metropolitan areas, attended the in-person conference, which was held on the first day.

The conference aimed to discuss lessons learnt and propose models and tools to promote metropolitan solutions to urban development challenges faced by Mediterranean cities.

The governance of cities and metropolitan areas is a fundamental question of who manages the relation of materials, energy and information in cities; who has the capacity and the powers to manage the major economic, social and climatic activities and the subsequent impacts to which cities and towns are subject; and who has the ability to face these challenges. Moreover, the way those activities relate cities and towns that are close to one another beyond local institutions and municipal borders is a key aspect. Intermunicipal cooperation is not only about achieving economies of scale, but rather on identifying the most adequate level of intervention in order to assure better quality of services and higher capacity to address urban challenges.

The North Mediterranean functional urban areas have developed governance systems and have shown a greater capacity to face their challenges under the principles of subsidiarity. On the other hand, on the south part, the role of local administrations is minor or completely subordinated to the structures of highly centralized state organizations. In most countries, States are predominant in urban planning and management. In cases where these powers have been transferred to local authorities, the financing capacity to carry out such tasks is still very limited. Also, the tools for the coordination of territorial and sectoral public policies that involve all local actors are still very centralized. The objective of this international conference was to enrich the analysis of the urban system challenges in the Mediterranean in order to contribute to a taxonomy of Mediterranean metropolises that is relevant to the region and to help bridge the gap in terms of intermunicipal cooperation.

## Opening session

Ms. Elisenda Alamany, Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) Vice-president for International and Digital Metropolis, opened the conference. She introduced first the metropolis of Barcelona, made of 36 municipalities, representing a total of 3.6 million inhabitants. The metropolis has competencies in transport, mobility, waste management, water supply, housing etc. She stated that **the metropolitan approach was a better way to answer the climate, energy and social challenges that are being experienced, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. She emphasized on the need to better meet the climate challenges and concluded her speech referring to the situation in the Gaza Strip. Ms. Alamany condemned the violence happening there and reminded that violence was one of the main obstacles to the development of societies. Finally, she briefly mentioned MedCities, the context in which it was created and passed the floor to its Secretary General.

Mr. Josep Canals Molina, Secretary General of MedCities, introduced the association he was working for, underlining that the metropolitan vision was at the core of the organisation. MedCities aims at improving capacities and capabilities of its members in various themes, including waste management, mobility, etc. On the metropolitan issue, he claimed it was important for smaller municipalities to move on and not be marginalised and for the metropolis to embrace them. He underlined that the institutionalisation of metropolitan areas is an

exception in the region. Mr. Canals detailed some projects that MedCities was involved in, such as A'SIMA Tunis dealing with the strategic planning of Tunis and waste management with a metropolitan vision or another one implemented in Sfax about sustainable mobility, involving municipalities with a metropolitan scope.

Beyond sharing resources and knowledge transfer, he highlighted that **metropolisation is not only a technical issue, but also a political issue**. It is most important to take into account the small municipalities not usually considered in the planning of these policies, in line with a message of leaving no one behind. This is good to the central city as it returns in a good way.

Ambassador Mr. Erdal Sabri Ergen, Deputy Secretary General in charge of Transport & Urban Development of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), underlined climate change challenges too, in particular the critical rise in temperatures in the Mediterranean, which is 20% faster than the rest of the world, and climate change effects. He reminded that UfM members are States but the territorial dimension represented by cities and metropolitan areas is of greater importance for implementing strategies in the Mediterranean. **The common objectives are very extensive but climate change is one of the most important**. He particularly referred to mitigation and adaptation processes. Ambassador Sabri Ergen chaired the following session.

## Political debate on Metropolitan governance in the Mediterranean

In opening the first panel, Ambassador Sabri Ergen highlighted that a city goes beyond administrative boundaries. There are urban continuums representing challenges and topics such as public transport, urban planning and it is necessary to think how they are addressed at the metropolitan level.

Ms. Elisenda Alamany, stressed the importance of making citizens aware of what is being done. Today when citizens take the bus or open the tap, they enjoy metropolitan policies. The usefulness of metropolitan reality should be promoted, there should be a government to enable this cohesion.

She also spoke about the need to reach a balance between big cities and small cities that do not have resources: it is fundamental to be supportive in resources and skills through inter-municipal solidarity.

Ms. Alamany illustrated the bottom-up approach in the history of AMB and how the AMB was institutionalised: it responded to the needs of the population by creating agencies on certain topics and at a certain point, they created a metropolitan institution to provide an answer to those needs.

In the building process of this young institution, it is necessary to think how to:

- Let citizens know why we need an institution that meets their needs;
- Work for the institutionalisation - e.g. port, airport, etc.

**The metropolis is a level of governance that needs to be explained both inwards and outwards - inwards for the citizens to understand the meaning of metropolitan policies, outwards for those who want to support the metropolisation process.**

She also claimed that metropolisation is key for the 2030 EU agenda. To reach relevant SDGs, the elected mayors need to be represented under a leadership.

Ms. Alamany informed AMB was getting involved to raise awareness on metropolisation, and support it through:

- international diplomacy through MedCities/European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA), which allows AMB to align the strategy in the Mediterranean with the institutions with which it participates and show that the level of the metropolis is pertinent to push for solidarity policy;

- the European Parliament with regards to the common objective to raise awareness on the fact that the 2030 agenda requires local voices and that without cities and metropolises, global goals cannot be met, and this must be accompanied by resources; UN Habitat already recognized that metropolises are a level of governance in which investment must be made. Sectoral management (water, climate, etc.) needs cities and Barcelona wants to lead and be at the forefront, but resources are needed to provide these solutions to the public.

Ms. Maria Karagianni, Deputy Mayor of Thessaloniki (Greece) and Chair of the Board of the Major Development Agency Thessaloniki S.A., introduced the case of her city. Local authority governance in Greece consists of two main levels: municipalities and regions. The City of Thessaloniki and the municipalities that make up the metropolitan area are part of the Region of Central Macedonia. There is no metropolitan governance system operating between the municipality and the regional level.

This approach to governance results in the following challenges:

1. Lack of economic independence of municipalities;
2. Complicated, disjointed and conflicting jurisdictional boundaries across municipalities, regional authorities and central government on issues like mobility, flood prevention, and risk management;
3. The management of European funds stops at the regional level.

The ability of cities to attract and manage urban investments is limited because of the current legislative framework and the human capacity of the administrations of the cities.

Currently, the cities are heavily dependent on European funding for new urban projects. To enhance their resilience, the cities must diversify their funding sources and leverage new partnerships to access private investments that produces a return on investment.

To tackle these challenges, Thessaloniki and its neighbouring municipalities need to implement an effective, coordinated plan that incorporates all institutions that are relevant at the metropolitan level.

Therefore, MDAT SA, operating as an organization for local development constituting its local government shareholders, 11 municipalities of the greater metropolitan urban district of Thessaloniki, as well as specific local organizations, supports the local government of the wider metropolitan urban area of Thessaloniki.

MDAT SA contributes in **providing management and technical support to its local government shareholders for development planning and preparation, maturation, promotion in financial means and implementation supervision of municipal projects**, projects with significant inter- and supra-municipal scale and cooperation plans, in collaboration with other development bodies of the local government and the public and social sector.

Specifically concerning the issue of energy efficiency, and contributing in climate change mitigation and adaptation, MDAT can indicate its activities on supporting the municipality of Thessaloniki to develop its Climate City Contract towards the 2030 climate neutrality ambition, as part of the EU Mission Cities, and disseminate good practices for their further adoption on behalf of the other municipalities at the greater metropolitan urban district of Thessaloniki and even beyond.

In the field of housing, MDAT has established the Social Rental Agency Thessaloniki, within its Social Resilience and Inclusion Department, in charge of designing social and affordable housing strategy on behalf of the municipalities, aiming at creating social and affordable housing stock using municipal, public and private stock, to focus on complementary interventions.

Ms. Anthi Tsakiropoulou, Mobility expert transport engineer at the Major Development Agency Thessaloniki, gave an overview of projects of metropolitan relevance:

- **REMEDI**O project: the redesign and upgrade of a major urban axis running along the municipalities of Thessaloniki and Kalamaria. Within a high-participatory approach, the redesign proposal was developed. MDAT applied to the Central Macedonia Regional



Operational Programme for the project's further maturation, promotion in financial means and implementation.

- Project of converting Pavlos Melas former military campus to an emblematic green metropolitan park. MDAT was highly involved in implementing the public consultation and finalization of the strategy, implementing the feasibility study and funding leverage actions. The programme of interventions with metropolitan impact is running providing basic infrastructure, greening, accessibility and safety and attributing public space to common use.
- More recently, MDAT has performed the relevant actions to guide the MoU signing procedure amongst three municipalities, Thessaloniki, Neapoli – Sykies and Panorama – Chortiatis for sustainable forest management in reducing vulnerability to climate change, improving greening and strengthening fire protection in Seich Sou Forest.

Subsequently, Mr. Omar Oulad Ben Hammam, Municipal Councillor of Tangier (Morocco), presented the challenges of Tangier. The area faces a challenge of migration and integration, which poses a threat to managing cultural diversity, and resulting in a fight against trafficking. He also mentioned issues linked to climate change after years of indifference, resulting in energy transition initiatives, and advocated for further cooperation on this topic. He insisted on the fact that the **future depends on participatory governance**, an open community as a model for searching for innovative solutions. Participation is key to work on the coordination of local policies especially on social justice, promote good quality of life as well as the development of intelligent and smart cities. Tangier became a metropolitan city thanks to its geographical location but also thanks to the national strategy and major development projects. This has helped it take metropolitan action on a few topics such as irrigation of green spaces by used water, wind power, creation of renewable energy orientation centre for citizens and electric transport.

The last case was the one of Mersin (Turkey), explained by Mr Haşim Tuluk, Member of Mersin Municipal City Assembly. He went through the challenges faced by having a port in the city with urbanisation near the coast. He also pointed up the natural risks from earthquake regions and taking active action in building an ecosystem-based approach to promote marine protection and coastal management.

Among the challenges, he mentioned heavy national and international migrations, especially linked to the Syrian geopolitical situation, and city population expansion that were putting pressure on the capacity to provide public services, in particular during summer.

He informed the meeting about the focus on enabling transport to connect Europe and Asia through railway from China to Mersin, as well as positioning Mersin as a key port with the Mersin Free Zone: first free trade zone established in Turkey. This illustrates the **working relationship between the city and the port**. This represents a very big trade activity, Mersin being one of the 100 biggest ports for containers.

In the ensuing debate on **multilevel cooperation**, the importance of offering citizens the means they need in the smaller municipalities that surround the large cities was highlighted. There is a halo effect of the large urban centre, advancing from rural to urban with adapted models.

The panel also advocated for a flexible approach that understands the regional context, subsidiaries with solutions at the local level and balances the local autonomy with centralised power so that citizens can keep their quality of life in the city while moving towards a metropolis. It also agreed on the fact that what happens at government level influences cities and what happens in cities needs to influence the national policies for a balanced approach. In addition, the challenges to be addressed are common: climate change, resource efficiency, environmental and public health issues, etc. The way to address these is through:

- Inclusive dialogue and collaboration between different stakeholders and different levels of governance;

- Coordinated effort among metropolitan areas with adaptive and flexible policies to the evolving challenges;
- Investing in the capacity building of local authorities and leveraging technology;
- Aligning governmental strategies with SDGs by taking action on the local level;
- Tailoring governance approaches to the specific needs of the country and use metropolisation as a mechanism to address disputes that might arise;
- Cohesion of the public services provided by striking the balance between local, regional and national levels in harmony.

## Institutionalising the metropolitan cooperation in the Mediterranean

Ms. Marianne Martin, Director of the Expertise and Training Center of AVITEM, chaired the following panel on institutionalising metropolitan cooperation in the Mediterranean. She introduced this panel by reminding that metropolises are ambivalent territories, both creating major problems and carrying potential in the face of the different crises. On the one hand, these are areas of high population concentration, and therefore very competitive. This is illustrated by the difficulties of access to housing and the strong social segmentation of metropolises. In addition, metropolises are heavy consumers of resources, particularly soil, reducing agricultural areas and natural spaces, which are nevertheless essential to the resilience of territories. Metropolises are also the areas that emit the most CO<sub>2</sub>, because they concentrate polluting industries and carbon-intensive mobility. On the other hand, if metropolises are also places of concentration of human capital and financial resources. It is undoubtedly in the metropolises that a large part of the solutions to the crises will be invented. They hold most of this economy that must be changed as part of the ecological transition, to move towards a more frugal, more territorialized and more circular model.

Furthermore, if we question the relevance of the metropolis as a scale of governance, it appears that this large territorial scale makes it possible to create links of solidarity and synergies between very diverse territorial situations. A metropolis is made up of both rural villages and large towns, spaces where land is available to produce agricultural resources or even renewable energy; but also spaces that have high energy and power needs. **The metropolitan scale makes it possible to regulate relationships between territorial situations and to find a balance between protected natural areas, housing areas, industrial areas.** The metropolitan scale makes it possible to achieve equalization and establish territorial solidarity between rich neighbourhoods and precarious housing areas. The interest of the metropolitan government scale is also to be commensurate with natural infrastructures, such as watersheds for water management and flood risk prevention for example, thus allowing better management, and environmental protection.

Finally, economies of scale and financial equalization are often put forward to promote the management of urban services on a large inter-municipal scale, concerning transport, waste, or even housing. Thus, metropolises appear to have strategic skills to act against climate change and socio-territorial inequalities.

Therefore, a major question emerges: what form of governance in metropolitan areas to address these issues?

The panel acknowledged the particular relevance of this question for the Mediterranean where metropolisation around a few large cities is a structuring event for the whole basin.

To answer this fundamental question, Mr. Gratián Mihăilescu, UrbanizeHub founder, introduced, on the basis of his experience and studies, the **4 main types of metropolitan governance found in the Mediterranean**, namely:

- Metropolitan government: created by law, process smoother, resources;
- Sector-based cooperation: transport, waste, etc.;

- Metropolitan municipality: a strong city that produces the metropolitan development;
- Association or unions of cooperation: collaboration between different municipalities.

He underlined the benefit of building metropolitan areas in the EU, namely to be able to unlock funds as well as the importance of rural-urban connections as a way to strategically develop the territory by reducing disparities.

Mr. Ramon Torra i Xicoy, General Manager of Barcelona Metropolitan Area, introduced the context of AMB as a new metropolitan entity, created 13 years ago, but with a very old history: in the Middle-Age, Barcelona ensured access and security to trade, city-port relationships with the towns on its side. From the 1960s, services began to be integrated (urban planning, transport, waste and water treatment). The Metropolitan Urban Planning Plan dates from 1967 and integrates these elements, which end up being the metropolitan services.

The main features offered are:

- Urban planning/territory: drafting of the New Metropolitan Urban Planning Plan;
- Integration of infrastructures (cohesion of the territory to deal with the dichotomy between centre and periphery);
- Public space: create public space with great urban quality (democratic public space) that can configure metropolitan spaces and big city public space everywhere. Maintenance of public space includes natural spaces: rivers, mountains, etc.
- Housing policies must be metropolitan;
- Integral water cycle (especially in this moment of emergency of drought). The focus is on reducing consumption (around 100m<sup>2</sup>/habitant/day), water regeneration as a central policy, and the creation of new infrastructures (desalination: + 30% of the water we consume);
- Waste: the metropolis produces waste and encourages solidarity in the decentralisation of infrastructures from Barcelona to other municipalities;
- Mobility as an integral service and central element for the decarbonisation of transport public and territory (e.g. electrification);
- Social cohesion: through supporting municipal policies;
- Economic development of the territory;
- Water management, housing, transport, public and green spaces, waste management are in AMB jurisdiction, but only offering support on social policies and economic development without authority.

Mr. Torra i Xicoy highlighted the **need to focus on exchange, that is to say to learn from other territories with which the AMB shares challenges** either in the nearby region (Mediterranean) or with other metropolises (EMA) or in direct cooperation with other metropolises.

He recommended metropolitan policies to be reached through a wide consensus so everyone can feel comfortable in an institution like this. He also advocated for a flexible form to respond to the different realities and adapt to new way of working together.

He mentioned the metropolitan cooperation to ensure the good quality of transport to cover the whole territory on an egalitarian basis as well as this type of cooperation with water. He also insisted on the need to focus on social cohesion. The metropolitan areas have tools for this: equity in the quality of services and elements of territorial quality. It is important for the territory to have a social cohesion.

The Union of Marmara Municipalities (Türkiye) was then introduced by its Secretary General, Mr. Cemil Arslan. It was created in 1975, with the main paradigm that unless they give power to local governments and support the institution capacity, they cannot protect themselves against central government. The Union of Marmara president is not directly elected, the president is elected by member cities. There is a council and there is an executive body (coming from different parties). Membership is voluntary, not compulsory, but 92% of municipalities of the region form part of this.

Regarding the challenges of the area, the Marmara Sea is surrounded by big industrial areas and facing pollution challenges. **Municipalities realised that cooperation is needed to deal with environmental concerns.** Unless municipalities come together and collaborate, this cannot be tackled.

Mr. Arslan added that local democracy and diplomacy are at the frontline of Marmara Union of Municipalities as they take a holistic approach in finding solutions, providing coordination between municipalities and with stakeholders (universities + CSOs + private sector).

Ms. Clémentine Papa, Director of International Relations of Montpellier Métropole, introduced the case of Montpellier Métropole (France). This entity was recently created by law, in the context of France having a very centralised tradition. There was no institutionalized cooperation between cities, only informal ones. This institutionalisation and new level of governance started very recently, in 1992. In Montpellier, there was a community of agglomerations cooperating on transport. Then the French State started to give more and more power to cities. Agglomerations were given more competences, but not by law, it was on a voluntary basis from the municipalities.

The law identified automatically metropolises as areas of more than 400.000 people, but Montpellier had slightly fewer inhabitants. Consequently, there was a lobbying action to give Montpellier this status. The transfer of competences planned by law includes waste, water, city planning, risk management, transport, public space management and roads management. This is the core of the powers belonging to cities. The cities voluntarily transferred these powers to the Metropolitan government.

The majority in Montpellier and Brest had qualified representation and had to get the metropolitan status by convincing their municipalities to come and build the metropolitan area. Several factors helped in getting municipalities on board to voluntarily unite, including:

- **A trust pact with the cities to bring together the municipalities with the same power and voice in decision-making;**
- Creation of a trust fund: what do you need, how can we be useful? The legitimacy of metropolis is taken from the legitimacy of the municipalities;
- All cities have the same vote and mayors have the same powers as the executive board;
- The process of legitimation is pushed based on trust and community, but only anchored in the law.

Amman (Jordan) metropolisation context was explained by Ms. Rama El Ezzi, Representative of Amman Greater Municipality. The emergence of the Amman metropolitan entity took place in the **context of a rapid urban growth** and issues with transportation (traffic and lack of sustainable public transport), waste management, water scarcity, affordable housing for the rapidly growing population and economic sustainability.

The Mayor of Amman is not elected, but appointed by the Prime Minister and councils have both elected representative experts and government officials to address the challenges. The responsibilities include planning, management of parks, road infrastructure, collections and treatment of waste, economic development. Greater Amman has a budget of approximately 7 million dollars, mainly coming from property taxes and central government grants from foreign partners. It has no authority over education, energy, public security and water.

After this first round of presentations, Ms. Martin asked her panel what were their recommendations for metropolitan governance?

Mr. Torra i Xicoy from AMB underlined that metropolitan policies must be a policy of broad consensus to keep local autonomy because of the **proximity to the citizen and the territory.** The key challenges include subjects of variable geometry, namely:

- The flexibility of the institution to give answers as not all needs are shared;
- Territorial scope changes (in terms of mobility for instance, some big cities of the metropolitan areas are well connected between them whereas the city and some neighbouring areas are poorly connected);



- Water problem/social cohesion and housing: new forms of institutional cooperation are needed to respond;
- Urban solidarity to ensure territorial balance;
- Coexistence: diversity of cultures and origins, can generate coexistence problems, existing racism and also integrate diversity to ensure social inclusion. This also deals with the feeling of security;

Mr. Arslan emphasized on the **need for cooperation to solve problems** as the strategic/regional plan for Marmara region was created by the union with municipalities and a dedicated scientific committee that was created to support the action plan.

UrbanizeHub reminded the importance of **diversifying funding sources and looking for external funding** for specific implementation of metropolitan projects, with private money being a key source.

## Metropolitan challenges: enhancing intermunicipal cooperation and access to funding

Mr. Oriol Barba Suñol, Director of MedCités, opened the 2<sup>nd</sup> panel of the session dealing with metropolitan challenges, and welcome the different speakers.

The first speaker of this panel, Mr. Amine Benaissa, Representative of AVITEM, started by pointing out that there is a GDP gap between the North and South of the Mediterranean and that the Mediterranean area is getting poorer.

As the city will have to live with its periphery and neighbourhoods, it is important to understand how to lead the city that will enlarge? Within debates between the city centre and periphery, it is inevitable to discuss about **territorialisation**. One of the examples of this expansion is Casablanca with Casa Transport that helps shaping the metropolitan area. In Algiers, there is a consensus and governance with light structure to externalise and to work with the neighbouring area. In Tunis, the set up of the district of the Greater Tunis is a pioneer. He also mentioned Tirana that is leading the metropolisation. The organization of the city is therefore an essential issue.

Mr. Antoni Novel, the Director of General Services at AMB, illustrated the **funding structure and challenges of AMB**:

- AMB is the third biggest institution in Catalonia, with a financing amounting to 1.200 million euros, which is divided as follows: 35% for mobility and transport, 26.5% for water & waste, 23% for investment in public space, housing, urban planning etc.
- The money is coming from citizens through one main contribution from public bodies over 50% (municipalities which make up the AMB), the regional government, the Spanish State and the European Union.
- Regarding the financing of transport: it has increased a lot in the past years. Electric vehicles or buses using hydrogen are much more expensive than classic ones and the adaptation to such new technologies is also expensive. Political decisions to apply exceptions and bonuses for the use of transport have resulted in a decrease in the income.
- Investment plan: the financing of transport causes problems to be able to approve the plan of investments;
- Metropolitan tax (tax that is applied on the IBI): it is 50M euros, there have been bonuses but they do not have regulatory capacity on the tax.
- Concept of indebtedness: AMB is at the limit of its borrowing capacity.
- Public-private collaboration: it is about incorporating private capital into the actions carried out by AMB. For instance, the initiative Habitatge Metropolis Barcelona, which is about protected rental housing. Town councils have land but they don't have money

to execute these investments. Therefore, the private sector makes the investment and receives the proceeds.

After this, Ms. Nazik Semlali, Council Member of Agadir Municipality, took the floor. The Greater Agadir has 9 municipalities and the transport entity is managed by private law, more flexible than private entities. There is a new body for the management and control for restructuring the transport agency, in line with national transport policy. Before 2010, bus transport was handled by municipal management. Agadir Mobilité (SDL SA) had the objective to deal with all the issues related to transport.

Regarding the competences of SDL SA, it is responsible for the plan of urban mobility plan for the Greater Agadir, realization of studies linked to mobility, search of fundings and mobilisation of funding partners. SDL SA has undertaken the construction of the first BRT line, studies for future bus and BHLS operating contracts, studies of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan. Regarding the financing, the studies and implementation are partially done by the State but the operating costs are not financed by the State or municipalities, which poses funding problems.

Mr. Martin Gullón, Director of Water Cycle Department at AMB, mentioned the drought context in Barcelona and Catalonia, as this **drought has been going on for 3 years** and is the harshest the area has ever had. In the last drought, the dams were at 15% of their water capacity. What has changed with this one is that the area used desalinated water and regenerated water (33% from desalination and 25% regenerated water). AMB is doing this through a mixed capital - a private part together with AMB that has 55%. This issue is usually in the hands of municipalities and in AMB, this is in the hands of the metropolitan area by law. The Catalan water agency tells the AMB how much they can consume. The area is currently in a pre-emergency state going towards emergency, with a total of 200L per inhabitant per day that include everything (the average is 170L). In order to reduce the water pressure it is important to update water rates.

Mr. Jean-Charles Lardic, Deputy to the General Director of Services of the City of Marseille (France) and Director of Strategy, introduced the challenges of the metropolisation of Aix-Marseille Provence metropolis. The metropolis was created by law but some mandates were not addressed: development of public transport, economic attractiveness, strengthening of territorial solidarity.

There is a loss of efficiency: small cities benefited from economies of scale on certain services but Marseille did not due to different political bodies and higher administrative complexity which damages the flexibility of public service.

Also, there are **issues at the political level**: there are now 2 people responsible, one at the metropolitan level and one at the city level, to take decisions. This has led to political problems where the metropolis hasn't created complementary services, thus generating barriers to political policies. A politician from another territory manages the problems of a territory for which he/she is not responsible. All of territorial governance needs to synergize action between the public and policy with the vision of the territory. It is essential to move away from the sectoral approach to have a systemic vision, with strong participation of the population and innovation actors.

In the following debate around the challenges of metropolisation, the panel underlined that metropolises can be **set up with the same law, but with a very different experience** such as in France. Montpellier has created a metropolis gathering the municipalities whereas in Marseille, the process has been different:

- The human dimension has further been taken into account in Montpellier with increased confidence between the different entities.
- Different administration: Montpellier worked on gaps, missing links and the reality of different political parties and geography.

- In Montpellier it was a voluntary process, whereas in Marseille it was automatic. Montpellier and Marseille have the same challenges with a big central city and then many smaller cities. For Montpellier, both administrations (municipality of Montpellier and metropolis) were mutualised with different agents and some had to work on metropolitan areas.
- In Montpellier, the process was more positive with the municipalities as small ones can now have ambitious policies on different topics whereas in the past they had to face challenges by themselves and now they get resources automatically. Nevertheless, they also had to give up some sovereignty and local interest for the metropolitan one, not only individual local interest but also a collective interest (no NIMBY as the metropolis legitimates the creation of larger areas).

Regarding Barcelona and its metropolitan area, its representatives were asked how have the 36 municipalities of AMB achieved to **move from the municipal interest to the metropolitan interest**? This was achieved through several elements:

- IBI: a municipal tax, AMB receives a percentage;
- The collection of municipal taxes by the State: AMB receives a part (9%) of these taxes automatically;
- AMB makes the investments on behalf of the councils (the investment that must be financed by the town halls).

## Improving coordination and collaboration through multilevel governance and networking

Ms. Carlota Roses, Head of International Relations at AMB, opened the third and last panel.

After she introduced the speakers, Mr. Agustí Fernandez de Losada, Director of the Global Cities Programme at CIDOB highlighted that decentralisation was happening worldwide, in the Mediterranean as well, but it recently experienced a setback with a return to a certain extent to **centralisation**. In Tunis, the most visible example, decentralisation was one of the cornerstones post-revolution with the Constitution and the recent reform removing the municipal councils is bad news.

Similar processes have happened or are happening in Europe. National governments managing recovery budgets have produced a centralisation of design and implementation processes. With the acceleration of the Covid pandemic and geopolitical tensions - rise of populism, authoritarianism - the nation state is back, which is bad news for solutions and policies to address the challenges.

Cities are key instruments for democracy and this centralisation is a setback. There is a difficulty to address to development banks, difficulty to cooperate, and inefficient multi-level governance.

There is a multi-level public cooperation between the different tiers of governments, between peers (metropolitan areas), urban-rural relations, inter-municipal cooperation, and metropolitan coordination. As a consequence, there is a difficulty to leverage metropolitan resources.

As part of the solutions, several things can be mentioned including political will and commitment, citizens' will via citizen engagement and to show the benefits of metropolitan coordination in urban agglomeration. Knowledge and research need to be linked to the policy and we need pressure by the international community. Mr. Fernandez de Losada concluded his presentation emphasizing on alliances with national governments to strengthen capacities and on the importance to define inclusive and effective systems for metropolitan stakeholders

In the following presentation, Mr. Oriol Illa, Director of International Relations and Digital Metropolis at AMB, underlined the importance to create spaces of reflection such as this one. It is important to gather metropolitan mayors to discuss metropolitan challenges. There are loads of networks for cities but it is newer for metropolitan realities. There is a lobby at the European Union level for metropolisation as there are different models and **no clear concept of metropolisation in the EU**. This is a problem because these entities cannot explain what they are.

Metropolis and the city are also political actors but there is no clear recognition yet. It is in the EU Agenda and the General Assembly of UN Habitat recognised the need for metropolitan areas. In the global agendas, there is an incipient recognition. The role of metropolises is connected with sustainable urban development, economic and social cohesions (what sectors the metropolises are on top of the ranking? Not every territory can be better performing in all economic sectors).

Mr. Illa underlined the key role of EMA in European institutions. EMA is a forum for leading cities and bring dialogue for metropolitan areas. There is no fixed structure or board or budget, but a flexible way to meet (once a year) with the mayors to talk about all common topics.

Regarding the New Green Deal and the digital transition, he claimed the EU did not want to lag behind and that these two strategies are very much connected with metropolitan reality because they are the level in which these strategies are implemented. Metropolitan dimension can help assure the main objectives of the EU agendas.

As for the SDGs, the challenges are shared by all and all big challenges happen at urban and metropolitan dimensions, the best way to act is the coordinated way e.g. transport, water, waste, etc. It is important to identify the issues where metropolitan scale is most needed.

He also mentioned that there is one important issue in governance: the exchange between regions and cities. The governance of the challenges posed by global agendas - pollution and mobility e.g. - is so complex that it should not only be solved in the metropolis. For instance, there is a Catalan water agency as regional investment, same for waste, housing consortium and ATM transport authority - all these have a regional scope that need regional funding. When it comes to execution and implementation, the metropolis plays a key role to cooperate.

Mr. Xavier Bernard-Sans, Secretary General at Euroregion Pyrenées Mediterranean, insisted on the role of the Euroregion which is to showcase the role of regional networks. The objective is to pool efforts, to make the State understand the interest in delegating (to regions, metropolises, municipalities, etc.) so they can better work together on a European scale. MedCoopAlliance is an interesting tool.

Europe is focusing on cities, however bigger emphasis needs to be given to rural territories. The hinterland is particularly relevant on an economical level.

The challenges (e.g. environmental, economic, social) pass through cities and regions. The challenge of the future is governance in which decentralisation is accompanied by resources. Europe needs to take into account the Mediterranean region as a priority, it is necessary that cities mobilise for this. All capitals need their hinterland to have economic power and carry on policies.

Mr Bernard-Sans emphasized on the need to move forward together in the Mediterranean. **Regions are not only competitors, they can be allies. If regions move forward, then metropolitan areas also progress and push back on recentralisation.**

Mr. Josep Canals Molina concluded this first round of interventions by stating it was fundamental to break the silos, the watertight compartments. Cities that have the capacity to do international politics should do it through networks, join efforts and have more impact. International policy cannot be done on one's own but through efforts to achieve efficiency through a network.

With the issue of climate change, **networks can act as accelerators of change and of implementation, waiting for final push, critical mass, or recognition and risk sharing for experiments.** Data compilation is one instrument, but sometimes data gathering has been used by technocrats to avoid action, there is enough evidence to mobilise collective waste,



water, transport. Mr. Canals raised the attention of the meeting on the lack of time. Gathering data to see how efficient metropolises could be continued however he insisted on the fact that without local authorities that is impossible and that they were late on SDGs.

Regarding the need to cover citizens' needs, he stated knowledge pooling works, and network help. A key example is Naples, which is part of MedCités with both a metropolitan vision and a city vision. There is no point making urban planning at the city level if there is a metropolitan reality, it is essential when there is a conurbation.

As for knowledge pooling, it is key. Mr. Canals Molina offered MedCités for policies implemented to act as an agent in the field of environmental policies.

Regarding political cohesion, States don't have the flexibility of municipalities. When MedCités meets with mayors to gather the needs of citizens, this leads to regional political cohesion, that is local diplomacy. This is necessary to make the most of it, especially when seeing military aggressions.

Concerning territorial governance, there are exchanges between regions and cities/metropolises. For instance, the solution to the pollution issue in Barcelona cannot be found solely and exclusively in the metropolitan area. This is followed by actors who participate and intervene at different territorial scales, but the role of AMB is crucial, and ways to work together should be explored.

The networks are agents of knowledge transfer and regional cohesion. Local authorities have room for manoeuvre, to defend common goals.

**The political message to remember is that we're all different and we don't compete, we cooperate.**

In the final debate, the representative of the Euroregion shared the challenges that were faced by his entity. When working with the regions or at the international level, the problems are usually on the borders but with the Basque country they share challenges and collaborate, all these go beyond borders. France and Germany have a tradition of cooperation because the States delegated some competences to regions.

MedCités, as a network, is offering its services to its members. On the subject where multilevel governance was easier to establish, the representative of MedCités informed about surveys among members to see what they would like to learn from other members and share knowledge on. He detailed the different working groups that were set including waste and mobility.

Different municipalities have different contexts, but how to work on and with different levels (e.g. climate change) requires all levels pooling together, from the European to the local levels. For any of these levels there will be a lot of actors involved and defining mechanisms for cooperation, meeting points, meeting spaces and clear strategies.

There are positive examples of cooperation:

- Tangier has the obligation to cooperate and coordinate in many cases, because the budget for the commune of Tangier is not enough for many projects. The mega project of the metropolis could not have happened if it hadn't been funded for 40% by the municipality of Tangier, and the State etc.
- Citizens' participation and citizens' will is what can push. **There will be space for cooperation as long as there is a political will and demand from citizens.**

As sometimes there are conflicts between entities cooperating, the conference subsequently focused on how to ensure smooth collaboration and key ways to enable success as well as the specific roles and competences to ensure a successful implementation. Among others, they highlighted:

- The need to think per project and territory, have a main goal and partners to ensure a smooth working. Many projects can be integrated in the strategies.
- In Spain, if there is a conflict of competence, a court will address this, the national government usually imposes. When it comes to coordination, it is easy, the conflict is usually when you need to mobilise funds and resources, conflict is possible.

- Conflicts can be mitigated through round tables etc. and roles and responsibilities can be defined and have a clear framework. **With political will and common strategy, the conflicts are easier to solve.**
- **Build trust and alliance:** the supranational levels are helping and networks play a role for cities to avoid past mistakes and help municipalities, which cannot afford playing at an international level. It is about using the network to offer or access funding and cooperation rather than doing it on one's own.

# Conference key takeaways

## Opportunities

- Coordination is easy and cooperation needs thinking about what you have as resources and constraints.
- 60% of the 2030 agenda is implemented locally and we have a role in implementing the EU agenda and New Green Deal, digital transition, biodiversity etc. Cooperation is needed to solve these challenges.
- Citizen participation and commitment are needed. It is important to communicate to citizens on what the metropolis does as it gives legitimacy to metropolitan institutions.
- Building consensus as metropolitan entities are a consensus-based policy and have territories with different needs between small and big urban areas.
- Territorial balance: provide good-quality metropolitan services / but replying to different needs. Adaptive and flexible policies to the evolving challenges (and to the particularities inside the territories).
- Solidarity is the keyword as the needs of big cities are not the same as smaller ones, the geography of territory plays a role and have policies that adapt to the whole territory.

## Challenges

- Creation of institutions and urbanisation process have similar trajectories and challenges are shared as climate, water, waste, transport, economic development, social cohesion.
- There is a diversity of metropolitan structures in the Mediterranean, this makes it difficult to explain who we are, what we do and have a unified voice.
- Sorting out finance as decentralisation is about allocation of resources as funding, assets etc. It is not possible to create policies without funds and talk about funding, including EU funds, to support the development of metropolitan structures.

## Moving into practice

- Shared objective to improve the quality of life in territory.
- Define projects, clear strategy and communicate.
- Make it clear to other actors that metropolises are essential to what they try to implement.
- Cooperation is necessary between the municipalities, other metropolitan areas, other levels of government through networks etc. to bring the voice of the metropolis into formal institutions such as the EU and put their needs on the official agenda. Networks are implementing parties and accelerators, apart from knowledge sharing partners.
- Aiming for a diversity of metropolitan cooperation structures in the Mediterranean between a voluntary form vs a top-down approach. This can have an impact on the legitimacy of the metropolitan structure.