Bringing urban priorities to global forums: Effective city networking and strategic alliances

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Sala Jordi Maragall, CIDOB. Elisabets 12, 08001 Barcelona
Organised by: CIDOB´s Global Cities Programme in collaboration with the Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Since the turn of the century, many transnational city networks have emerged alongside long-established networks of local governments. The most notable are multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together a range of actors–including, philanthropists, the private sector, research and knowledge organizations–around key global urban challenges. The most notable platforms have been those working on climate change, resilience and more recently migration. *Ad hoc* alliances that are based on political affinities and advocate for "local" issues, such as housing, platform economies and migrant and refugee reception systems, to be put on the international agenda also seem to be regularly announced.

These many forms of strategic alliances are increasingly influential in the international arena, shaping global policy discourses and processes. Many of them involve partnerships with multilateral organizations; they act independently from, and at times in opposition to national governments; and they are formulating new pathways to tackle today's major global challenges. They also provide spaces for peer-learning and knowledge transfer, and some, with backing from the multilateral, private and knowledge sectors, have elaborate technical capacities, data collection and analysis methods and communication strategies.

The great potential of the many kinds of city networks and strategic alliances is their dynamic and innovative mode of operating. Yet, they also risk becoming increasingly competitive, territorial, and redundant. Cities themselves are overwhelmed by the number of invitations to be affiliated with networks and are increasingly confused with which avenues will produce the most effective outcomes. These trends are driving the fragmentation of advocacy relating to global policy processes, and they highlight the urgent need to move towards more collaborative and concerted actions. Coordination mechanisms, like the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF), could provide transnational networks and platforms with the opportunity to speak with one voice, and in turn provide intergovernmental bodies with one single interlocutor. Yet they could also dilute the importance of many issues, misrepresent the diversity of stakeholders, or worse, lack formal recognition in the international governance system.

In collaboration with the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, CIDOB's Global Cities Programme brings together researchers, local policy makers and representatives from city networks, multilateral organizations and other stakeholders to discuss how to ensure this new era of city networking is effective in achieving its intended goals of scaling urban priorities to global forums. The seminar is part of a series launched at CIDOB in July 2018 with the first edition on *Rethinking the Ecosystem of International City Networks: Challenges and Opportunities* and the resulting publication. The session will also discuss findings from the Chicago Council's 2019 city diplomacy survey, building on its previous report, *Toward City Diplomacy: Assessing Capacity in Select Global Cities*. The purpose of the seminar is to provoke new thinking on how these strategic alliances can be organized more effectively and democratically. The central questions that will be addressed are how cities can most effectively navigate the wide array of advocacy-oriented networks and alliances; how the new networks interact with more traditional municipal networks; and what the future role of global coordination and consultation mechanisms, such as the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments, may be.

The programme consists of three sessions. Each session opens with a 5-10 minute intervention by two keynote speakers followed by a moderated discussion around a set of core questions that will be circulated in advance. To foster a dynamic debate and new insights, the moderators will call on individual participants to intervene at relevant points of the discussion. The entire programme is conducted under the Chatham House Rule.

PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 15 October

09.00-09.15   **Opening remarks**
Miquel Rodríguez, Commissioner of 2030 Agenda, Barcelona City Council
Pol Morillas, Director, CIDOB
Juliana Kerr, Director, Global Cities, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

09.15-09.30   **Introduction to the Seminar**
Agustí Fernández de Losada, Director, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB

09.45-11.00   **Panel 1: The rise of city networks and the demand on cities**
Moderator: **Juliana Kerr**, Director, Global Cities, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Michele Acuto, Director, Connected Cities Lab, University of Melbourne
Ian Klaus, Senior Fellow, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Urban multi-stakeholder platforms across multiple dimensions and the increased demand on cities to navigate affiliations and build internal capacity to influence policy.

11.30-12.00   **Coffee Break**

12.00-14.00   **Panel 2: Scaling-up local political agendas through *ad hoc* international alliances**
Moderator: **Paola Arjona**, Technical Director, ALLAs

Felip Roca, Director of International Relations, Barcelona City Council
Agustí Fernández de Losada, Director, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB

How are cities challenging national and international policies on climate, refugees and migrants, housing, etc.?

14.00-15.00   **Lunch**

15.00-16.30   **Panel 3: Coordination mechanisms: towards the structured participation of cities in international governance**
Moderator: **Johannes Krassnitzer,** International Coordinator, ART Initiative, UNDP

Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, UCLG
Chrystie Swiney, Lead Researcher, Global Cities Initiative, Georgetown Law Center

How to move towards the formal political representation of cities at the global level?

16.30-17.00   **Closing Remarks**
Hannah Abdullah, Researcher, Global Cities Programme, CIDOB

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