

GOLD VI

**Case-Based Contribution
to Chapter 9: Democratizing**
*GOLD VI Report on Pathways
to urban and territorial equality*

Democratisation of Metropolitan

Governance. *Participation, training,*

efficiency and transparency to promote

social and territorial equity

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Democratisation of Metropolitan Governance. *Participation, training, efficiency and transparency to promote social and territorial equity*

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CHAPTER

9: Democratizing

SUMMARY

Democratising metropolitan governance means overcoming a series of conditions to achieve a shared sense of citizenship: the participation of citizens and key actors, multilevel governance structures, sufficient political will and an equitable financial system. Essential factors required to consolidate an urban management process that includes all voices and realities, especially women's voices, to promote a more equal society that leaves no one behind.

Once the city's functional structure exceeds the limits of what is understood as local government, larger-scale governance is required, to provide equal opportunities for the entire population.

This paper describes the case of three Latin American cities, which have each put an institution in place to foster metropolitan governance, taking advantage of individual city assets and the strength of a comprehensive vision of the entire metropolis as a strategy to reduce social and territorial inequality.

They have based their strategy on encouraging dialogue between public, private and social stakeholders, making it easier to implement projects with political consensus and citizen participation.

- **CONSOLIDATED WILL:** The Metropolitan Area of the Aburrá Valley (AMVA), Medellín, Colombia (1980-2021)
- **INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE:** Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (AMSS), El Salvador (1986-2021)
- **COMPULSORY PAUSE:** Metropolitan Area of Caracas (AMC), Venezuela, (1983-2017)

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Democratising metropolitan governance means overcoming a series of conditions to achieve a shared sense of citizenship: the participation of citizens and key actors, multilevel governance structures, sufficient political will and an equitable financial system. These are the essential factors required to consolidate an urban management process that includes all voices and realities, especially women's voices, to promote a more equal society that leaves no one behind.

Once the city's functional structure exceeds the limits of what is understood as local government, larger-scale governance is required, in which the participation of key actors and multilevel coordination are core factors in responding to the needs of a more complex and diverse territory. The goal of this governance scale should be to provide equal opportunities for the entire population.

This paper describes the case of three Latin American cities, which have each put an institution in place to foster metropolitan governance, taking advantage of individual city assets and the strength of a comprehensive vision of the entire metropolis as a strategy to reduce social and territorial inequality. They have based their strategy on encouraging dialogue between public, private and social stakeholders, making it easier to implement projects with political consensus and citizen participation.

"Metrocable", the Medellín's gondola lift, Colombia.

Source: Jorge Gobbi / Flickr

I. CONSOLIDATED WILL: The Metropolitan Area of the Aburrá Valley (AMVA), Medellín, Colombia (1980-2021)

As a legally autonomous public entity, which aimed at harmonising territorial planning between 10 municipalities,¹ the AMVA has supra-municipal legal powers and planning functions defined by law. Some examples of how this institution has helped reduce inequalities are shown below:

- **Access to public transport and high-quality public spaces:** some of the projects and actions include multimodal mobility (metrocable, metro, cycling and walking), facilities for entrepreneurship and culture such as Library Parks (*Parques Biblioteca*) in the most vulnerable and precarious neighbourhoods, Articulated Life Units (UVA), Zonal Business Development Centres (CEDEZOS), and the Medellín river park.

- **Public-private partnerships for better public services:** public-private partnerships, through entities such as Empresas Públicas de Medellín (EPM) and the International Cooperation Agency (ACI), have made it possible to democratise access to better public services, invest resources in knowledge, innovation, entrepreneurship and local competitiveness, and encourage the economic progress and social mobility of the population.

- **Towards an inclusive and social city:** “Medellín, the most educated” (*Medellín, la más educada*) is a programme for the comprehensive city transformation, which has maintained its main objective throughout successive periods of government. This programme was created to implement high-quality educational facilities in lower-income sectors, using public space as an integrative element and urban facilities as a tool to expand the benefits of living in the city.

II. INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE: Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (AMSS), El Salvador (1986-2021)

The AMSS is an autonomous decentralised organisation based on an association of 14 municipalities,² which encourages and drives effective development strategies and solid regional processes, bringing together private sector participation, academies and communities, through multi-level partnerships aimed at planning for equitable land use, within the framework of the Territorial Development Law.

The AMSS is based on three pillars: the Council of Mayors of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (COAMSS), which focuses on managing urban development, the Planning Office of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (OPAMSS) and the Metropolitan Development Council (CODEMET), which focused on coordination between local and central government. This structure has helped to reduce inequality.

1. 1,165,5 km²/population 3.9 million/7,75% national

2. 650 km² /population 2,2 million /27% national

- **The provision of infrastructure services:** the **COLLABORATIVE MULTI-LEVEL METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE**, implemented via the AMSS Planning Office (**OPAMSS**) on behalf of the Council of Mayors (**COAMSS**), is an example of management and technical support that contributes towards comprehensive coordination of urban planning and promoting technology. It allows investment to be redistributed throughout the territory, and for greater equity in the provision of infrastructure services.
- **Redistributing investment to reduce inequality:** this metropolitan governance model has allowed

plans and projects to be put in place that redistribute private investment to the municipalities that are most in need. It has also improved the efficiency and impact of investment, has allowed for plans, guides and standards to be developed, and has seen the city adopt good practices for sustainability and a monitoring system.

- **Implementing the SDGs:** the **Institutional Strategic Plan (PEI) 2030** is an action plan to leave no one behind, in line with the SDGs for 2030, including long-term projects aimed at improving the quality of life of the entire population.

III. COMPULSORY PAUSE: Metropolitan Area of Caracas (AMC), Venezuela, (1983-2017)

The Caracas valley is made up of five municipalities under two different regional authorities; 45% of the population lives in self-built informal sectors, and over 80% live in extreme poverty. In this scenario, the Metropolitan Area of Caracas was created, as a legally constituted, autonomous political organisation for the area.³ The organisation was designed to establish comprehensive policies, plan and coordinate actions aimed at improving citizens' quality of life. The AMC was ratified by the National Constitution and a special law set up its framework and competences. However, as a result of overlapping public and private interests, as well the political situation in the country, this metropolitan governance body was eliminated in 2017.⁴

Despite being an institution without legally binding powers, the Caracas Metropolitan Institute of Urbanism managed to create relevant proposals to reduce the inexisting inequality in the city and achieve some degree of metropolitan governance.

- **Inequality in public transport and accessibility:** the modernisation of the metropolitan public transport system (Transmetrópoli) improved the quality and reliability of public transport systems in the AMC.
- **Transparency and citizen participation:** the consolidation of the Metropolitan Urban Information System (SIUM), the promotion of Citizen Culture programmes, and the implementation of Public Ideas Contests for urban renovation became tools to democratise the decision-making process related to urban transformation.

3. 776 km² /population 2,9 million/10,2% national

4. Official Gazette N° 36.860 del 30/12/1999, N° 36.906 del 08/03/2000, G.O. No 39.170 04/05/2009, G.O. No 39.276 01/09/2009, Suppression Decree of the Metropolitan mayor office O.G Venezuelan Republic N° 41.308 27/12/ 2017, National Constituent Assembly

How have metropolitan institutions helped to reduce inequality?

In each one of these three examples, institutional development has been the key to improving economic management and policy making, in order to reduce the multifaceted inequality in metropolitan spaces. Strengthening institutions has been crucial in boosting social development, as well as in promoting entrepreneurship and innovative investment models. To achieve those goals, cities need a context of political stability, legal predictability, social justice and transparency.

The first two examples managed to democratise metropolitan governance through forms of institutional organisation that count on legal and citizen support, with greater capacity for self-management and financing, while the third example was eliminated during a period of profound social and political crisis.

Some best practices to reduce inequality in metropolitan spaces are:

Policy framework

- A gender mainstreaming perspective in metropolitan governance frameworks and tools, encouraging community participation in the decision-making process.
- A regional planning system that recognises the metropolitan entity and encourages it to be recognised by all the stakeholders in the area in question, including the community included. It should also define the entity's competences, as well as its budget and legal capacity in relation to local development.
- Progressive adaptation of the legislative framework to incorporate an inclusive land use planning process, in order to put the appropriate climate in place to foster voluntary inter-institutional cooperation.
- Institutional stability and apolitical commitment to boost credibility and encourage the support of local, regional and national stakeholders.
- Development of a joint growth strategy for subregions, in order to prevent the migratory process from the outskirts to the centre, encourage balanced living conditions and provide more opportunities to the less fortunate.
- Strengthening and adapting the urban legal framework for multi-level coordination.

Capacity building

- At a managerial level, in terms of the technical capacity to manage urban development, which legitimises the value of metropolitan governance and planning.
- Ensuring gender perspective is incorporated in strategic urban planning and the definition of long-term structural metropolitan guidelines when building infrastructure (transport, public space, social facilities and housing) with the objective of promoting equal rights to the city for all.

- International cooperation to develop projects, both in terms of technical support in defining policies as well as financial support, if required.
- Creating technical scales to monitor and follow-up on management through, for example, Metropolitan Observatories, which encourage transparency and strengthen institutions and the credibility of the authorities.
- Putting technological platforms in place for access to information, and to encourage citizen participation.
- Consolidating **Municipal Cooperation** through the voluntary creation of a binding coordinating body offering technical support and a separate legal personality.

All the metropolitan areas that could make use of these best practices are facing common challenges brought about by the ongoing pandemic:

- The need to redesign public space, to put the multiple uses and tasks involved in daily life as the main focus for cities.
- Mainstream gender perspective in public policy so no one is left behind.
- The opportunity to develop inclusive and caring mobility patterns.
- More inclusive and sustainable economic models, implemented and adapted to local situations and social diversity.
- Incorporating innovative technology to allow more decentralised patterns of work and leisure, considering the gender gap.
- Implementing nature-based solutions and greater care for biodiversity, to reduce our carbon footprint.
- Strengthen healthcare services as well as public services.
- Maintaining a comprehensive metropolitan vision while designing socio-economic policies at a human scale.
- Public legitimacy as an engine for developing governance that is resilient, participatory and gender inclusive.

Some of the obstacles blocking the process of democratisation of metropolitan governance are:

- The lack of a climate of cooperative interaction in which the free choice of authorities, negotiation and shared actions are accompanied by government legitimacy and transparent governance.
- The lack of a process of political, fiscal and administrative decentralisation as a tool to reduce inequality and inequity in each territory.
- The lack of gender mainstreaming in metropolitan governance frameworks and tools, which could provide a perspective to recognise all citizens as legitimate political actors with equal power and status in decision-making spaces.
- Concurrent and duplicate competences between national, metropolitan and local levels, which result in problems in terms of fiscal matters, procedures (urban management), connected decision-making and operations (coordinated work) that must be resolved for effective management.

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In particular, the present paper has contributed to Chapter 9 on “Democratizing”, which focuses on the challenges and opportunities for local and regional governments in implementing meaningful participatory processes, and democratizing decision-making, unpacking asymmetries of power and the underpinning trends affecting processes of democratization. The chapter explores how local and regional governments can promote more egalitarian, participatory and democratic processes, giving voice to marginalized groups of society, minorities and other groups, and thus contribute to urban and territorial equality.

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