

Editorial Note

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the inaugural issue of this biannual newsletter on metropolitan management prepared by UN-Habitat along with several international metropolitan experts and partners. Under the theme "Unveiling Metropolitan Action" this piece comprises several inviting sections, articles, and stories.

It begins by featuring the highlights from the World Metropolitan Day 2023. Then, UN-Habitat's recent progress made, and results achieved in the metropolitan projects, advocacy and partnerships are spotlight.

The guest articles explore two timely topics: Heritage and the Metropolis and Multi-level Governance for better Metropolises. The newsletter also features Barcelona Metropolitan Area in the segment on "How are you managing the Metropolis?"

This inaugural edition finalizes by sharing a snippet of what's next in the metropolitan space.

Enjoy the read!

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Part 1. Feature Story- World Metropolitan Day 2023



World Metropolitan Day, marked on 7 October every year, is a global campaign led by Metropolis and UN-Habitat celebrated since 2018 to build fairer and more prosperous metropolises. The day sets the stage for global debates on the importance of managing cities from a metropolitan perspective. This year's theme "**The Power of Nature in Metropolises**" emphasized how nature-based solutions can increase the resilience, inclusivity and liveability of urban areas, providing an environment where all kinds of experts, managers and stakeholders from government, private sector, academia, civil society, international organizations and city networks come together.

The final day of [Marmara Urban Forum 2023](#) saw the celebration of World Metropolitan Day (WMD 2023), organized by UN-Habitat and Metropolis. WMD 2023 sought to explore how nature-based solutions increase the resilience of the world's metropolises, focusing on the question "**City and Beyond: How Can Nature Transform Metropolises?**"

Attended by over **250** diverse participants from all over the world, the event featured keynote remarks from mayors, policy makers, other government officials, academia members and other participants.



WMD 2023 was also observed throughout Urban October in various metropolitan areas globally, including Guangzhou city, China. Watch the video [here](#):

You can read more about WMD 2023 here:

<https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/marmara-urban-forum-celebrates-world-metropolitan-day/>

<https://www.worldmetropolitanday.org/2023>



KEY MESSAGES

- "The larger the city, the larger the challenges. But also, the larger the opportunities" *Claudia López, Mayor of Bogota, Colombia.*
- "The issue of finance is important for the citizens to be happy within the metropolitan borders. The metropolises do not receive the necessary share of the national income and this should change." *Hasan Akgün, Mayor of Büyükşehir, Turkey*
- "People have defined cities as the opposite of nature for a very long time, but now nature and metropolitan cities should make an alliance, especially in the face of the climate crisis." *Jordi Vaquer, Secretary General of Metropolis*



Part 2. UN-Habitat Metropolitan Spotlight

a. Projects

In 2023, UN-Habitat provided technical support to advance metropolitan management in several countries, highlighting Central America and Mexico.

Some of the key achievements during the year include:



Central America: UN-Habitat contributed to formulating and applying the [special guide](#) on national urban policies for the SICA region. This is resulting in mainstreaming metropolitan management into National and Territorial Urban Policies in Central America and Dominican Republic, showcasing especially the case of Honduras.



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El Salvador: UN-Habitat held a multi-stakeholder workshop with the Planning Office of the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador (OPAMSS) to present and validate the findings of the diagnostic for the **Metropolitan Policy of Environmentally Sustainable Urban and Territorial Development**, and to identify the strategic components, lines of action, and main programmes addressing the findings, with full-house participation from OPAMSS.



Mexico: UN-Habitat provided technical contributions to the draft new law regulating metropolitan management at the State of Yucatan. UN-Habitat also delivered a learning session on **"The Global Metropolitan**

Phenomena and its Significance for Sustainable Development" for the Virtual workshop on SDGs and other Global Agendas organized by UN-Habitat Mexico Office for the State of Yucatan.

b. Advocacy and Outreach



Metropolitan Solutions Expert Group Meeting (Barcelona, Spain)

UN-Habitat participated and facilitated the 2-days EGM jointly organized with the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, including distilling key messages on:

- i) Metropolitan solutions and SDG localisation;
- ii) Metropolitan solutions conceptualization, typologies, and good practices;
- iii) Decision-making for metropolitan solutions; and
- iv) International proposals on specific metropolitan solutions.



14th World Metropolis Congress (Brussels, Belgium)

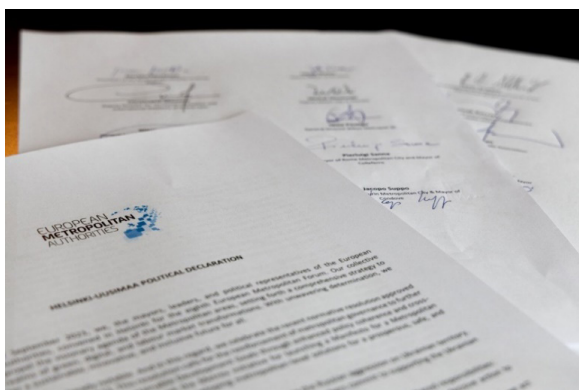
UN-Habitat highlighted the on-going international work on multi-level governance, SDG localization at subnational levels and empowerment of mayors and metropolises within the UN System.





European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) annual Forum (Helsinki, Finland)

Led by the European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) and Barcelona Metropolitan Area, UN-Habitat participated in this annual forum culminated in the **Helsinki Declaration**, to propel the visionary agenda of the metropolitan areas towards European more sustainable and equitable futures.



MetroLAB event: Metropolitan Governance for Urban Resilience (Tegucigalpa, Honduras)

This international event was the first space for articulation between the national and metropolitan level to manage urban resilience, within the framework of the National Urban Policy and in alliance with GIZ, SICA and the Government of Honduras. It resulted in the **launch of the Central American Metropolitan Authorities Network on Resilience** led by the Metropolitan Area of San Salvador.



Some moments from the event © UN-Habitat

Part 3. Guest Articles on Metropolitan Management

i. Heritage and the Metropolis: Strengthening the Connection

Mike Turner, on behalf of the Heritopolis Society Steering Committee

The people of the city are its soul and spirit. Natural and cultural heritage of the metropolis play the accumulative role of the city's fragmented parts as the traces of its history. Heritage and the metropolis are no longer monolithic concepts but constitute an agglomeration of places, histories, events, and functions. With E.N. Rogers noting a discontinuity in the continuity of tradition, the multiple layered identities of the metropolis may also provide the continuity needed to make our cities safe, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.

While the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges the role of culture across many of the SDGs, safeguarding cultural and natural heritage is directly addressed only in Target 4 of Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities. However, it was the New Urban Agenda that made a significant step in the sustainable leveraging of natural and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. It benefited from the UNESCO Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development (2016) to UN-Habitat III on Culture, Urban Future.

The report determined that in a global situation characterized by many metropolitan areas, the preservation of the quality of urban life, the protection of urban identities, the valuing of local cultures, and the promotion of cultural expressions are essential pillars of sustainable social and economic development.

Natural and cultural heritage are key to what makes cities attractive, creative, and sustainable. By acknowledging the metropolitan dimension and its bioregion, this can be achieved through integrated **urban and territorial policies**, and by promoting cultural infrastructures and sites, indigenous cultures, and languages, thereby highlighting the role that these play in rehabilitating and revitalizing urban areas and in strengthening social participation and the exercise of citizenship.

The metropolis, as the urban typology of the 21st century, represents a profound break from the past, necessitating a new discipline and tools.

Established in 2021, [Heritopolis](https://www.heritopolis.org) - Heritage and Metropolis - is an open-ended consortium under the UN-Habitat UNI MetroHub partnership, currently with 20 universities linking their metropolises and connecting research and practice. Its aim is to bring more knowledge to the discourse, provide evidence for the application of alternative strategies and policies, and accompanied with capacity development.

The network was established to explore how metropolises are being (re-)shaped by heritage, redefining their meaning.

The work undertaken to date, confirms the validity of the initial hypothesis: that there is indeed a need to delve deeper into the nature of metropolitan identities and that this is likely to bring significant innovation in the heritage field as an enabler for sustainable development. The **Heritopolis** Research Forum provides the platform for debate and discussion needed to better understand these trends and share experiences over a wide range of disciplines and metropolises.

In a world where classic 'integration' or 'assimilation' policies are no longer straightforward processes, due to digital technologies and the ease of communication between communities beyond their original contexts, **Heritopolis** has already demonstrated how the concept of metropolitan heritage goes beyond the conventional model and can contribute to localizing the metropolis employing a landscape approach. Time is a canvas for potential futures crafted from carefully chosen elements of the past; there is no saving without creation, while the architecture of today will be the heritage of tomorrow.

The metropolis as a heritage with the evolving heritage that shapes the metropolis. Addressing migrations, the question of the multiplicities of social identities is critical in the metropolitan context, and in the application of heritage as a component of the culture and landscape of the metropolis. In parallel, our perspective on cultural rights asserts the entitlement of every community to generate and



Professor Michael Turner is an architect, the UNESCO Co-Chairholder in Urban Design and Conservation Studies at the **Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem** with design experience and research encompassing urbanism, social inclusion, urban heritage and sustainability.

He is special envoy at UNESCO, having accompanied the **Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation** since its inception, and Executive Board member of the UNHabitat University MetroHub on Heritage and the Metropolis - **Heritopolis**.

Find more about us:

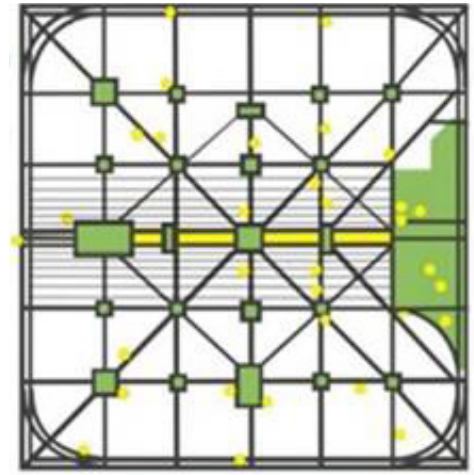
www.heritopolis.org



govern its own culture, fostering the collaborative creation of new cultural narratives. It is a way to reconsider metropolitan policies by placing the question of the legacy transmitted to the next generation as a critical entry point. Metropolitan ownership is a social construct applying metropolitan marketing, political arrangements, and social representations. Implementing the New Urban Agenda will likely bring significant innovation in the heritage field as an enabler for sustainable development.

Heritopolis will engage the viewpoints of diverse disciplines and thinkers that can help shape a clear and forward-looking paradigm outside common silos as part of a quintuple helix approach integrating academia, governance, and industry with civil society, its culture, and natural environment.

With the upcoming 12th World Urban Forum in 2024 in Cairo addressing the localization of the SDGs and the management of climate change, the role of heritage in the metropolis remains essential. Nevertheless, sustainability is not just defined through time, between generations but through space between places – chronos and topos – it is the spatial sustainability that the metropolis can provide in creating public spaces, food security, livelihoods, culture, and well-being as areas of mutual interdependence. The natural heritage of the metropolitan context will be essential in addressing climate extremes through spatial porosity creating an urban sponge, while the cultural heritage may provide identities and localisation – a double edged sword that will need to address polarisation and socio-economic transformations.



The metropolis as heritage – La Plata, the open space system © Federico Pinto, Wikimedia Commons

ii. Multi-level Governance for Better Metropolises

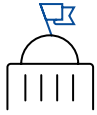
MetroHUB Centre: Pioneering *Antifragile* Solutions for Global Metropolises

Antonella Contin, Politecnico di Milano, Italy.

In a rapidly urbanizing world, the MetroHUB Centre emerges as a beacon of innovation and collaboration, championing resilient solutions for the complex challenges faced by global metropolises. This collaborative initiative, led by UN-

Habitat and the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASTU) at Politecnico di Milano, seeks to redefine metropolitan governance as a dynamic and interconnected system. Drawing inspiration from biological principles, the forthcoming

centre strongly emphasizes dynamic adaptability, structural plasticity, and the role of metropolitan governance in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (HSP/OECPR.2023/CRP.9, June Nairobi, 2023).



Metropolitan Governance as a System

The MetroHUB Centre introduces a paradigm shift by conceptualizing metropolitan governance as a dynamic and interconnected system. This perspective introduces critical thinking on key principles such as control, antifragility, and experience. Understanding metropolitan governance as a system allows for more effective localization of SDGs and the ability to address the intricate challenges that global metropolises face.



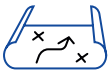
Space and Scale Dynamics

Acknowledging the pivotal role of space and scale dynamics is crucial in climate change and ecological transition. The MetroHUB Center recognises the interconnectedness of these factors and their impact on the resilience of metropolitan systems. By addressing these dynamics, the centre aims to contribute to developing antifragile solutions adaptable to the evolving environmental and urban landscapes.



Antifragility through Entanglement

The MetroHUB Centre adopts a holistic approach by emphasizing the entanglement of culture and science to strengthen the antifragility of metropolitan systems. This approach acknowledges the interdependence of various components within a metropolis, promoting antifragility by integrating diverse perspectives and disciplines.



Metropolitan Cartography

An essential tool introduced by the MetroHUB Centre is Metropolitan Cartography. This mapping tool facilitates a comprehensive understanding of metropolitan territories by integrating sustainability principles with data analysis. By visualizing complex urban dynamics, stakeholders can make informed decisions and implement targeted interventions to enhance the sustainability and resilience of metropolises.



MetroHUB Centre's Vision and Objectives

The MetroHUB Center sets forth an ambitious vision, responding to the imperative for innovative and antifragile solutions in sustainable development. The centre is an international laboratory that fosters local transformations while promoting global cooperation. The collaborative initiative with DASTU outlines a comprehensive action plan for 2022-2024, focusing on research, training, and practical solutions to address the multifaceted challenges of metropolitan governance.



Antonella Contin, PhD, serves as a Research Associate at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASTU) within the School of Architecture, Urban Planning, and Construction Engineering at the University of Politecnico di Milano. She also holds the role of Coordinator for MSLab (Measure and Scale of the Contemporary City) and takes on scientific and organizational responsibilities for international workshops and seminars. Antonella serves as a Group Coordinator for various European co-funded research projects and delivers lectures at international universities.

Her research primarily focuses on the Metropolitan Architecture Project, exploring sustainable models of urban growth, urban-rural linkage patterns, smart and sensitive city concepts, new technologies, and urban design mapping. She has authored several notable publications, including "Metropolitan Landscapes: Towards a Shared Construction of the Resilient City of the Future" (2021), "Training for Education, Learning, and Leadership Towards a New Metropolitan Discipline" (2021), and "The Impact of Smart Cities and Technologies on Desakota Region" (2022), among others. Her work contributes significantly to the understanding of urban development and globalization, particularly in the context of the Global South.



Global Outreach and Collaboration

The MetroHUB Centre extends its reach beyond Europe, actively engaging with Latin America, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific regions. This global outreach aims to showcase research on metropolitan dynamics, attract private partners, and support UN-Habitat partner countries in implementing sustainable projects. The centre serves as a catalyst for change, addressing urban-rural dynamics, regional dimensions and digital and green transitions on a global scale.



Conclusion

In summary, the MetroHUB Centre in Milan represents a significant endeavor to advance antifragile and sustainable metropolises through comprehensive metropolitan multi-level governance. Aligned with worldwide challenges, the centre bridges the gap by linking global issues with practical local solutions. The collaborative partnership between DASTU and UN-Habitat establishes the MetroHUB Centre as a crucial force in fostering antifragile solutions and contributing to the overarching objectives of global sustainable development. In navigating the intricacies of urbanization, the MetroHUB Centre emerges as a pioneer, leading the way toward a future for our global metropolises that is more sustainable and antifragile and less susceptible to shocks and uncertainties.

Part 4. How are you Managing the Metropolis? Perspectives from Barcelona Metropolitan Area

The Barcelona Metropolitan Urban Plan (PDUM): a Plan for life

Oriol Illa, Director of International and Digital Metropolis, AMB.

The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (AMB), with urban legislative powers for the entire metropolis, decided to approve a new urban plan for the metropolitan area (PDUM).

The PDUM is the planning instrument of the metropolitan territory that will update the current planning framework that dates back to 1976 (Over 40 years).. During all these years, a total of 1,240 modifications and 116 general planning plans and metropolitan urban planning plans have been made, but the plan had never been addressed in a comprehensive manner.

The Barcelona metropolitan area is unique. It has an area of 636 square kilometers, of which 52% are agroforestry soils. This large non-buildable

surface is combined with the typical characteristics of a Mediterranean metropolis that has been transformed over the centuries.

Barcelona portrays an incredibly consolidated urban fabric with dispersed elements that require a certain order. The current complexity means that, to organize a city that envisions a modern impression, it is necessary to combine history with progress, the past with the future, and do so with the environmental sustainability criteria established by global agendas and, in particular, the 2030 Agenda.

Urban planning is one of the most important actions for the development of a metropolis for several reasons;



Oriol Illa, Born in Barcelona, is the Director of International and Digital Metropolis since 2023 and Director of International Relations and Cooperation of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) since 2016. He holds a degree in Political Science and Administration from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), a Master's Degree in Financial and Accounting Management from the Pompeu Fabra University, a Master's Degree in Urban Policies from the UAB and a Diploma in Senior Management from the School of Public Administration of Catalonia. He also has a Master's Degree in Urban and Metropolitan Policies from the Metropolis Institute of the UAB.



- It allows space to be used appropriately and balance its uses (residential, commercial and industrial), avoiding chaos and making the use of energy and resources efficiently and sustainably.
 - It regulates the growth of cities because it can set limits on the development of infrastructure and construction density. These limitations are important to avoid future urban challenges, such as mobility.
 - It preserves cultural and environmental heritage.
- Planning promotes sustainability, creating environmentally friendly spaces.

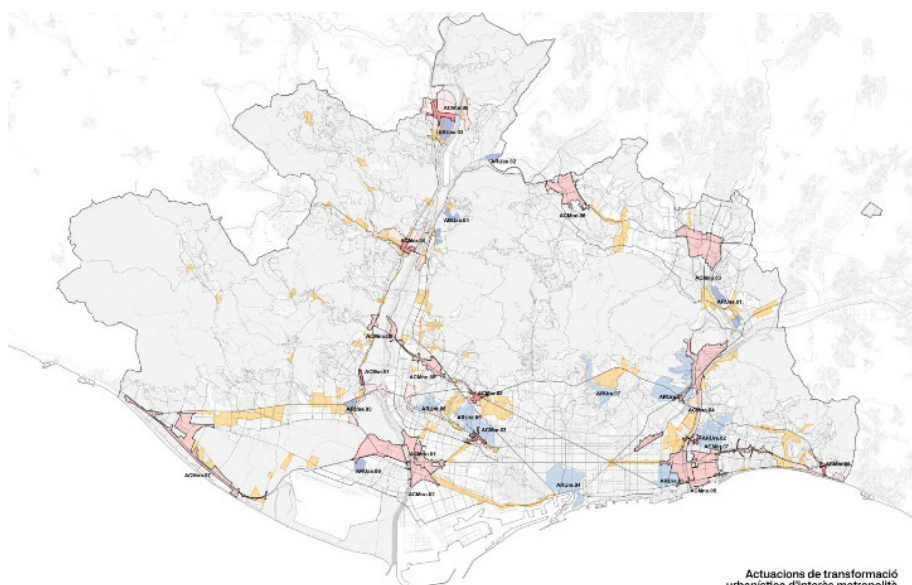
Developing an Urban Plan of this dimension is a daunting task and requires considerable effort. The involvement of all institutional, political, social, economic, environmental and neighborhood actors throughout the territory is necessary but, above all, the approval process must be transparent, democratic, and legally impeccable. For this reason, Law 31/2010 creating the AMB already contemplated specific powers in

urban planning matters and, before the approval of the progress of the plan - in March 2019 - participation tables and reflection documents had been held for over 5 years.

Immediately after the approval of the progress of the Plan, participatory public reading tables were initiated by the 36 metropolitan municipalities that led to an initial approval of the plan 4 years later - in March 2023. This has enabled another round of- public debate- and that will culminate in the final approval of the Plan.



Stakeholders working group deliberating on the metropolitan plan under development © AMB



Actuacions de transformació urbanística d'interès metropolità

PDUM



The metropolitan area of Barcelona will benefit from this new PDUM, because it will help protect the natural spaces that the metropolis has (especially the maritime coastline and the large parks of Garraf and Collserola) and will allow the development of new – environmentally sustainable – industrial activities. In addition, those who decide to settle in the metropolitan area in the future will be better located.

It will also improve connectivity between municipalities and respect the natural corridors and the passage of the two rivers (Llobregat and Besós). Perhaps you might think that it is a long time to modify one of the most important plans of AMB – if not the most important – in the design and future of the metropolis. But is it too long if this plan has to be for life?

Part 5. What's next in the Metropolitan Space?

Efforts to advance metropolitan management continue. Here's what to come in the areas of knowledge, capacity development initiatives and advocacy efforts:



Capacity development

1. Official launch of the Milano MetroHUB Centre.



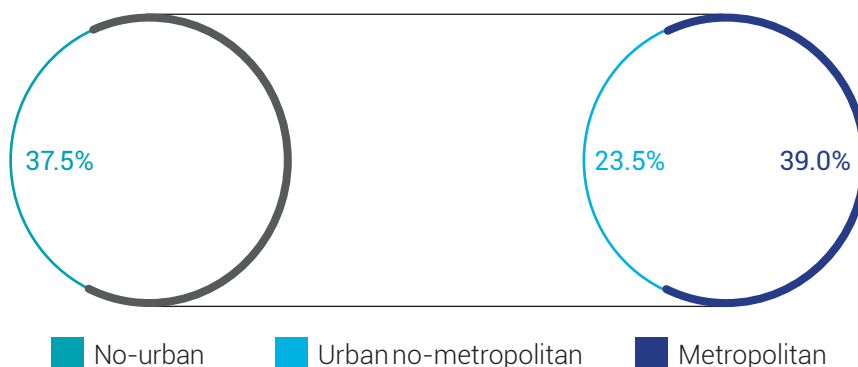
Knowledge

1. Releasing of the 1st Global State of Metropolis Report
2. Advancing Voluntary Metropolitan Reviews series, focusing on metropolitan resilience and metropolitan planning.



The Metropolitan Figure: Be in the Know.

It is projected that the number of **people living in metropolises in 2035 will increase to 3.47 billion** representing 39% of the world's population and 62.5% of the urban population by then. Almost 1 billion more people will become metropolitan inhabitants between 2020-2035.



Source: [Global State of Metropolis \(2020\)- Population Data Booklet](#)

Contact us

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
P.O. Box 30030, GPO Nairobi, 00100, Kenya

www.unhabitat.org

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