

## **City, metropolis, region in the same trajectory**

By Josep Roig, Former Secretary of Metropolis, Secretary General of UCLG since 2011

**1913:** *In the summer of 1913, in Death Valley, temperatures of over 52°C were recorded over 10 consecutive days and on the 10th of July it reached 57°C, the highest temperature ever recorded. On the 27 of July 1913 in Ghent (Belgium) the Union Internationale des Villes (UIV) was created.*

**2013:** *In the summer of 2013, for the first time in one hundred years, the 1913 record in Death Valley was equalled, with ten days recorded as reaching temperatures of 52°C. On the 1 of October 2013 in Rabat, the UCLG Congress will commemorate the centenary of the international municipal movement.*

Between the two hottest summers of the last one hundred years, the life of the international municipal movement has unfolded.

My participation in this movement has been somewhat shorter. I was born in 1950, the same year that Emile Vinck, first Secretary General of UIV (*Union Internationale des Villes*) died, and it is an honour for me, one hundred years since the creation of the movement, to hold the position of Secretary General of UCLG, inheritor of UIV.

My participation in the international municipal movement began in 1984 and 1985 in Paris and in Montreal when Metropolis was founded as the global association of large cities. A short time before I had begun working at the Corporación Metropolitana de Barcelona: one of those rare organizations that is truly of a metropolitan nature and that seldom appears in the ever competitive world of regional or state governments and local authorities. Together with Agustín Marina, mayor of Castelldefels, and on behalf of Pasqual Maragall, mayor of Barcelona and some of the other key promoters of the municipal movement of the last decades of the XX century, I signed the constitution act of Metropolis. At that time I could not imagine that that signature would mark my professional path right up to today, first as Secretary General of Metropolis (2000-2011) and now as Secretary General of UCLG.

It is interesting to note that as metropolitan areas gain increased recognition for their economic, social, political and cultural strength and ability to innovate and progress, it becomes more difficult to consolidate them as intermediate public organization. They become the objects of desire of everyone: political parties and other levels of government, from above and below. The most common result is that they end up being attacked on all sides, by the pro-central and the pro-local, by the Right and the Left. Nevertheless, metropolitan urban agglomerations continue to exist despite not achieving full administrative recognition.

Metropolis was created as a non-political, non-religious organization. It allowed not only for the existence of different political ideologies within the same organization but also for all members to belong to the same organization: from municipal governments to metropolitan governments to regional governments or federal state governments and including ministries of the Interior in some countries in which there are no metropolitan areas. The basic condition was that they represent urban agglomerations of more than 1 million inhabitants or are a capital of State. This second condition was probably a French concession to allow access to African capital cities in their areas of influence.

Nonetheless, what truly united members was the reality: the existence of metropolitan problems and their solutions that could be shared. Metropolis became a club of large cities of

over 1 million inhabitants. An exclusive club that has grown strongly over the last 100 years when originally on 12 members were eligible in 1900 to 500 in 2013. A foreseen 650 will be eligible in 2025.

Throughout this period, Metropolis has only had three presidents: the promoter Michel Giraud, President of Ile de France up to 1998, his successor Joan Clos, Mayor of Barcelona and President of the Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona and in 2006, Jean Paul Huchon, President of the Ile de France Region.

It is interesting to highlight that already in 1913 a justifying factor in the creation of the *Union Internationale des Villes* in Ghent was the concept of metropolises even though, at that time, the number of metropolises was limited. Nevertheless metropolitan areas were and have been one of the principle actors in the international movement of towns and cities.

Evidently, Metropolis played a role in the creation process of UCLG in Paris in 2004. This process started with the Habitat II meeting in Istanbul in 1996 and the creation of CAMVAL, in which Metropolis was always actively represented. Pasqual Maragall and Joan Clos were always promoters of this process with the constant help of Margarita Obiols, with her team in which Antonia Sabartés was an active member. Joan Clos assumed the presidency of CAMVAL and the Presidency of UNACLA, the advisory council of UN Habitat for local authorities, an experience that would later contribute to his incorporation into UN Habitat as Executive Director. Furthermore, in 2000, the first steps of Cities Alliance were taken following an emotional beginning in Berlin (December 1999) with the symbolic presence of Nelson Mandela. Firstly through Metropolis and later through UCLG, I have been able to participate more closely with this alliance, led by the World Bank and UN Habitat. The local and the global spheres came together and this meeting must inevitably be strengthened in the coming years.

Metropolis, conscious that a fusion between IULA and UTO was already sufficiently complicated, helped this process without becoming disharmonious third party. We waited for the agreement between the two organizations before later establishing a metropolitan section and actively incorporating the large cities into UCLG.

The decision to establish the UCLG Secretariat Generals of UCLG and Metropolis in the same office in Barcelona allowed for a first step in this coordination. We must now take another step forward: a new reorganization process in the network, making the most of the regional sections to finally ensure that all citizens, metropolis, regions, directly and through their main national, regional and global associations are all under the same roof. Avinyó 15, the street in which Picasso was inspired to paint *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, should represent the leadership hub of a global network of organizations that today form the international movement of local and regional governments.

Under the Presidency of Bertrand Delanoë, mayor of Paris, and Kadir Topbas, mayor of Istanbul, UCLG is being consolidated as an inclusive and open organization of local and regional governments before the international institutions and regarding the major global debates on sustainability, poverty and accelerated urbanization. Its recognition before the United Nations is also a sign of the need to address the planet's global problems in partnership between different levels of government and civil society.

In view of this, we must work toward Habitat III in 2016: CGLU, global network of geographic and thematic networks of local, regional and sub-national governments; global partner of national states, international bodies and civil society wishing to work jointly with local and regional governments and seeking to become more familiar with the daily needs of citizens

and help find solutions to problems.

In 1913, a group of pioneers came together to start the international municipal movement and created the *Union Internationale des Villes* as a political answer to the challenge of urbanization.

After 100 years, we are going to begin an intense period of debate and reflection, of thought and action, to define the sustainable development agenda for the future of 9,000 million people, 70 % of whom live in urban areas and 30% in rural areas.

We are looking for the pioneers of the new millennium to define the life project for the entire planet, for 6,000 million people living in urban areas and for 3,000 million in rural areas.

Let us bring together the thousands of local governments from all over the planet to define an agenda centred on citizens and let the citizens themselves decide upon a global agenda that gives each and every citizen an opportunity, whether they be urban or rural, to live a dignified life and build their own life projects in harmony with nature and the limitations of our planet. Let us increase wellbeing for more people while also reducing consumption of resources.

Vinck and the other pioneers of the municipal movement witnessed the turbulent year that began in 1914. They were wholly in favour of peace. And this is, sadly, a task that we have never been able to remove from our activity. In any war or catastrophe, in any country, the most affected are always the citizens and the towns and cities. However cities learn to become resilient. They work their way out of the chaos and the barbarity to become stronger than before, rebuilding their towns and cities for a new period of peace and progress.

We do not know what awaits us in 2014, however this summer, in 2013, the temperature has risen in many regions of the planet. We hope that it will get better, without first having to get worse.