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## Interview
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**1** **How in general do you view i) the "southern learning process" and ii) associated international platforms and actors?**

**LC:** To provide some background, the City of Bilbao has been leading the UCLG Committee of Digital and Knowledge-Based Cities. What we are trying to do from the committee is to provide input to UCLG to position itself regarding digital issues that affect cities. We believe that information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be used as a tool to have more sustainable and competitive cities. We have 88 committee members who are cities and associations of cities. We work like a network and serve as a platform for the exchange of knowledge. For example, we believe that the experiences and best practices from one city might

not necessarily be replicated in another city, but all of the lessons learned or the ideas that one city already has might help the other cities. We really try to be an exchange platform for our members and other UCLG members as well. We work like an observatory where we can really identify new tendencies or topics. We also take part in other UCLG committees, including the Committee on Culture. In March 2015, the City of Bilbao organised the first UCLG Culture Summit[1].

It is really hard to work as a network, and it is even more difficult to work as a network worldwide and to reach all of the regions, especially where the historical and cultural backgrounds are very different. To address this, we currently have four vice-presidents around the world, in Europe, the City of Bordeaux; in Latin America, the National Confederation of Municipalities (NCM) of Brazil; in Asia, the City of Ulan Bator; and in Africa, the Association of Municipalities of Morocco (ANCLM). What we are trying to do is have them be our

'antennas' in these regions. We are going to initiate a renovation process in 2016 to really define what their roles should be, how they should be involved with the activities of the committee, and how they can best act as antennas to really network with cities in the different regions to identify the trends in the cities in their regions in regard to new technologies.

In terms of the southern learning process, southern cities often share common background problems, this makes it easier for them to connect and to understand the realities other cities are facing. This shared experience can facilitate the learning process. When a city is too different from another city, it makes the learning process difficult. In terms of engagement with other actors, there should be a lot of collaboration with international organisations, including UN agencies, as well as civil society in order to support the aim of promoting South-South collaboration and learning. Often there are too many stakeholders working in the same areas and efforts are spread across many platforms. It is important to have one strong platform that brings all of the interested stakeholders to work together

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1    More information is available online: http://www.uclg-culturesummit2015.org/index.php/en/

and to complement each other's efforts. Each actor, each platform can provide their specific input – that may be different from others – and together they can be a lot stronger. This kind of collaboration can also facilitate the generation of more resources and can help in the design of a learning programme. This would also help avoid having dispersed or fragmented efforts. It would be difficult to coordinate, but it can really facilitate the learning process.

In terms of city-to-city learning and ICTs, technology will have a big role to play in the future because right now cities have fewer resources available, and they have to use what they have wisely. I think the use of new technology in city-to-city learning can really help because it is not always possible to send a delegation to the other side of the world. Using new technologies is another way to really facilitate learning and to reach many cities, and also to make a more useful use of their resources.

In terms of the cities impacted by the digital divide, we have to understand their reality and that the digital revolution has not been the same for them. For example, many cities in Africa have jumped different phases of technology – they didn't really use computers, they went directly to mobile phones. They have another reality and another timing, understanding this can help us to work in filling the digital divide at the city level.

2 **Do we need to create a specific and formal platform for south-south cooperation? If so, how would this be best organized at city, regional and international levels? How can UCLG best help in this?**

**LC:** I do think it could be useful to have a specific, formal platform for South-South cooperation and learning. Sometimes cities really want to learn but don't know where to go and can become confused by everything that is available. They want to enter this world of learning but they really don't know where they should go or what will be the best solution for their learning needs. Having a platform focused on South-South cooperation and learning programmes can facilitate the initiation of cities to this type of learning.

UCLG, as one of the largest organisations of cities and that already collaborates with a lot of institutions, such as the UN, and is actually the voice of local governments towards the UN, should play a key role. If a platform is created, UCLG can have an active role not only in providing input, but also in offering the platform and making it available to the cities because of their power to reach them.

3 **How do you think the learning and cooperation process can be tuned or calibrated to best benefit developing countries?**

**LC:** When cities go to a learning process, and one is more developed than the other one, they really need to understand the reality of the other city and the situation of the less-developed city in particular. Often cities want to share their knowledge, but they have to be aware that it cannot be replicated. Cities have to adapt their knowledge and experience to the situation of the less-developed city. If the learning is not tailored to their context, it will not work. For example, if a city like Bilbao is going to be in a learning programme with Maputo, it is essential for Bilbao to have a very deep understanding of the situation in Maputo before sharing and getting in too deep in the learning programme. Cities need a clear understanding and clear objectives before starting, otherwise the more developed city will provide them with experiences or solutions they will not be able to implement and the learning process is not going to work.

4 **What can your city or association teach other cities? Where does your city or association need to learn most from other cities? How do you effectively transfer technical knowledge?**

**LC:** Speaking from the perspective of the City of Bilbao, Bilbao has undergone a transformation process in the last 30 years. Bilbao was a strong industrial city in the north of Spain but in the 1980s it faced a really strong industrial crisis. The steel and iron industries were brought down because of competition with the Asian market. Bilbao was also a very contaminated city because of the kind of industry we had. We had a social crisis because the unemployment rate was over 27%, and we also had an economic crisis because the city's economy really disappeared. It was a very bad scenario. The city brought together the governments at all levels with other agents to reflect on where the city should go,

what direction it should take. The building of new infrastructure, including the metro, was undertaken. This is also when the Guggenheim Museum was built as part of the major redevelopment of the region. Bilbao became a case study for the world because of this transformation process, and a lot of cities come to Bilbao to learn how the city was able to achieve this transformation. Our river was completely polluted, but over the past 25 years it has been cleaned up. This was paid for through tax revenue generated from the population. A year ago I saw someone swimming in the river, before that it was impossible. Many cities have come to Bilbao to learn how to clean up their rivers. We have been invited to share our experience in international forums. A lot of delegations come to Bilbao. The last visit was from Johannesburg. Bilbao 'shares' with others, we don't 'teach'. We try to share the political side of the transformation - the need for firm commitment and a clear long-term plan. The private sector can help in bringing the vision to life. We try to introduce visiting cities to the companies that provided the technology for the City of Bilbao as these companies already have first-hand experience working with a city and providing technology and may be able to offer their expertise or services. In the case of the river clean up, the technology came from the private sector. The city could not invest in developing such technology. While the private sector can develop technology, they need to adapt it to meet the city's needs. Cities with a similar need can join forces in order to work with the private sector to find win-win solutions for all.

# 5

**What are your big successes and why were these initiatives so successful? What are the lessons for the south-south and triangular learning and development agenda? How can your best practices for innovation be turned into learning opportunities for others?**

**LC:** One of our biggest successes has been conducting the Smart Cities Study[2], which for us

the situation of ICT, innovation and knowledge in cities", which came out in 2012, provides an overview of the current situation of 28 cities in different regions of the world, in terms of six key areas of importance that affect the development of cities: economy, citizenship, governance, mobility, environment and quality of life. A smart city uses digital technologies or ICTs to enhance quality and performance of urban services, to reduce costs and resource consumption, and to engage more effectively and actively with its citizens.



was like a milestone in the history of the committee because it really helped us to define how we were going to defend the digital aspect in Smart Cities. The "Smart Cities Study: International study on

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2       http://www.uclg-digitalcities.org/app/uploads/2015/06/en_smartcitiesstudy.pdf

For the committee, we really had to define our position towards this new idea of a Smart City because it seemed it was more oriented towards the private sector and companies. For example, with mobility and environment we really needed to

define our vision of what a Smart City really is. It was a bit difficult to get the 28 cities from around the world to share their experiences and their information. Many did not want to share their information initially as they thought it was going to be more like a ranking. We had to explain that it was more to have an idea of how the cities are doing around the world. In the end, they worked with us. Part of the difficulty also came from having to get the information from numerous people within the municipality. We were happy with the outcome as we had many cities, not only smaller but bigger cities as well. It was more like a learning experience because if you go through the study you can find a lot of best practices from the cities in domains that were defined in the study, which can facilitate exchanges and learning among cities.

Another success is our annual forum – a thematic and operative event – that provides the opportunity for cities to connect with other cities[3], and allows for the exchange of experiences and knowledge as well as debate among the participants, on topics related to the use of new technologies, innovation and knowledge to make more efficient and sustainable cities. Participants can share their experiences face-to-face and really interact. This year it was held in Sao Paulo and focused on modernization of municipal public management. In the knowledge exchange section of the committee website, we upload presentations, experiences that have been shared, etc., for people who cannot attend the forum. This is how we try to facilitate knowledge exchange.

6 **Do you have case studies or methodologies that demonstrate: i) processes that are effective; and ii) the effective building of capacity?**

**LC:** The Smart Cities Study is an example. Another example is the Uraía Platform project[4] that has produced guidelines for cities. The Uraía Platform was created as a space for exchange between local governments and their partners about the possibilities offered with the introduction of Smart technologies to local public management. The platform brings together local governments; associations and networks of local governments; service and technology providers from the private sector; universities, experts and research institutes; international organizations and from civil society; ministries and national departments in charge of innovation in public management. Uraía facilitates peer-to-peer learning, fosters transfer and adaptation of Smart solutions, and encourages experimentation.

We are currently working with UN-Habitat's Local Government and Decentralisation Unit through the Uraía Platform project with the Global Fund for Cities' Development (FMDV) on how smart technologies can help on collecting more municipal finances, etc. It is also a learning platform. We have recently collaborated with them in the publication of guidelines, including the management of Private Public Partnerships (PPPs) for Smart

Cities management. In terms of PPPs for Smart City management[5], there are a number of useful recommendations, it is a more practical and direct approach. The document that presents these recommendations is the result of a workshop held in Oslo in June[6] that brought together representatives of local governments and their associations, private sector, research centres, civil society and international organizations from Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia. Participants shared their experiences through a dynamic discussion, and this publication is the result of that workshop, based on real experience. There are a lot of recommendations for how cities can negotiate with private companies for Smart solutions, including key aspects to consider.

When you try to share knowledge, it can be more practical to have guidelines or 'tips' to help the cities. Often there are a lot of policy papers or position papers, but sometimes it is better to be practical.

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3    http://www.uclg-digitalcities.org/en/seminar-modernization-municipal-management/

4    http://www.uraia.org/home

5    http://www.uclg-digitalcities.org/en/links-and-publications/publications/

6    http://www.uclg-digitalcities.org/en/committee-collaborates-uraia-oslo. Access the agenda of this workshop here: http://issuu.com/dianitalop/docs/agenda_en_fc5039e994579a