

METROPOLITAN PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE IN BRAZIL: HOW THE USE OF SDG DATA CAN HELP TO DELIVER BETTER RESULTS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, urban areas are characterized not by individual cities but as metropolitan regions, often grouping together millions of citizens across the borders of multiple municipal governments. Currently, Brazil has more than 90 metropolitan regions, totaling nearly 100 million inhabitants, distributed in more than 1,300 municipalities. Nevertheless, **metropolitan-focused policies in Brazil** have been off the government agenda for a while, particularly in the last two decades. The approval of the new Constitution in 1988 greatly empowered local public authorities, reduced the role of the inter-federative management and collaboration, and limited coordination of geographic territories beyond the borders of an individual city. Even though it was not the center of urban policy, metropolitan-led policies such as participatory planning led to a rise of a metropolitan identity among citizens.

In early 2015, the Metropolitan Statute (Law no. 13,089) was passed in the Brazilian legislature, finally requiring integrated metropolitan planning. The legislation dictates shared responsibilities between cities and states under a coordinated mechanism, including participation of civil society in the deliberative sphere. It also requires that each of the 90 metropolitan regions develop an Integrated Urban Development Plan (PDU) by January 2018. To date, none of the Brazilian metropolitan areas have finished this whole process.

Multiple global frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, emphasize the importance of integrating and adopting those international standards in the development of the Metropolitan Plans. In this context, over the past 18 months, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), in partnership with GIZ – the German Cooperation for Sustainable Development - and Casa Fluminense, a Rio de Janeiro-based civil society association, have participated in an initiative to better understand the challenges and opportunities for the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs in metropolitan regions in Brazil. The result of the cooperation is the **Metropolitan SDG Observatory**, also known as **METRODS** (in Portuguese), an initiative dedicated to advancing metropolitan development in Brazil.

THE PROBLEM

After the President's impeachment process, in August 2016, the discussions regarding the **2030 Agenda** in Brazil were paused and the interaction between national government and civil society was stopped. As a result of this, Brazil has not established **yet an official national SDG indicator framework or national goals to be pursued until 2030**, even though an **official national government commission** has been recently established to monitor the 2030 Agenda, with participation of different sectors, including civil society. Due to the economic and political crises in the country, there are even recently rumors that the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics doesn't have the necessary financial resources guaranteed for the development of the **next national Census** and, in fact, it **might not be conducted at all**.

Based on this, civil society has been looking to fill in the monitoring gaps by using localized and context-specific indicators to track progress at different scales. One critical output of this effort is the **"Spotlight Synthesis Report: the 2030 sustainable development agenda in Brazil"**, which was presented during the UN High Level Political Forum in July 2017. The Brazilian Civil Society Working Group for the 2030 Agenda prepared this report for the SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17, in opposition to the **Brazilian Voluntary National Review**. The VNR presented in New York was produced with no participation and only focused in positive numbers, presenting a framework very different of the actual Brazilian social and economic situation.

Right now, it's already known that the Brazilian Government did not sign to present a VNR in the HLPF 2018, reinforcing the perception that in the following years less attention will be given to the 2030 Agenda by national government, and that alternative initiatives will be indispensable to guarantee the achievement of the SDG goals.

Those facts happen exactly in the moment when **metropolitan areas** need accurate data to meet the deadline for the elaboration of the **Integrated Urban Development Plans** and as the National Congress is discussing the **incorporation of the 2030 Agenda** into their government **budget planning processes**.

Metropolitan areas concentrate more than 50% of the Brazil's population, and face unique challenges in sectors such as housing, urban mobility, health, sanitation and public safety, among others. Metropolitan areas in Brazil are created by laws proposed by Governors, most of the time designed to consolidate political support or access to national funds. The inner city usually attracts more funds and investments than the peripheral municipalities due to its technical capacity and strategical political power, even if the others have more needs.

The lack of technical planning capacity of city staff in peripheral areas of the metropolis reduces chances to access national and state funds and other investment possibilities. The internal inequalities between the cities that compose the metropolitan areas are huge and the total absence of integrated planning in the past decades has made it even worse. The production of data that can help those processes is usually concentrated in the state government hands and sometimes not even the capital cities have departments responsible for data collection or production.

SOLUTIONS

A **Book of Practices** (available in Portuguese and English) was developed through the SDSN/GIZ partnership to provide valuable inputs on the ongoing Brazilian initiatives on the reality of the Sustainable Development Goals in metropolitan areas, and provide guidance to local stakeholders on adopting the **2030 Agenda**.

During the evaluation session of the SDSN/GIZ partnership last May, when the Book of Practices first draft was released, a group of actors from different sectors working with the 2030 Agenda - which practices are described in the Book - have identified the need for a better understanding and more robust monitoring of the reality of SDGs in metropolitan areas in Brazil. The outcome of this meeting was the commitment of those actors to work together in the creation of observatories in metropolitan areas¹, as a civil society initiative to the Brazilian reality regarding the issues 2030 Agenda and metropolitan areas.

The **Metropolitan SDG Observatory** is being organized in response to this and it seeks to help especially peripheral cities of the metropolitan areas to improve their planning capacity through the use of SDG oriented localized data, reducing

inequalities and helping Brazil to reach the 2030 Agenda goals. Capacity building activities for civil society and public servants regarding budget planning and monitoring and evaluation of public policies are part of the METRODS outcomes in order to change this picture of inequalities and to improve the population lives.

It is a **network of institutions and organizations** from civil society, the public and private sectors, and academia, with the overall objective to identify, disseminate and monitor indicators related to SDG 11 in the major metropolitan regions of Brazil.

METRODS is not only concerned with the development of a data system to support the monitoring of SDG goals in Brazil. It is focused on converting **data into action**, through the creation of a data network that will support participatory decision-making processes in order to deliver better results in the achievement of SDG goals, according to the integrated urban development metropolitan plans. The network will also help in the Brazilian monitoring process of SDG 11 by civil society, empowering and qualifying its representatives in the official forums of discussion of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

HOW IT WAS DONE

METRODS is employs a strongly **participatory approach** both in the process of institutional design as well as indicator development and data decision-making activities. The METRODS initiative convenes a **coalition of institutions**, featuring different areas of expertise, who merge their knowledge and collaborate to address the multidimensional realities of sustainable development in metropolitan areas. Based on the current Brazilian structures regarding metropolitan governance, METRODS is deemed as a **solution** that integrates **technical and institutional efforts** which fill the gap between Brazilian legal framework and the absence in past decades of comprehensive sustainable development planning and monitoring in metropolitan regions.

The initial organization and structure of the METRODS network was based on the group of institutions who integrated the Book of Practices for the SDSN/GIZ Solutions Initiative. Those institutions' work is directly connected to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Brazil.

- *Structuring Process.* To establish a vision and a mandate for METRODS, individual meetings in São Paulo and Belo Horizonte were convened in May 2017 with the initial network group participants and additional actors, indicated by METRODS coordination or its participants, including: Sustainable Cities Program, Public Agenda, SEADE Foundation, Datapedia, Cities Alliance, National Front of Mayors, Institute Democracy and Sustainability, Belo Horizonte Metropolitan Agency, and Our BH, among others. During these meetings the draft concept was presented, and partners shared their different experiences and capabilities, indicating their inputs to the observatory activities.
- *Concept Note Preparation and Public Presentation.* Next, a concept note outlining the **mission, specific objectives, governance structure and Letter of Commitment** (Annex) of METRODS was developed and shared with the network of meeting participants. Once approved by all, a slide presentation on METRODS was made at the initiative's first appearance in the National Congress of Brazil for a Public Audience about the SDGs.
- *Engaging Local Government Leadership.* The primary objective of METRODS is to provide **technical support to local and state governments** for the development of action plans that aim to achieve the SDGs. To guarantee effective participation of mayors and governors, a second round of meetings with mayors associations and governmental departments was convened in Brasília in June 2017.
- *Fundraising.* A fundraising proposal was elaborated to be shared within the participants of the network to guarantee **resources for structuring** the initiative and **implementing** the observatories pilot projects. The strategy is to share in quotes the total amount for each of the phases to build METRODS – indicators, governance structure and pilot projects, so any partner of the project can internalize part

of the costs into their own projects, or even guarantee small contributions to keep the project going on.

- *Drafting Local SDG Indicators.* METRODS' main activities were defined during a full network meeting, and a first draft of a set of local SDG 11 indicators, elaborated by the coordination, is under discussion. This draft considered UNDP-suggested indicators for Brazil, indicators from partners' projects and some others proposed by the project coordination. Due to potential national government cutbacks on census and research activities, these early discussions about indicators targeted **local and regional governments as the primary data source**. The network also noted that data for key national indicators, such as housing deficits and population living in slums, may not be maintained. So, instead of focusing on diagnosis and results data, the first discussion on indicators focused in **process indicators** to evaluate the local actions that might directly influence and help in the achievement of SDG 11 targets. The network has proposed that METRODS should monitor in metropolitan areas the existence and effectiveness of local public plans, policies, facilities and participatory councils related to housing, risk management, accessibility, public spaces, green areas and resilience, covering most of the main SDG 11 goals. This draft set of indicators will be then used to prepare pilot projects that will implement observatories in the metropolitan areas of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Belo Horizonte.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND LESSONS

HIGH DEPENDENCY ON OFFICIAL NATIONAL DATA CAN COMPROMISE RESULTS

Though some important baselines use available official national data (e.g. slum dwellers), whether this data will continue to be collected by national authorities, and therefore if it could be used for monitoring indicators for the long term, is uncertain. The METRODS network has reached out to national authorities to resolve this issue, but no official discussion has moved forward as of yet. In the interim, METRODS is developing local data solutions, however, due to limitations, not all SDG 11 targets may be included in the final set of indicators.

CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS MUST BE CONSIDERED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Data collection is not a simple task for local and state governments, and some might never have done this before. The total absence of localized data and of a capable local team **might delay local SDG monitoring**. Guidelines for local SDG data development will be prepared and every metropolitan area observatory team will be trained before the beginning of the activities, so they will be able to support governments in the data collection process. Partnerships with local universities will be established in order to reduce training costs. However, financial resources must be guaranteed for capacity building, even in times of budget shortage, so that permanent civil servants can be trained and continuously oriented to provide accurate data.

USE OF LOCALIZED DATA AS MAIN SOURCE OF INFORMATION WITHOUT COMPROMISING RESULTS

Once it was established that **localized data is one of the main sources of information** for monitoring SDG 11 at METRODS, a careful analyses of possible indicators is being developed, considering: (i) type of information, considering source, availability and periodicity; (ii) relevance to the targets; (iii) grade of difficulty for data collection; (iv) alternatives for official national data that might not be available or actualized during the monitoring process. This review process will allow the network to define a set of indicators, establishing a minimum number of common indicators for all metropolitan areas to use. The index is intended to establish a high standard for shared measurement and cross-comparison between locations. As explained above, localized data solutions, as alternatives for official national data, are being considered in this selection. This includes data produced by civil society, guaranteeing a wider scope of coverage for the SDG 11 goals.

A COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE BASED ON MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

METRODS is a **network of organizations** (Annex) with different backgrounds engaged with the 2030 Agenda. It represents the thoughts of a group of organizations committed to sustainable development in different ways. This commitment guarantees a

broader approach to the discussions and gives the Observatory more recognition, respect and open doors. It doesn't represent any political position, allowing the interaction between organizations and government entities with different points of view, guaranteeing better results in its discussions.

NEXT STEPS AND GUIDANCE FOR FUTURE ACTION

Define the set of indicators and find resources for the implementation of observatories pilot projects are the next steps of METRODS. The formation of local groups to establish the core of the metropolitan observatories are being encourage, so fundraising can be already done by them.

Unfortunately our methodologies are still not available online, but as soon as new contributions arrive, a website will be created and the work developed so far will be available for all. In the meantime, we'll keep looking for new partners and opportunities to discuss and promote METRODS, together with the Brazilian Civil Society Working Group for the 2030 Agenda.

References

1. The proposed observatory had an initial focus on SDG 11.

ANNEX

METRODS LETTER OF COMMITMENT

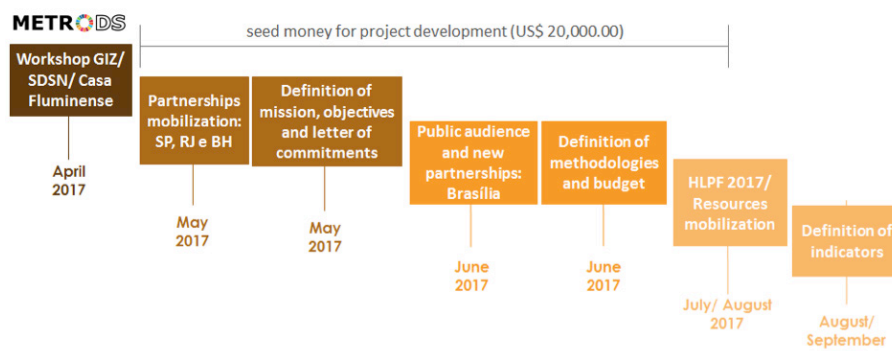
The members of the Executive Council of the Metropolitan SDG Observatory - METRODS - reaffirm their commitment and role together for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Brazil, and assume the commitment to the METRODS network which calls to:

- Collaborate with the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals within the scope of METRODS, providing methodologies and inputs that enable a better analysis of the proposed indicators, respecting the work developed by each member and working collectively to achieve the initiative's objectives;
- Contribute to fundraising and mobilization of new partners, individually or collectively, aiming to maintain the work of the Executive Secretariat and the structuring of new observatories;
- Share methodologies, publications and products that can contribute to the observatories' work;
- Protect the integrity of the initiative by not using the results of the work for commercial purposes;
- Encourage the exchange of experiences between participants of the Network, as well as among the local observatories located in different metropolitan regions of Brazil;
- Collaborate in the process of dissemination of METRODS' work.

METRODS TIMELINE



METRODS CO-CREATION JOURNEY



NETWORK GROUP (SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS)

