

## NEWS



## Going global to solve local issues

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Globalisation has brought global issues close to home. More than 60% of the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be implemented without the direct involvement of local and regional governments. As Jan Erasmus, Johannesburg's Director of Strategy and International Relations, states "Cities experience and manage the most complex challenges linked to globalisation." But with all the challenges brought on by globalisation, with the right leadership, globalisation can also bring new opportunity.

Johannesburg has been able to create safer, more inclusive and accessible public spaces thanks to their international activities. First created in response to a call from the Africities Summit for the creation of a regional knowledge-sharing platform on public spaces, the Centre on African Public Spaces (CAPS) was established by the City of Johannesburg in 2018. Putting public space at the core of their development, they

work to connect urban practitioners, policymakers, community groups, and scholars to reimagine and these key actors in Africa to



Jan Erasmus, Director of Strategy and International Relations of Johannesburg

In Seoul, South Korea, the Seoul Friendship Festival brings together more than 70 cities from all around the world. The cultural event enables connectivity, provides a platform for experience-sharing and brings a strong sense of global connectivity to its citizens. Additionally, international cultural events play an important role in international positioning and create opportunities for nurturing new projects by hosting a substantial number of government officials from around the globe in the city.

Toronto's One-to-Many Collaboration scheme has set the city apart as a leader in internationalisation. More than a single project, Toronto's international initiatives have shown a special approach to efficient resource allocation: the shift from a one-to-one mindset to a "one-to-many" focus. This transition in engagement with the international arena shows a proactive approach to the creation of "one-to-many" collaboration schemes that are aligned with Toronto's strategic objectives. This approach is also crucial to connect actors and optimize cooperation towards globally shared challenges. This featured portfolio management mindset indicates an important pathway for cities and metropolitan areas that are usually reactive to many one-to-one initiatives and are looking to develop coherent internationalisation strategies.

It's abundantly evident that metropolises have much to gain by engaging with the international sphere to tackle their local issues. By strategically positioning themselves in the global sphere, these cities foster partnerships towards shared global well-being that lead to plans and strategies to influence the global agenda in a way that brings value back to their own citizens. However, measuring the outcomes of internationalisation strategies is challenging especially given that data collection and analysis practices are not standardised. Here, the famous saying rings true: you can't manage what you don't measure. How can cities know if their internationalisation strategies are working if the results are never analysed and evaluated?

City and metropolitan authorities are by definition local, and they rightly face questioning as they stretch onto the global arena. As so many cities are operating with scarce resources, citizens are eager to know if internationalisation does more to mitigate or amplify negative impacts coming from the global context. It's the role of local authorities to extract the most benefits possible out of their international relations.

Of course, this process looks different from city to city. It's key that internationalisation strategies are aligned with the overall priorities and needs of the city. The conceptualisation of an internationalisation

strategy should start with a reflection on the city's priorities and needs through direct communication with local stakeholders. These goals will define how the success of the strategy is measured. The need to understand the impacts of city internationalisation strategies goes far beyond their attachment to best practices in policy analysis. In the current context of multiple crises and increasing demand for building international connections that help governments to tackle their challenges, monitoring the success of a city's internationalisation strategy is more important than ever.

This urgent need for effective internationalisation strategies led us to bring together what five Metropolis' members (Barcelona, Santiago Metropolitan Regional Council, Toronto, Seoul and Johannesburg) have learned through their first-hand experience. With the comparative study "Monitoring internationalisation strategies in cities and metropolitan areas" we offer metropolitan policy-makers a tool to cast a critical look upon their internationalisation strategies and to re-design them for success in an evolving global context through the use of indicators to measure the performance of the city's internationalisation strategy.

The three main challenges cities face in this process are conceptualisation, evaluation and methodology. The challenge of conceptualisation stems from the conceptual gap as cities attempt to translate internationalisation strategies at the national level to the local level. The challenge of evaluation refers to the lack of comparison with other actors or with past performance. The methodological challenge lies in the fact that no one methodology can be applied across different issues. Therefore, there also exists a lack of monitoring effectiveness.

To tackle these three barriers, the report proposes two sets of indicators: deployment and outcome indicators. These were chosen based on state-of-the-art literature, case studies and the identification of international best practices. Deployment indicators assess existing strategies and/or guide the construction of new strategies for internationalisation, providing the guidelines for effective implementation.

During the report's launch event, the Director of International Relations of Barcelona, Felip Roca, pointed out that, in addition to the lack of qualitative indicators to better monitor the performance of international relations strategies, there is still a long way to go in terms of institutional recognition. According to him, "cities are part of the global narrative, but we still do not have a seat at the table".

Barcelona structures international relations on four pillars: Starting from the city brand based on values and municipal activism. One of the main pillars in its external action is that of values, where cooperation is at the backbone of international relations. The second pillar is to ensure a strategic approach inspired by the SDGs and its principles, which reinforces the principle of localisation of the Agenda 2030 as a key aspect for its successful implementation. The third pillar is advocacy. Barcelona is present in over 100 city networks, all of them trying to have their impact to diverse topics and dimensions of the Global Agendas. Finally, the last pillar of Barcelona's international strategy is mobilisation of knowledge, which according to Roca this fourth pillar is connected to the other three due to the richness of exchanging with other cities and the constant need of learning from each other.



Felip Roca. Director of International Relations of Barcelona

As hinted by its name, outcome indicators support the monitoring of existing strategies and their diverse impacts in different sectors. The guiding principle of all indicators should be that the internationalisation strategies should support the interests of the local community. Strategies should be complementary to local plans and policies, looking to improve them instead of contradicting them. As a result, by using both sets of indicators, policymakers are able to develop ongoing practices for implementation and monitoring. It is crucial that this methodological guide is properly calibrated to the social-economic trends, cultural specificities, institutional arrangements, and political landscapes of the urban context. Through this process, knowledge becomes institutionalised, passing down to future governments, which allows for greater continuity regardless of shifting politics.

To apply these insights to your own city's internationalisation strategy, read the report for yourself [here](#).

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