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View of Santiago, Chile

## Latin American Cities Innovative urban policies

**T**he right to fuel-efficient and low-polluting mobility for all is a necessity today. That means encouraging the most economical modes of transport for people and local authorities alike. The solution clearly lies in developing public transport, especially in urban areas.

In Bogota, this approach has been in place since the early 2000s with *the Transmilenio*, a two-lane bus rapid transit system that carries almost 2 million people every day at faster speeds than the Paris metro. Express busways not only use space better, they also give buses - the most fuel-efficient means of transportation - the comparative advantage of speed and regularity of service. Today, this high frequency bus service model is replicated across cities of the South and the North. Other innovative modes of urban transport have also emerged in Latin America, especially in Medellin. The city has made integration of informal settlements in peripheral neighbourhoods into the rest of the city a key aspect of its urban policy, the spearhead of which is the development of a novel public transport system. Improved access for the poor hillside neighbourhoods is provided by two additional modes of transport: a giant escalator that ascends 384 m and, above all, a cable car known as Metrocable. This silent and efficient system is linked to existing underground lines and allows residents to reach the city centre in 45 minutes rather than two-and-a-half hours. By opening up neighbourhoods and creating new central areas, these innovations are restructuring the city in a novel manner. They also have a major impact on the quality of life of households and promote environmentally friendly economic and cultural development.

At Medellin, urban policy goes even further, proposing the integrated development of ghettoized neighbourhoods through mobility-friendly policies. The policy of Comprehensive Urban Projects (PUI) involves massive intervention by public

authorities in public spaces and services (state-of-the-art libraries, schools, hospitals, parks, etc.), housing (rehousing schemes, securitisation) and economic development (policies to access micro-credit). The projects contribute to improving the living conditions of residents, reducing violence and social exclusion and, consequently, transforming the entire social, cultural and economic fabric. The Metrocable also allows Medellin to be connected with Arvi Park - a vast natural park and the town's green lung - thereby making recreational and environmental education services accessible to the entire population.

There is no shortage of urban and environmental integration policies in Latin America. Curitiba, in particular, has focused on taking greater account of biodiversity in the urban environment. The simultaneous development of public transport and a green corridor across town (on the banks of Rio Barigüi) linking existing parks ensures ecological continuity between the different spaces.

The cities of Latin America are therefore social and environmental innovation laboratories on key issues such as mobility, housing, waste management and energy efficiency. The reforms implemented over the last few years reflect the forward-thinking decisions of municipal leaders and deserve wider publicity. The Metrocable has inspired a similar system in Rio de Janeiro and Caracas. Several cities in France are also considering its implementation. Undoubtedly, solutions devised against a shortage of resources are particularly suited to saving energy and meeting social needs. In combining economy of resources, solidarity and global vision, South-North technology transfers are proving to be an asset at the very core of the transformations taking place.

In this "Villes en Développement" issue on Latin America cities, you will find numerous examples of innovative policies. ■

**Denis Baupin**

Vice-president of the National Assembly since 2012, Denis Baupin was Deputy Mayor of Paris from 2001 to 2012 responsible in turn for transport, sustainable development, environment and climate. As manager of the «Climate Plan» for the city of Paris, he put in place a transport policy promoting «soft modes» and public transport.



# AFD in Latin America: funding sustainable and inclusive cities

Fabrice Richy  
richyf@afd.fr

*Latin America is undergoing rapid urban growth that creates tensions and inequalities. Yet it can rely on the impetus given by some large cities whose highly innovative urban policies are blazing the trail for more inclusive and sustainable development. It is this dynamic that the Agence française de développement supports through its funding and cooperation programmes developed with Latin American cities.*  
Fabrice Richy, Director of AFD's Colombia branch, describes below the aims and initial outcomes of this initiative.

Faced with serious infrastructural shortcomings, numerous Latin American cities have adopted ambitious policies to address the problem of poor urban public facilities and services. Some see this as an opportunity to come up

with innovative sustainable urban development policies that strengthen social cohesion and reduce the ecological footprint of those policies. AFD is committed to strongly supporting policies which address priority issues, such as housing and mobility and propose new ways of meeting the chal-

enges confronting the city. In this respect, AFD is an original and novel fund provider. Indeed, of the large bi- or multilateral development banks AFD is the only agency to lend significant sums of money directly to towns and local authorities and ensuring a better fit between policy and local urban development strategies. Urban mobility is a priority for public policy in many Latin American cities. Several projects have received funding in this field, including one involving the construction of Santo Domingo's second metro line to ease congestion in the capital and promote the development of urban public spaces that encourage the use of soft modes and public transport systems.



Bird's-eye view of part of the city of Bogotá

without state-backed guarantees. In Latin America alone, AFD has become the development bank for cities. In Mexico, the agency supports the Federal Mortgage Society SHF's housing policy aimed at improving accessibility to dwellings

and ensuring a better fit between policy and local urban development strategies. Urban mobility is a priority for public policy in many Latin American cities. Several projects have received funding in this field, including one involving the construction of Santo Domingo's second metro line to ease congestion in the capital and promote the development of urban public spaces that encourage the use of soft modes and public transport systems.

AFD also encourages initiatives by proactive and pioneering municipalities such as Curitiba (Brazil) and Medellín (Colombia), which have turned their mobility policies into strong drivers of social development and inclusion within low-income neighbourhoods. It is currently funding the extension of BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) systems in Curitiba and the Metrocable in Medellín with the aim of promoting integrated urban projects that, like Medellín's «urban social» policy, develop coordina-

ted sectoral policies and focus public investment on informal settlements. Also in Medellín, AFD's \$250 million direct loan to the municipality, undoubtedly one of the largest of its kind ever made, is financing the construction of Latin America's first new generation tramway, work on which is in progress

As well as being a development bank, the agency wishes to play an initiating role in exchanges of sustainable urban development know-how and views. Accordingly, it uses bank loans to fund technical cooperation and exchange projects that are highly regarded by its partners. In Mexico, for example, AFD provides technical cooperation funding for urban densification projects initiated by ANRU (National Agency for Urban Renewal) and ANAH (National Housing Agency). In Rio de Janeiro, the Ile de France Transport Union (STIF), in partnership with the Ile de France Institute for Urban Planning and Development and the engineering consultants SYSTRA, has engaged in discussions with Rio's local government and city authorities. The city of Medellín has brought to bear the expertise of the Paris Urban Planning Agency (APUR) to support the «Medellin

2030» long-term planning project. The loan granted to «Empresas Publicas» – a public undertaking of the city of Medellín and an international reference in urban management – funds technical cooperation with the Federation of Local Public Companies (FEPL) in the areas of corporate governance and relations with the municipality of Medellín. Technical cooperation programmes also provide support for new governance initiatives, such as the establishment of State/Region planning contracts and town contracts in Colombia

based on the French model. Adjustment of this tool to the Colombian context has given rise to exchanges with DATAR on the methodology of this new form of territorial extension of public action.

The agency is also keen to encourage the debate of ideas on the methodologies for building the sustainable cities of tomorrow. Two events have been especially fruitful in this regard. One was the «Cities and Climate Change» summit held in Bogotá from 19-21 November 2012, which brought together elected officials, ex-

perts and representatives of civil society from all over the world to exchange best practices and innovative initiatives in sustainable urban development. The other was the Year of France in Brazil in 2009 during which the agency and the Ministry of Urban Affairs brought together Brazilian and French promoters of urban initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency.

One of the great challenges for urban policymakers in Latin America today is whether development banks will support urban

initiatives in small and medium-sized cities. Half the urban population of Latin America in fact lives in cities with less than 500,000 inhabitants, i.e. in cities lacking institutional and financial resources. The major challenge facing those cities is how to address their vulnerability to private interests and inequalitarian or unsustainable growth patterns, exacerbated by their failure to channel resources towards or exercise meaningful control over their physical development. AFD intends to contribute towards addressing this challenge. ■

## YO SOY PISCO

Claudia Amico  
Director of Surveys and Urban Projects at  
*Espacio Expresión* (Pisco, Peru)  
[www.espacioexpresion.org](http://www.espacioexpresion.org)

*The town of Pisco (60,000 inhabitants) is located 290 km south of Lima. A 7.9-magnitude earthquake struck it in August 2007 virtually destroying the city.*

Shortly after the earthquake, several city professionals involved in urban and social policy set up the Espacio Expresión association for urban development to encourage the creation of public spaces based on a participative approach.

The association focuses on the seafront because of its tourist potential and of issues such as pollution, safety and abandonment. In 2011, it put in place, with the sup-

port of the municipality and the private sector, a «Strategic Programme for Comprehensive Development of the Pisco Seafront», also known as «I Am Pisco» (*Yo soy Pisco*). The programme provides public authorities with a portfolio of quantified projects and a social management scheme for families in the area. The aim is radical transformation of the area through the creation of public spaces that encourage economic and social activity.



Peru: Innovation on the move or how to pay your local taxes simply at a bank branch

The project involves converting the coastline into a large tourist site and improving its accessibility by connecting it to nearby tourist centres such as Paracas and major transport hubs (airport, motorway, port, etc).

In 2012, the project won second prize at the international urban development and social inclusion project competition organised by the «Andean Development Corporation» (CAF). ■



# The sustainability index (IDL) a tool for social housing policy in Mexico

Guillermo Velasco Rodriguez

gvelasco@centromariomolina.org

*Former Environment Secretary in the State of Mexico, Guillermo Velasco now coordinates sustainable development programmes at the Mario Molina Centre, a highly influential national think tank that defines public policy on sustainable development, energy efficiency and environmental protection.*

*Results from the IDL index have led to fresh policies to promote sustainable social housing in Mexico.*

In order to have a comprehensive housing assessment tool, in 2012 the Mario Molina centre compiled the 'sustainable housing and direct environment index' (IDL). The fruit of inter-institutional cooperation, the IDL comprises 30 indicators measured on a common scale and used to characterize housing and its urban, economic and social environment over time. These indicators are weighted by factors that take into account the physical and socio-economic conditions for the integration of housing into its environment. The result is a composite index that takes account of regional specificities and encourages a balance between the environmental, economic and social aspects of housing.

As part of the project, researchers carried out a case study on a representative sample of social dwelling stock in four metropolitan regions of Mexico: Cancun, Monterrey, Tijuana and Mexico valley. To date, over 3,800 surveys have been collected from 35 social housing estates. This data, combined with housing life cycle analysis, measures the direct and indirect environmental impact of social housing construction and use. It also helps to modelize

the behaviour and perceptions of users regarding the environmental, economic and social aspects implied by the construction and use of this type of housing.

With regard to the environment, the index analysed housing performance by measuring the environmental impact of its production process (type and production of raw materials used) and occupancy. The Centre thus drew up, for each region and type of occupant, a typology of the materials, design methods and construction processes used in social housing estates. The survey also helped to obtain data on the consumer and transport patterns of occupants.

Next, on a per-square-metre-of-living-space basis, the study sought to quantify the environmental footprint of homes. The factors taken into account included volume and type of consumption of open areas, consumption of water and energy drawn from public supply systems, discharges of polluting or harmful metallic or organic substances, emissions of volatile organic compounds, emissions of compounds modifying soil and water acidity, production of phosphates altering the composition of water and needing

wastewater treatment, and production of solid waste and carbon dioxide throughout the housing unit's lifespan.

At the same time, the economic and social indices measured the impact of housing and transport costs on family income, savings resulting from the use of ecotechnologies, occupants' satisfaction levels, utilisation of street furniture, accessibility of public transport systems and the role of local bodies, regulations or facilities for the upkeep and maintenance of dwellings.

To have a convenient method for comparing indicators, the values of the data gathered were measured on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 denotes no water treatment and 100 full wastewater treatment. The scores were then weighted on a 0-1 scale according to the specificity of problems in each context studied. On overpopulation, for example, Chiapas was awarded 1 because of its overcrowding problem, whereas the Federal District was awarded zero. This standardisation and weighting facilitated the measurement and processing of each indicator.

## A tool in the service of public policy

In broad terms, the index

shows that social housing scores 41 to 48 points on a scale of zero to hundred and has average to low sustainability.

These results, along with the systemic nature of IDL, have helped to identify key factors in housing sustainability optimization. Location shows that housing in equipped urban areas rather than under-equipped ones can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 35% and increase the financial resources of households by 15% simply because of lower transport costs.

Mexico's social housing policies have taken into account these findings, together with other data and recommendations derived from the analysis. There is no doubt that IDL is having a significant impact on policy. It has even helped change the rules governing the award of the «This is your home» (*Esta es tu Casa*) grant as one of the award criteria now is housing location within urban areas.

Similarly, IDL has encouraged the setting up of a cross-disciplinary panel on housing (*Mesa Transversal de Vivienda*) and served as one of the basic documents in the new national housing policy. Efforts are under way to include IDL in the single dwelling re-

gister, thereby providing first-time homebuyers with more information.

IDL has been used to develop the «Sustainable Homes Guarantee Programme», which takes into account the financial obstacles to the construction of vertical housing or homes meeting above-



average sustainability criteria. A risk analysis is in progress on the inclusion in the green mortgage loan (*Hipoteca Verde*) of lower transport costs resulting from better-located homes. ■

Mexico:  
a social housing project

## Medellin sets out to reclaim its neighbourhoods

Alejandro Echeverri

www.eafit.edu.co/urbam

*The spirit of cities is reflected in their meeting places. In the '90s, at the height of the violence related to drug trafficking, Medellin no longer had any meeting places. It had become a desolate city in a fragmented society ruled by fear. Things have clearly changed since, as Alexandre Echeverri, Director of the Centre for Environmental Studies (URBAM) at Eafit University, explains. Director of urban projects at the municipality of Medellin from 2004 to 2007, he is one of the urban social planners to have transformed the city.*

Today, spaces such as Moravia Cultural Centre bear witness to this change. Numerous young people from a neighbourhood that was a city dump in the '60s and a scene of violence and exclusion between 1980 and 1990 flock to this place to release their energy and creativity through rap and hip-hop. A cultural centre, designed by the architect Rogelio Salmona, was opened in 2007, and is now an integral part of a broader programme of education and urban and social transformation of poor neighbourhoods in the north of the city. In 2012, another city was at the heart of the play staged in the main courtyard – one that yearns for change while renewing itself. Groups of young musicians from the city's formerly disreputable districts were showcased at a large and splendid opening of the «Public space in action»

international exhibition. Despite the vast challenges it continues to face, Medellin today has reclaimed spaces for its residents through education and urban social development policies. It is a city where urban policies have helped to kick-start a process of virtuous change.

Medellin is located at the heart of Colombia in a long and narrow valley crossed from north to south by a river and enclosed between two mountainsides rising to a height of 1,400 metres and 2,400 metres respectively. In the '50s, it was commonly known as «the silver cup» because of its key role in the coffee economy and its position as the second most populated city of Colombia and the country's leading industrial city. The population rose from 350,000 in those days to 2 million in the '80s. Today, the conurbation has 3.5 million inhabitants. This rapid

growth is largely the result of forced displacement due to violence in rural areas. It has led to the rapid expansion of informal settlements on the northern slopes of the valley and created a division between these districts - known as «*Las comunas*» (townships), for the most part informal and home to 40% of the population - and the centre and south of the valley inhabited by the middle and upper classes. In the '80s and '90s the drug cartels arrived in Medellin and enlisted young people from the «townships» in what became «Pablo's city» in reference to Pablo Escobar. In 1991, Medellin was the world's most violent city, with 381 homicides for every 100,000 inhabitants, or 20 homicides a day.

Since the '90s, public authorities, private enterprises, the academic world and non-governmental organisations have acted in concert to transform

the quality of life for the residents of marginalised neighbourhoods. However, it was under the direction of the Mayor Sergio Fajardo that the city decided in 2004 to adopt a public policy aimed at reducing those shortcomings and addressing the recurring problems of violence. The policy combined education, cultural, empowerment and ownership programmes, resulting in the urban transformation of some of the neighbourhoods situated in the worst affected areas in the north of the city. This policy was continued and extended during Mayor Alonso Salazar's term from 2008 to 2011.

The urban transformation strategy has been implemented through the urban social development programme and its Comprehensive Urban Project (PUI) mechanism, a key instrument for reclaiming and rehabilitating the public spaces





*The Metrocable and the Spanish Library  
in Medellín's Santo Domingo district (Colombia)*

of the city's neighbourhoods worst hit by the problems of inequality and violence. The first intervention model in 2004 used the commissioning of the cable car transport system (Metrocable) and its new stations to define the basis of the territorial strategy. The northeast PUI sought to optimise station locations to strengthen and widen the impact of the Metrocable. Subsequently, a neighbourhood consolidation process was put in place to structure and develop the

territory through community educational and cultural infrastructure projects, parks, streets and interconnecting footbridges between neighbourhoods. The Comprehensive Urban Project (PUI) has helped to drive the social inclusion and development process by offering an alternative to the violence and indifference prevailing in those neighbourhoods for decades. In this way, mere bridges, by connecting neighbourhoods, have helped inte-

grate communities hitherto divided by imaginary and impassable borders. Another example is the Santo Domingo library. Making the most of its strategic location and the educational and cultural programmes it runs, the library has become a focal point for the community and a gathering place where young people are steered towards knowledge and culture and away from guns. These neighbourhoods are seeing the fruits of community participation in numerous social programmes initiated by the municipality and a more robust public sector and civil society. The programmes have notably helped improve primary and secondary education coverage and protection for vulnerable people. Residents have seen the launch of numerous cultural, recreational and sports projects, along with citizen debates on the use of public space, respect for human rights, etc.

The urban social development programme implemented since 2004 seeks to make a qualitative leap in the way in which the comprehensive rehabilitation of neighbourhoods is designed. It makes use of tools like the Comprehensive Urban Project that serve to bring about structural, physical and social transformations in the strategic activities of poorly consolidated neighbourhoods with the aim of including marginalised communities sustainably. The city of Medellín has become a living laboratory where violence and exclusion have perhaps not been fully eradicated, but where neighbourhoods are undergoing substantive changes that are having a profound impact. New attitudes to culture and education are the best illustration of this change, reflected in new meeting spaces and in the physical and mental recapture of the street previously torn apart by violence. ■

sion makers, build new political, institutional, citizen and financial mechanisms, and roll out technical solutions based on multi-sectoral approaches. The Summit was part of a wider process of discussion and consultation, enriched by the diversity of participants, the range of cross-sectoral insights and the plurality of technical approaches, political ideologies, geographical origins and styles. We sought to promote a broad discussion around the types of communities, cities and regions we are building with a view to combating climate change together. We even included the views of opinion leaders as an integral and strategic part of the fight against climate change. The way in which information is created and disseminated and social perceptions and representations are shaped is crucial. Numerous cases - from cities

on every continent - were presented at the Bogota Summit. This helped to raise awareness of the leadership of local authorities in the face of this global challenge and the role of the various associations that were emerging to develop initiatives at various levels with different players. Of the major political and citizen messages that came out of the Summit, mention should be made of the following:

- The fight against climate change and the fight to reduce poverty must be closely linked, especially in a region like Latin America.
- Political will is crucial for launching and supporting initiatives to deal with global warming.
- The governance of cities, in the context of climate change, requires concerted efforts on the part of local authorities, the private sector and civil society.

Integrating the city into its wider region is vital for the sustainable development of our territories. Information and communication on cities and climate change require a paradigm shift. Lastly, while greenhouse gas emissions (GGE) of Latin-American cities are fairly low in global terms, the cities are aware they can set an example on this issue by including citizens and local communities.

The cities of the region have expressed on a number of occasions, including the Bogota Summit, their determination to work with each other to meet the challenges of climate change. Within the framework of the Summit, therefore, 17 new cities decided to sign the Mexico City Pact Against Climate Change and more than 25 Latin-American cities signed the Bogota Declaration on «Humane Cities Confronting Climate Change». ■



*Opening ceremony of the Bogota Summit*

## Latin American cities in the face of climate change

Ricardo Montezuma

[ricardomontezuma@ciudadhumana.org](mailto:ricardomontezuma@ciudadhumana.org)

*The fight against climate change is moving to the top of local political agendas in many Latin American cities. A civil engineer with a PhD in urban planning, Ricardo MONTEZUMA founded and directs Ciudad Humana - a foundation that promotes a participative approach for sustainable cities. In this connection, he has coordinated various initiatives on cities and climate change issues with the support of local, national and international authorities, in particular the French Embassy in Colombia and AFD. He files his report below.*

A first international seminar, held in 2011, was followed by a workshop for local authorities in early 2012 and the Bogotá Summit in November 2012. The summit featured many highlights, including political meetings, citizen assemblies, meetings with journalists,

extraordinary sessions of the Senate and of the Bogota Municipal Council, technical tours and numerous parallel activities related to civil society. Two reference documents on events at the summit were also published. The bulk of solutions already exist. For several years now, the numerous experts accom-

panying us at various meetings have been spreading the word among local authorities to make the fight against climate change a political priority. Therefore, the main challenge today is how to ensure that this technical and scientific knowledge remains on local, national and international

political agendas. That is why it is important to involve several tiers of administration. We must work together to improve the governance of our cities, instrumental in developing effective and fair policies. The Bogota Summit was one of the first attempts to link efforts between different deci-

## For a regional vision of Santiago

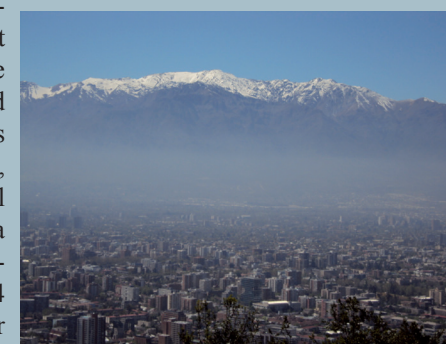
By Gerardo Ubilla Bravo, Geographer at the Regional Planning Department, [gubilla@gobiernosantiago.cl](mailto:gubilla@gobiernosantiago.cl) & Gilles Antier, IAU-IdF International Director, [gilles.antier@iau-idf.fr](mailto:gilles.antier@iau-idf.fr)

Fragile, confined and imbalanced, the Santiago conurbation has been continuously expanding for the last forty years. Successive development plans have more often accompanied than mastered this growth. Worse still, this urban sprawl lies at the heart of a very large metropolitan region (15,554 km<sup>2</sup>) that has never seen a proper comprehensive project.

An initial urban and rural development regional plan did in fact propose in 1999 more evenly spread growth across the region's urban areas, but it was never adopted. However, the project sparked

sufficient interest as a reference for a new long-term territorial framework. Its underlying principle was a series of regional centres in the west and the south, backed up in the north by a second group of intermediate centres, sometimes spawned by mega-projects. In line with the decentralisation under way in Chile, the regional government at the time conducted a study on a regional development strategy that would provide a framework for the future Regional Urban Development Plan (PROT). However, this was more an addition of sectoral

policies than a dynamic regional vision. The challenge for the resurrected PROT is to deliver a consistent project for the entire metropolitan region conceived as a common territory. By implementing the regional development strategy across the entire territory, PROT would provide not only a much-needed missing link, but also a frame of reference for the conurbation's current plan (PRMS). Discussions on this core issue for the Santiago region culminated in a workshop held in Paris in April 2013. However, the true exercise in «regional vision» will take place in Santiago in October. Its purpose is a non-prescriptive yet precise map, translating at last the shared vision of the main decision makers into a formal regional development document ahead of the forthcoming PROT. ■



*View of Santiago, Chile*

# In Brief

## • Fourth World Congress of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Rabat 1-4 October 2013.

The fourth UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) Congress will be held in Rabat (Morocco) on the topic «Imagining Society, Building Democracy». This large local government forum will bring together thousands of participants from local authorities, national public authorities, companies, civil society and international development agencies.

<http://www.uclg.org/Rabat2013>

## • World Urban Forum Medellin 7-11 April 2013

UN-Habitat held the 7th World Urban Forum (WUF) in Medellin, Colombia. Like Naples in 2011, Rio in 2009, Nankin in 2007, Vancouver in 2005, Barcelona in 2003 and Nairobi in 2001, the Medellin Forum brought together local authorities, public and private stakeholders, representatives of civil society and NGOs. It offered presentations on various topics, discussion panels and numerous parallel events on city and urban development issues. Link to <http://www.unhabitat.org/>

## • AdP Workshop Day, 6 September 2013

AdP-Villes en développement will hold its annual day of discussion in Paris on 6 September 2013. Entitled «Research and action for a sustainable city» the day will focus on relations between researchers and city professionals, particularly in southern and emerging countries.

Information and registration on <http://www.ville-developpement.org>



The issue is financed by AFD

Publication Manager:

**Yves Dauge,**

Deputy Mayor of Chinon

Editor-in-Chief:

**Marcel Belliot,**

Association des professionnels de l'urbain ADP-Villes

Editorial Committee:

**Gilles Antier**

**Michel Arnaud**

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**Louis-Jacques Vaillant**

**Emilie Maehara**

**Françoise Reynaud**

This issue has been produced in collaboration with **Fabrice Richy**, Director of AFD in Colombia

Translation:

**FEAT**

(Financial & Economic Authors & Translators)

Technical secretariat of  
The French Alliance for Cities and  
Territorial Development  
French Development Agency

Graphic design  
**Ap Conseil**

ISSN 1151 - 1672  
Subscription: 4 nos per year : 20 euros

# Publications



## CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE SUMMIT PROCEEDINGS

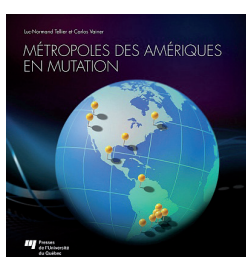
The Cities and Climate Change Summit held in Bogota from 19-21 November 2012 highlighted the role of cities in the face of climate change. It brought together local authorities, experts and representatives of civil society. The presence of numerous Latin-American mayors demonstrated the commitment of local authorities to tackle environmental issues.



## THE STATE OF LATIN AMERICAN CITIES :

UN-Habitat published in 2012 a new edition of the report on the state of Latin American and Caribbean cities. The report provides an overview of urbanisation in the region and analyses the demographic, social, economic, environmental and institutional conditions for urban development.

[http://www.onuhabitat.org/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=362&Itemid=235](http://www.onuhabitat.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=362&Itemid=235)



## MÉTROPOLES DES AMÉRIQUES EN MUTATION :

The *Presses de l'Université du Québec* have published a book containing a collection of papers by international researchers on urban, economic and social changes in a dozen North and South American cities. Are they going their separate ways or on the contrary converging? The book re-examines the deep cleavages in these cities and places them in the context of globalisation <http://www.puq.ca/catalogue/livres/metropoles-des-ameriques-mutation-1305.html>