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### **The fellowship at BCUS and the context**

During my academic visit to the Brussels Centre for Urban Studies I completed research and finished the writing up process of the book project entitled “Metropolitan Economic Development: The Political Economy of Urbanisation in Mexico”. At BCUS I spent the last and busiest stage of the writing up process. During most of my time during the fellowship I wrote Chapter 8, Chapter 9, Introduction and Conclusions. At the end of my stay I submitted the complete draft of this manuscript to the publisher.

Two research groups at the Brussels Centre for Urban Studies supported my fellowship: Cosmopolis and Interface Demography (ID). I was cordially received by Patrick Deboosere at ID and David Bassens at Cosmopolis; both supported my visiting research fellowship project. In addition to the writing up, while in Brussels I participated in a couple of academic activities. I was invited by Sylvie Gadeyne from the ID group to give a lecture in the lecture series 'European Social and Population Issues'. I also presented and discuss the book project in one of the Cosmopolis Lunch Seminar. I thank to Sylvie for the invitation and to colleagues who attended the Cosmopolis lunch seminar where I presented the book project. Last but not least, thank you to Elena Solonina for her support regarding administrative issues.

Working at BCUS was inspiring and stimulating. It was very useful to have a working space (provided by the ID group) and access to some of the electronic resources to get some relevant material. It was hard work and I hope to share my book when it is published. I also hope that we can engaged in further collaborations with researchers and students.

### **The project and results**

The aim of my book “Metropolitan Economic Development: The Political Economy of Urbanisation in Mexico” is to contribute to the debate and analysis of urbanisation and economic development in metropolitan areas in Mexico. The research deals with varied aspects of metropolitan areas, but

emphasis is placed on demographic trends, economic development, public policies and governance. Therefore, the fellowship project reflected significant interdisciplinary concerns about the issues of urbanisation, urban economic development, governance and planning.

The last part of the book emphasises the relevance of comparative perspectives in analysing metropolitan governance and urban policy. Chapter 9, in particular, includes a summary of the recent state of Mexico's National Urban Policy and those of other OECD federal countries that have experienced intense urban expansion, including Belgium and the United States. National Urban Policies have been considered important frameworks to deal with urbanisation issues in a coherent approach. In Chapter 9 I discuss that whereas there have been advances in the formulation of an explicit National Urban Policy in Mexico and Belgium, there has been much recent interest in the United States, which has a long tradition of home rule for municipal authorities. In the manuscript, the urbanisation process in Mexico is examined considering the increasing relevance of metropolitan areas. Mexico's National Urban Policy explicitly refers to the problem of metropolitan sprawl, in the United States there has long been debate about issues of coordination in metropolitan areas, while Belgium's National Urban Policy does not address metropolitan expansion explicitly. Another fundamental issue in the book is economic development in cities and policies. Mexico's National Urban Policy includes economic development objectives and Belgium's shows interest in attracting high-value economic activity. The United States' economic development strategy, for its part, is largely formulated and implemented at the local and state levels.

Comparative analysis of National Urban Policies across countries is difficult. Urban policy is a very broad concept, and policy objectives differ across countries because they are contingent on the specific challenges facing the cities and the urbanisation rates in each country. There are also varying degrees of political centralisation and forms of national government. Despite cross-country differences in urban policies within the OECD a number of comparable trends were identified: countries have recognised that national economic performance depends on the competitive capacity of their cities; development policies increasingly endorse a more pragmatic approach to balanced territorial development (while remaining concerned about territorial redistribution, national governments accept that a certain degree of concentration in the main cities is needed for national economic growth); and National Urban Policies are becoming proactive and looking forward rather than acting remedially.