



Our Members at a Glance

Interview with Inés Álvarez-Gortari *



Ines Alvarez-Gortari works at [Casa Fluminense](#) (CF), a civil society organization based in Rio de Janeiro. CF was created in 2013 to enhance the public sphere by proposing public policies aimed at promoting equality, deepening democracy and achieving sustainable development of the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, comprised of 21 municipalities.

CF works around three areas: a) monitoring of public policies; b) strengthening of civil society; and c) developing public policies proposals that make the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro more fair, democratic and sustainable. CF is constructed as a decentred network that brings together diverse local organizations and social actors. By holding a consistent interface between an ever-growing network of organizations and public institutions and policy debates, the aim is to create new social participation dynamics in the city, thus strengthening the city's public sphere and democratic life at a wider metropolitan scale.

The metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, whose population of 12 million represents 75% of that of Rio de Janeiro state, is characterized by great inequalities. Currently most services and investments are concentrated in the central areas of the city Rio, while the rest of the metropolitan area still faces critical problems such as limited public service delivery, higher violence rates, low quality education, etc. In this context, CF aims to bring the metropolitan issues to the public eye in order to push for fairer and better living conditions for all inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro's metropolitan region.

Two examples of their work are the following. 1) *Casa Fluminense* defends in the public debate a set of specific priorities and proposals for Rio's metropolitan agenda in the coming years, looking beyond the horizon of the 2016 Olympic Games. These include better public transportation planning, improving sanitation infrastructure and reducing homicide rates across its metropolitan region. 2) *Casa* works at promoting knowledge about the realities of its metropolitan region, rendering data on income levels, development indices, public health infrastructure and so on, into accessible and reader-friendly information that can be harnessed to mobilize interested actors and stakeholders towards transforming their regions. CF regularly holds capacity-building workshops and presentations and recently launched a set of maps with such indicators, thereby contributing towards bridging the information gap about the metropolis' living conditions.

For Ines, it is important to foster a strong and capable civil society that demands social accountability of public policies, uncovering issues that affect people's lives and rights, and bringing those to the public debate in order to promote more inclusive policy-making.

You can contact Ines Alvarez-Gortari to get to know more of her work at *Casa Fluminense* through the GPSA Knowledge Platform!

* This interview was done by Janet Oropeza Eng, Coordinator of the Knowledge Management Area at Fundar, Centre for Analysis and Research, in December 2015.