



UCLG CONGRESS
WORLD SUMMIT OF LOCAL
AND REGIONAL LEADERS

Right to the City

#CitiesAreListening
Town Hall Track

Policy Papers



Global Platform for the Right to the City
Plataforma Global por el Derecho a la Ciudad
Plateforme Globale pour le Droit à la Ville

#CitiesAreListening

The 2019 Congress and World Summit will mark the way towards the follow up of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the first review of the New Urban Agenda in 2020.

It will consolidate the policies that UCLG has been promoting within its strategic plan, with a strong focus on localizing the SDGs, aiming at leaving no one, and no place behind, with a key focus on local governments as representatives of communities and for communities, and keeping the four UCLG Policy Councils issues as key pillars.

Special attention will be paid to creating a space of structural dialogue with other constituencies and stakeholders and in particular civil society. For the first time, the outcome will not only be a declaration, but a corpus of integrated policy recommendations resulting from a consultation with other stakeholders and offering both bottom-up continental and region-specific priorities.

The Summit will provide a space to ensure connection between the agenda of the global municipal and regional movement and that of the sister constituencies. A special Track has been set up to this end: The Town Hall - with discussions at the highest levels led by the organized international constituencies.

The Town Hall is the space for dialogue and interaction between different internationally organized civil society and the political leadership of the local and regional governments constituency to jointly define the local global policies. Local and regional leader cannot achieve these goals on their own, and thus they need to build upon, strengthen and enhance partnerships moving forward. The goal is not only to invite partners and stakeholders to join, but to collaborate in the world that we are building. The Town Hall is structured around 5 sessions with different themes: Accessible Cities; Addressing Informalities; Gender Equality; Right to the City, and Sustainable Urban Development.

Preparations towards the Congress were articulated around an open process of co-creation led by the constituencies themselves and facilitated by the World Secretariat. Each group elaborated policy recommendations for local governments to implement transformative action on the above-mentioned themes. At the Congress' Town Hall sessions – designed by the constituencies themselves –, each document will be presented by the constituency's representatives, discussed with UCLG members and debated with all other constituencies. After deliberations a pooling of recommendations will be defined as a result of the session, which will be presented to the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments.

1. Acknowledgements and background ¹

The right to the city is a new paradigm that provides an alternative framework to re-think cities and human settlements on the basis of the principles of social justice, equity, democracy and sustainability.

It has been defined through social struggles, popular mobilizations and public policies that have taken place during the last decades all over the world. These practices are connected with the theoretical formulation of the concept by Henri Lefebvre (2009, 2000), but have nonetheless endowed the right to the city with a specific meaning that goes beyond its initial theoretical framework.

Drawing from such bottom-up narratives and experiences which stem from diverse regional contexts (GPR2C, 2015), from significant efforts of organized civil society and urban social movements working together at global, national and local level (World Charter for the Right to the City, 2005; Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City, 2010), from innovative national policies and legal frameworks (i.e. Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador) and from recent global debates (Habitat 3 Policy Paper on the Right to the City and Cities for all, New Urban Agenda, Cities for Adequate Housing Manifesto), the right to the city can be defined as follows:

It is the right of all inhabitants (present and future; permanent and temporary) to use, occupy, produce, govern and enjoy just, inclusive, safe and sustainable cities, villages and settlements defined as common goods.

It is a collective and diffuse right which aims at being applied both in urban settings and human settlements at large, including small villages, rural towns and metropolitan areas.

It envisions the effective fulfillment of all internationally agreed Human Rights and Sustainable Development Goals, while dealing specifically with a dimension of urban problems that classic human rights' standards do not tackle: namely, spatial exclusion, its causes and consequences. At the same time, it provides a territorial approach that can enhance policy pertinence and coherence.

In this regard, it claims for (i) the social function of the city; (ii) quality public spaces; (iii) sustainable and inclusive rural-urban linkages; (iv) inclusive economies; (v)

¹ The policy paper drafting process was coordinated by Eva García Chueca (Scientific Coordinator, Global Cities Programme at CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs))

inclusive citizenship; (vi) enhanced political participation; (vii) non-discrimination; (viii) gender equality; and (ix) cultural diversity.

2. Assessment and challenges

Financialization of cities, gentrification and housing crisis. The financialization of cities is one of the main challenges faced by cities today and is strongly linked with gentrification and the current housing crisis. The primacy of an urban model based on economic growth disregards the social function of land, property and the city. There is thus an urgent need to regulate the real estate market, foster public housing and alternative ways to produce housing, while simultaneously ensuring inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods.

Rural-urban divide. The current environmental crisis, together with urban sprawl, makes it necessary to invest greater efforts in protecting biodiversity, natural habitats and fostering inclusive rural-urban linkages. The latter is a key factor to ensure sustainable food systems and food sovereignty. Disparities of income distribution, livelihood opportunities, healthcare services, quality education, cultural facilities and quality of life in general are some of the main problems affecting rural areas today vis-à-vis cities.

Territorial and social inequities. A solidarity-based and inclusive approach is needed within the ecosystem of urban territories. Inequalities within countries and within cities themselves have been a growing transversal challenge, resulting in an increase in the number of economic, social and environmental threats. Inequalities between dynamic and stagnating regions, large, middle-sized and small cities, central and peripheral cities and neighbourhoods, and wealthy gated communities and slum areas, have experienced a sharp rise, resulting in greater urban fragmentation and territorial polarization.

Democratic backsliding and human rights curtailment. Across the globe, the struggle for democracy and democratic institutions is taking shape as a response to the rise of racism, misogyny, hatred speeches and the extreme right. Cities are melting pots where different groups and identities share their living space, hence the need of local governments to foster social cohesion and fight the proliferation of discrimination.

New waves of social protests are emerging to claim for equality and human rights for all, often encountering difficulties related to freedom of expression or even criminalization and persecution. Claims for participatory democracy are gaining weight all over.

Migration crisis. Human mobility is part of the history of humankind. Its causes are linked to a wide range of issues, from poverty, natural disasters, wars, economic crises, political distress, urban violence or educational and employment opportunities, among others. Although it is not a new phenomenon, migration is increasingly polarizing societies in a context of rise of the extreme right and restrictive national migratory policies. Cities are confronting these narratives (see the Sanctuary Cities or Cities of Refuge movements) at the local, national and global level, and enhancing their reception and integration policies.

3. Recommendations for Local and Regional governments

Implementing the right to the city falls within the framework of the global efforts undertaken to localize SDGs and implement the New Urban Agenda (NUA). Local governments are invited to operationalize the following components of the right to the city, which are linked to several SDGs and NUA recommendations, also aligned with Human Rights obligations:

1. **Fostering the social function of the city** (see SDG1.4, 6.1, 6.2, 11.1, 11.3; par. 14c, 34, 69, 108 NUA)
 - Ensure equitable access for all to housing, livelihoods, goods, services, urban space and opportunities.
 - Fight against land speculation and the commodification of urban space.
 - Fight territorial inequities.
2. **Ensuring quality public spaces and services** (see SDG 5.2, 11.7; par. 13, 37, 53 NUA)

- Create public spaces that enhance social interactions, living-together, political participation; that embrace diversity and promote socio-cultural expressions, recreation and sports.
 - Ensure open, accessible and safer public spaces.
 - Acknowledge and protect the role of public spaces in the provision of opportunities and livelihoods.
- 3. Building inclusive and solidarity linkages with rural areas** (see SDG1.5,2.4, 8.4, 11.A, 12.2, 15.9 NUA)
- Tackle urban sprawl.
 - Foster rural-urban linkages and avoid urban development models that take place at the expense of rural areas, other cities or future generations.
 - Upgrade self-built habitats.
- 4. Fostering inclusive economies** (see SDG 2.3, 8.3, 10.2, 14.B; par. 14b., 57, 59 NUA)
- Secure livelihoods for all.
 - Ensure equal access to social protection.
 - Ensure women's equal access employment and equal payment.
- 5. Ensuring an inclusive citizenship** (see SDG 8.8., 10.2, 16.3; par. 28, 36, 42 NUA)
- Mainstream and institutionalize human rights at local level.
 - Ensure the respect, protection and fulfilment of all human rights (civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental) in cities and human settlements for all, whether for permanent or temporary inhabitants.
 - Establish specific mechanisms to ensure equality for women and for marginalized groups (those living in poverty or situations of environmental risk, informal economy workers, ethnic and religious groups, LGBTI persons, disabled people, children, youth,

the elderly, migrants, refugees, street dwellers, victims of violence, indigenous peoples and any other visible minority or vulnerable group), whether permanent or temporary

6. **Enhancing political participation** (see SDG 5.5, 6.B, 11.3, 16.7; par. 13, 41, 48 NUA)

- Strengthen representative, direct and participatory democracy mechanisms at local level.
- Foster equal and substantive participation of all urban dwellers' in urban policies and spatial planning.
- Build strategic alliances with civil society to co-create, co-implement and co-monitor local policies.

7. **Fostering non-discrimination** (see SDG 10.2, 11.2, 16.1, 16.B; par. 14a., 20, 38, 40 NUA)

- Foster a human-rights based approach to migration.
- Fight discrimination of any kind based on gender, age, health status, income, nationality, ethnicity, migratory condition, or political, religious or sexual orientation.

8. **Promoting cultural diversity** (see SDG 4, 10.2, 11.4, 12.B.; par. 14a., 38, 40 NUA)

- Ensure access to culture and to cultural facilities for all.
- Develop cultural and education policies to build cohesive and sustainable societies, foster equality of opportunities and valorize diversity.
- Respect, protect and promote diverse customs, languages, memories, identities, expressions, and socio-cultural forms.

4. **Recommendations**

1. **Active, diverse and cohesive citizenship**

- a. Action 1. To ensure free and democratic elections and to set up legal mechanisms to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights at all spheres of government.

- b. Action 2. To guarantee the right to public information and to establish legal and political mechanisms that foster and institutionalize citizen participation (e.g. referenda, plebiscites, participatory councils, territorial committees, participatory budgeting, negotiation tables, audiences, conferences, public consultations or deliberative bodies) in all the stages of urban policy-making (planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring).
- c. Action 3. To ensure that disadvantaged inhabitants have an equal say and guarantee the participation of individuals lacking the formal status of citizens.

2. Engaged governmental institutions

a. Local and regional governments

- i. Action 1. To establish a strategic vision and operational framework in close dialogue with citizens to realize the right to the city within a locally agreed interpretation informed by existing international and local recommendations and commitments.
- ii. Action 2. To provide training to public officials regarding the implementation of the right to tie city, particularly the staff in charge of materializing it.
- iii. Action 3. To ensure transparent and participatory program-planning, decision-making, program implementation, and policy monitoring.

b. Metropolitan institutions

- i. Action 1. To foster inter-municipal cooperation and solidarity in metropolitan areas through coordination mechanisms.
- ii. Action 2. To create coordination bodies among municipal governments belonging to the same metropolitan areas to foster coherence and integral approaches to policies.
- iii. Action 3. To develop financial tools to redistribute wealth within metropolitan areas.

c. Action 3. National governments

- i. Action 1. To comply with human rights legal obligations and commitments under international human rights law.

- ii. Action 2. To enable or adapt legislative frameworks and national urban policies that contribute to realize the different components of the right to the city, paying special attention to bridging the rural-urban divide.
- iii. Action 3. To provide sufficient funding and political competences to local governments, so that they can further the right to the city implementation as the sphere of government closest to citizens (principle of subsidiarity).

3. Engaged private sector

- a. Action 1. To undertake its economic activities under a corporate social responsibility framework to include social objectives and ensure inclusive and sustainable approaches to urbanization.
- b. Action 2. To comply with human rights standards and undergo accountability processes when performing public functions or providing basic services.
- c. Action 3. To act in accordance to the UN Principles of Responsible Investment (UNPRI).

4. A polyphonic voice for local and regional governments at the global level

- a. Action 1. To ensure representation of different typologies of territorial governments (metropolises, towns, intermediary cities, peripheral cities, small villages) in UCLG governing bodies to build an inclusive global narrative.
- b. Action 2. To foster the participation of different typologies of territorial governments in UCLG policy councils, committees, working groups and communities of practices.
- c. Action 3. To foster the creation of fora that allow the different typologies of territorial governments to share concerns, build a common narrative and engage in peer learning processes.

5. Joint Way Forward

1. Step One: Local alliances for the right to the city

- a. To build local coalitions among local governments, civil society, private sector and academia to co-produce the city in light with the right to the city.
- 2. Step Two. Metropolitan and regional strategies for the right to the city**
- a. To foster equality and socio-spatial cohesion in metropolitan areas through metropolitan governance mechanisms and/or inter-municipal cooperation.
- 3. Step Three. International action for the right to the city**
- a. To build or consolidate multi-stakeholder international alliances between civil society organizations, local governments and academia (e.g. the Global Platform for the Right to the City) to raise the awareness of governments and boost right to the city sensitive international agendas.
 - b. To engage in global advocacy processes or campaigns (e.g. The Shift) to foster a human rights approach to city making.
 - c. To promote new legal and policy frameworks, capacity building, peer to peer learning and political debates to move towards an urban model based on human rights and the right to the city.
 - d. To prepare, in close dialogue with stakeholders mentioned in Step One as well as the diverse typology of urban territories (major, intermediary, small cities and peripheral cities), guidelines to implement the right to the city at national, regional and local level.
 - e. To gather relevant information (e.g. best practices, legal frameworks, cases studies) about how the right to the city is implemented worldwide by the different typology of urban territories (major, intermediary, small cities and peripheral cities).

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