

## **HABITAT III URBAN DIALOGUES**

### **Toluca Regional Meeting**

18 - 20 April, 2016

### **Latin America and the Caribbean**

**Moderators: Eugenia García, SEDATU, Mexico and Lilia M. Blades, UN-Habitat**

#### **Dialogue Structure:**

The Habitat III Urban Dialogue for the Latin America and the Caribbean regional meeting took place over a two-week period from 4 - 15 April 2016 prior to the three-day regional meeting in Toluca, Mexico on 18 - 20 April 2016.

The discussion was overseen by two substantive experts (“moderators”) from UN Habitat, Nairobi and SEDATU, Mexico’s Federal Ministry of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development, who devised two general framing questions for the discussion.

The moderators responded to participants’ particular questions and comments, engaging them through an extensive discussion around the challenges and opportunities in achieving sustainable and inclusive urban development in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Questions sought to encourage the exchange of experience, as well as get to the heart of practical difficulties and challenges faced by cities in providing shelter, employment and urban basic services and how to ensure that no one is left behind in terms of the “Right to the City”, especially indigenous people in the LAC region.

The **Right to the City** aims to ensure that citizens are able to enjoy their cities appropriately, and governments enabled to meet the obligations necessary to create the conditions for the enforcement of this right. The Right to the City is aligned to the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity and social justice; it recognises the territory as essential for all people to fully exercise their rights and it ensures that social inclusion and sustainability are guiding principles for land use planning at different scales: national, regional, metropolitan, urban, rural and neighbourhood.

80% of the Latin America and Caribbean region’s population lives in urban centres, which continue to face great challenges to establish themselves as engines of development, as spaces of opportunity that offer the optimal conditions for their entire population to exercise their rights. The dialogue looked at how to address the challenge of sustainable urban development in a sustainable, inclusive and integrated manner. Participants were invited to discuss regional priorities for the New Urban Agenda and share successful examples from the region.

#### **Participation:**

During the online discussion, more than 2,078 individuals visited the discussion forum at: [www.habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/toluca](http://www.habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/toluca), representing 103 countries, with the largest number of visitors from Mexico, Ecuador, Brazil, Colombia, Spain, the United States and Argentina. Posts were received from countries in the region including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico and beyond. The majority of contributions were received in

Spanish and English, as well as Portuguese. However, the platform featured the ability for participants to translate the discussion pages into several dozen languages, which provided greater accessibility for participants to post and comment on the discussion in their native language.

### Framing questions:

1. What are the most pressing challenges and opportunities in achieving sustainable urban development in Latin America and the Caribbean? What are some good practices? - 56 replies
2. How do we ensure that no one is left behind in terms of the "right to the city", especially indigenous people in Latin America and the Caribbean? What strategic policy options and/or instruments can ensure this? - 27 replies

### Key Recommendations from the Dialogue:

#### Summary of the Dialogue:

#### Q. 1. The most pressing challenges and opportunities in achieving sustainable urban development in Latin America and the Caribbean and some good practices

Participants discussed the challenges faced by the region in realising the social function of urban land and enabling all inhabitants equal opportunity to enjoy their 'right to the city' and ensure that future urban development is sustainable and addresses poverty, inequality, violence and climate vulnerability.

**Challenges:** The rapid pace of expansive and disorderly urbanization has significant negative effects on social cohesion, the economy and connectivity of cities, hampering the operation of regulatory mechanisms to manage environmental impacts. The following areas were shared by participants as key to address for sustainable urban development in the LAC region, and highlighted by the Moderator:

- **Safe mobility** that raises inhabitants' quality of life;
- Meeting inhabitants' housing, work, recreation and education needs;
- **Women's rights** and gender discrimination;
- Protection and enhancement of **multicultural identities**;
- Vulnerability of the population to **natural disasters** and **climate change**;
- Civic participation and strengthening communities' social fabric.

***"The moment itself is a great opportunity. Habitat III should take advantage of the momentum provided by the recent approval of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement to promote a series of proposals that aim to 'make cities and human settlements are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'"***

**- Daniel Barragan, CIIAT, Universidad de los Hemisferios, Ecuador**

**Opportunities to promote sustainable urban development:** Recommendations drawn by the Moderator from the discussion included:

*“I think it is important to talk about “urban resilience” ... the highest levels of climate change risk are in population centres associated with heavy rainfall, it is therefore urgent to implement adaptive actions”*

- Eugenia Garcia  
Director of Urban Planning,  
SEDATU, Mexico

- The need to promote social development actions to promote **sustainable economic development.**
- Promote a binding regulatory framework encompassing the various risks posed to human settlements.
- Prioritize projects that promote **sustainable urban mobility**, oriented towards non-motorized transport.
- Promote the improvement of social infrastructure to ensure that **women and girls**, other vulnerable and minority groups can access secure and inclusive **public spaces.**
- Implement regulatory, administrative and control instruments for **land management** to prevent **housing segregation** and irregular occupation of peripheral land.

Other issues raised during the discussion included the importance of **urban legislation** in Latin America, which participants argued is often ineffective and inconsistent with other levels of regulation. It was recommended to use urban legislation as a mechanism to ensure the right to the city.

Participants highlighted **social inequality** as one of the most urgent challenges for sustainable urban development in the region, as evidenced by the segregation of cities and gated housing developments in LAC, arguing that these prevent equitable and inclusive social relationships and encourage crime, social resentment and racism, affecting the most vulnerable. The Moderator, Eugenia Garcia emphasized that, *“An important element for socially sustainable cities requires a cultural change to create a society where people recognize and respect themselves and where a culture of human rights, equality and non-discrimination prevails, to allow the construction of an inclusive society.”*

*“We agree that safe public spaces is one element to contribute to social cohesion and equity for Liveable Cities.”*

- Sistren Theatre  
Collective/Groots  
Jamaica/Huairou  
Commission

*“At government level it is necessary to strengthen regulations surrounding sustainable development and urban planning, and at national level to encourage every inhabitant of this planet to agree to leave it better than you found it (albeit by force of law).”*  
- Carolina, Masters student  
in regional development and  
environment, University of  
Valparaiso, Chile

Several participants raised the issue of resource potential and its relationship with **urban planning**, recommending that it is critical to ensure that urban development projects are consistent with land use, limit urban expansion and promote urban densification. Support was recommended for urban planners to enable a more holistic approach to sustainable urban development that integrates the economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects of the increasing complexities of urban realities. A

successful example was shared from Ecuador where the Network of Fair, Democratic and Sustainable Territories developed a process to strengthen the planning teams of several municipalities so that they are able to respond simultaneously to the four aspects of sustainable development as part of a coherent, participatory institutional dynamic (see examples below).

### Financing urban development in LAC

*“the scarcity of resources to finance social, environmental and urban priorities. We all pay for these increases in land prices but we pay the wrong people - we should pay the community so that the community can finance these priorities.”*

- Carlos Morales Schechinger, Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, Erasmus University, The Netherlands

Some participants highlighted the dynamics of **migration** as a phenomenon which directly influences the spread of cities, and recommended the need for strategies to manage intra-urban land and prevent the development of segregated population settlements.

Participants recommended that in order to achieve sustainable urban development it is important to create the conditions to bring the benefits of urbanization to all and promote greater access to **public services** and opportunities to improve wellbeing and create a new social fabric, particularly to promote

actions to ensure women’s’ rights, creating ‘**Safe cities**’ - a safe environment for women and other vulnerable groups.

**Young people** were highlighted as a potential “force for transformation” to support sustainable urban development. It was recommended that young people should not only be seen as beneficiaries of public policies but should also be active **participants and contributors** in the planning, implementation and monitoring of policies in order to maximize the potential of young people to be part of the solution.

Several participants emphasized the importance of **public participation** in policy development and implementation in order to ensure sustainable urban development. Daniel Barragan, CIAT, University of the Hemispheres, Ecuador, argued that this requires a cultural shift for inhabitants to become “active actors in the construction of the environment/city and not wait for the local government to be responsible for providing solutions”.

Several participants commented on the slow progress in ‘**Land Value Capture**’, capturing profits from urban land to finance environmental protection, infrastructure provision and access to housing. It was argued that there already exists an extensive menu of instruments in Latin America, but there has been very little application in order to discuss how to improve and especially as implementation. Carlos Morales Schechinger

### Land Value Capture

*“There is an ample menu of instruments to do this and many of them exist in Latin America, but there has been little, very little implementation.”*

- Carlos Morales Schechinger, Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies, Erasmus University, The Netherlands

wrote that, *“In Habitat I, Latin America proposed a land value capture policy that was clearly established in the Vancouver Declaration, 40 years later, there are inspiring cases that have generated interest including in other parts of the world, but the advances continue on a very limited scale.”*

The prevalence of **informal settlements** and the need to provide **adequate housing for all** was highlighted as a major challenge. One participant argued while landowners enjoy considerable rights under urban legislation in the region, the lack of legal obligations imposed on landowners should be addressed. The positive characteristics of the process of informal, self-built urban housing were highlighted, such as strengthening community organization, generating solidarity networks, the fulfilment of rights and the exercise of citizenship. It was recommended to study these contributions in order to include them in the New Urban Agenda.

In terms of the challenge of **mobility and dominance of the private car** in many cities in the region, participants highlighted negative effects including: hours lost due to traffic congestion, poor air quality, high noise levels, traffic crime, increasing levels of obesity, sedentary lifestyles and associated diseases, lack of green and collective areas and hence poor quality of life for inhabitants, lack of access to urban services and socio-spatial segregation, particularly for low and middle-income inhabitants. In terms of solutions, Sustran-LAC, a network of cyclists from the region proposed a series of recommendations to promote alternatives to the private car, including public transport, walking and cycling including the redistribution of public space to prioritize these alternatives and disincentivize car use. Positive examples were shared of reducing urban speed limits in Sao Paulo, Brazil; participatory planning of bike paths in Rio Centro, Brazil and Santiago, Chile; prioritization of the bicycle in Quito, Ecuador and public bicycle systems in Mexico City and Santiago, Chile (see examples below).

Finally, a number of participants raised the need to preserve cities’ cultural and architectural heritage, both for cultural reasons, as well as to improve safety and security in areas which have deteriorated, as well as to create opportunities for jobs, tourism, education and culture.

**Q. 2. How to ensure that no one is left behind in terms of the "right to the city", especially indigenous people in the region**

The discussion looked at what policies can contribute to reducing inequalities in cities in the region and sought to identify successful integration initiatives. Urbanization processes in the region have, in many cases been associated with economic development, but also with an expansion of socio-economic inequalities. While some housing policies and integration initiatives have achieved a reduction in segregation and an improvement in access to city services, it was argued that the right to the city must

*“We need to promote initiatives to strengthen citizenship and recover community values at the core of our cities; citizens that are better informed, but also caring, committed and responsible”*

- Esteban Torres, Project Coordinator, Somos Ecuador NGO, Ecuador

also includes space for different views, ideas and modes of life to co-exist.

Most of the discussion was focused on legislative instruments, participation and focalized policies, such as mobility to reduce inequality. In terms of challenges, participants mentioned the lack of implementation of good public policies, as well as a lack of awareness of laws and public policy. Two participants raised the issue of violence in public spaces, particularly gendered violence, as well as police violence, which it was argued mainly affects young people.

Rather than planning and urban design, recommendations focused on the challenges of creating and applying **legislation** that guarantees the rights of all citizens, including minorities and marginalized groups in the city. Several participants spoke about the "right to the city" as a basic principle of integration. There was consensus on the need to create legal frameworks and regulations to ensure compliance and recognition of the rights of all citizens to use and enjoy the services of the city. It was agreed that these legislative frameworks should be binding and mandatory at the regional level.

Participants commented on ways to link legal frameworks with planning tools, such as strategies to control gentrification. It was argued that adequate planning mechanisms and financial frameworks give legislation a practical dimension and enable laws to be implemented adequately. The discussion also highlighted the importance of dialogue between different sectors of urban administration and the need for better inter-sectoral integration in order to achieve the objectives of different laws.

Participants highlighted the importance of linking this with **participatory processes** at all levels, including through the mobilization and engagement of excluded groups and the various urban actors. It was argued that informed citizens can better monitor and demand respect for their rights, as well as monitor the enforcement of laws. The Moderator emphasized the importance of **education**, information and awareness-raising to empower urban communities at different administrative levels.

In order to ensure that indigenous people are not excluded from the 'right to the city' recommendations included programmes to encourage their participation and actualization of their "rights to the city" and mandating that programmes, societal developments and infrastructure allocate time, funds and resources to serving indigenous communities, or face sanctions. Another recommendation was to include communities and indigenous peoples in Land Management Plans. It was argued that these plans must also consider gender, multicultural and special needs in order to allow everyone to enjoy the area they live in and use it freely according to their specific needs, recognizing that different groups have different ways of using the city.

Among the various factors to achieve more inclusive cities, participants highlighted the need for knowledge and data on urban inhabitants and their needs in order to both inform and empower different sectors of the population and feed processes that promote awareness and basic principles of solidarity in the region's cities.



Specific actions and concrete examples of urban inclusion were shared by some participants, including successful non-motorized transport solutions, focused on the accessibility of marginalized communities and overall urban communities, which have shown tremendous impact, not only on the wellbeing of transport users, but on the city as a whole. The same goes for planned public spaces. The Moderator also highlighted the example of urban land management in **Puerto Rico**, which like many others, uses land as a factor for social integration.

*“Afro-descended people are especially vulnerable; black people suffer more discrimination and violence because of the history of slavery and migration within Latin America, as a result the urban homicide indices in Brazil, for example, are extremely high among the black population.”*  
- Alice Junqueira, independent consultant and youth expert, Brazil

### Successful examples shared:

#### Policy-making for sustainable urban development:

**Ecuador** - The Network of Fair, Democratic and Sustainable Territories (2014) developed a process of strengthening planning teams of the municipalities of Quito, Cuenca, Guayaquil and Santa Cruz so that local governments respond together to increasingly complex urban realities (climate change, population growth, urban mobility and transport, etc.) and are able to achieve land management which aims to balance economic, social, environmental and cultural aspects as part of a coherent and participatory institutional dynamic.

The International Society of Land Management and Ecological Planning (ISLPEP) is joining several Latin American specialists from **Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Argentina, Cuba, Chile** and other parts of the world (India, Morocco, Italy, Spain, France, Australia) to create a platform for discussion of issues of land and environmental planning in order to develop a planning tool for sustainable urban development.

**Land management in Puerto Rico** - Creation of a “land trust” model, which avoided relocation of communities. The land trust acts on behalf of communities in the management of land and affordable housing ownership. The value of the land is managed separately from that of the housing. The land is held by the community in perpetuity, allowing for housing to remain affordable for people in the area. More information is available at:

<https://www.bshf.org/es/premios-mundiales-del-habitat/ganadores-y-finalistas/fideicomiso-de-la-tierra-del-cano-martin-pena/>

#### Mobility:

**Sao Paulo, Brazil** - drastically reduced the speed limit of private cars to 40 km/h in the centre and 50-60 km/h in large avenues; a reduction in accidents by 18.5% and in deaths by 71% has been found. Source:

<http://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/upload/transportes/apresentacoes/reducaovelocidademarginais.pdf>

**Rio Centro, Brazil and Santiago, Chile (2007-2010)** - participatory planning of bike paths: civil society organizations worked with government actors and citizens, mapping the best routes, validated the bike lanes in the Bi-centennial Master Plan, and other activities to promote bike use in the centre and other areas of the city.

**Quito, Ecuador** - introduced a basic cycle lane network and a public bike system in 2012. The system has grown and now has more than 615 bicycles and 300 electric bikes. 2014 recorded more than 3,000 daily trips by bike and a total of over 60 km of bicycle paths and lanes. Similarly, public bicycle systems in **Mexico City** and **Santiago** have had excellent results; the most common critical need is to expand the network and ensure that those with lower incomes have equal access to this vital ability to access urban services and jobs.

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*Disclaimer: the findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this discussion summary report are those of the participants and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of the Habitat III secretariat, UN-Habitat, the United Nations or the participants' organizations.*