

HABITAT III URBAN DIALOGUES
Open-ended Informal Consultative Meetings
25 - 29 April, 2016
United Nations Headquarters, New York

Moderators: Laura Petrella (UN Habitat), Stefan Köhler and Steven Crosskey (UNOPS).

Dialogue Structure:

The Habitat III Urban Dialogue during the Open-ended Informal Consultative Meetings took place online over a five-day period from 25 - 29 April 2016 in parallel with the open-ended informal consultative meetings at UN Headquarters in New York. The consultative meetings were an opportunity for member states and stakeholders to provide feedback on the recommendations of the Habitat 3 Policy Units and the regional and thematic meetings.

The online Urban Dialogue aimed to engage a broader audience to take part in discussions online and share their views on the meetings' themes. The dialogue was overseen by three substantive experts (“moderators”) from UNOPS and UN Habitat who, in consultation with the Habitat 3 Secretariat, devised six general framing questions for the discussion, focusing on the meetings’ six thematic areas:

1. Leave No One Behind: Urban Equity and Poverty Eradication
2. Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Growth, Prosperity and Opportunities for All
3. Ecological and Resilient Cities and Human Settlements
4. Establishing a Supportive National, Regional and Local Framework
5. Strategic and Integrated Planning and Management of Urban Spatial Development
6. Enhancing Financing and Other Means of Implementation

The moderators responded to participants’ comments, engaging them through a discussion around the thematic areas. The discussion questions sought to encourage the exchange of experience, focusing on participants’ own cities, as well as to get to the heart of practical difficulties and challenges faced by cities in providing shelter, employment and urban basic services, how to ensure sustainability and climate change resilience and that no one is left behind in terms of the concept of “cities for all”, defined in some countries as the “Right to the City”.

Participation:

During the online discussion, more than 1,360 individuals visited the discussion forum at: <https://www.habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/newyork>, from 89 countries worldwide, with the largest number of web visitors from the United States, Ecuador, Guatemala, France, Brazil, Argentina, the UK, Spain and the Czech Republic. Posts were received from countries including Brazil, Bulgaria, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United States and beyond. The majority of contributions were received in English, 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.

Discussion questions:

1. What is your notion of 'The Right to the City'? What populations in your own city would most benefit from The Right to the City? - 17 replies
2. In your city, what are the key challenges in terms of job creation, enhancing livelihoods and ensuring that all citizens have access to income-earning opportunities? - 2 replies
3. What sustainable energy, resilience and climate change adaptation options are appropriate in your city, given its specificities? - 10 replies
4. How would a National Urban Policy impact urban dwellers in your city and how could its impact be measured? - 11 replies
5. What strategic and integrated planning needs to be considered in managing urban spaces to improve the quality of living conditions, economic growth, etc.? - 11 replies
6. How can public finance and planning functions be integrated and/or aligned to advance local municipal fiscal systems? - 6 replies

Key Recommendations from the Dialogue:

Summary of the Dialogue:

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND: URBAN EQUITY AND POVERTY ERADICATION

1. What is your notion of 'The Right to the City'? What populations in your own city would most benefit from The Right to the City?

The concept of “cities for all” is fundamental to the New Urban Agenda. Participants in the online discussion shared their various conceptions of the right to the city, ranging from “*access to and freedom to utilize urban resources*”, including ensuring that rapidly urbanizing areas provide access to basic services such as housing, public space, education, health, etc., to ensure the well-being of *all* inhabitants, while others added good access to employment opportunities for all, arguing that “*jobs are getting farther and farther away from the people who need them most*”, and defining the right to the city as to “*recognize the inherent*

“As much as it is a right to cities, it is even more a right to fairness, and through fairness comes the ability to thrive.”

- Steven Tomas Branca,
Urban Economic
Development Policy
Advisor, Auckland Council,
New Zealand

value in an potential contribution of every individual.” There were also more specific definitions, such as freedom of movement and the mobility perspective, as advocated by the World Cycling Alliance, “*As a citizen of your city, you should be free and have the right to move about your city in a safe, affordable, sustainable and accessible way*”, arguing that sustainable means of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport provide low-cost, less-polluting, healthy means for citizens to access study, employment and other benefits available in cities.

Other participants highlighted the importance of **inclusiveness** and policies which consider the informal sector, as a significant contributor to the local economy and employment provider. The difficulty of balancing each individual citizen's right to the city was highlighted, and balancing conflicting conceptions of the "right to the city". A contributor from the Government of Indonesia argued that the discussion on the right to the city should also include citizens' responsibilities to *follow "the rules of conduct of living in a city"*, arguing that the Right to the City is not an individual right but rather, *"collective, communal, societal rights to have a life, to determine the kind of urban life and the kind of city that society (collectively) would like to have."*

"The Right to the City is about providing socio-cultural and political space for [different] groups to exercise, organize, conduct, sustain their lives in the assembles of urban setting named as a City."
- Senior Advisor,
Indonesia

"The voice of the poor is not heard in the city. The poor thus has no right to the city ... Targeted and inclusive governance processes are the best service we can offer to ensure everybody has the right to the city "
- Victor Osei Kwadwo, PhD Student in Economics and Governance, the Netherlands

Participants were in agreement that by definition everybody has the "right to the city", and recommended appropriate public policies to enable all citizens to exercise that right. In order to ensure this, Victor Osei Kwadwo, PhD Student, the Netherlands, enlarged the right to the city to include the **right to shaping or influencing urban policies**, *"the chance to be heard"*, while Jasmine Tolber, Social Impact Consultant at Liberty Global Consulting, United States, emphasized the importance of **civil society participation in urban decision-making** together with local urban authorities' recognition of, responsiveness to and collaboration with civil society.

In terms of how to ensure the right to the city, the positive example was shared of the **Brazilian Unified Health System** which has successfully enabled the voices of citizens and health workers to be an intrinsic part of the policy-making process and definition of priorities. It was recommended that ongoing experiences such as this of how the right to the city can be exercised across sectors, such as the health sector, be used to guide the development of a general framework for policy making within cities.

Participants suggested several population groups who would most benefit from the right to the city, including:

1. **Women's right to the city** was highlighted as requiring support in order to promote women's equitable participation in economic and social affairs and their safety and mobility. Groots Jamaica/Hauirou Commission argued that the New Urban Agenda should promote women's right to the city through **public spaces, urban transport and women's security of tenure**, as central to ensuring their economic and political empowerment. Several concrete recommendations were shared to advance this, including improving the design of public transport systems to provide safe travel and increase women's social mobility, empowering women's groups to engender planning and policies on

how public spaces and essential municipal services are designed and managed, and support women's groups to participate with government to ensure the New Urban Agenda is engendered and inclusive.

2. **Migrants** - participants highlighted the contribution of both international and rural-urban migrants to the economy of cities and argued that their right to the city should be supported, including ensuring migrants' social, economic and legal rights in addition to basic services, livelihood opportunities, safety and security.
3. **Low-income groups** were highlighted by the World Cycling Alliance as one of the main beneficiaries of improved mobility, benefiting and enabling all citizens equal opportunity to enjoy their 'right to the city'. The Alliance also argued that all city residents could benefit from increased use of sustainable transport such as cycling, walking and public transport and reduced use of private cars, with potential benefits including reduced air pollution, noise pollution, traffic congestion, accidents and deaths.

“We see the “right to the city” in a frame of mobility - meaning a freedom of movement. [...] We feel that transport is missing from a lot of the key discussions”
- World Cycling Alliance / European Cyclists' Federation
4. **“The family”** as a social unit was highlighted by one contributor, who argued that the New Urban Agenda should promote protection of the family unit in cities and recognize the *“constructive role of the family in the design, development and management of such settlements”* (Paragraph 31, Habitat II agenda), as well as support for children who live outside families and women who are the sole providers for their families, and consider the needs of children and future generations in decision-making processes.
5. **Homeless/Landless populations** were cited as lacking by extension access to education, healthcare, clean water and other “goods” for a decent life. A solution proposed by Edward J. Dodson from the United States was to tax land speculators in order to raise revenue and provide an incentive to maximize land use.

SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE URBAN GROWTH, PROSPERITY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Q. 2. In your city, what are the key challenges in terms of job creation, enhancing livelihoods and ensuring that all citizens have access to income-earning opportunities?

Challenges: Very few responses were received to this question. However, the main challenges shared by participants were so-called **“jobless growth”**, for example in India, where rapid urbanization, for example fuelled by rural-urban migration, and a large youth population is faced with a lack of job opportunities in the formal sector. Another challenge was shared by a contributor from the United States who highlighted **“rent-seeking”** as a powerful and destructive driver in his city, and suggested such profits should be taxed at a higher rate than the wages earned by people producing goods or providing services.

An example of solutions to enhance livelihoods and ensure that all citizens have access to income-earning opportunities shared were “Skill India” (<http://skilldevelopment.gov.in>) an Indian government initiative launched in July 2015 which aims to train over 400 million people across the country in vocational skills by 2022 and “Start-up India” (<http://startupindia.gov.in>) which aims to encourage bank financing for start-up ventures to boost entrepreneurship and job creation through start-ups, thereby making the process of urbanization in India more inclusive and sustainable.

ECOLOGICAL AND RESILIENT CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Q. 3. What sustainable energy options, resilience and climate change adaptation options are appropriate in your city, given its specificities?

Participants from cities in Bolivia, Brazil, India, the United States and the UK shared examples of sustainable energy, resilience and adaptation options. Toshiyasu Noda, Professor at Seinan Gakuin University in Japan, called for the New Urban Agenda to include a “big paradigm shift”, for example to address climate change. Carl Emerson-Dam, Climate Change Centre, Reading, UK, agreed, arguing that Habitat 3 is the opportunity to advocate for “NetZero carbon” urban development, for example, by limiting uncontrolled consumption, meeting the challenge of the “carbon budget” to ensure that global temperature rise remains within safe boundaries, and establishing and protecting greenbelts and urban growth boundaries as a means to limit growth and preserve open space. He also championed the importance of highlighting scientific data in the New Urban Agenda.

“Habitat III is now the body to inspire and make important decisions, for rational, radical and bold urban climate action”

- Carl Emerson-Dam, Climate Change Centre, Reading, UK

Evelyn Calispa, post-graduate at the University of Manchester, UK, pointed out that vulnerability and adaptive capacity are determined by diverse factors, including gender, race, class, age or financial capacity and recommended that - in order to improve formulation and implementation of adaptation policy - local-level research be undertaken to better understand the social determinants of vulnerability.

“We have to shift our lifestyle from mass consumption and waste to less consumption and waste. It is the next urbanism. [...] urbanisation is good for our future planet. Such big paradigm shift [is] needed in the New Urban Agenda.”

- Professor Toshiyasu Noda, Seinan Gakuin University, Japan

From India, Kulwant Singh, a former Senior Researcher at UN-Habitat, detailed options for promoting energy efficiency in urban planning, buildings, urban transportation and services, particularly energy, water, waste and lighting, and called for a sustainable urban plan in India to improve the quality of urban life and enable citizens to be more energy efficient. He shared the example of India’s National Mission on Sustainable Habitat which includes sustainable energy, resilience and climate change adaptation options such as promoting energy efficiency as a core component of urban planning; emphasizing urban waste management and recycling; using fuel pricing to encourage use of

efficient vehicles; incentivizing use of public transport.

From **Bolivia**, Miguel Rodriguez of the Cities Footprint Project being implemented in 11 diverse Latin American cities, advocated the use of ‘Carbon and Water Footprints’ as urban management tools and shared two examples of mitigation and adaptation solutions from Andean cities affected by reduced water supply due to glacial shrinking: government-led programmes to retrofit water appliances for greater resilience, with international funding, and watershed protection funded by public-private partnerships, protecting water sources while allowing private companies to advertise their corporate footprint neutrality.

An example of American cities was shared by Edward J. Dodson, who shared that while recycling schemes have dramatically reduced the waste sent to landfill and public transport provision into cities reduces private cars use, there remains considerable scope to increase renewable energy production and reduce private car use, sprawling development and increased flood risk.

ESTABLISHING A SUPPORTIVE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL FRAMEWORK

Q. 4. How would a National Urban Policy impact urban dwellers in your city and how could its impact be measured?

“As we advance towards defining in which way to develop or work with National Urban Policies, measuring their impact is critical. It is both an issue of formulating the right indicators and of designing concrete policies which address measurable aspects of urban policy.”

- Laura Petrella, City Planning, Extension and Design Unit, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

The Discussion Moderator, UN-Habitat’s Laura Petrella, highlighted the importance of a National Urban Policy to act as a higher level guiding document, noting that such policies are not ‘prescriptions’ from national government on what cities have to do, but rather should orient sectoral policies so that they better support local objectives and address national-level obstacles to sound urban development. She suggested that in federal states state-level urban policies might be suitable. Kulwant Singh shared the example of **India** where there is no overarching National Urban Policy but several policies and ‘Missions’ on housing, urban transport, energy efficiency, implemented by states, and shared service level indicators and benchmarks to measure impact.

From **Brazil**, Thiago Herick de Sa, Urban Health Researcher, University of São Paulo, argued that in that city, the greatest impact of a national urban policy (and a subsequent local urban policy) would be in **health and wellbeing**, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children, low-income groups and older people, by improving urban living conditions. He brought to the discussion the importance of discussing health issues as part of an urban policy development process, arguing that there is now sound evidence of the relationship between urban policy options and health outcomes, and highlighted the under-discussed potential role of health and the health sector as an agent - not only a beneficiary - of urban transformation.

Carl Emerson-Dam, Climate Change Centre, Reading, UK argued that the New Urban Agenda should include the definition and protection of ‘Greenbelt’ in the New Urban Agenda, in order to ensure that cities are “green, compact and resilient”, giving the benefits of the greenbelt as, “ensuring that urban dwellers have access to countryside, with consequent educational and recreational opportunities; increase resource efficiency; improve air quality and making cities resilient to flood, heatwaves and natural hazards.”

STRATEGIC AND INTEGRATED PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF URBAN SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT

Q. 5. What strategic and integrated planning needs to be considered in managing urban spaces to improve the quality of living conditions, economic growth, etc.?

The Discussion Co-moderator, UN-Habitat’s Laura Petrella, highlighted the many gaps remaining in planning and management practice, the particular importance of public space, addressing sprawl and its impact on urban prosperity and focusing on “making plans happen”.

Arguing that access to essential services is an absolute priority for the economic, social, environmental and political development of developing countries, Mahrez, from the French think tank (Re)sources shared 21 recommendations (<http://fr.calameo.com/read/000132100171c7370c141>) linking urban development and access to essential services, underlining the importance of planning and governance to enable access to services, including:

- Integrate informal settlements into city management and development plans for water and wastewater services in urban and peri-urban areas;
- Set up transitional systems for access to basic services in informal settlements, with short-term organizational and technical arrangements, when remaining in the premises is inadvisable due to safety, land or urban planning constraints;
- Acknowledge neighborhood committees and intermediation associations as institutional players of urban organization in association with national and local public authorities;
- Authorize public service operators to organize, with local people, adequate temporary supply to informal areas, regardless of local authorities’ wish to displace the population;
- Prioritize securing funding for maintenance and renewal of facilities and train public actors in urban planning implementation.

Provision of basic services

“It is important to understand the interconnected nature of sectors, including water, waste, energy and transport. This will be important to ensure efficiency and improved investment decision-making. Finding ways to break the traditional sector silos from a policy, planning and implementation perspective is key.”

- Steven Crosskey, Head of IPM Strategic Positioning, UNOPS, Copenhagen

“Well planned urban space can be a key tool for development.”
- Laura Petrella, City Planning, Extension and Design Unit, UN-Habitat, Nairobi

The Moderator added that integrating basic service consideration and plans into wider spatial and urban development plans can achieve important economies of scale and avoid fragmentation of service provision, noting that it would be important to evaluate different strategies in terms of the effectiveness and affordability of service delivery.

From Bulgaria, Nina Ilieva argued that urban planning should be **people-focused and inclusive**, encompassing the needs of all citizens, including women and minority groups, such as the Roma in Europe. She shared a positive planning approach in the form of the ‘EU Framework for National Integration Strategies up to 2020’, which outlines the European Commission’s strategies to integrate Romani people across Europe on a national and international level, and called on the New Urban Agenda to recognize its interdisciplinary, holistic approach which involves all stakeholders - Romani NGOs, local residents and officials - in four crucial areas: education, employment, healthcare and housing.

Carl Emerson-Dam, UK advocated the inclusion of **urban topography** in the New Urban Agenda, as a strong determinant of a city’s storm resilience and disaster response to other urban extreme (increasingly frequent and intense) climatic events. Finally, Faiyaz Muhammed Pasha, Arslan Scientific, India, questioned the future viability of cities and advocated improved mass transportation systems to enable people to live further from metropolitan areas in *“peaceful, spacious, green environments”*.

ENHANCING FINANCING AND OTHER MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Q. 6. How can public finance and planning functions be integrated and/or aligned to advance local municipal fiscal systems?

Very few responses were received to this question. The challenges of limited capacities of local urban authorities and limited devolution of powers were cited as obstacles to integrating public finance and planning functions in order to strengthen local municipal fiscal systems. An example was shared from India where it was argued that initiatives to boost weak municipal finances, such as the ‘Urban Renewal Mission,’ have not been fully successful due to lack of project planning capacities in local urban bodies.

Alessandra Fidanza, Environmental Advisor and Architect, Italy, proposed a means to help cities finance local actions for effective resilience by linking national CO₂ emission reduction targets and the local level through extending the trade of carbon offsets to sectors beyond the existing emission trading scheme locally, *“Establishing urban CAP and TRADE systems, for instance, would entail a series of virtuous actions aimed, on one hand, to reduce GHG emissions locally, and on the other to account those emissions reductions at a national level, with direct positive effects for urban economies.”* Other discussion participants felt that a cap

and trade system would be counter-productive and instead advocated “polluter pays” direct taxation.

Finally, in order to improve land use and community planning and boost municipal finances, Edward J. Dodson, United States, proposed ensuring the implementation of regular land assessments based on current market values by transferring responsibility from local county to state agency staff, professionally trained and protected from political interference, and cautioned against funding public services, such as education, by local property tax revenue, as this disadvantages those in areas with low property values.

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.