



Global Platform for the Right to the City
Plataforma Global por el Derecho a la Ciudad
Plataforma Global pelo Direito à Cidade

COMMENTS ON HABITAT III POLICY PAPER FRAMEWORKS

February 2016

The following comments on the Habitat III Policy Paper Frameworks are the product of a collective effort by members and partners of the Global Platform in its commitment with the Right to the City principles for their advocacy in the Habitat III process.

The GPR2C expects that the frameworks would fill the gaps already identified in the Issue Papers and in several other documents and discussions; therefore this review points to some outstanding considerations: in particular, civil society and local governments issues that have yet to find a home in any of the existing forums and mechanisms.

The PPF must ensure the continuum of Habitat I and Habitat II through Human Rights and Democracy approach

In general terms, the conversation seems to be presented as build from zero, disregarding that all PPFs would benefit from maintaining integrity with the Habitat II proposals and commitments made in 1996, considering this exercise as a part of a continuum of forty years that requires serious consideration and evaluation. This discontinuity puts into critical focus the tremendous resource demands now on all Habitat III stakeholders to participate effectively, especially to salvage the values that are in risk of being lost.

The Global Platform consider as necessary to adopt a human rights and democracy approach, in particular the right to the city approach, understood as the right to habitat that facilitates a network of social relations based on social cohesion and equality and the collective construction of the city, the right to live with dignity in the city and to participate in the decision making processes. Those principles are necessary to create pacific co-existence at the local level avoiding urban segregation and threats of social instability. All the related commitments included in the Vancouver Action Plan (1976) and the Habitat Agenda (1996) should be taken into account.

Indeed, without a real evaluation of the impact of the model of competitive cities, and the huge consequences of commodification of housing during the past two decades and despites of Habitat II commitments, it seems impossible to address the roots of territorial and urban inequalities that are at the center of the challenges of the new Habitat Agenda.

It is impossible to understand that facts about the financial and housing crisis—with few exceptions — were hardly mentioned. It is also disappointing that the local **consequences** of growing global inequality; e.g., the extreme redistribution of global wealth into the hands of very few, as well as the consequences of free trade agreements (such as TISA, CETA, TPP), transnational austerity measurements, structural-adjustment programs (through international financial institutions or the European crisis programmes) and Tax Haven have not been discussed. All those global issues are threatening the commons, that we think is the higher purpose of all human settlements.

There are worrying **consequences** of these fundamental deficits for the Habitat III outcomes. The exclusion of these international issues would be an extreme regression in efforts toward global equality and equity promised in the Habitat II Agenda (1996) and, more recently, in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Habitat III could end in a total betrayal of the principles and commitments already standing in the Habitat Agenda, as it is replaced by a narrower and inferior "new urban agenda." This, we fear, will produce another pretext for economic attacks on our commons, our livelihoods, our neighbourhoods, our human rights.

Public-private partnerships (PPP) have been broadly used over the last decades, proving that, in many cases, they have not been the best option and their social and financial costs have been really high. Public policies should be a discussion between the governments and the inhabitants and regulation must be in place to protect and guarantee the public interest. At the same time, the Habitat II Agenda emphasized the importance of supporting local efforts to encourage the community partnership and participation in building, operating and maintaining basic infrastructure and services that empower women and meet the marginalized groups' livelihood.

In broader terms, the social production of habitat (understood as all non for profit processes carried out under inhabitants' initiative, management and control that generate and/or improve adequate living spaces, housing and other elements of physical and social development) deserves and demands recognition and support from the State, by providing access to adequate land, financial mechanisms, legal framework and technical assistance.

The need to include the Right to the city as the cornerstone of the Habitat Agenda

As a Platform, we are convinced that a change of paradigm is needed and has to be based on the right to the city as its cornerstone. If not, cities concentrate such unsustainable inequalities that they threaten to be places of segregation, social insecurity with resulting unsafety, affecting the quality of life of all inhabitants and dwellers. Hence, the New Habitat Agenda has to recognize the Right to the City as an individual and collective right for all inhabitants, considering the territories of the cities and their hinterlands as spaces for the exercise and fulfilment of human rights, in order to ensure that people have access to the resources, services, goods and opportunities that the city brings in a fair, universal, democratic and sustainable way.

It is a right that confers legitimacy upon people's action and organization, based on their uses and customs, with the objective to achieve full exercise of the right to an adequate standard of living. Like all human rights, the Right to the City is interdependent of all internationally recognized and integrally conceived human rights. That is why it has interface with civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, bringing the dimensions (with a broad perspective within the idea of Habitat rather than just a **New Urban Agenda**) of the territory and the urban life.

The Human (Well) being a the core of the Habitat Agenda

At the same time, the **human being should be at the core of development**, as an active participant and beneficiary of the right to development. The agenda should promote social justice as a goal of all human settlement, addressing the needs of all people living a territory, and in particular those of the more vulnerable : women, children, youth, minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, aged persons and persons living in poverty and exclusion.

The New Habitat Agenda should be an agenda that address as a priority the needs of all urban dwellers, independently of their legal status as national, residents or not. In that regard, and in the context of growing migrations flows that are responsible for most of the growth of the urban areas, the New Agenda should address as a central issue the question of equality of rights between migrants and nationals, to prevent racism, ghettoization and growing tensions between communities.

In the PPF, there is no critical view on growth; it appears as the unique condition to create jobs, nor a reference to sustainability and social inclusion that must be the sine qua none condition to face climate change and to achieve social inclusion. The PPF's **do not refer to other forms of economy such as solidarity-based economy**, or plural economy that combines business sector together with solidarity economy, contributive economy, circular economy...

There is a commitment for the need to recognize and support the "informal" sector, however is ignored and overlooked a recommendation towards supporting and protecting the livelihoods of the working poor, and not just its "recognition and integration". The indicators included say nothing about the **need of measuring the impact/contribution of the social production of habitat, the informal sector, the social and solidarity economy, the economy of care, etc.**

It must be noted that a **significant part of the population** is involved in the informal economy, but **has no rights, is invisible**. They are frequently object and main targets of privatization and revitalization policies (in other words, sanitization, in the majority of the cases), which are detrimental to realization of the Right to the City.

The informal economy it is part also of the physical informality of the city (housing, access to basic services, etc.). It is necessary to gather these two discussions. While it is important to recognize the need for "negotiating" the occupation of public space by workers on the streets —so that the rights and needs of all of those who make use of the urban public space are met—it is important to recognize that streets are the primary and most-essential component of the public sphere, where a great deal of the informal economy workers (particularly for waste pickers and street vendors) make their livelihood. Assuring the rights of informal workers assures realization of the Right to the City.

The **Global Platform for the Right to the City** is an international network supported by over 100 civil society organizations, social movements, academic institutions, local governments, public sector agencies, foundations and international organizations, which seeks to create an international movement to campaign for the recognition and implementation of the Right to the City at local, national and global level.

The **Right to the City** is defined by the World Charter on the Right to the City (2005) as the equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity, and social justice. It is a new collective right of the urban inhabitants, in particular of the marginalized groups and people living under vulnerable conditions, that confers upon them legitimacy of action and organization, based on their uses and customs, with the objective to achieve full exercise of the right to free self-determination and an adequate standard of living. The Right to the City is interdependent of all internationally recognized and integrally conceived human rights, and therefore includes all the civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights which are already foreseen in the international human rights treaties. It includes the inhabitant's rights to the resources, services, goods and opportunities of city life, including rights to citizenship, to participation in governance, and to land for housing and livelihoods; while also encompassing emerging collective rights, e.g.: to water, energy or cultural identity. The Right to the City challenges the commodification of urban land to argue for recognition of the social function of land and property. Countries and cities have already included these principles and reframed urban legislation accordingly (e.g.: Brazil and Ecuador) and practice (e.g.: Mexico City and Montréal).

PLATFORM MEMBERS AND PARTNERS INCLUDE:

Brazilian National Urban Reform Forum, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales/Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO/CLACSO), Habitat for Humanity, Habitat International Coalition (HIC), Huairou Commission, International Alliance of Inhabitants (IAI), Polis Institute, RIPESS (ahora no recuerdo el nombre completo - está en la web), Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), StreetNet International, UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, Women and Habitat Network (Red Mujer y Habitat), Women in Cities International, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO).

This initiative is supported by: ActionAid, Cities Alliance, Ford Foundation, Fundación Avina, Global Fund for the Development of Cities (FMDV).