



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

## GPR2C Assemblies: Right to the City facing COVID-19 and the global crisis

Assembly 2: Right to the City, integral health and protection of life

April 23rd 2020

### Minutes in english

#### 1. Agenda

|  |   |                            |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| <a href="#">Welcome and greetings</a>  | GPR2C Support Team                        | 10 min                     |
| <b>How to face the crisis? - Initial reflexions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <a href="#">Amanda Flety - Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights   United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)</a></li><li>- <a href="#">Meena Menon - Social Justice Cluster of the Asia Europe People's Forum</a></li><li>- <a href="#">Fides Bagasao - Community Organizers Multiversity</a></li><li>- <a href="#">Javier de Haro - ONG Cesal</a></li><li>- <a href="#">Ana Falú - CISCOSA; Women and Habitat Network; GPR2C Gender and Diversity WG</a></li></ul> |   | 35 min<br><br>(7 min each) |
| <a href="#">Exchange and debate: proposals for activities, collective advocacy, etc</a>  | Everyone (moderation: GPR2C Support Team) | 60 min                     |
| <a href="#">Closing</a>  | GPR2C Support Team                        | 5 min                      |

#### 2. [List of attendees](#)



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### 3. Minutes in English

#### a. Welcome and greetings - Henrique Frota, GPR2C Support Team

We are going to start the 2nd part of the Assembly. I would like to thank all speakers who are joining us! You can check [in our website a summary and the minutes from the previous session.](#)

Today we will start with an interactive exercise to get a notion of who is in the room and what we are all working on.

1) First question: where are you from:



Many people from Brazil, Spain, France, Argentina, Ecuador, Germany, Italy, Montenegro, South Korea, Ukraine, USA, India.

2) What are the major urgencies from your point of view of this crisis?



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## Greatest urgencies of the crisis? / ¿Mayores urgencias de esta crisis? / Plus plus grandes urgences de la crise?



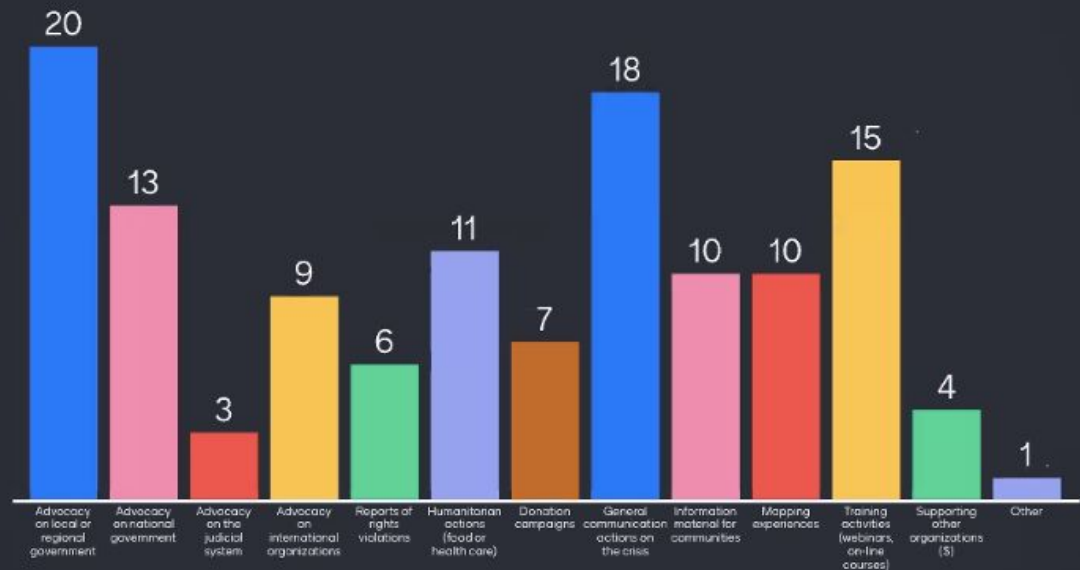
Housing, safety for homeless, Human right violations, Women safety, Rural workers, Informalities, Economy, Health, Governments, Jobs, Lack of jobs, After-crisis changes, Public spaces, Rents, Forced evictions, Violences, Hunger, Social problems, Fundamental rights, Settlements, Social protections, etc. It's very important to have this cloud here to have an insight of everyone's concerns.

3) What kind of actions is your organization taking during this crisis?



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What actions is your organization taking? / ¿Qué acciones está tomando su organización? / Quelles mesures votre organisation prend-elle?



Advocacy on local or regional level, general communication actions on the crisis, training activities, advocacy on national government, humanitarian actions, mapping experiences, making materials for communities, etc.

After this meeting we will make this presentation open so you can participate more. (Go to [www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com) and put the code 707259).

## b. Initial thematic reflections: how to face the crisis?

### i. Amanda Flety - Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights | United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

I am very that advocacy for local and regional governments is one of the topics highlighted. Now more than ever we are seeing the importance of local government action. UCLG started, with the first containment measures, to organise [virtual seminars for its members](#). The first one, 3 weeks ago, brought together many UCLG members, and one of the main messages was that local and regional governments are ready to take greater responsibilities



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in this crisis. Health is not part of their responsibilities, but this crisis puts this back on the table, and many governments are taking local action.

UCLG and Metropolis have launched a [mapping of more than 300 initiatives and responses to the crisis](#). At UCLG we have worked hard to have local authorities implementing such actions, but also to have local actors decide on their own actions. And this is what we see happening today, with many actors acting to meet citizens' needs, even going beyond the responsibilities of local governments. For example, Sfax has created a solidarity fund to help migrants. There are also examples of hotel requisitions to help homeless people or women who are victims of violence.

In addition to this, in this debate on the right to the city, it is necessary that local and regional governments open up the debate on the issue of the right to health. We see the limits of considering health as a commercial good. Governments that already took the right to health into consideration before the crisis are now better organised to deal with it, for example with public health centres or being able to put in place "health for all" policies during the crisis.

Another important point is the issue of inequalities, highlighted by the crisis, which reveals the fragility of social choices made before. From the Committee, we are trying to feed into this debate. Poor neighbourhoods are more exposed to the virus because of lack of adequate housing and greater concentration, which leads to the very active debate now on density and metropolization, which again highlight how the right to the city is linked to the discussion on health.

There are many issues on which we need the intervention of local governments because they have the capacity to respond: the issue of rents, mortgages, domestic violence, homelessness, migration, etc. On all these issues, local governments want their voice to be better heard at the global level.

Finally, we can see that there is a strong willingness to take action during the crisis, but also to think about the after-crisis. This crisis is the moment to make changes, and it is one of our responsibilities as a network of local governments to push for these changes. I am sharing this responsibility with you, the GPR2C, because we need to bring together local government, civil society and others to think about the after crisis and what policies should take us there. This is what we have done in the past with the "Cities for adequate housing" initiative and now we have another opportunity to broaden the debate and to advance on the Right to the City.



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Just to close, I would like to highlight that in all of UCLG webinars, Human rights were at the core of the discussion. We see that the human rights approach is needed and that local governments are open to include such an approach in their policies.

## **ii. Meena Menon - Asia Europe People's Forum (Social Justice Cluster)**

At AEPF, we have an annual gathering of civil society to discuss several issues. On the Social Justice Cluster we have particularly been focused on social protection. We have launched a Global Charter for Social Protection, to define an universal framework for social justice in policy decisions.

When we talk about the Right to the City, it is important to see cities as spaces that protect life and livelihoods. Thus, comprehensive social protection is an important foundation for the Right to the City, because you may have rights but you may not have the ability to access those rights unless it is actively facilitated. So an approach to planning and policy that takes social justice into consideration is very important.

In my country, India, from the time lockdown was announced, at least half of the more than 400 million people that work in the informal sector (with no social security or protection) were out on the streets. The main reason was their dependence on a daily wage, so they could no longer stay at home. So 10 days into the lockdown, those workers, many of them migrants, came out onto the highways with the plan to walk home (often more than 500km). Because they had no home they could not access public food distributions and money transfers (because they had no fixed address). And even if they got the ration, where would they cook it? So, most of our cities became hostile places for these people. And for the first time a lot of people in the middle class and the mass communication channels saw these millions of people on the streets.

For us, it is important to think of how we can act now to change and direct policies. What kind of policies do we need? Why do we need social protection? Why do we need homes? As housing groups we have been fighting to stop evictions. But in the context of informal settlements we have to think if these places really offer decent housing, which is a question the pandemic made even more urgent. The debate on universal health protection is very important but we need to think of what other basic conditions needed to ensure the access to universal health, such as decent housing.

Emergency responses are key, especially in developing countries. We have to look carefully at some of the protests against lockdown, because in many cases they express the anguish and desperation of starving families.

In the notes of the last meeting, an important point was made on building cities around care.





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How do we build not just a consciousness of rights but a consciousness of social justice? To protect political, economic, social and cultural rights, we need to provide active facilitation and engage with social justice and with culture (to the extent that if there is a culture or patriarchy, of racisms or of casts, for example, this will not allow people to claim the rights they technically have).

I would like to highlight how all governments have acted in concert, based on WHO recommendations (except Trump). If the whole world can react as one for the pandemic, there are many other things for which they can respond as one but they choose not to. If we make a unified global campaign for social protection, we can demand these protocols as well.

In the past, we have had a lot of discussion in international fora, etc., and we have been very active in this regard. Today, it seems that we are acting more in silos, and we need to solve this problem, and think about how we can work together to build a new world. And just to be clear: when I talk about social protection, I am talking about fulfilling the essential conditions for life, which includes health and education, but also housing and a habitat that is genuinely protective of all kinds of life on earth.

### **iii. Fides Bagasao - Community Organizers Multiversity**

I would like to underscore what Meena has said about how our actions and work should be based on us as humans and the need to put care at the center. It should be our aspiration with or without COVID-19. This pandemic has called into question the lives of many people: "my house, my car, my clothes are all useless in this context". Whether you are a prince or a homeless person, you can all be infected.

My reflection will start with the language that we use for Covid-19: "stay home" and "wash your hands" have been the main mottos of the fight against the health crisis. I wonder what do the homeless people or people in informal settlements think about this language and of the concept of social distance. Then come the lockdowns and their implication for daily-wage workers. India elevated this conflict to an epic scale, but in the Philippines we had a similar episode: construction workers who had to walk to other parts of the city or to other provinces. We have to think about the experiences of the people who suffer inequalities, which have been intensified by the pandemic.

Government action took a moment to be in place. Who were the first responders? Community groups. It was through the pressure of activists in social media that many actions were taken and that public policies were modified, for example in the case of suspension of



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public transportation. Here in the Philippines, social media was key, since people can't protest in the street anymore.

Fortunately, the young mayors of several municipalities were very quick to respond, providing measures to help their residents financially (some even gave up part of their salary). Regarding emergency accommodation, only those with hotspots were really able to follow the quarantine, and evacuate vulnerable people to safe places (in Manila and Cebu, for example, they used empty hotels to house the homeless). Whether before COVID or now, places of protection for women victims of violence continue to be open. Indeed, violence is often more intense because of stress and lack of work. These places of protection continue to play an important role.

The role of civil society needs to be strengthened in the post-COVID-19 rebuilding. We have seen that the national government is quite far from the people and does not know what is happening on the ground. It does not engage properly with grassroots organizations who are very efficient in doing risk mappings related to disaster prevention, a key tool now.

The right to the city underlines the issue of social production. The current crisis makes us reflect on how we are all linked to one another: to the farmers who produce our food, to the doctors who treat us, to the distribution chains. These are the value-chains of human life. More than ever we have to strengthen solidarity and mutual-aid within communities in order to respond to precise issues but also to improve advocacy towards government based on the concrete on the ground needs.

Our organization with communities on the ground must be the foundation of the Right to the City movement. Some economies are collapsing as a result of the rupture of these interconnections but also due to ruptures on how we deal with the environment. The GPR2C must take into account these lessons that come from the emergency.

#### **iv. Javier de Haro - ONG Cesal**

We are Cesal, an NGO of Spanish origin. We are just over 30 years old and are present in 16 countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe. We have 7 international offices and more than 600 projects carried out: 130 in the last year. Last year we supported more than 200,000 people.

What we want to convey here today is how an NGO like ours has implemented some actions in the territories where we are, mainly in the cities. This crisis, as we know, has exacerbated the





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problems that already existed in the cities with the most vulnerable communities. Where there used to be a minimum of work, there is now none, where you could pay rent for a family, you can no longer do so. Where there were water problems, now there are more serious shortages.

This situation is seen in some ways around the world, but more critically in the peri-urban areas and vulnerable communities where we work. We have tried to refocus our activities and launch emergency actions, having been able to support more than 1000 families so far. Our action is based on 4 fronts:

- Communication and awareness raising
- Food, hygiene and sanitary equipment
- Employment online assistance
- Social-emotional and psychological support for affected families

Firstly, communication and awareness actions. We think that everyone knows what they should do, in terms of hygiene and prevention, but in many communities there is no clear awareness of what to do and how. We have carried out different awareness campaigns on how to protect themselves from COVID-19, as well as fundraising campaigns.

Food assistance, hygiene promotion, and material assistance to vulnerable groups: now with the COVID-19 crisis, in places like Madrid, we are acting in areas where we were not before, as they were not in a situation of vulnerability before. Another sector that has been very affected is that of migrants. In Peru we have more than 1 million Venezuelans migrants, mostly informal workers. We are supporting them with the distribution of basic food baskets. In places that are very dangerous and we cannot reach, we are working on cash-based interventions.

Training for employment: we work with migrants, especially in Madrid. Everything has been virtualized. We support them with courses and training, in trades and languages.

Socio-emotional support: food is very important, otherwise there is no life. The situations of overcrowding that we observe in many vulnerable communities around the world, under a context of confinement can lead to borderline situations of conflict and violence. The situation as a whole affects mental health. We are using all possible means to keep in touch with and care for these families. Listening to them.

With these examples we wanted to show how civil society organizations can respond to the emergency. We do not know when the confinement will end, but we can still contribute something to respond to the crisis.



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## **v. Ana Falú - CISCOSA; Women and Habitat Network; GPR2C Gender and Diversity WG**

I want to contribute with 4 main points in relation to today's topics: violence against women and their health is part of the Right to the City and Human Rights.

Women's right to the city and to diversity is political, and implies the unveiling of power conflicts, of domination and subordination, of omissions that give account of the patriarchal and colonial constructions that have become more acute in the neo-liberal society of the ownership of goods and people. In times of epidemics and uncertainty, violence against women breaks records, women are locked up with their abusers. At the same time it is mostly women who are in the front line of the healthcare crisis.

The social humanitarian consensus is absolute, in the face of the pandemic the people are the focus. However, "the people" is a neutral category, insufficient to think about the diversity of society. This neutrality that we have been questioning from the women networks and the feminist movement demands that policies be thought of in a feminist key in order to put inequality and diversity at the centre of the emergency agenda. And within it, women and their intersections, and to understand that this pandemic is not the same for everyone.

1. At least two major omissions that are closely linked to health in the COVID-19 epidemic must be accounted for. The first omission is to make subjects invisible under the neutrality of actions and policies. At least two conditions are necessary for the analysis:

a. Recognition of the great gaps in inequality and the understanding that this pandemic is not the same for everyone; that it is decisive to incorporate inequalities into the centre of emergency agendas and actions;

b. Focus on diversity and inequality, on the recognition of different identities, dissenting bodies, the LGBTQ population. Centrally, on women and the differences that cross them: race, ethnicity, education, condition of place/migrant where they live, ages, others. All as intersectional.

2. This pandemic is expressed with more virulence in the cities and even more so in the large conurbations where we are part of the urban fabric of obscene inequalities, where we are part of the social and diverse fabric, in the North and in the South. Therefore the importance of local governments. Fragmented and unequal cities, in which the territories of poverty



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extension present themselves with deteriorated habitat conditions, which expose the population to greater vulnerabilities in the face of the pandemic.

3. The invisible care that most women take. Women make up more than 70% of health workers everywhere. The managers of neighbourhood canteens, they are the caretakers par excellence of children, older adults, and people with disabilities. This situation is aggravated in the homes under the sole responsibility of women, most of them under the line of poverty or indigence. Homes that have more than twice as many children as those in the top quintiles. In these caregiving conditions, it is necessary to recognize the differentiated use of time by women and men. Time is the most scarce good in women's lives.

4. The most critical issue in women's lives, the one that hinders their autonomy, the one that weakens and frightens them, the one that takes away their self-esteem, is the one that opens up gender violence. Violence as a central dimension of life in cities and the greatest limit to people's freedom. Today there is concern about the increase in violence that particularly affects women in these times of COVID-19. Without a pandemic, women were already denouncing, and it is never enough. Social isolation aggravates the risk for violence against women, children and the elderly. In Argentina, violence both inside and in public spaces has grown: in 30 days, 23 women were killed.

Other groups -LGBTQI+, racialised- are also targeted. In this silenced city, that should protect us from the virus but does not protect us from other aspects, is allowing us to listen. To listen to each other and realize the many violences that are taking place. We need to raise our voices, campaign against this violence.

These four central considerations are expressed at different scales of territories, which are necessary to recognize and which account for territorial injustices. The bodies, the home territory, neighborhood territory and city territory. Each with its complexities. Each scale constitutes a type of territory strongly in dispute.

Violence is a public health problem, that the epidemic has brought to light the obscene inequalities resulting from a patriarchal culture and coloniality that persist in the racialized, impoverished, and discriminated bodies that skew the lives of women. The capitalist, patriarchal, colonial, racist vision wants to discipline them by seeking to weaken resistance. Resistances and resiliencies in emergencies and crises empower themselves and transform established power relations.



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**c. Exchange and debate: proposals for activities, collective advocacy, etc - all  
(moderation: GPR2C Support Team)**

**Catalina Ortiz, DPU, Coinvite**

The name of our initiative is "[Synergies for Solidarity](#)". How can we imagine a post-pandemic future that is just? How can we build a global network of solidarity and empathy? Many of the people present in this call interacted in Coinvite, a research project around the circulation of urban knowledge, particularly on slum upgrading using the methodology of transmedia storytelling as a crucial tool to engage with epistemic justice, bringing to the fore knowledges often neglected.

In this project we used a pilot case and we based our experience in Medellín, in several of the neighborhoods in the mountains. We engaged with the communities, universities, local governments and with the Global Platform as well. There, we developed this transmedia platform, trying to overcome the limitations related to the use of "best practice" experiences, neglecting many of the contextual issues. We wanted to shift the idea of a single narrative told by the main actors of our cities, bringing in a multi-narrative idea as a tool for the circulation of knowledge.

Our idea was to expand our strategy of translocal learning working with urban storytellers. Once COVID arrived, we decided to think about how to use our methodologies in the current context. We started observing the ecosystem of what is already being done, that, as Amanda has mentioned, is vast. What is largely absent is the voice of local communities in informal settlements. Based on the idea of the mapping of storytellers, we decided to start a map with all the people we were in touch with to make synergies in order to be more effective in the action in the face of this pandemic. We developed some premises for this particular campaign and renewed alliance with organizations:

- 1) Learning among organizations and strategic alliances are an imperative to protect life and putting care in the center. Territorial resilience is only possible if we engage with empathy in co-creation processes.
- 2) Engaging again with the idea of slum upgrading, learning from the vast institutional memory in Latin America, where we can bring back the notions and policies to align the response of the emergency to a long-term recovery with new priorities revealed in the pandemic.



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- 3) We also wanted an inter-sectorial and multilevel alliance at the global level, particularly focusing on the living conditions of the most vulnerable. Data becomes crucial. We are proposing a tool to identify and put in touch initiatives that are emerging, to make synergies and promote a renewed global alliance based on long-term responses centered in care and the dignity of inhabitants.

At least 10 organizations in this call are already mapping initiatives. We want to connect and have a shared platform of information at the local level, decentralized, to put them in touch and share knowledge, finding common approaches. This is the [survey](#) we have put together so that you can distribute within your networks.

### **Nelson Saule, GPR2C Support Team**

The main question for this debate is what should be the priority for the GPR2C in actions during the crisis. The city is the territory where the main spread and impact of the virus happens, especially in the more global cities. Cities suffer a lot with this pandemic. The idea of the Right to the City has become even more strategic while searching for responses for this crisis. How can the Right to the City help change the reality we have considering the main issues that have been arising in the assembly? Some themes that should be a priority: gender issues, elderly, informal workers, access to right to health, housing, water, basic sanitation, adequate food, the importance of care, etc.

### **Soha Ben Slama, International Alliance of Inhabitants**

COVID 19 is a universal tragedy, a virulent virus from which fragile populations must be protected. The positive point is that this virus has broken all territorial and social boundaries: it does not make the difference between rich and poor. It has also empowered us as citizens, at all levels, and through solidarity movements, to find common ground in saving the planet and communities in difficulty.

Like everywhere else in the world, at the moment is that we are realizing that some issues should be treated as a priority: food security (a truly vital priority) health security, and job security for fragile and already precarious communities. The poverty and misery to come after COVID-19 is likely to kill far more than the virus itself.

In Tunisia, containment was rather timid at the beginning, but the government has made up for it by imposing drastic procedures, even if they are not respected in some regions, and



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COVID cases are increasing. Most worrying are the cases of evictions, despite the texts issued by the state to stop the evictions for debts and mortgages. Some landlords continue to evict their tenants (with or without a contract).

What is also very worrying is that violence is on the rise, especially against women. More than 50% of the population is made up of women. They are often the ones who work for their families and there is a lot of violence against them because of lockdown. Lockdown is a hard word psychologically. We prefer to say "sheltering", but the situation is really brutal in scenarios where there was already violence.

At the level of my organisation, we see that the state is not enough to deal with problems such as the increasing evictions, the migrants on the street and elderly or pregnant women being evicted. There is also a lot of speculation about food. The International Alliance of Inhabitants and many other co-signatory organisations have signed with us a communiqué that we will soon publish, which calls on the government and local authorities to protect the right to housing and health for all in order to face the pandemic.

COVID-19 has worsened the situation of families who are homeless, or already in the process of eviction, because they have no income. Female workers who earn their living in houses, factories or even picking up plastic in the street, workers in the informal sector in general and migrants: all these groups are suffering because they have no guarantees. Fortunately, there is a great deal of solidarity from the medical professionals and from organisations and associations, and even anonymous people, who help a great deal.

### **Meha Bargaoui, Tunisian Association for Reproductive Health**

With the arrival of COVID-19, and since we know that migrants often work in the informal sector, we saw that these people were in need, and we chose to help them. From the beginning, condoms were distributed to prevent unwanted pregnancies and STIs. We also focused on pregnant women and women who had just given birth, who are very vulnerable. Sexual and reproductive health is in any case part of overall health. So we also helped them with food, providing them with diapers, iron treatments for pregnant women, milk for babies. And we also continued to raise awareness.

With the problem of COVID-19, many women don't dare to go and get checked. Yet the centres are working and are open and free of charge. But because women are afraid to go to health facilities, they are not necessarily protected. That's why we've expanded condom distribution.





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We also thought of protecting midwives by giving them masks. All over the world, there is a great lack of masks, so we have distributed surgical masks for midwives, and we are also going to try to have food vouchers, especially protein and milk vouchers, for these women.

I am also in another association, the National Union of Tunisian Women. We have a place where abused women can come and live. The president of the Association has now decided to also house sub-Saharan and Algerian migrants in these premises with the crisis.

### **Cesare Ottolini - International Alliance of Inhabitants**

We're trying to do a symphony. There are different voices from many countries, not only in Europe and Latin America, but from many others. However, despite the symphony, everything depends on the facts and on what is happening: the neoliberal policies do not wait, they are already under way. We see this in many European countries: Spain, Italy, France are already in phase two of the fight against the virus and this is not a time for alternative policies, even though more funds are available.

They are proposing the same traditional recipes so in the near future we are going to have many problems of private and public debt and policies of tears and blood. It is not enough to act on emergency policies. We are again entering the wrong part of the portal that is opening. We have the opportunity to make systemic changes or continue with the wrong policies, which maintain the mechanism of reproduction of the neoliberal model.

We do not have the recipe but we are looking for a common strategy towards the portal of alternatives. It is important to solidify alliances between progressive organizations and governments. We need to take a step forward, we need to think about the future. We said that in October, the month of the habitat and the Right to the City, we have to make an enormous mobilization. For the health emergency scientists will find a solution, our task is to find an answer for the social emergency, new models for the long term.

Every year in the autumn, the European Union debates its budget: we have to manage to have this common force to speak with them and exercise more force to ensure policies of rent control and social funds, so that there is more public housing and social policies. The World Bank and the IMF are rubbing their hands in what they are going to do with the banks in the future. Stock prices are going up because they are thinking about what they are going to do in a year.



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All countries should be dealing with the debt issue. In Italy, for example, they are debating the type of loans they are giving us and how many years we will have to pay them back. Now we have to say what we want. It is clear that we need money, but it cannot be based on huge debts and it has to serve to pay for alternative policies on the basis of all the debates we have had. Now is the time. It is important that we find a way for the different instruments to converge in the same symphony and for everyone to sing and dance with us. We need to implement these alternative policies and the Global Platform has to play this role.

### **Oksana Abboud - Streetnet International**

I will continue on what Cesare mentioned on how to use crisis as an opportunity, this time for the informal economy workers. Informal workers are very affected, mostly for income loss and health. But this moment is also an opportunity to improve their organization and ability to influence public policy. These workers need to have a voice in taking decisions that will be very consequential on their future. This crisis, as said, shows the inequalities gap, how legislation is not inclusive and the real picture concerning the situation of the urban poor around the world. Informal economy workers were providing essential services before the crisis and will continue to do so after.

The crisis is a test for all, including us. We have to think how to develop short-term strategies that feed into mid and long-term strategies so we can be more efficient for our constituencies. We are encouraging advocacy on:

- Social protection, universal social protection (local and national level)
- Universal healthcare systems
- Make visible the issue of vulnerability

The pandemic brought more or less the same preventive measures around the world, but it is clear that in developing countries these measures are not working accordingly, in part because of the high levels of informality and lack of inclusive policies that address this scenario. Governments have to focus on more inclusive policies and narratives.

We can't forget the other ongoing pandemic: the silent pandemic of gender-based violence, fueled by the "general mood of hunger" and being experienced also by our members.



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We also ask ourselves how we can be more effective in approaching international institutions such as ILO, WB and IMF and get them involved in addressing these informal workers not covered by social protections. This must all be done under the guiding principles that no-one should be left behind. We hope to advance towards consolidated guidelines that will allow us to operate in a coordinated and effective manner in different levels.

### **Gaia Redaelli - Patios de la Axerquía**

I am from the association Patios de la Axerquía (PAX), in Córdoba (Spain). We are a laboratory for urban regeneration through social innovation to fight gentrification in a historical centre that is very relevant from a heritage point of view. We use the cooperative model to recover the historical houses for the neighbors.

In the face of a pandemic like this, we must prioritize the emergency concerning health and the most vulnerable sectors, but it is true that, as Cesare said, there are things that will affect cities and society after COVID-19 in terms of the Right to the City. This implies not only in access to services but also in our capacity to determine and imagine collectively what the future of the urban physical environment is and how we live together in that environment.

In this that is happening to us, borders appear and disappear for the sake of security and thus people's freedom is reduced. But the borders right now are not those of states or city walls: the most visible borders in the fight against the virus in our unequal cities are borders between rich and poor. The main frontier we see today is housing. What is the danger that may arise? We are reduced to an individual space (our housing), public space is forbidden, but what happens next? Will we stay in this virtual public space with more social control?

Who coordinates and manages the new technologies? It is not always the public apparatus. We know that there are entities with a lot of power in the virtual world in which we live and this should concern us. The coexistence and the capacity of decision on these subjects should concern us.

I repeat: health and the most vulnerable people should come first. But beyond the emergency there are many other things at stake: what kind of city we want and what kind of society we are looking for.

### **Robert Robinson, IAI, US-Canada Alliance of Inhabitants**



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I will talk about the mobilizations taking place in the US. It is a moment of opportunity for mobilization and organization of social movements in the US unseen since the occupy movement and the financial crisis of 2008. The difference with the 08 crisis is that now the crisis affects everyone and not a select group of people that are more vulnerable.

There is a call in Jackson Mississippi for a National General Strike on May 1st. The call is broad and involves a range of issues, some of which we can't change for some time to come, but it focus on issues highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis. Different factions around the country are participating in this call in different ways. It is difficult for us to involve labour in a general strike, because of legislation. But housing is absolutely part of it. There are mortgage and rent strikes being prepared in NYC from May 1st, as well as a strike on buying throughout May. We will keep our money in our pockets starting May 1st.

Another opportunity for advocacy is the upcoming Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the US, scheduled for May and postponed to November. It is an opportunity for organizations in the US to do advocacy on a different level. The UPR task force, led by the US Human Rights Network, [did a presentation last week for 44 UN missions from around the world](#) focusing on issues such as: women's rights, housing, indigenous rights, workers rights, criminal and immigration detention, healthcare, voting rights, basic services, etc. There will be a preparatory event open to the public on May 11. Would be great to count with you.

### **Brenda Perez-Castro - Asian Coalition for Housing Rights**

We are a coalition of community-based organizations and NGOs that support community organizing processes. We are active in 10 countries in Asia and the Pacific. In terms of what we observe about how groups in our network are pursuing not only the health crisis but also the economic crisis, we see that there is a strong trend in Asia towards very authoritarian responses. Curfew measures are common, mainly in countries like India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, where people do not have the possibility to go out and where there is very strong repression. These communities are beginning to feel the hunger due to the loss of their livelihoods. These are very strong measures that, beyond health, also affect the economy.

Something we wanted to understand is precisely how these communities are responding to the emergency. Our network seeks to help create social structures that are able to be resilient, to develop their own modes of development and to be a countervailing voice to the local political powers, while collaborating with them. In this sense, it has struck me that the networks of communities that are established at the city level have begun to provide



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solidarity responses to the crisis based on very simple initiatives: using the information they have already collected as solidarity networks to understand where the most vulnerable communities are, which need more support. They have also been using solidarity financing networks: communicated savings groups, which also give credit, but managed by the communities, creating a kind of parallel and fairer financial system. This is the financial system that is responding to the needs of the communities right now.

This responds to one of the main messages we share in the region: how and why should communities organize themselves? These structures created by the communities allow them to give an effective response to the crisis, making local and even national governments (in Thailand, for example) look to these organizations to support the development of public policies. This is a time when we have to identify what messages we need to convey to governments and public opinion about what is needed for communities to be able to develop themselves.

We need to have an articulated voice among social movements. There is a major disconnect with Asia in the global movement and I think that we have had few opportunities to create the symphony that we talked about before. We have to understand the sound each one of us can make.

Finally, we need to implement rights, not only to claim their existence but to develop, realize and implement them. The feminist movement brings back the values of care and empathy to the public sphere, these are fundamental points of convergence.

### **Adriana Allen - HIC President**

It is clear that the value of this type of meeting is to be able to build these symphonies, starting with knowing better how we sing as soloists. We have organizations here working in very different modalities, as Brenda pointed out. Getting to know each other is very valuable for us to work together in order to start generating music audible to others outside of those with whom we already have a convergence and community of ideas. The next step is to articulate how we talk to other groups, groups that do not have the same communion of ideas, priorities, values, etc.

Not only do we have to think about the question of symphony, but also how to have more political muscle. In this respect I would like to point out what Cesare said, that we are entering a second phase in the fight against the virus in Europe. I am speaking from England and here



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the government is already starting to assess how many hospital beds we have and how quickly we can get out again. As Cesare pointed out, in this phase 2 there is no indication that we are moving towards a new normality of change. It is a phase 2 where we are going to come out wearing masks and with more individualized and domesticated behaviors or attitudes. There is clearly the construction of a new normality that is very resilient from the point of view of capitalism, which is already articulating channels to keep in place the processes of exploitative accumulation.

For me something central, thinking from the Habitat International Coalition (HIC) perspective, is the value that we can generate as networks of networks. Something very valuable is to do together what we cannot do alone. A political advocacy based on the idea that care networks not only in the framework of solidarity but under a responsibility perspective. This is the central agenda for us as a group, without taking away the value of continuing to share experiences among ourselves.

#### **d. Closing - Nelson Saule, GPR2C Support Team**

We have concluded all interventions. In this assembly there have been important questions and proposals that we will continue to discuss. Adriana has just stressed that we are in a second moment in which we have to align more strategic actions and initiatives at the international, regional, national and local levels.

We have to talk about two elements central to the Right to the City and little discussed today. First, the democratic management of the city and political participation. It seems to me that in these virtual initiatives we have to debate how we continue in a perspective of democratization of the management and planning of our cities in relation to the public policies that are being implemented at this time, always from a perspective of participation and democratization.

The second is the issue of climate change. This was already on our agenda before the emergency, but we have to link it to this moment. This is an issue that we must consider in our strategy. There are several perceptions that environmental conditions have improved following emergency restrictions.

From the GPR2C we already have an initiative that goes in that direction: to elaborate in the coming months some strategic documents on the Right to the City and specific themes:





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climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and the vision of the city as a common good, among others. This will undoubtedly be an important action of the GPR2C this year.

Thank you all very much and I ask you to open the cameras so that we can all see each other.