

# Right to the City: a roadmap for Climate Justice

The Relevance of the Right to  
the City to Face Climate Change,  
Global Warming and  
Environmental Justice



Global Platform  
for the Right to  
the City

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# A. Introduction and background



# Introduction

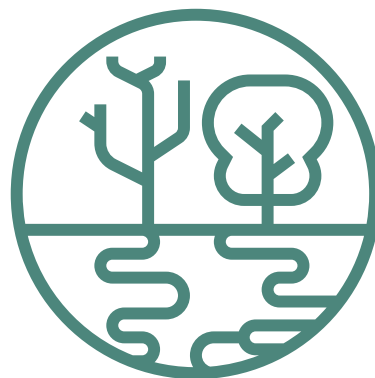
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This paper proposes the Right to the City, understood as

**“the right of all inhabitants, present and future, permanent and temporary, to inhabit, use, occupy, produce, govern and enjoy just, inclusive, safe and sustainable cities, villages and human settlements, defined as commons essential to a full and decent life”<sup>1</sup>**

as **one of the reference frameworks** to guide equitable climate action and to jointly create **practical agendas** to mitigate climate change (i.e. dramatically reduce carbon emissions), adapt to its impacts, and guarantee the

restitution of rights lost in the past while preserving those rights for future generations. The paper also reflects on **ambitious but failed former agendas** aiming to preserve the environment, and guarantee human rights and development. It also explains how the human rights-based **Right to the City principles** are aligned with **sustainability values** and permeate the current **Paris Agreement, 2030 Agenda** and the **New Urban Agenda** (henceforth PA, 2030 Agenda and NUA). The paper focuses in particular on Components 5 and 8 of the Right to the City,<sup>2</sup> as they relate specifically to the environment, biodiversity, natural habitats and surrounding ecosystems. The document also describes how to create **enabling environments** for local action, the role of **local governments** and a selection of **good practices and initiatives** that successfully incorporate Right to the City principles into climate action. The paper ends with the **main challenges** identified, **general recommendations** and a **glossary** gathering concepts from a range of sources.



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1. Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C), What is the Right to the City?; available at <https://www.right2city.org/the-right-to-the-city>

2. Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C), Right to the City Components; available at <https://www.right2city.org/right-to-the-city-components>

# The greatest challenge for the habitat

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According to the World Health Organization (WHO), ongoing climate changes are estimated to be causing over 150,000 deaths annually.<sup>3</sup> Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to increase this figure to **250,000 additional deaths per year**, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress alone,<sup>4</sup> while the causes of climate change further increase mortality.<sup>5</sup> The direct damage costs to health are estimated to be between USD 2-4 billion per year by 2030. **The damage cost to ecosystems and human habitat cannot even be estimated.**

This crisis is a **protracted threat**, sometimes silent in the form of pollution or progressive and accelerated deforestation, sometimes manifesting itself wildly in the form of droughts, heatwaves, hurricanes and floods.

**The present and future challenges posed by climate change require urgent action and systemic changes, addressing its root causes.**

At the same time, it is essential to resolve the **historical injustices** that date back to the colonial system, later intensified by the industrial revolution, which are currently exacerbated by the dominant existing extractivist and capitalist system.

## Combating climate change requires combining multiple strategies at different levels

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While the climate crisis is widely recognized as one of the greatest challenges currently faced by humankind, the social justice dimensions of climate action and the strategies developed to achieve them have remained relatively underexplored. In its special report on global warming and climate change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the largest global institution on the subject comprising 195 countries and thousands of contributors, warned that “**without societal transformation** and rapid implementation of ambitious greenhouse gas

reduction measures, pathways to **limiting warming to 1.5°C and achieving sustainable development will be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible**”.<sup>6</sup> This means that, without structural changes, the goals of the 2030 Agenda, including the **eradication of poverty** in all its forms and dimensions, the preservation of our planet, the **realization of the human rights for all** and achieving **gender equality** and the empowerment of all women and girls, will not be possible.<sup>7</sup>

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3. Health and Environment Linkages Initiative (HELI), WHO and UNEP, Climate Change section; available at [Climate change](#)

4. World Health Organization (WHO), Climate Change and Health section; available at [Climate change and health](#)

5. Urban air pollution generated by vehicles, industries and energy production kills approximately 800,000 people annually according to Health and Environment Linkages Initiative (HELI), WHO and UNEP; available at [Priority environment and health risks](#)

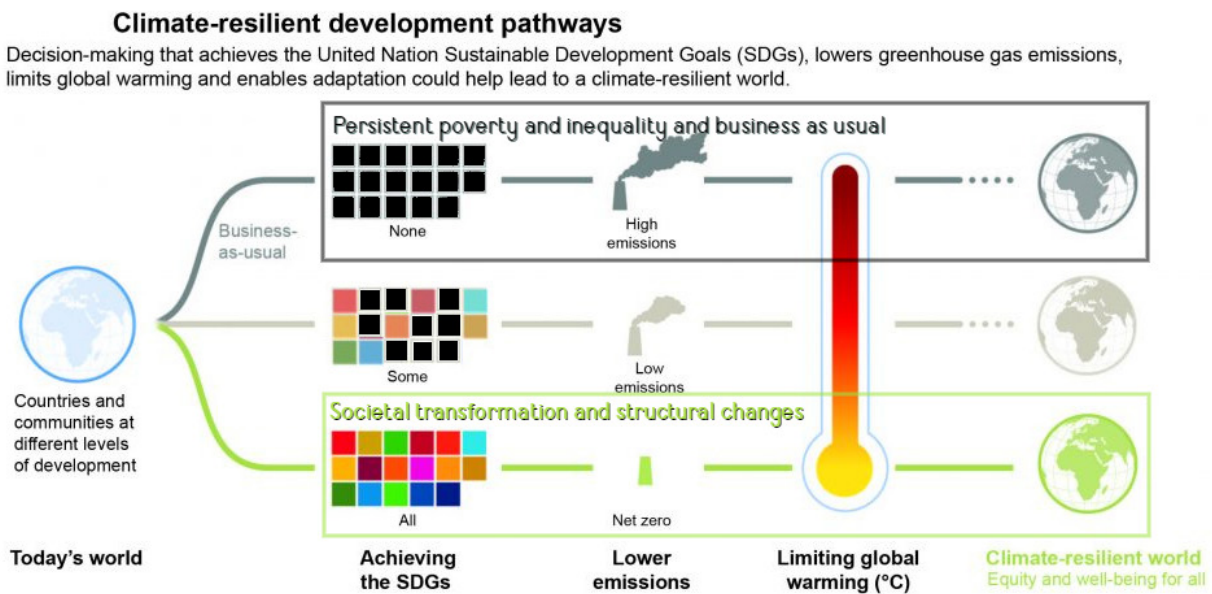
6. Sustainable Development, Poverty Eradication and Reducing Inequalities (Executive Summary); IPCC Special Report Global Warming of 1.5°C; available at [Chapter 5-Global Warming of 1.5°C](#)

7. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Preamble; available at [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

Yet the IPCC goes further and adds that “Ambitious actions already underway around the world [...] offer insight [...] for limiting warming to 1.5°C. For example, [...] clean energy and sustainable transport while creating **environmentally- friendly jobs** and supporting social welfare programmes to reduce domestic poverty. [...] [There are also] different ways to promote development through practices inspired by community values. For instance, **Buen Vivir**, a Latin American concept based on indigenous ideas of communities living in harmony with nature, is aligned with peace; diversity; solidarity; rights to education, health, and safe food, water, and energy; and well-being and justice for all. The **Transition Movement** [...] promotes equitable and resilient communities through

low-carbon living, food self-sufficiency and citizen science. Such examples indicate that

**reducing poverty and inequalities while limiting warming to 1.5°C is possible and can provide guidance on pathways towards socially desirable, equitable and low-carbon futures.”<sup>8</sup>** (See Figure 1)



**Figure 1:** Sustainable Development, Poverty Eradication and Reducing Inequalities; IPCC Special Report Global Warming of 1.5°C; Chapter 5, FAQ section (edited by the author)

8. Sustainable Development, Poverty Eradication and Reducing Inequalities (FAQ section); IPCC Special Report Global Warming of 1.5°C; available at [Chapter 5-Global Warming of 1.5°C](#)



Is this a wake-up call to states from the scientists advising the IPCC? Given that we are far from a zero-emission society and in a world that functions at multiple velocities, these messages convey that the social transformation and structural changes that are needed have more to

do with decentralized strategies and urgent demands for **fundamental systemic changes**,<sup>9</sup> but they are also related to the **redistribution of resources and opportunities**, the fulfilment of **human rights** and **ensuring climate and environmental justice**.

(See Figure 2)



9. See Chapter 7 of Extinction Rebellion's 'Emergency on Planet Earth'; available at [The urgent need for collective action](#). See also [What is degrowth?](#)

In the following sections, the paper will explain how the Right to the City — understood as a **collective right** that highlights the **territorial integrity and interdependence** of all internationally recognized **civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights**, as regulated in international human rights treaties, bringing them the **territorial dimension** and a focus on **adequate**

**living standards** and **environmental preservation** — is fully aligned with the notions of Climate and Environmental justice, and a reference framework to guide equitable climate action and to jointly create practical agendas to mitigate climate change.



# Big words, insufficient action

From the first world Conference on the Environment held in 1972<sup>10</sup> to the Paris Agreement in 2015,<sup>11</sup> 43 years passed in which successive agreements and measures were taken to protect the environment, mitigate climate change and combat global warming. However, these commitments have proven to be insufficient to achieve increasingly ambitious and urgent objectives, for a range of reasons,

including a lack of political will, inability or unwillingness to undertake drastic economic measures as well as insufficient funding, follow-up and monitoring mechanisms. The changes needed are radical, including a change of economic and social models that states and societies have not been able to implement.

“Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations.”<sup>12</sup>

**Stockholm 1972**

“The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations. Environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.”<sup>13</sup>

**Rio de Janeiro 1992**

“[...] climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should [...] respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity.”<sup>14</sup>

**Paris 2015**

**Figure 3:** Excerpts from Stockholm 1972, Rio de Janeiro 1992 and Paris 2015 Declarations (1 of 2)

The extracts quoted above come from the declarations of three of the conferences most committed to preserving the environment (Stockholm 1972; Rio de Janeiro 1992; Paris 2015). These demands and expectations could well be swapped in order or merged, as they all originate from the urgency and need to change an unsustainable

production and consumption model that creates inequality and destroys the natural habitat, and therefore the human habitat. But the fact is that none of them contain an ultimatum to take immediate action, since it is usual for declarations and agendas of United Nations conferences to dodge binding commitments

10. United Nations Conference on the Environment, Stockholm, 1972; more information available at [United Nations Conference on the Environment, Stockholm 1972](#)

11. More information available at [What is the Paris Agreement?](#)

12. Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Environment; Principle 1; Stockholm, 1972

13. Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; Principles 3 and 4; Rio de Janeiro, 1992

14. Climate Change (Paris) Agreement; Preface; Paris, 2015

and obligations. Had this been the case, the parties would have boycotted the texts, made them non-binding or simply ignored them.<sup>15</sup> Only the 2015 declaration was to be — in theory — binding. However, unfortunately, by the end of 2019 it was already known that “[in 2020] no country performed well enough in all index categories to achieve an overall very high rating”<sup>16</sup> in the Paris Agreement targets.

Moreover, in 2020, when millions of people were forcibly confined and production and transport slowed dramatically or even stopped due to the coronavirus pandemic, the resulting reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions “would not drive the deep and sustained reductions needed to reach net-zero emissions”,<sup>17</sup> despite an overall but limited improvement in the air quality in many cities around the world.

This demonstrates that the necessary structural changes in the economic, transport or energy systems, and in production and consumption models, must be sustained over time. Since, in the last 48 years (1972-2020), we only managed to make partial — and inadequate — progress, it is clearly time to explore and implement new strategies and paradigms. At the same time, it is also important to cast doubts on certain mechanisms devised by states to compensate their incapacity to lower emissions, such as the highly questionable case of emissions markets, where the atmosphere is parcelled up and permits to pollute it can be bought and sold just like any other international commodity.<sup>18</sup> Emissions trading is rife with controversy and the potential for exacerbating environmental and social injustice, with environmentalists and scientists warning that poorer countries with very low carbon footprints are bearing the brunt of carbon dioxide emissions in the wealthy world.<sup>19</sup> [\(See Figure 4\)](#)



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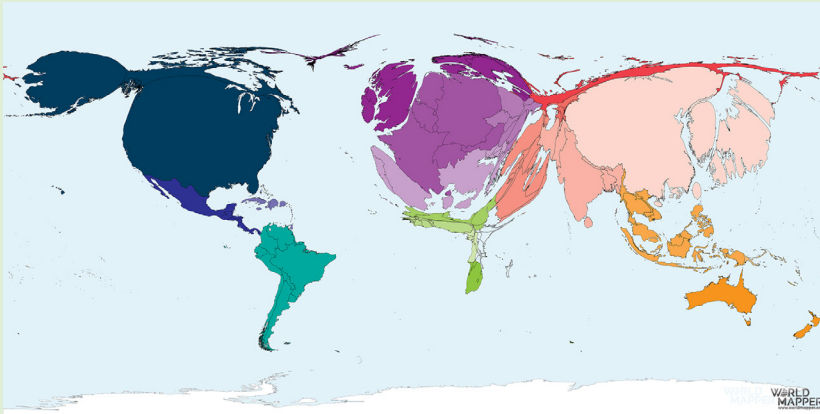
15. For more information on the negotiation processes of the Habitat Agendas, read ‘HIC at Habitat II (1996): From Vancouver 1976 to Vancouver 2006. A critical look back from the non-governmental perspective (first and second part)’ (Enrique Ortiz, 2008) and ‘The New Urban Agenda: wishful thinking’ (Alfredo Rodríguez; Ana Sugranyes, 2017); available at [HIC and the Habitat Conferences 1976-2016](#)

16. No Country on Path Compatible with Paris Climate Targets, 2020 Climate Index Warns; IISD, 2019; available at [No Country on Path Compatible with Paris Climate Targets](#)

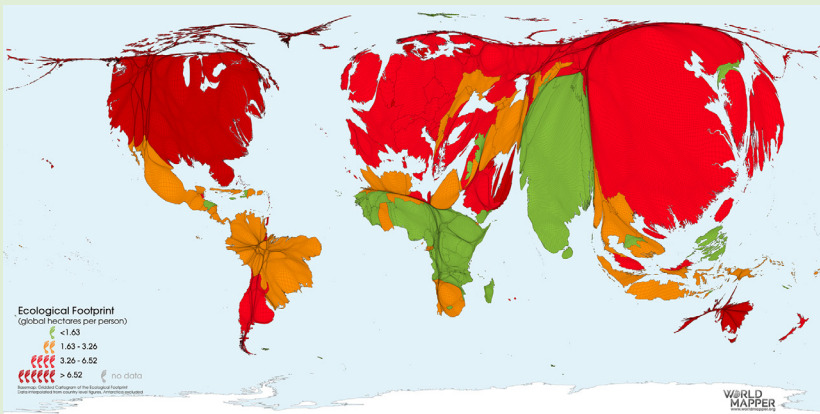
17. Discussion section at Le Quéré, C., Jackson, R.B., Jones, M.W. et al. Temporary reduction in daily global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions during the COVID-19 forced confinement. *Nat. Clim. Chang.* 10, 647–653 (2020); available at [Temporary reduction in daily global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions during the COVID-19 forced confinement](#)

18. Climate Fraud and Carbon Colonialism: The New Trade in Greenhouse Gases, Heidi Bachram; available at [Climate Fraud and Carbon Colonialism: The New Trade in Greenhouse Gases](#)

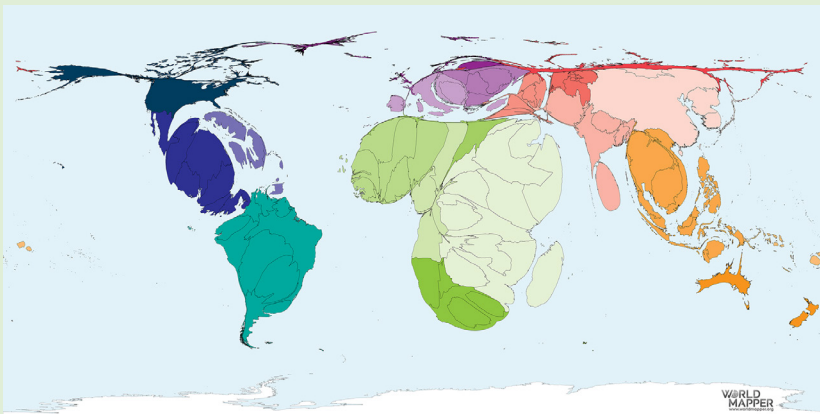
19. The global injustice of the climate crisis. Deutsche Welle (DW); available at [The global injustice of the climate crisis](#)



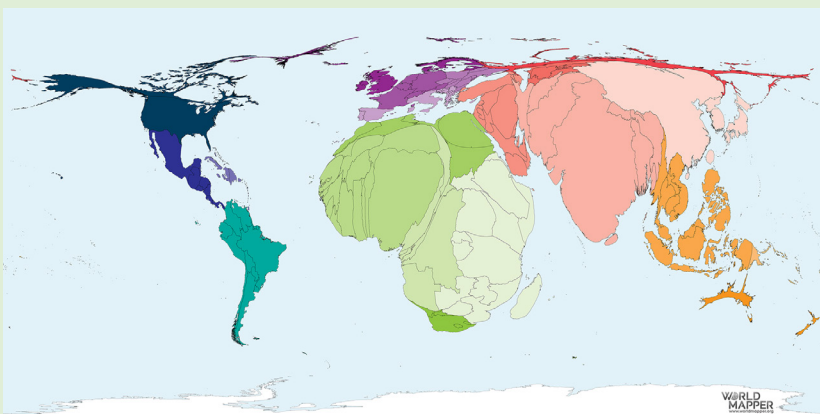
Gross Domestic Product Wealth 2018



Ecological Footprint of Consumption 2019



Absolute Poverty 2016



Droughts 2000-2017

**Figure 4:** While the relationship between gross domestic product and ecological footprint is proportional, the extreme effects of climate change affect the poorest regions the most (source: <https://worldmapper.org/>)

# From subordinate players to agents of change

In terms of the participation and involvement of civil society and inhabitants in the implementation of the Stockholm, Rio and Paris agendas, all have recognized equity and the importance of participation, but none of them have managed to achieve it in practice (see Figure 5). One of the major problems with these agendas is that they were built from top to bottom, with the bulk of the population as passive recipients of measures that do not try to change the dominant model itself. Instead, these measures rather tried to adapt the model to new rules that demanded higher levels of efficiency and lower use of resources, but basically meant business as usual — and often with more than questionable image-washing campaigns.<sup>20</sup>



Figure 5: Excerpts from Stockholm 1972, Rio de Janeiro 1992 and Paris 2015 Declarations (2 of 2)



20. More information available at [The troubling evolution of corporate greenwashing](#)

21. Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Environment; Preamble, paragraph 7; Stockholm, 1972

22. Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; Principle 10; Rio de Janeiro, 1992

23. Climate Change (Paris) Agreement; Preface; Paris, 2015

Conversely, strategies built by citizens might bring about the qualitative and quantitative leap that the fight against climate change demands. Such strategies must necessarily be based on **human rights** and **participation**, with the **social function** of housing, land and property at their heart and supported by **diverse and inclusive economies**.<sup>24</sup> A gender-based and multicultural agenda that will not leave anyone behind and that is rooted in the principles of locally-led adaptation action.<sup>25</sup>

It is also fundamental to understand that mitigating climate change, and adapting to its impacts, requires radically different strategies than those that were previously tested; not merely a revision or adaptation of previous plans, but **structural changes** addressing **root causes**. Because without new paradigms, we can only hope that in a few years new agendas will attempt to solve insurmountable problems, for which it may be too late.

In the meantime, the world's dynamics are being trans-

formed by the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, and societies are adapting as best as they can to face this new situation. If the world's governments are finally to tackle climate change and its consequences with the same rigour that some of them are employing against COVID-19, they need appropriate participatory frameworks to ensure that the burdens do not fall back on the most disadvantaged groups. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted pre-existing inequalities, and any recovery plan should be an opportunity to usher in a paradigm shift, given that “unthinkable” measures have become reality. Yet this also has potential both to exacerbate existing inequalities and increase the wealth gap, as well as to reverse progress on the climate issue, with job creation and economic stimuli taking precedence over all else. In this sense, recovery measures need to be targeted to ensure that they identify and target groups in situations of vulnerability to avoid the worsening inequalities, and that they are aligned with climate goals.



24. The social function relates to a use or application for the benefit of the greater society, in particular, prioritizing those with the greatest need (see glossary for further information).

25. More information at <https://www.iied.org/principles-for-locally-led-adaptation>

# B. Today's assessment and future challenges





# Dimensions of climate (in)justice

Climate change feeds on the excesses of the current socio-economic model and the lack of planning for human development and human habitat. On a global scale, it is most strongly felt by certain groups who have done little to speed up climate change and global warming but bear the brunt of the impacts (at present, industrializing nations, and in the future, the generations who will have to live with the consequences of an irreparably damaged planet). On both a local and a global scale, it is **particularly detrimental to the most marginalized sectors of the population in situations of vulnerability** due to the **injustice** and **inequality** that prevails in the current economic and social model. To make matters worse, within these populations in situations of vulnerability there are several aspects that affect certain groups to a greater extent.

**Women, girls and people who identify as LGBTQI** are already more likely to experience violence, discrimination or everyday inequalities such as a larger share of the household care burden or stigmatization, and may be further disadvantaged by the effects of climate change;

**The homeless**, who are stigmatized and continuously exposed to adverse weather conditions, pollution and poor food, hygiene and health;

**Indigenous populations**, with their customs, territories and their own survival threatened;

**Peasants and pastoralists**, threatened by water and land scarcity, excessive heat and prolonged droughts;

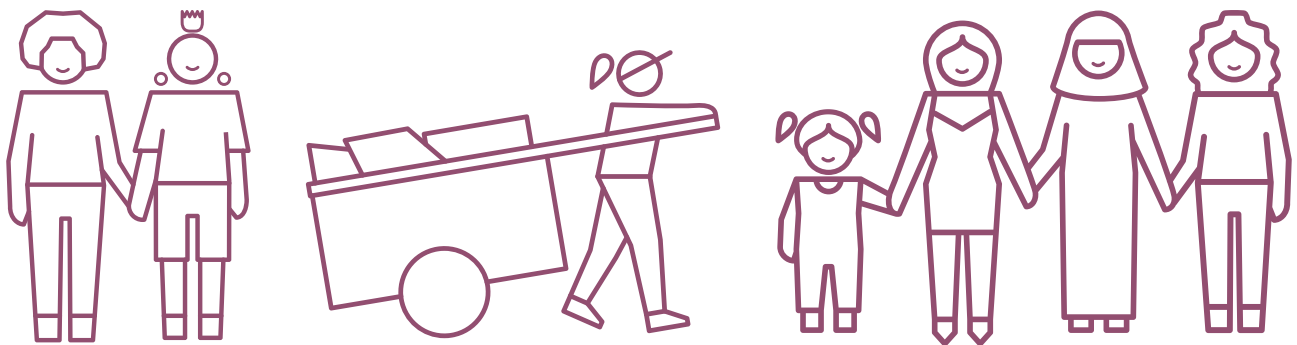
**Coastal, small island, archipelago and delta populations** who lose their shelter and sustenance and have to abandon their homes;

**Children and the elderly**, who suffer the consequences of climate change the most;

People that have historically been, and continue to be, discriminated against because of their **ethnic group, income, physical abilities or social status**;<sup>26</sup>

Those who live by undertaking **informal jobs**, depend on daily wages and have no social assistance of any kind;

**Future generations** who may live in a harmful environment and in a highly unequal socio-economic system.



26. Interview with Elizabeth Yeampierre at Yale Environment 360; available at [Unequal Impact: The Deep Links Between Racism and Climate Change](#)

This was one of the issues that the Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C) targeted during the 25th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP25), “Any strategy or programme devised to fight climate change must take into account the international human rights standards, recognize the indivisibility of such rights, and put the focus on the world’s most vulnerable populations.”<sup>27</sup>

The GPR2C also stated that an “[...] integrated approach is essential to address the structural causes of the climate crisis, as well as the responsibility for the violations, with preventive and corrective actions to ensure that urban and rural communities achieve their well-being with respect and protection of the ecosystems in which they live. For this, it is urgent to change the current economic neo-liberal model based on real estate speculation, extractivism and fossil fuels, shifting away from the current

focus on unsustainable production and consumption and seeking a balance with natural ecosystems; [to] make visible and strictly regulate and control polluting industries and practices; [...] and promote environmental justice.”<sup>28</sup>

This situation of gravity and vulnerability for so many groups has increased over the centuries, with some authors citing origins in colonial societies that began mass processes of deforestation and monoculture, indigenous slave labour and the enrichment of privileged sectors in the metropolises. Since the industrial revolution, this process has accelerated exponentially and the challenges have multiplied. Unfortunately, major efforts to combat climate change have proven not only to be ineffective, but have also failed to adequately address inequalities

(see Figure 6).

## Major challenges and environmental issues in human settlements and land management

Destruction of human and natural habitats;

Increasing socio-economic inequalities that exacerbate the impact of climate change on the most disadvantaged;

Insufficient integration of mixed-use land development and sustainable transport infrastructure;

Ever-expanding costs of infrastructure to maintain the basic functions of human settlements;

Increasing rural-urban inequalities (services, livelihoods, opportunities) and imbalance that puts the countryside and territories at the service of urban areas;

Increase in extreme conditions related to climate change that force population displacement (rising sea levels, lack of water and food, extreme temperatures, droughts, fires, hurricanes, tornadoes...) and the increase of climate-induced displaced people and refugees;

Recurrent persistent climatic events (such as droughts) that can be more damaging than extreme events;

Threats to food security and food sovereignty;

Insufficient and inadequate development of rural and coastal areas promoting mass exodus to urban areas without sufficient land, resources and services to support the population sustainably;

Impact of speculative and investment-driven strategies on land and the built environment (especially housing) that fuel urbanization, combined with premeditated deregulation of environmentally harmful activities in pursuit of profit.

27. HIC and GPR2C’s statement at COP25; available at [GPR2C Statement for COP25 - Right to the City](#)

28. Ibid

## Shortcomings in the existing mechanisms aiming to combat climate change

Insufficient (or lack of) energy supply and efficiency, greenhouse gas abatement, sustainable transport, water supply and conservation, pollution prevention (air, water and soil), enhanced land and biodiversity, resource efficiency and waste avoidance (solid and water);

Initiatives or policies that exclude and/or marginalize the so-called informal sector (waste pickers, informal transport, street vendors, food producers...), including the criminalization of these workers;

Insufficient training and awareness of broad sectors of the population on environmental issues;

Consumerist economic systems with no alternatives to other, more environmentally friendly practices;

Increasing technical requirements to combat climate change (transition green economy, electrification, building codes) combined with privatization and the centralization of public services, unaffordable for the most affected and disadvantaged communities;

Lack of autonomy, technical and financial capacity, and the necessary empowerment of affected communities;

Insufficient or ineffective participation mechanisms to include affected communities and civil society at all levels (consultation, planning, implementation and monitoring);

Highly questionable carbon market trading;<sup>29</sup>

Obstacles and false solutions for a just transition;<sup>30,31</sup>

Failure to differentiate the distribution of climate impacts and benefits of corresponding actions among communities (e.g. through spatially explicit risk and vulnerability assessments that disaggregate data according to sex, socio-economic status, ethnicity etc.), leading to actions that are unlikely to prioritize the needs of the most disadvantaged and those in situations of vulnerability.

**Figure 6:** The major challenges of Climate Change and shortcomings of mechanisms to combat it (the author)



29. 'Climate Justice Alliance, 'Carbon Pricing: A Critical Perspective for Community Resistance'; available at [Carbon-Pricing-A-Critical-Perspective-for-Community-Resistance](#)

30. Climate Justice Alliance, 'Just Transition Principles'; available at [CJA JustTransition Principles](#)

31. The definition of 'Just Transition' can be found in the glossary

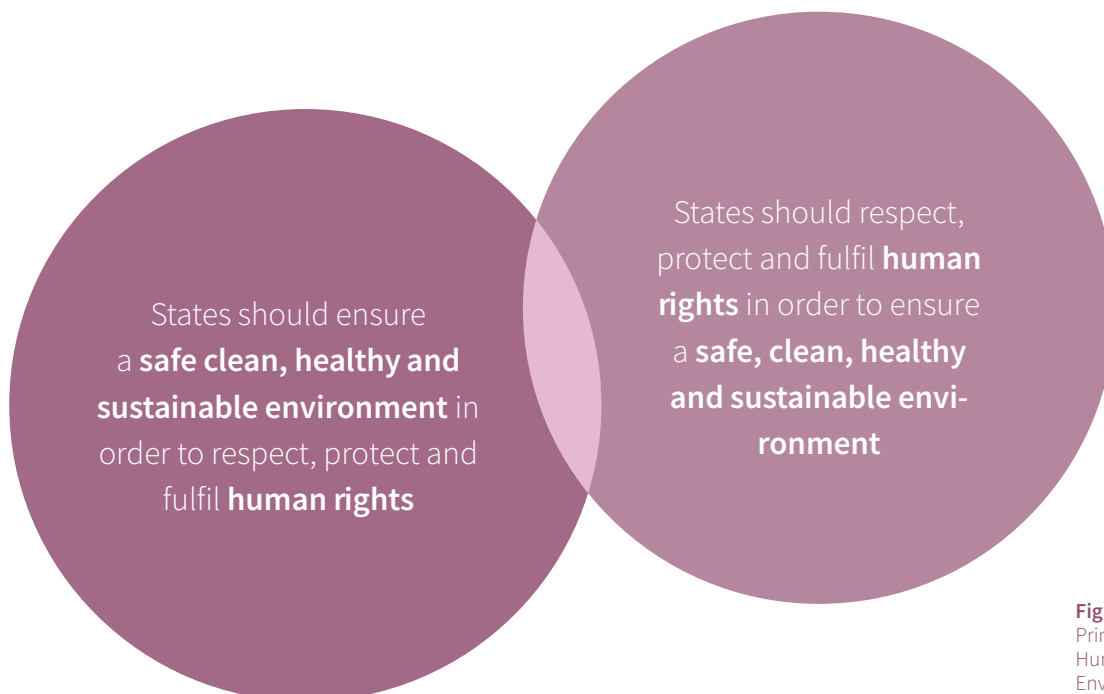
# The importance of a rights-based approach to dealing with climate change

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The major challenges and environmental issues in human settlements and land management described above have adverse effects on a wide range of human rights, and it is the responsibility of states to take immediate actions to prevent this. States have legally enforceable obligations reflecting existing commitments under international human rights law<sup>32</sup> and should apply a rights-based and gender-focused approach to all aspects of conserving, protecting, restoring, using and benefitting from healthy ecosystems, targeting, in particular, the needs of the poorest communities in situations of vulnerability. States should also empower people, especially women and others in vulnerable conditions, to become involved in designing and implementing solutions and benefit from them, generating livelihoods and improving their environment.

Yet, despite all these obligations and responsibilities, states have repeatedly failed to fulfil their commitments and have not been held accountable because of weak enforcement mechanisms. The question remains on how to reconstitute and implement human rights while achieving **climate justice**, understanding this as a fair play that links **development** and **human rights** to achieve a human-centred approach to **addressing climate change**, safeguarding the rights of people in situations of vulnerability and **sharing the burdens, impacts and benefits** of climate change equitably.

To this end, the ‘Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment’, which summarizes the main human rights obligations for states (arising from actual or emerging international human rights law) relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, is worthy of note.<sup>33</sup> Framework Principles 1 and 2 (of a total of 16) build a virtuous cycle in which a “safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment” is indivisible from the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights [see Figure 7].



**Figure 7:** Framework Principles 1 and 2 on Human Rights and the Environment

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32. ‘Human rights depend on a healthy biosphere’, Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, David R. Boyd, available at [A/75/161](#)

33. ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment’, John H. Knox available at [A/HRC/37/59](#)

Other principles focus on prohibiting discrimination and ensuring protection, including for those working on human rights or environmental issues; freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; education and public awareness; environmental information and the impact on human rights; public participation in decision-making processes; remedies for human rights and domestic law violations; substantive, non-retrogressive and enforceable environmental standards; international cooperation to remedy transboundary and global environmental harm; additional measures to protect the rights of groups in situations of vulnerability; and complying with their obligations to indigenous peoples and members of traditional communities.

The final principle gives us the key to achieving the implementation of human rights, ensuring environmental preservation and guaranteeing human development:

“States should respect, protect and fulfil **human rights** in the actions they take to address **environmental challenges** and pursue **sustainable development**.”<sup>34</sup>

**These three concepts (rights, environment and development) are thus indissoluble, and abandoning any one of them means that their common objectives would not be achieved.**

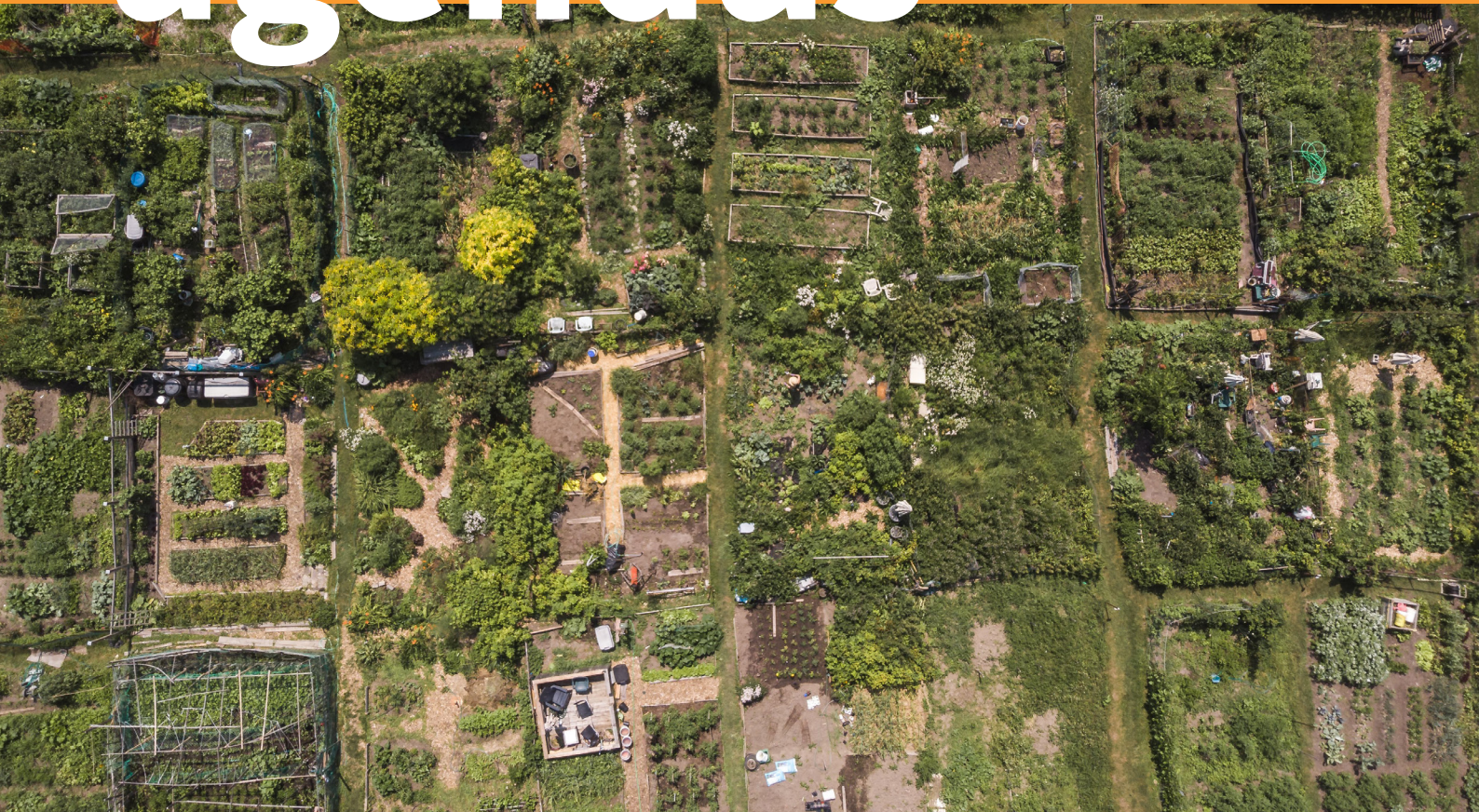
This is a major call to **align global agendas with human rights**: something that the framework of the Right to the City marks as fundamental. But, in the current, dominant governance model, development undermines the environment without ensuring compliance with human rights and, in fact, many development processes flagrantly violate fundamental rights.

The following sections explore how the Right to the City endorses this integrated approach and challenges the dominant model; firstly by analyzing how the Right to the City is reflected in global agendas that combat climate change, global warming and fight for climate justice (Part C); secondly by explaining how the components of the Right to the City are aligned to the principles of sustainable human settlements and territories, but go beyond these, adding extra value to basic sustainability principles (Part D); and thirdly how the Right to the City and Human Rights are the most engaged and aligned frameworks around which to build new agendas and commitments at all levels (Part E).



34. Ibid

# C. The Right to the City reflected in the global agendas



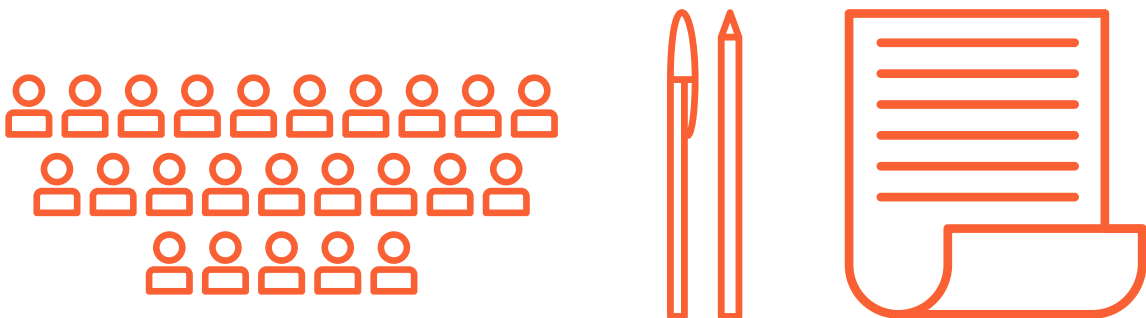
## C. The Right to the City reflected in the global agendas

**This section analyzes how the components and spirit of the Right to the City agenda permeate the PA, 2030 Agenda and NUA, in particular in Components 5 and 8, as they relate specifically to the environment, biodiversity, natural habitats and surrounding ecosystems.**

As suggested in the current global agendas and IPCC reports, the necessary systemic change to confront climate change can only be achieved through solidarity and effective collaboration among states, institutions, communities and individuals, throughout all phases of negotiation, implementation and monitoring. However, despite the various participation mechanisms — unfortunately different in each process — opportunities for multi-stakeholder dialogue are limited. And although certain processes are marketed as participatory, in the long run, decision-making spaces are far from spaces for deliberation and debate. The same applies to the verification and monitoring processes, in which states are often unable to provide comprehensive data on the level of implementation of the agendas they have committed to sign.

This lack of genuine dialogue and deliberation has meant that references to the Right to the City (R2C) in current global agendas are rare and — where they do exist — have often been deliberately stripped of content. Yet despite the reticence of many, the Right to the City is present to a greater or lesser degree in the current global agendas on climate change, development and human settlements. As is often the case with references to human rights — and to the obligations of states in this sense —,

**the Right to the City must be studied as the sum of fragments and references that permeate the three aforementioned agendas.**



# Right to the City Component 5



## RIGHT TO THE CITY COMPONENT 5

A city/human settlement fulfilling its social functions, that is, ensuring equitable and affordable access for all to housing, goods, services and urban opportunities, [...] ensuring a just and environmentally balanced use of urban and rural spaces, and that recognizes and supports the social production of habitat.

### Paris Agreement

Article 6.8  
Article 6.9

### 2030 Agenda

Goal 1.4; Goal 3.9; Goal 6.1;  
Goal 6.2; Goal 7.1; Goal 11.1;  
Goal 11.2; Goal 11.3; Goal 11.c

### New Urban Agenda

Vision 13 (a); Principle 14 (c);  
Implementation 34 and 69

**Figure 8:** R2C Component 5; Main alignments with the Paris Agreement, 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda

Article 6.8 of the PA recognizes the importance of non-market approaches to tackling climate change, but does not clarify if that goes beyond public and development aid approaches. This Article should also include social aspects, the work of the so-called informal sector and the added values of the social production of habitat (SPH).<sup>35</sup> Here, SPH must be understood as a methodology that goes beyond the notion of the built environment (housing, urban fabric, etc.), also referring to environmental management from a social perspective. Article 6.8 also talks about coordination (and hence, participation), and includes financing, transferring technology and building capacities. Article 6.9 makes additional references to a non-market framework for sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda set a number of ambitious goals related to Right to the City Component 5. In particular, Goal 1, indicator 1.4 refers to equal rights to economic resources and access to basic services and natural resources. In a finite world, where resources are scarce and commodified, this goal is particularly aligned with non-discriminatory Right to the City principles. Indicator 3.9 affirms that it is fundamental to reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from pollution and contamination, a goal that requires an urgent and overall improvement of the environment at all levels.

Goal 6 (water and sanitation) is one of the most ambitious, with indicators 6.1 and 6.2 calling for access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for all. It is worth mentioning that both indicators should focus on gender and vulnerability issues. Indicator 7.1 points at ensuring universal access to energy services, but fails to mention the importance of clean and safe energy for basic uses such as cooking and heating/cooling. Only ambiguous mentions of clean energy are made in indicators 7a and 7b, but they do not target the needs of those without access to clean, safe and affordable energy.

Goal 11 is directly linked to Right to the City principles, including indicators 11.1 (adequate housing, basic services and slum upgrading), 11.2 (sustainable transport, road safety and expanding public transport), and 11.3 (inclusive and sustainable urbanization with participatory planning and management). Indicator 11.c suggests the building of sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials in least developed countries, a strategy directly related to SPH.

A couple of important comments must be made here. Firstly, the opportunity to create jobs, reduce global poverty and guarantee the human right to adequate housing by means of SPH at a global level (indicators 11.1 and

<sup>35</sup>. All non-market processes carried out under inhabitants' initiative, management and control that generate and/or improve adequate living spaces. Full definition available in the Glossary



11.2) through inclusive and participatory mechanisms (indicator 11.3) must be highlighted. Secondly, the tasks reflected in indicators 11.1 and 11.2 are of such magnitude that their achievement will only be possible by reversing the current system of land management and housing production. Attempts at the mass production of housing are necessary, but must be combined with respect for the social function of land and housing, i.e. that the millions of empty houses around the world are inhabited and that land regains its social function. Any other strategy is unworkable and would seriously endanger the already delicate environmental systems we inhabit.

The NUA has by far the most parallels with Right to the City components. Part 13 (a) of its vision has very ambitious references to social and ecological function, the right to housing, and equal access to basic services, energy, water, food, air quality, education, transportation and livelihoods. Moreover, the NUA's Principle 14 (c) ensures environmental sustainability, clean energy, sustainable use of land and resources, the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity, sustainable consumption and production, and increased urban resilience.

These similarities with the Right to the City principles prompt us to ask why the Right to the City was deprived of content in the NUA, while these ideas were essentially reflected word for word in Policy Framework Number 1. Moreover, the naivety of these postulates is also surprising

(as was the case with some of the 2030 Agenda goals): without a radical change in the processes of urbanization, housing production and distribution of wealth and opportunities, it is impossible to achieve these objectives. In this case, comments made on Goals 11.1 and 11.2 of the 2030 Agenda apply again here. It would have been appropriate for the NUA to have constructed a feasible plan to achieve these objectives, instead of reformulating ideas and concepts without a strategy, sufficient funds or reasonable implementation deadlines.

Other mentions to environmental sustainability are included in Implementation 34 and 69, including sustainable physical and social infrastructure; affordable land; housing; energy; water and sanitation; food; waste disposal; mobility; healthcare and family planning; education; culture; information and communications technologies; the ecological and social function of land; protecting the ecosystem; ensuring sustainable consumption and production; sustainable land use; and containing urban sprawl.

Good plans that find themselves up against bad projections made by UN-Habitat itself four years after the presentation of the NUA, given their statement that there is a significant lack of funding to cover such plans,<sup>36</sup> as well as the declining productive and regenerative capacity of the earth, and increasingly worrying data year after year.<sup>37</sup>



36. UN-Habitat, 'Financing Sustainable Urbanization: Counting the Costs and Closing the Gap', available at [Financing Sustainable Urbanization: Counting the Costs and Closing the Gap](#)

37. Global Footprint Network, 'Calculating Earth's Overshoot Day', available at [Calculating Earth Overshoot Day 2020: Estimates point at August 22nd](#)

# Right to the City Component 8



## RIGHT TO THE CITY COMPONENT 8

**A sustainable city/human settlement with inclusive rural-urban linkages that benefit poor people, both in rural and urban areas, and ensures food sovereignty; a city/human settlement that protects biodiversity, natural habitats, and surrounding ecosystems.**

### Paris Agreement

Preface; Article 5.1; Article 5.2; Article 7.9.e

### 2030 Agenda

Preamble (People, Planet, Prosperity) Goal 1.5; Goal 2.4; Goal 8.4; Goal 11.3; Goal 11.A; Goal 12.2; Goal 15.9

### New Urban Agenda

Paragraphs 13, 50 and 95

**Figure 9:** R2C Component 8; Main alignments with the Paris Agreement, 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda

In its Preface, the PA recognizes the fundamental priority of safeguarding food security and ending hunger, and notes the importance of the concept of “climate justice” for some. Here, climate justice is in quotation marks and has been stripped of its true meaning and the importance of addressing it, similar to the NUA’s reference to the Right to the City. Moreover, the sentence “noting the importance for some of the concept of ‘climate justice’” implies that climate justice is not enforceable by everybody. The Preface also notes that sustainable lifestyles, consumption and production are essential in addressing climate change.

With regard to biodiversity, natural habitats, and surrounding ecosystems, Articles 5.1, 5.2 and 7.9.e are direct references to Right to the City principles, but more emphasis should be placed here on linking these contents to the paragraph mentioned above (sustainable lifestyles). There is little sense in conserving-protecting-enhancing strategies if emissions are not radically stopped.

The 2030 Agenda has an interesting triple approach in its Preamble (People, Planet and Prosperity) in line with Right to the City principles. Goal 1.5 talks about the resilience of groups in situations of vulnerability while reducing their exposure and vulnerability to all sorts of shocks; Goal 2.4. discusses sustainable food production and

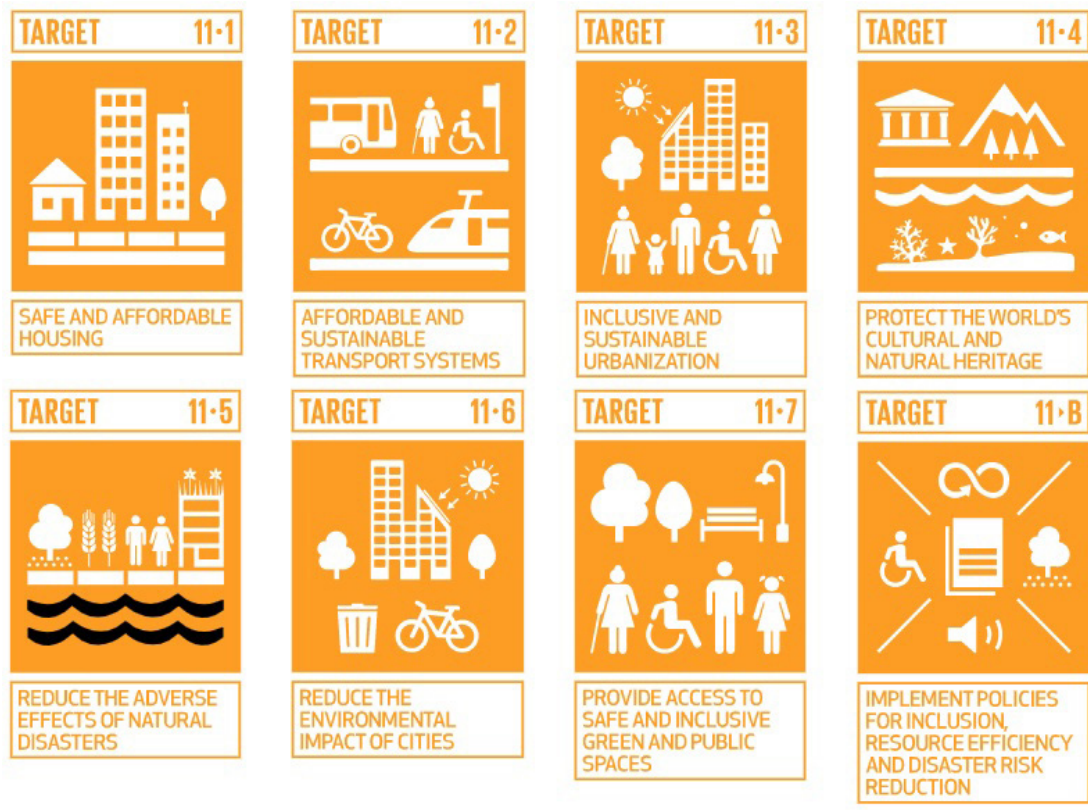
resilient agriculture that increase productivity and production, and help maintain ecosystems; Goal 8.4. would improve resource efficiency in sustainable consumption and production; Goal 11.3. would “Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning [...]”; Goal 11.A. would enhance positive links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas; Goal 12.2. would manage natural resources in a sustainable way; and Goal 15.9. would integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into planning and development processes.

The NUA develops a plethora of urban-rural relations that fortunately have more to do with a habitat agenda than with an urban one. This is the case of Articles 13 (territorial functions; balanced, sustainable and integrated urban and territorial development; reduce vulnerability; build resilience; protect, conserve, restore and promote ecosystems; and change sustainable consumption and production patterns) and 50 (urban-rural interactions and connectivity; integrated urban and territorial approach; territorial cohesion; as well as safety and environmental sustainability).

Paragraph 95 is more reminiscent of the organic definition of the Habitat Agenda “a regional and cross-sectoral approach to human settlements planning, which places

emphasis on rural/urban linkages and treats villages and cities as two ends of [i.e., points on] a human settlements continuum in a common ecosystem<sup>38</sup>. In this sense, paragraph 95 would support balanced territorial development, encouraging cooperation and mutual support among different scales of cities and human settlements,

providing access to adequate housing, infrastructure and services, facilitating trade links across the urban-rural continuum, supporting urban agriculture and farming, as well as responsible, local and sustainable consumption and production, and social interactions.



**Figure 10:** The Targets of Sustainable Development Goal 11 (available at <https://www.ihs.nl/en/resources/library/sdg-11-knowledge-hub>)

38. For more information read 'A needed cornerstone for Habitat III: The Right to the City' (Isabel Pascual, 2015) available at [HIC and the Habitat Conferences 1976-2016](#)

# D. Right to the City and sustainable human settlements



# The relevance of justice, participation and territory to sustainability

The current accelerated processes of urbanization, the growth of the urban population, and the exponential increase of capital accumulation and consumption in cities have made the global agendas focus on these specific contexts, and assert that these agendas will only be fulfilled if cities (the urban context) are sustainable. This biased discourse, assumed by many, has, over time, built a plethora of linkages with the territory and the environment that have not managed to achieve a detachment from the urban focus or slow down the mechanisms that fuel urbanization processes.

**Yet a sustainable human settlement is far more than an urban environment that pollutes less, recycles more and increases its efficiency, maintaining an unbalanced relation and a dominant position over surrounding territories.**

Beyond this technical debate on sustainability, there are **social, cultural, political, economic and territorial factors** that make a human settlement sustainable. Perhaps the most important factor would be to put the environment and the territory ahead of, and not at the service of, urban areas. But it is also essential to stress the importan-

ce of **justice, equality, diversity and participation for an environment to be sustainable.**

In considering how to address the social, political, economic, cultural and environmental characteristics that define a sustainable human settlement, necessary to tackle climate change and global warming, without overlooking other dimensions that are fundamental to achieving this target — among them the **right to citizenship, democratic management at the local level** and the **social function of the city and property** — we can look to an example from nearly three decades ago.

As part of the Forum on Urbanization that was part of the Global NGO Forum organized in Rio de Janeiro in parallel to the official conference in 1992, a treaty on urbanization entitled '**Towards Just Democratic and Sustainable Cities, Towns and Villages**'<sup>39</sup> was one of 30 separate treaties that emerged from the Global Forum.

The participatory nature of this treaty at the levels of formulation, implementation and monitoring gave it a clear advantage over more recent top-down agendas (such as the Paris Agreement, 2030 Agenda and New Urban Agenda) and set it apart from more technological and technocratic aspects, ambitious and to some extent contradictory objectives, as well as the general lack of commitment by states.



39. 'Towards Just Democratic and Sustainable Cities, Towns and Villages' treaty, available at [HIC and the Habitat Conferences 1976-2016](#)

# The added values of the Right to the City framework

In line with the spirit of the above-mentioned treaty, the Right to the City framework places a fundamental emphasis on **enhanced political participation**, citizenship **free of discrimination**, the promotion of the **social functions of land and property** and the **social production of habitat** within a human rights framework.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the participatory nature of the Right to the City framework, its territorial scope and its special bond with human rights, facilitates the integration of new demands into its discourse. Even a non-rights-based language on sustainability (as enshrined in the 1992 treaty) has considerable common ground with the Right to the City components (see Figure 11).

## RIGHT TO THE CITY COMPONENTS<sup>41</sup>

**1. A city/human settlement free of discrimination** [...] that **embraces minorities and** ethnic, racial, sexual and cultural **diversity**, which respects, protects, and promotes all non-discriminatory customs, memories, identities, languages, and artistic and cultural expressions of its inhabitants.

**2. A city/human settlement of gender equality**, [...] which takes all appropriate measures to ensure the full development of women and girls [...].

**3. A city/human settlement of inclusive citizenship** in which all inhabitants, (whether permanent or temporary) are considered as citizens and granted equal [...].

**4. A city/human settlement with enhanced political participation** in the definition, implementation, monitoring, and budgeting of urban policies and spatial

## JUST, DEMOCRATIC AND SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND COMMUNITIES<sup>42</sup>

**Diverse** – An integrated mix of household sizes, cultures, ages and incomes, housing types, densities, tenures and land uses that creates vibrant and locally interdependent communities.

**Spaces of justice and equality** – Where spatial, social, economic and climate injustice is tackled.

**Spaces free of forced evictions, displacement, resettlement or migration** – with social, economic, environmental and legal conditions that prevent these abuses.

**Amene** – Establish communities able to support basic facilities and neighbourhoods with well-designed public spaces.

**Seeking long-term benefits** – Commit to the philosophy that greater overall returns can be produced by a higher upfront investment.

**Adaptive** – Easily adapt to change and plan for future needs.

40. To learn more about the construction of the Right to the City framework visit <https://www.right2city.org/our-history>

41. Available at <https://www.right2city.org/right-to-the-city-components>

42. Adapted from the treaty 'Towards Just Democratic and Sustainable Cities, Towns and Villages', available at *HIC and the Habitat Conferences 1976-2016* and from the paper 'Sustainable Communities'; Danielle McCartney and John Daggart; Environment Design Guide GEN62; published in November 2004; available at *Environment Design Guide*

planning, [...] equitable governance and the social function of all human settlements within a human rights habitat.

**5.** A city/human settlement fulfilling its **social functions**, that is, ensuring equitable and affordable access for all to housing, goods, services and urban opportunities, [...] ensuring a **just and environmentally balanced use of urban and rural spaces**, and that recognizes and supports the **social production of habitat**.

**6.** A city/human settlement with **quality public spaces and services** [...] where public spaces and services contribute to building **safer cities** [...] and to meeting the needs of its inhabitants [...].

**7.** A city/human settlement with **diverse and inclusive economies** that safeguards and ensures access to secure livelihoods and decent work for all[...].

**8.** A sustainable city/human settlement with **inclusive rural-urban linkages** that benefit poor people, both in rural and urban areas, and ensures **food sovereignty**; a city/human settlement that protects biodiversity, natural habitats, and surrounding ecosystems.

**Figure 11:** Right to the City components and elements of Just, democratic and sustainable human settlements and communities

**Participative** – Promote active participation in the decision-making process for the planning, development and long-term management of the community.

**Environmentally sound** – Commit to minimizing the impacts of the community on the environment.

**Responsible** – Act responsibly to achieve reductions in consumption and increase local production.

**Economically thriving** – Provide diverse and decent employment opportunities to meet the projected needs of the community.

**Healthy** – Prioritize the health, well-being, comfort and social amenity of residents.

**Accessible** – Guaranteeing affordable housing, a low-emission built environment and accessible basic public services, not creating systems based on economic capacity or social position and ensuring a balance between public and private systems by prioritizing the former.

**Safe** – Integrate environmental design to reduce the impact of pollution on health and reduce opportunities for crime.

**Supportive** – but not competitive, and planning their development with other human settlements and communities in solidarity.

**Distributive** – in such a way that economic and political powers and the investments that depend on them are distributed in a fair and balanced way in human settlements and territories.

**Resourceful** – Being aware that population growth and other challenges will test the sustainability of host human settlements.

**Connected** – Establish transport links within the neighbourhood, to local amenities, to other local communities and to regional centres with low-emission means of transport, accessible to low-income groups and serving deprived areas.

**Resilient** – But not only understood as the ability to withstand further climatic, economic or health shocks, but rather as a strength that depends on the degree of implementation of the above-mentioned characteristics.

On the other hand, there are fundamental added values that the Right to the City brings to more technical, scientific or developmental agendas. Firstly, **placing people and communities** at the centre and aligning with **human rights standards** and **environmental protection**. Secondly, a framework created through a **participatory approach** at the levels of **drafting, implementing and monitoring**. Thirdly, a **territorial scope** where **land management policies** are aimed at resolving injustices and preventing future excesses related to the breakdown of human rights and environmental destruction. These land policies must take into account multiple factors such as the **preservation and restoration** of the **environmental**

**values** of land, the capture of land values and its use in actions committed to human rights and environmental preservation, and finally ensure that land (and housing) is **accessible and affordable**, and not driven out of the reach of some by speculation and market logic.

Fourthly and finally, the Right to the City framework recognizes and takes into account how **diverse groups experience the city in different ways**. This is the case of women, the informal sector, migrants and others with clearly differentiated needs and expectations.



**Figure 12:** Different graphic conceptualizations that highlight the components of the Right to the City and sustainability values. Emphasis is placed on diversity, political participation, links with the territory and environmental values. (Sources: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/monitor/monitor-january/february-2019>; <https://transitionnetwork.org>; <https://www.right2city.org>; <https://www.hic-net.org>)





# E. Enabling environments for Local Action: a joint way forward



This section reflects on the relevance of the Right to the City for local governments engaged in sustainable development, and looks at the agendas of three local government networks in this regard. It then goes on to outline three enabling environments for community organizations to advance their work at the intersection of sustainable development and the Right to the City.

## Right to the City and local governments

We have learned in previous sections how human settlement and territorial sustainability values are aligned with the components of the Right to the City and how these components are reflected in current global agendas dealing with environmental preservation (PA), development (2030 Agenda) and human settlements (NUA). When it comes to the national and local arenas, negotiating the inclusion of the Right to the City in national policies with states has also been complex and frustrating at times, with few exceptions, such as Ecuador, Brazil, or Mexico.

However, it should be emphasized that local and regional governments have been more predisposed to propose the Right to the City and its components as a facilitating framework to improve urban environments and their surrounding territories.<sup>43</sup> There are several causes for this: firstly, local and regional governments have a **better knowledge** of the needs of their populations and **concrete tools** to implement policies based on the Right to the City aimed at resolving these needs; secondly, the spaces for **dialogue** with communities, civil society groups, international networks and experts are in general more **frequently available, participatory and productive**, and this has given way to new rights based strategies; thirdly, the **consultative and participatory processes** defended by the Right to the City are common tools for some local

governments when drafting and implementing public policies; lastly, aware of the urgency of environmental problems in their cities and territories and the need for **local strategies to support global and national plans**, local and regional governments have decided to drive forwards policies on sustainability both in coordination with national governments and independently.

Thus, the Right to the City has become a fundamental part of municipal charters such as the **Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City**, of regional charters such as the **Women's Agenda for the City in Latin America**<sup>44</sup> and of the work plans of city networks such as **United Cities and Local Governments**. Other networks focused on sustainability and environmental issues such as **ICLEI** have also developed documents aligned with the Right to the City components, while other macro-city networks such as **C40** are promoting policies for emission reductions, environmental protection, development and systematic poverty reduction (see Figure 13).

In these three cases (UCLG, ICLEI, C40), local governments (also referred to as 'cities') are demanding a battery of measures to implement agendas at the local level, and to a greater or lesser extent, are collaborating with citizens, civil society organizations and networks. These demands

43. See *UCLG Policy Council on the Right to the City and Inclusive Territories* | CISDP for more information.

44. See <https://www.right2city.org/news/agenda-for-womens-right-to-the-city-in-latin-america> for more information.

include greater funding and competences, and common requests are coordinated in new spaces for discussion among local and regional governments (e.g. the **Global Taskforce**, set up in 2013 in connection with the SDGs

and particularly the New Urban Agenda<sup>45</sup>), with greater interaction with the United Nations and multilateral agencies.



**Figure 13:** Right to the City linkages with city networks' work plans

45. See *Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments*

46. See UCLG's GOLD V Report 2019 'The Localization of the Global Agendas', available at [The Localization of the Global Agendas](#)

47. See ICLEI's 'ICLEI in the urban era' 2019, available at [ICLEI in the Urban Era](#)

48. See C40's 'Global Green New Deal', available at [The Global Green New Deal](#)

# Enabling environments

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This subsection explores how to move forward and open more spaces in which actions aligned with the Right to the City are useful in the fight against climate change. The Right to the City benefits from being built collectively, and the different strategies outlined below are essential and might be complementary. It will first mention the work and demands of communities at the local level, secondly the importance of alliances and collective work of civil society organizations, and finally the partnerships with strategic global actors, such as the local government networks mentioned above or United Nations' Special Rapporteurs to jointly lobby states and United Nations' bodies.

## Working at the community and local level

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First-hand knowledge of local problems and hope for radical improvements of their environment make local contributions crucial to building the local agenda for the Right to the City and to combat climate change. These demands and proposals from local communities can be the foundations of systemic change — very often based on components of the Right to the City and on human rights.

**These movements may or may not endorse the plans proposed by local and regional governments, but their added value is the urgency, the need to go far beyond insufficient or inadequate measures, and the awareness of the local population, regardless of the regulations and plans that are proposed.**

As an example, the **Movement for Climate Justice** works at the metropolitan level in Barcelona and launched the **'Measures to deal with the climate emergency'**<sup>49</sup> in 2018, with a chapter expressly dedicated to housing and the Right to the City.

Besides the local agendas and the political arena, it is fundamental to highlight the role of groups excluded from the formal sector (e.g. **street vendors, food producers, waste-pickers, recyclers** ...) and how their work contributes to protecting the environment. It is crucial that national and local policies help guarantee **decent jobs, livelihoods and social security schemes** for these groups. Similarly, the **social production of habitat** is relevant when planning, building and managing human settlements and their territorial dimension with a participatory, inclusive and gender perspective that is also respectful of the environment.

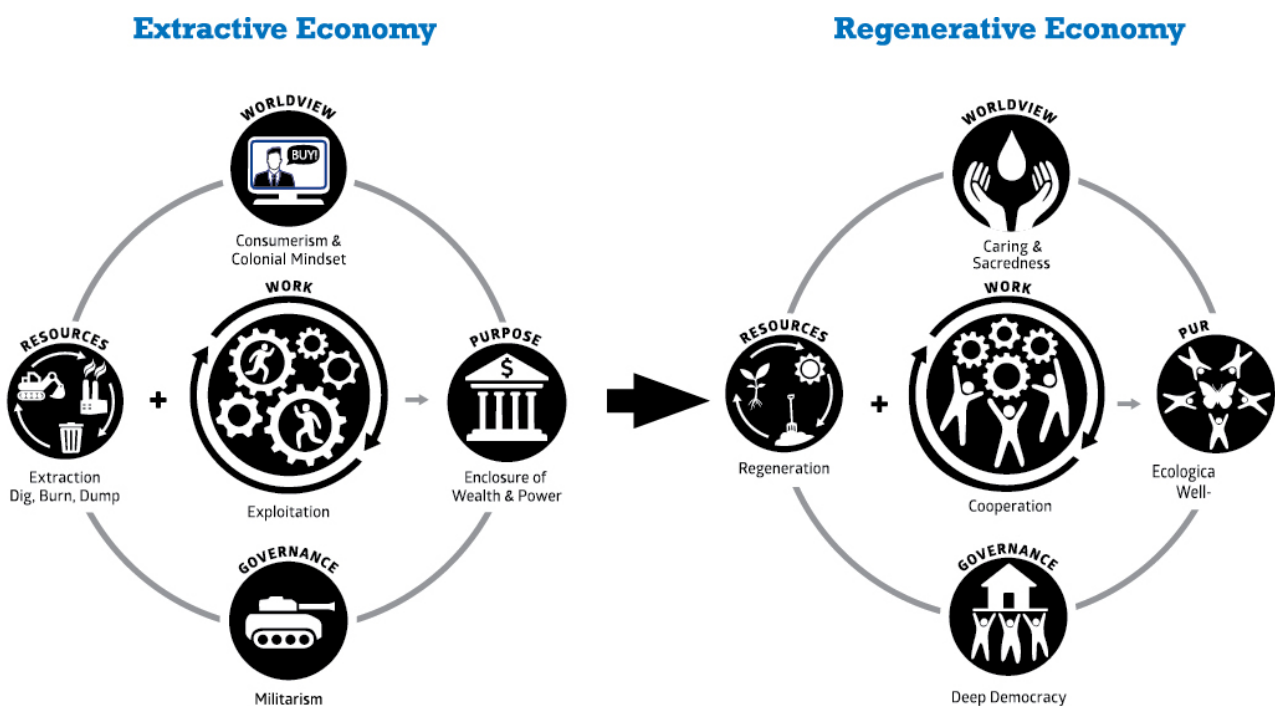
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49. 'Mesures per afrontar l'emergència climàtica' ('Measures to deal with the climate emergency'), by Movement for Climate Justice (2018) available in Catalan at [Mesures Emergència Climàtica](#)

# Scaling up the struggle: the international arena and the construction of alliances

At the international level, local struggles can scale up their strategies and take their demands to international bodies, or build strategic alliances with like-minded constituencies. Among these cases it is worth highlighting actions in defence of local manifestos at global conferences, such as the case of the **‘Manifesto for Climate Justice’** presented at COP 21 by the **Movement for Climate Justice**,<sup>50</sup> the more recent **‘Considering Climate Justice and Human Rights in responding to COVID-19’** promoted by the Economic Social and Cultural Rights Network (ESCR-NET),<sup>51</sup> the **‘Just Transition Principles’** by the **Climate Justice Alliance**<sup>52</sup> or the **‘Global Call for the UN Human Rights Council to urgently recognize the Right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment’** in which over 800 diverse civil society and Indigenous Peoples organizations urged the United Nations Human Rights Council and the states represented within it to consider that:

*“A healthy environment is essential for human life and dignity. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the life-sustaining climate we enjoy, all are dependent on healthy, diverse, integral and functioning ecosystems. In view of the global environmental crisis that currently violates and jeopardizes the human rights of billions of people on our planet, global recognition of this right is a matter of utmost urgency.”<sup>53</sup>*



**Figure 14:** Just Transition is a set of principles, processes and practices to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy (Source: Climate Justice Alliance, ‘Just Transition Principles’ available at [Just Transition](#))

50. Available at [Manifesto for climate justice](#)

51. Available at [Considering Climate Justice and Human Rights in responding to COVID-19](#)

52. Available at [Just Transition](#)

53. Available at [1 Planet, 1 Right](#) and [HR2HE: The Time is Now](#)

# Global advocacy built from the bottom up

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A third space is through: 1) partnerships with strategic actors who participate in the implementation or follow-up of global agendas; and 2) the monitoring and dissemination of reports and statements from institutions working on environmental conservation and climate change.

Among the former, we can highlight the UN **Office for the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR)**<sup>54</sup> and the UN **Special Rapporteurs**,<sup>55</sup> and among the latter the increasingly urgent reports of the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**.<sup>56</sup>

This last example (IPCC) can become a fundamental tool to support demands at all levels, since it provides a comprehensive summary of what is known about the drivers of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and how adaptation and mitigation can reduce those risks. In its latest reports — and due to the extreme urgency of the measures to be taken and the insufficient response from states — the IPCC goes beyond scientific positions to claim for social justice and multi stakeholder joint actions, stating:

*“Social justice and equity [...] widen opportunities, and ensure that options, visions, and values are deliberated, between and within countries and communities, without making the poor and disadvantaged worse off.”*

*“Strengthening the capacities for climate action of national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities can support the implementation of ambitious actions implied by limiting global warming to 1.5°C.”<sup>57</sup>*

It is also worth mentioning the **Principles for Locally Led Adaptation**,<sup>58</sup> eight principles to help ensure that local communities are empowered to lead sustainable and effective adaptation to climate change at the local level, which has been endorsed by 40 governments, leading global institutions and local and international NGOs.

Other strategic alliances can be coordinated with networks of local governments and metropolitan networks, institutions that in recent years have called for greater competencies and capacities to preserve the environment, reduce pollution and address the adverse effects of climate change. In this sense, it is important to highlight the above-mentioned **United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)**, which has proven to be a strategic ally of civil society in addressing public policies based on the Right to the City and human rights, and **ICLEI — Local Governments for Sustainability**, with one of its five pathways being “Equitable and people-centred development” that “builds more just, livable and inclusive urban communities and addresses poverty”.

It should be noted that these three strategies are not independent clusters, and that different actions can be taken from the local to the global level and vice versa.

**In this way, actors working for the Right to the City, and consequently for the right to a healthy environment, can join forces and coordinate strategies with other actors fighting for climate justice and against climate change.**

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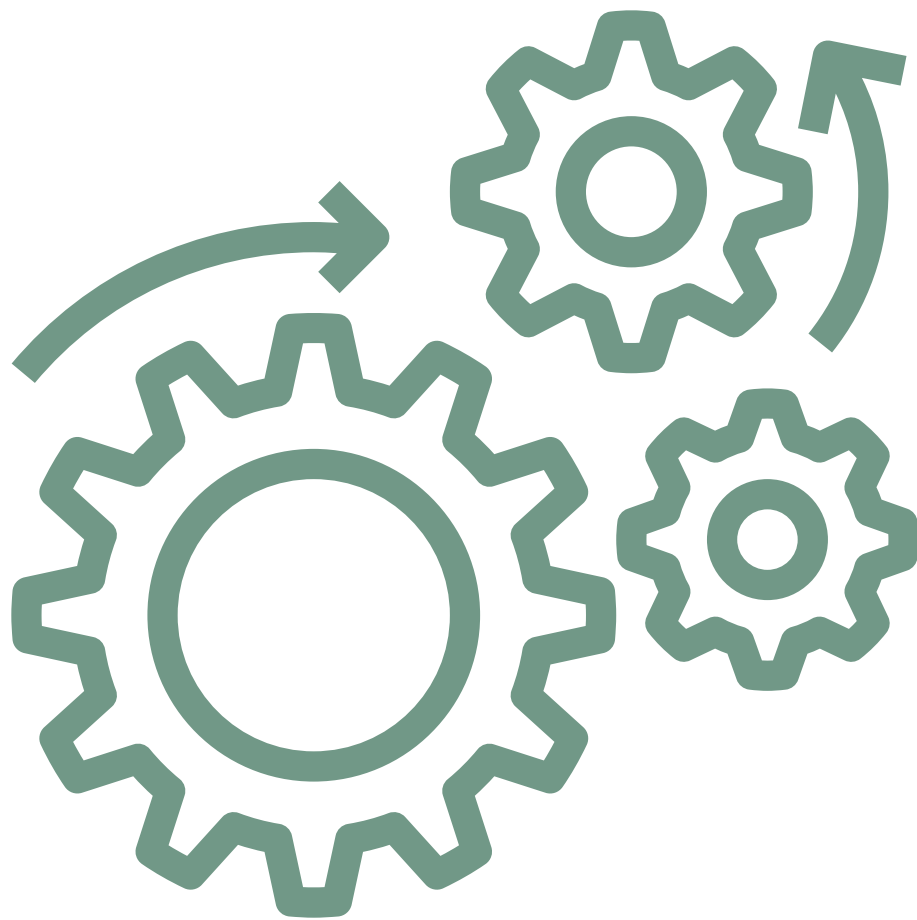
54. More information available at [OHCHR's work on human rights and climate change](#)

55. Fundamental information on states' human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment is available at [A/75/161](#); For a better understanding of the linkages of climate change and the human right to adequate housing, please check [A/64/255](#)

56. More information available at [IPCC Reports](#)

57. Sustainable Development, Poverty Eradication and Reducing Inequalities (Executive Summary); IPCC Special Report Global Warming of 1.5°C available at [IPCC Report: Global Warming of 1.5°C Chapter 5](#)

58. More information at <https://www.iied.org/principles-for-locally-led-adaptation>





# F. Selected good practices and initiatives



While the previous section explored enabling environments at different levels, this section presents initiatives that build on first-hand knowledge of local problems. The section lists several **good practices aligned with the Right to the City that have emerged from local experiences**, which have been previously identified by the Global Platform for the Right to the City and presented at UN events monitoring current global agendas such as the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the Conference of the Parties (COP). The list also includes links to **other institutions gathering similar cases around the world (highlighted in blue)**.



## Good practices aligned with the Right to the City that have emerged from local experiences

NAME OF THE INITIATIVE AND DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	OUTREACH	LINK
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THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE OF WASTE PICKERS	WIEGO	Latin America, Asia and Africa	<a href="#"><u>Global Alliance of Waste Pickers</u></a>
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The Global Alliance of Waste Pickers is a networking process supported by WIEGO, bringing together thousands of waste picker organizations with groups in more than 28 countries covering mainly Latin America, Asia and Africa. Informal waste pickers globally contribute to the conservation of natural resources and energy while reducing air/water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions through the reuse of materials.

JUST FOOD REGIONAL EQUITABLE VALUE CHAIN	JUST FOOD	New York	<a href="#"><u>Just Food</u></a>
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Supports community leaders in their efforts to advocate for increased access to healthy, locally grown food. Just Food strives to amplify racial and economic equity for a more just food system. They foster direct linkages among NYC community members and sustainable small- to mid-scale regional farmers and producers.

NAME OF THE INITIATIVE AND DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	OUTREACH	LINK
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<b>COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE</b>	CSAC	China, United States, Canada	<a href="#"><u>Community Supported Agriculture</u></a>
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One of the best examples of a successful, alternative food distribution system, providing real income to producers and affordable healthy food for consumers. Food continues to be grown in peri-urban areas and trust between producers and consumers is strengthened.

<b>BIOCANTEENS TRANSFER NETWORK</b>	MOUANS-SARTOUX	Mouans-Sartoux, France	<a href="#"><u>BioCanteens</u></a>
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A 100% organic and local canteen with no additional cost, aiming to respect the health of children and preserve the planet.

<b>RECONSTRUCCIÓN POST-DESASTRE EN LA MONTAÑA DE GUERRERO [POST-DISASTER RECONSTRUCTION IN MONTAÑA DE GUERRERO]</b>	COOPERACIÓN COMUNITARIA [COMMUNITY COOPERATION]	Montaña de Guerrero, Mexico	<a href="#"><u>Montaña de Guerrero</u></a>
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Construction of 33 reinforced adobe houses and recuperation of sustainable agricultural practices to reduce the vulnerability of communities affected by hurricanes.



NAME OF THE INITIATIVE AND DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	OUTREACH	LINK
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<b>ALDEAFELIZ [HAPPYVILLAGE]</b>	ALDEAFELIZ	San Francisco de Sales, Cundinamarca, Colombia	<a href="#"><u>Ecoaldea AldeaFeliz</u></a>
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An ecovillage that gathers together families that migrated from the city to the countryside in search of a solidary and ecological lifestyle. The property is collective and the village governs itself through sociocracy: a horizontal and equitable system inspired by nature. The families self-build ecological houses from bamboo and earth within the forest and use few resources, as most services are commonly shared.

<b>BARRIOS Y CULTURA DEL AGUA [WATER CULTURE AND NEIGHBOURHOODS]</b>	RED HÁBITAT [HABITAT NETWORK]	Barrio Solidaridad, El Alto, Bolivia	<a href="#"><u>Barrios y Cultura del Agua</u></a>
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This rainwater harvesting project was led by women seeking empowerment through alternative climate change adaptation technologies.

<b>SOM ENERGIA [WE ARE ENERGY]</b>	SOM ENERGIA COOPERATIVE	Girona, Spain	<a href="#"><u>Som Energia</u></a>
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A non-profit cooperative committed to producing 100% renewable energy from hydroelectric, solar, biomass and wind power.

<b>PENCON'S 'EMPOWERING WOMEN AS SUSTAINABLE ENERGY LEADERS'</b>	PENCON-FOE	Palestine	<a href="#"><u>Empowering Women as Sustainable Energy Leaders</u></a>
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An initiative that brings local women together to transform the energy system in Palestine, empowering them to be active in decision-making in the clean energy sector, and to lead change in their communities.

NAME OF THE INITIATIVE AND DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	OUTREACH	LINK
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**ENERGY EFFICIENT HOUSING IN BULGARIA**

THE MUNICIPALITY OF BURGAS

Burgas, Bulgaria

*The 'smart' transformation of Burgas*

Burgas is a smart, energy efficient city implementing the most up-to-date energy approaches and measures, and demonstrating the power of local authorities to drive sustainable change.

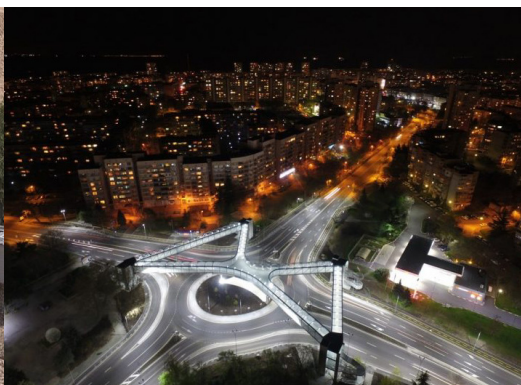
**MEXICO CITY CHARTER FOR THE RIGHT TO THE CITY**

ORGANIZATIONS OF THE URBAN POPULAR MOVEMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO CITY

Mexico City

*Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City*

A Charter that establishes the commitments of various actors to promote and realize the Right to the City in Mexico City.





## Other institutions gathering similar cases around the world

NAME OF THE INITIATIVE AND DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	OUTREACH	LINK
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<b>COHABITAT NETWORK</b>	URBAMONDE	<i>Global</i>	<a href="#"><u>CoHabitat projects</u></a>
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A network of community-led housing organizations and allies from across the world, who work to secure housing through collective, non-speculative, people-led solutions.

<b>WORLD HABITAT AWARD</b>	WORLD HABITAT	<i>Global</i>	<a href="#"><u>World Habitat Awards</u></a>
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A selection of habitat projects by and for communities in the global North and the global South, tackling a wide range of housing issues and sharing knowledge and experience with others who can transfer them to their own situations.

<b>TRANSFORMATIVE CITIES</b>	TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTE	<i>Global</i>	<a href="#"><u>Transformative Cities</u></a>
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An opportunity for progressive local governments, municipalist coalitions, social movements and civil society organizations to popularize and share their experiences of building solutions to our planet's systemic economic, social, political and ecological crises.

NAME OF THE INITIATIVE AND DESCRIPTION	ORGANIZATION	OUTREACH	LINK
GRASSROOTS WOMEN-LED COMMUNITY RESILIENCE INITIATIVES	HUIROU COMMISSION	Global	<a href="#"><u>Women-led initiatives</u></a>

A selection of initiatives that advance community development priorities while reducing the impacts of natural hazards and climate change in low income, resource-poor urban and rural settlements.



# G. Main priorities and challenges





# Main priorities and challenges

In previous sections, this thematic paper has analyzed how the urgent need to address the challenges caused by climate change requires more participatory agendas, with better monitoring procedures and which are capable of complementing each other. It also emphasized the critical importance of protecting the groups in situations of vulnerability and the need to link actions to mitigate climate change within a human rights framework that puts people at the centre. Parallels between current global agendas and the Right to the City framework, as well as its added values, have also been identified, with a final analysis on how to create enabling frameworks to leverage actions based on the Right to the City that can mitigate the effects of climate change. This section aims to highlight some of the key issues and challenges identified in previous sections that should be prioritized in mitigating climate change through the implementation of the Right to the City agenda.

## Vulnerability

Climate change-related impacts are particularly devastating for **marginalized communities in situations of vulnerability** and for those living in countries that lack the resources, infrastructure and capacity necessary to protect their populations. These communities are usually located in the most hazardous sites, at risk from the direct and indirect impacts of climate change. In line with Right to the City principles, **addressing vulnerability** must be at the core of any policy or strategy.

## Inequality

Climate policies addressing climate change are fundamental to **reduce social inequalities and poverty**. Any measure to combat climate change and global warming must be seen as an opportunity to **address development problems and fulfil human rights**. Priority should be given to the **so-called informal sector, the unemployed, and to the elimination of all sorts of discrimination (by gender, age or social status)**. This can be achieved by creating environmentally-friendly jobs and livelihoods with social protection schemes and by promoting the social production of habitat. A New Green Deal for communities and people, not for corporations.

## Human Rights

States and all spheres of government must fulfil their obligations and implement the global agendas adhering to **human rights principles**. These actors should also adhere to the **framework principles on human rights and the environment** and work towards the full recognition of the Human Right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

## Well Balanced

Any agenda or strategy at any level should have a balanced approach to **social, political, economic, cultural and environmental** issues, protecting **urban, rural and coastal areas and their communities** while tackling **past, present and future injustices**. They must also combine immediate actions including **urgent protection measures, disaster risk reduction** and **risk management strategies**; and mid-term actions such as increasing resilience and **enhancing climate adaptation**.

## Participatory

**Multi-stakeholder** coalitions with enhanced **participatory** processes and **Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities** (CBDR-RC) are fundamental (e.g. public authorities working with community-based groups and movements to reduce urban inequalities — housing inequality in particular — in partnership with the private sector and popular workforce).

## Synergies

Given the urgency and the scope of the climate crisis, any strategy targeting climate change should **support the implementation** of the current global agendas (2030 Agenda, NUA and others). These strategies can also **provide added value, improve, enrich and give more legitimacy** to existing policies. As explained in previous sections, this is particularly relevant to the Right to the City framework, with its components mirrored in the three global agendas analyzed (PA, 2030 Agenda and NUA).

## States' Responsibilities

**Accountability, adequate funding, monitoring and evaluation, participation and transparency** among other values are fundamental responsibilities for states, and cannot be ignored or underestimated when tackling climate change.

## Fundamental Changes Addressing Root Causes

**Systemic** economic and social **changes**, tackling the **root causes** of climate change, **changing** production and consumption **patterns**, seeking **environmental justice**, and improving **value capture mechanisms** to mitigate climate change are inseparable parts of any solution to climate change.

## Land Management

**Adequate planning**, with a gender and multicultural perspective, as well as **affordable and well-located land**, are fundamental to avoid further unplanned settlement expansions and guarantee fair resettlement plans. It is fundamental to link income-earning and human development opportunities to urban and land planning. Resettlement plans should only be used in extreme circumstances where safety cannot be guaranteed. Human rights standards and participatory decision-making processes must prevail in all stages of these resettlement plans.



# H. Recommendations for local governments and civil society actors



# Recommendations for local governments and civil society actors

This paper has argued how the **Right to the City** is considered a preferential framework to jointly create practical **human rights-based policies and initiatives** that can be implemented at different levels to mitigate the effects of climate change, reverse the process, and guarantee the restitution of rights lost in the past while preserving those rights for future generations. The Right to the City framework is also well suited to create **synergies and alliances with other frameworks**, as well as actions that are organized by communities and civil society, in a process of **mutual support and common enrichment**.

It has also been explained how the principles of the Right to the City are reflected in current global agendas and how local arenas (both in the sphere of local governments and civil society) have been **more productive when discussing and implementing agendas based on the Right to the City**. This last section includes recommendations for local governments and civil society actors working on environmental and climate change issues.

**The recommendations, built on the main ideas identified in sections C, D, E and G, are based on the premise of effective collaboration and mutual support, but also on civil society's demands to governments — at all levels — regarding their obligations and responsibilities. The recommendations are grouped according to the components of the Right to the City.**

## No discrimination

- Apply the human rights and the Right to the City approach, to address structural causes of the climate crisis and transform the current predatory economic and productive model into an inclusive, fair and sustainable model.
- Respect, protect and nurture the environmental, social, cultural and economic diversity in each territory or ecosystem, both in the natural and the built environment.
- Support — not criminalize — and protect environmental rights defenders.



## Gender equality

- Guarantee everyone, especially impoverished women and people in situations of vulnerability, equal rights to economic and natural resources and common goods.
- Promote a safe, healthy and inclusive environment for all, especially women and other groups in situations of vulnerability.
- Guarantee security of tenure and rights to land and housing for women.



## Inclusive citizenship

- Urgently address social, gender, economic and territorial inequalities.
- Generate spaces of citizen control over the public management of environmental commons, energy resources, and public heritage, with the purpose of guaranteeing their accessibility and enjoyment by all.
- Promote regulatory improvements that facilitate regularization of tenure in popular settlements, provided they do not occupy risk-prone or ecological protection areas.
- In case of population displacement, guarantee the basic rights of affected groups and the right to information and fair compensation.



## Enhanced political participation

- Ensure the participation of civil society in decision-making processes related to the drafting and implementation of environmental policies.
- Create strategic alliances between local and national governments, the private sector and the social and solidarity economy sectors to use, plan, manage and monitor common goods.



## Fulfilled social functions

- Guarantee the social function of the city and property.
- Guarantee fair access to housing, livelihoods, goods, services, green or natural spaces and opportunities for all.
- Ensure environmental sustainability, promoting sustainable behaviours while fighting against land speculation and the commodification of basic services, land and housing.
- Encourage the decentralization of activity in cities by favouring an equitable distribution of opportunities for employment, education, culture and political participation in human settlements, thus favouring a reduction in mobility demand.



## Quality public spaces and services

- Promote the creation, use, planning and management of natural public spaces that are sustainable, open, safe, of quality and accessible to all.
- Recognize and protect the importance of public spaces for health, human well-being and for the creation of livelihoods.
- Promote a culture of respect and protection of natural and environmental commons and public heritage in the use and enjoyment of public spaces.
- Promote and support the responsible management, enjoyment and protection of green areas and natural reservoirs.



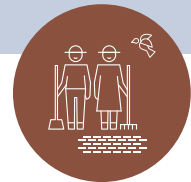
## Diverse and inclusive economies

- Recognize, protect and support other lifestyles and livelihoods, such as solidarity economies, social production of habitat and cooperative work schemes. Make them fundamental tools for job creation among the most marginalized sectors and for climate change mitigation.
- Recognize, protect and support small-scale food production through equitable and sustainable access to land and all water bodies, protecting peasants, indigenous peoples and fishers.
- Recognize, protect and support the so-called informal sector, such as recycling initiatives with informal recyclers.



## Inclusive rural-urban linkages

- Recognize, protect and promote balanced and sustainable urban-rural linkages.
- Promote the right to food and food sovereignty.
- Protect natural habitats and ecosystems.
- Promote the responsible use, consumption and care of the commons.



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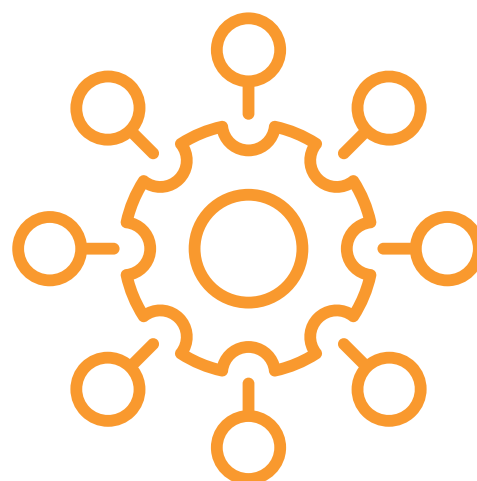
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# Glossary



# Introduction

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This glossary takes terms from various sources in order to clarify specific terms mentioned in this thematic paper. Some terms contain several definitions in order to compare purely technical or scientific terminology with definitions constructed by social movements and non-governmental organizations (e.g. ‘resilience’). In other cases it is the author himself who has created the definition from multiple sources (e.g. ‘greenwashing’). In some cases, certain terms have been further elaborated by adding information from multiple sources (e.g. ‘adaptation’). The sources are referenced and the original documents can be consulted to expand the terminology.

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**I.** International degrowth web portal, available at <https://www.degrowth.info/en>

# Definitions

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## Adaptation (D)

In human systems, the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects, in order to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In natural systems, the process of adjustment to actual climate and its effects; human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects.

## (Incremental) adaptation (A)

A process that maintains the essence and integrity of a system or process at a given scale.

## (Transformational) adaptation (A)

A process that changes the fundamental attributes of a socio-ecological system in anticipation of climate change and its impacts.

## Buen vivir (A)

Rooted in the cosmovisión (or worldview) of the Quechua peoples of the Andes, *sumak kawsay* – or *buen vivir* – describes a way of doing things that is community-centric, ecologically-balanced and culturally-sensitive. In English, *buen vivir* loosely translates as “good living” or “well living”, although both sit too close to western notions of individual well-being or welfare; instead, the subject of well-being is about the individual in the social context of their community and in a unique environmental situation.<sup>59</sup> *Buen vivir* is also considered a political platform for different visions of alternatives to development.

## Carbon price (D)

The price for avoided or released carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) or CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent emissions. This may refer to the rate of a carbon tax, or the price of emission permits. In many models that are used to assess the economic costs of

mitigation, carbon prices are used as a proxy to represent the level of effort in mitigation policies (see Emissions Trading).

## Climate change (D)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): refers to a change in the state of the climate that can be identified (e.g., by using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or external causes such as modulations of the solar cycles, volcanic eruptions and persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use.

The Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC): a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is, in addition to natural climate variability, observed over comparable time periods. The UNFCCC thus makes a distinction between climate change attributable to human activities altering the atmospheric composition and climate variability attributable to natural causes.

## Climate justice (D)

Justice that links development and human rights to achieve a human-centred approach to addressing climate change, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its impacts equitably and fairly.

## Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) (D and A)

Is a key principle in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that recognizes the

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59. Extracted from <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/buen-vivir-philosophy-south-america-eduardo-gudynas>

different capabilities and differing responsibilities of individual countries in tackling climate change. The principle of CBDR-RC is embedded in the 1992 UNFCCC treaty. The convention states: "... the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response, in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and their social and economic conditions." Since then, the CBDR-RC principle has guided the UN climate negotiations.

This principle should not only apply to countries but to communities and individuals with different socio-economic-cultural statuses, confronting climate change, global warming and seeking climate justice. (A)

### **Degrowth (I)**

Degrowth is an idea that critiques the global capitalist system which pursues growth at all costs, causing human exploitation and environmental destruction. The degrowth movement of activists and researchers advocates for societies that prioritize social and ecological well-being instead of corporate profits, over-production and excess consumption. This requires radical redistribution, reduction in the material size of the global economy, and a shift in common values towards care, solidarity and autonomy. Degrowth means transforming societies to ensure environmental justice and a good life for all within planetary boundaries.

### **(Internal) Displacement (D)**

Refers to the forced movement of people within the country in which they live. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are "Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border." (UNHCR, 1998)

### **Environmental justice (E)**

Environmental justice was born as a slogan for communities mobilized against injustices perpetrated in their communities by polluting industries and waste disposal facilities. It later became an analytical frame, largely in relation to concerns about the unequal distribution of

social and environmental costs among different human groups, classes, ethnicities, as well as in relation to gender and age. It draws attention to the links among pollution, race and poverty, and tackles socio-spatial injustice. Environmental justice is both a social movement and an activist/mobilized science and thus offers the potential to bring together citizens, researchers and scholars.

### **Emissions trading (D)**

A market-based instrument aiming to meet a mitigation objective in an efficient way. A cap on GHG emissions is divided in tradeable emission permits that are allocated by a combination of auctioning and handing out free allowances to entities within the jurisdiction of the trading scheme. Entities need to surrender emission permits equal to the amount of their emissions (e.g., tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>). An entity may sell excess permits to entities that can avoid the same amount of emissions in a cheaper way. Trading schemes may occur at the intra-company, domestic, or international level (e.g., the flexibility mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol and the EU-EUTS) and may apply to carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), other greenhouse gases (GHGs), or other substances.

### **Equality (D)**

A principle that ascribes equal worth to all human beings, including equal opportunities, rights, and obligations, irrespective of origins.

### **Inequality**

Uneven opportunities and social positions, and processes of discrimination within a group or society, based on gender, class, ethnicity, age, and (dis)ability, often produced by uneven development. Income inequality refers to gaps between highest and lowest income earners within a country and between countries.

### **Equity (D)**

The principle of fairness in burden sharing, it is a basis for understanding how the impacts and responses to climate change, including costs and benefits, are distributed in and by society in more or less equal ways. It is often aligned with ideas of equality, fairness and justice and applied with respect to equity in the responsibility for, and distribution of, climate impacts and policies across

society, generations, and gender, and in the sense of who participates and controls the processes of decision making.

### ***Distributive equity***

Equity in the consequences, outcomes, costs and benefits of actions or policies. In the case of climate change or climate policies for different people, places and countries, this includes equity aspects of sharing burdens and benefits for mitigation and adaptation.

### ***Gender equity***

Ensuring equity in that women and men have the same rights, resources and opportunities. In the case of climate change, gender equity recognizes that women are often more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and may be disadvantaged in the process and outcomes of climate policy.

### ***Inter-generational equity***

Equity among generations that acknowledges that the effects of past and present emissions, vulnerabilities and policies impose costs and benefits for people in the future and of different age groups.

### ***Procedural equity***

Equity in the process of decision-making including recognition and inclusiveness in participation, equal representation, bargaining power, voice and equitable access to knowledge, and resources to participate.

### **Eviction (B)**

The act or process of evicting; or state of being evicted; the recovery of lands, tenements, etc., from another's possession by due course of law; dispossession by paramount title or claim of such title; ejection; ouster. Removal of a tenant from rental property by a law enforcement officer following the landlord's successful lawsuit, also known as an "unlawful detainer". (See Forced eviction)

### **Extractivism (B)**

The practice and process of removing natural resources from the Earth to sell on the global market. It exists in

an economy that depends primarily on the extraction or removal of natural resources that are considered valuable for exportation worldwide.

### **Forced eviction (B)**

Defined in international law as "the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land [that] they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection."

### **Forced migration (B)**

Refers to the movements of refugees or internally displaced persons compelled to flee to avoid harm arising from conflict, development policies and projects, and natural or man-made disasters.

### **Gender equality (F)**

Refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys. It means that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not just a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.

### **Global warming (D)**

An increase in global mean surface temperature (GMST) averaged over a 30-year period, relative to 1850-1900, unless otherwise specified. For periods shorter than 30 years, global warming refers to the estimated average temperature over the 30 years centred on that shorter period, accounting for the impact of any temperature fluctuations or trend within those 30 years.

### **Green economy (B)**

An economy or economic development model based on sustainable development and knowledge of ecological economics. "Green economics" is loosely defined as any theory of economics by which an economy is considered

to be a component of the ecosystem in which it resides. The green economy is one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities (Green Economy Initiative, The UN Environmental Programme [UNEP]). In its simplest expression, a green economy can be thought of as one [that] is low-carbon [producing], resource-efficient and socially inclusive.

### Green New Deal (A)

(USA) The Green New Deal is a proposed package of United States legislation that aims to address climate change and economic inequality. The name refers back to the New Deal, a set of social and economic reforms and public works projects undertaken by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in response to the Great Depression. The Green New Deal will “mobilize every aspect of American society to 100% clean and renewable energy, guarantee living-wage jobs for anyone who needs one, and a just transition for both workers and frontline communities—all in the next 10 years.”<sup>60</sup>

(EU) The European Green Deal aims to transform the 27-country bloc from a high- to a low-carbon economy, without reducing prosperity and while improving people’s quality of life, through cleaner air and water, better health and a thriving natural world. It is “a new growth strategy that will transform the Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, economic growth is decoupled from resource use, and no person and no place is left behind.”<sup>61</sup>

(C40) Global Green New Deal is a commitment by major cities to drive an urgent, fundamental and irreversible transfer of global resources away from fossil fuels and into action that averts the climate emergency, keep global heating below the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement, secure a just transition (everyone has social protection; all jobs are decent; emissions are low or at zero; poverty is eliminated; communities are thriving and resilient) and correct long-running environmental injustices.<sup>62</sup>

### Greenwashing (A)

Activities or campaigns by a company or an organization that are intended to make people think that it is concerned about the environment or doing more to protect the environment than it really is. Expressions of environmentalist concerns especially as a cover for products, policies, or activities.

### Habitat (B)

This term, in its original Latin, derives from the verb “it inhabits”, a 3rd singular present indicative of *habitāre*, frequentative of *habēre*, meaning to have, or to hold. Habitat is the natural environment of any organism, the place that is natural for the sustainable life and growth of an organism and a place where a living thing lives and can find food, shelter, protection and mates for reproduction. It also has come to mean the place where a person or thing is usually found. In the context of development, planning and governance, the Habitat II Agenda defines habitat as a “regional and cross-sectoral approach to human settlements [that] places emphasis on rural/urban linkages and treats villages and cities as two ends [points] of a human settlements continuum in a common ecosystem” (para. 104).

### Human Rights Habitat (B)

Is the most general and, thus, inclusive operative term that embraces the gamut of human rights in any kind of human settlement, social context or living space. Its components include the interaction among the natural environment, vital resources (such as land, water and food for human livelihood), and the built environment at any scale. The quintessential values of the human rights habitat concept are at the same time biological and social, material and ethical. The protection and preservation of environmental values and measures to sustain social justice are core operational principles for a human rights habitat, whether in a forest-dwelling, a pastoral setting, an informal settlement, or across a megacity.

60. Sunrise Movement, <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/green-new-deal/?ms=WhatistheGreenNewDeal%3F>

61. European Commission, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

62. C40, <https://www.c40.org/ggnd>



## Informal settlement (B)

A cluster of housing and other structures built without the formal consent of the planning authorities, or settlements that have only temporary permission to occupy the settled land.

## Just Transition (G)

A vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste free. The transition itself must be just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be. Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there.

## Local government/administration (B)

The lowest tier of public administration in urban and rural areas within a given state. Local governments aim to bring government to the grassroots and enable citizens to participate effectively in the making of decisions affecting their daily lives. As the level closest to citizens, local governments are in a much better position than central governments to deal with matters that require local knowledge and regulation on the basis of local needs and priorities. Local governments possess certain powers that consist in regulating and managing certain public affairs and delivering certain public services. Local governments have specific, subordinate regulatory power for the exercise of their functions which are, however, subject to compliance with the law. Political, fiscal and administrative decentralization is essential to localize democracy and human rights. It should be noted that democracy is not possible without respect for human rights and no human rights can be achieved without democracy. The role of local authorities should not be limited to mere executors of decisions taken and policies developed without them. On the other hand, local independence should have certain limits clearly prescribed by law, and mechanisms may be available for supervising the legality of local authorities' activities.

## Mitigation (of climate change) (D)

A human intervention to reduce emissions or enhance

greenhouse gas sinks. Note that this encompasses carbon dioxide removal options.

## Refugee (A and B)

Anyone who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [or herself] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [or her] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." The term climate refugee or climate migrants are a subset of environmental migrants who were forced to flee due to sudden or gradual alterations in the natural environment related to the impacts of sea-level rise, extreme weather events, drought and water scarcity, destruction of human habitat and other related causes.

## Resilience (B and D)

This term has many different definitions that apply to specific contexts. Different definitions of 'resilience' include: "the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner" (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNDRR); or "The capacity of social, economic and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation" (IPCC); or alternatively "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change" (Resilience Alliance). Resilience shouldn't be the return to the status quo ante, regardless of the quality of living conditions prior to the shock. Resilience should allow for the root cause of the shock to be addressed and liability for the parties responsible for the shock requiring resilience. Resilience puts the onus on the victim to "bounce back", but shouldn't omit the need and right to resist the causes, including defence against the responsible party, if any, offering recourse to the impunity of perpetrators.

## Right to the City (C)

The Right to the City is the right of all inhabitants, present and future, permanent and temporary, to inhabit, use,

occupy, produce, govern and enjoy just, inclusive, safe and sustainable cities, villages and human settlements, defined as commons essential to a full and decent life. The Right to the City is a collective right that highlights the territorial integrity and interdependence of all internationally recognized civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, as regulated in international human rights treaties, bringing them the territorial dimension and a focus on adequate living standards.

### **Slum (B)**

A contiguous human settlement where the inhabitants are characterized as having inadequate housing and basic services. A slum is often not recognized and addressed by the public authorities as an integral or equal part of the city and includes any combination of the following elements: insecure residential status; inadequate access to safe water; inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure; poor structural quality of housing; overcrowding.

### **Social function (B)**

The social function relates to a use or application for the benefit of the greater society, in particular, prioritizing those with the greatest need. Thus, the social function of a property, good, resource or service is realized when it is applied to satisfy a general social need or the unmet need of a segment of society. Regardless of the type of tenure, holders of housing or land bear a corresponding social duty to use and/or dispose of them accordingly.

### **Social justice (B)**

Any theory or practice that encourages members of a society to behave more justly toward each other. The “social justice” concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society is characterized and measured by the distribution of wealth, natural resources, goods and services, opportunities for personal activity, social privileges and other values related to habitat and well-being.

### **Social justice (G)**

Social justice is concerned with justice in the distribution of resources, benefits and burdens in society, in the power and voice to make and affect social decisions, in the access to knowledge and other social goods, and in the proper recognition of different individuals and groups.

### **Social production of habitat (B)**

All non-market 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, preferably without — and often despite — impediments posed by the state or other formal structure or authority.

### **Sustainable development (D)**

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED] 1987) and balances social, economic and environmental concerns.

### **Sustainable Development (B)**

A process of synergetic integration and co-evolution among the great subsystems making up a territory (economic, social, physical and environmental) that guarantees and sustains an increasing level of well-being in the long term, without compromising the possibilities of development of surrounding areas, and contributing to, or reducing the harmful effects of production, consumption and urbanization on the biosphere.

### **Sustainability (D)**

A dynamic process that guarantees the persistence of natural and human systems in an equitable manner.

### **Sustainability (B)**

Is the endurance (assured continuity) of a condition, system or process. Any condition or process can be either sustainable or unsustainable depending upon its likelihood of continuous progression. Such sustainability could be positive or negative, as seen by the beholder.

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## Credit photos

- p.5 System change, not climate change. Chris Yakimov
  - p.10 Reunión de coordinación del trabajo de las mujeres con Red Hábitat. Archivo fotográfico Red Hábitat.
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This Thematic Paper is part of a series of seven documents produced by the **Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C)**.

These documents are the result of a **process of collective learning** on the Right to the City. Each author was supported by a reference group formed by different organisations members of the Platform. These groups closely followed the drafting of the documents and provided assistance to the experts.

Additionally, a series of webinars were held for each topic in order to broaden discussions and collect suggestions and proposals from a wider range of organizations (including grassroots and social movements, NGOs, professionals, academics and local governments' representatives from different countries and regions).

The **Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C)** is an action-oriented advocacy network committed to social change and with the promotion of the Right to the City as a core value for policies, commitments, projects and actions at the local, national and international levels. We gather organizations, networks and individuals from a wide range of backgrounds: local-based and international social movements, NGOs, forums, academics, representatives from local governments, and other institutions committed to create more just, democratic and sustainable cities and territories.

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