

The impact of COVID-19 on the right to the city

Post-Pandemic Perspectives to Build Back Better and Fairer Cities and Human Settlements



Global Platform for the Right to the City

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Barcelona, 2021

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A. Introduction



Introduction

This paper argues that the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the failures of the current economic and urban models in many fields. A number of unresolved problems suddenly emerged in a simultaneous manner: gross inequalities, poor access to adequate housing, homelessness, urban economies incapable of ensuring livelihoods for all, poor public healthcare systems, lack of digital skills or tools, insufficient basic urban infrastructures, and so on. **The evidence of these structural failures opens up a window of opportunity to change the hegemonic patterns of city-making.** A paradigm shift is needed to build back our cities and human settlements better in post-pandemic times.

The Right to the City sheds light on how to move towards this paradigm shift by encouraging us to rethink cities and human settlements, building on the principles of solidarity, inclusivity, social justice, equity, democracy and sustainability.

Bottom-up conceptualizations of the Right to City invite us to understand cities as commons¹ that belong to all inhabitants (present and future, permanent and temporary). In particular, this understanding of the Right to the City entails ensuring that all dwellers — with no discrimination based on any condition or feature of identity — have the right to access, produce, use, occupy, govern and enjoy safe cities and human settlements, and all their resources, services, facilities and opportunities.

Against this framework, this thematic paper aims to be useful to a variety of stakeholders (civil society, governmental institutions, the private sector, academia, etc.) in their efforts to build back better cities and human settlements in post-pandemic times by using the Right to the City as a guide for change. To this end, the paper first provides the international legal and political ground on which such change can be underpinned, as well as offering a succinct diagnosis of how the pandemic has impacted cities and human settlements. On the basis of such a diagnosis, several fields of action are offered to guide the policies of national and local governments. Finally, the paper points out the main elements that make up an enabling framework for the realization of the Right to the City.



1. The Thematic Paper *The City as a Common Good* written by Edésio Fernandes further elaborates on this idea.

B. Acknowledgements and background



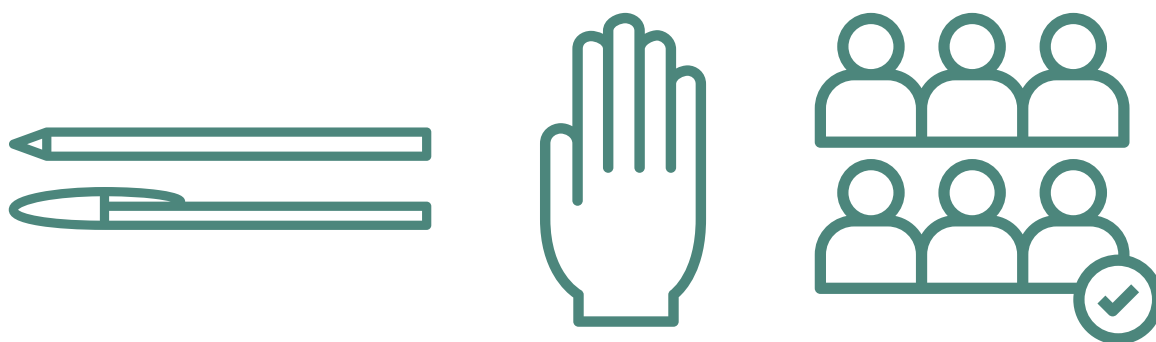
At the global level, the vision of the Right to the City has been captured in a range of international declarations and policy documents, mostly developed by transnational civil society organizations, but also by international city networks and the UN. The following should be noted: ***the World Charter for the Right to the City*** (2005); ***The Right to the City: Building Another Possible World. Guidelines for its understanding and operationalization*** (2016); ***UN Habitat III Policy Paper “Right to the City and Cities for All”*** (2016); and the ***UCLG Congress Policy Paper on the Right to the City*** (2019).

Recent international policy declarations, which have become the framework of action of a number of governmental and non-governmental institutions and a wide variety of stakeholders in the environmental and urban field, also include some policy proposals connected with the vision of the Right to the City. Particularly noteworthy are the ***UN 2030 Agenda*** and its ***Sustainable Development Goals*** – SDGs (2015) and UN-Habitat’s ***New Urban Agenda*** – NUA (2016). While both declarations support ideals that conflict with the Right to the City, e.g. economic growth vs. sustainability (see Garcia-Chueca, 2019), it is also true that they contain some principles intimately related to the Right to the City, such as the notion of the social function of the city and human settlements, gender equality, human rights, and the need to reduce inequalities and to end poverty.² For this reason, some groups of activists and civil society organizations have strategically decided to make a selective use of the SDGs and the NUA in order to back some of the claims of the Right to the City agenda.

Last but not least, a number of international treaties enshrine several Right to the City components (see Figure 1). These include but are not limited to the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948); the **International Covenants on Civil and Political, and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (1966); the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination** (1969); the **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers** (1990); the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** (1979); and the **Convention on the rights of the Child** (1989).³ The Right to Health, especially relevant in (post-)pandemic times, is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 25), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art. 12) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Art. 25) (2006).

This body of international laws and commitments provide the legal and political ground to support a paradigm shift in city-making.

The key to change will be to strategically mobilize these resources and politically urge institutions and other relevant stakeholders to join the road to change with new post-pandemic legal frameworks, policies and strategies aligned with the Right to the City and its components (see section on Enabling Environments for Action).



2. For more information about the links between the SDGs and the NUA with the Right to the City, see *[Right to the City Agenda: For the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda](#)*.

3. An exhaustive analysis of the most relevant international treaties and covenants vis-à-vis the Right to the City can be found in *[The Right to the City: Building Another Possible World. Guidelines for its understanding and operationalization](#)*.



Figure 1: Right to the City components.
Source: Global Platform for the Right to the City (2016)

C. Assessment and challenges



COVID-19, an urban pandemic

COVID-19 is fundamentally an urban pandemic. According to the United Nations, around 95% of cases of COVID-19 have been reported in cities, with nearly 1,500 cities affected (UN-Habitat, 2020). This explains why the data gathered during the pandemic by a huge number of online trackers and monitors importantly refer to city and sub-city level emergency responses. As the following graphic shows, 43% of the government responses tracked during the crisis were taken at city level (29%) or below (14%) (LSE, UCLG, Metropolis 2020a).

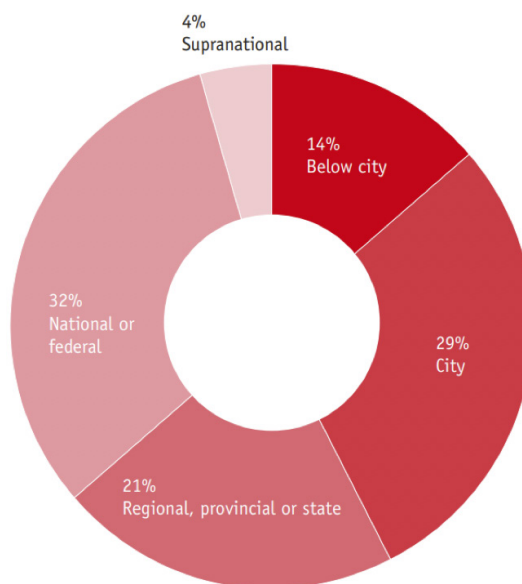
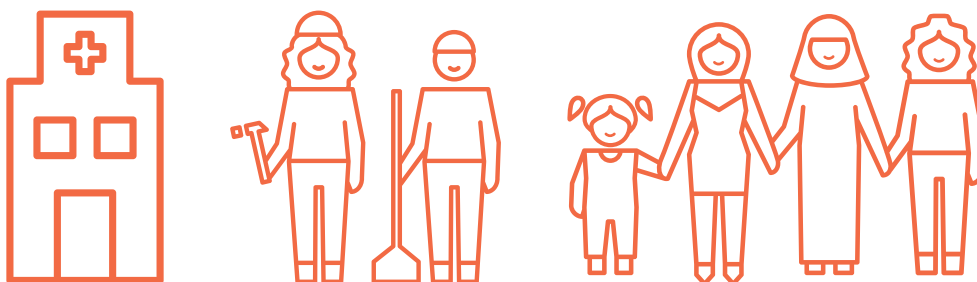


Figure 2: Government responses to the crisis. Source: LSE, UCLG, Metropolis (2020a)

Because of the prominent urban nature of the crisis, **a number of systemic urban vulnerabilities have been exposed**, in particular regarding healthcare systems, precarious housing opportunities, unplanned urbanization, lack of adequate water and sanitation facilities, and access to livelihoods (UN-Habitat, 2020). The privatization of basic services (health, water) and urban transportation in some countries, and the financialization of housing (Rolnik, 2018), are highly related to **these vulnerabilities**, which **have acquired special relevance in midst of a global pandemic because they have seriously compromised the Right to Health**.

Quarantine has indeed been very difficult – if not impossible – in overcrowded homes, and has even spread the disease;⁴ washing hands if piped water is not available has meant traveling to a shared tap, thus making it difficult to self-isolate; informal and low-income workers have been compelled to continue working during lockdowns for fear of losing income, jobs and the ability to feed their families, among others (Du, King, Chanchani 2020).



4. See, for instance, the chronicle of The New York Times about service workers' quarters skirting Silicon Valley: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/01/business/economy/housing-overcrowding-coronavirus.html>.

Box 1. Access to water in deprived neighborhoods.

Cape Town's Water and Sanitation Department distributed water tanks and trucks to informal settlements where residents did not have access to piped water.

The urban socio-economic vulnerabilities underpinning COVID-19 worldwide urge us to tackle the pandemic “through an urban lens” by recognizing the interlinkages between today’s ‘extended urbanization’ and global health. Further, for pandemic responses to engender healthier and more sustainable societies, **attending to urban equality should be beyond question** (Acuto et al., 2020). In this context,

the Right to the City can become the driving force of post-pandemic policies aiming to enhance not only equality but social justice and equity, following decades of an urban model led by economic growth over people-centered and environmentally-friendly city-making.⁵



5. For more information, see the Thematic Paper on *Climate Change, Global Warming and Environmental Justice* authored by Álvaro Puertas.

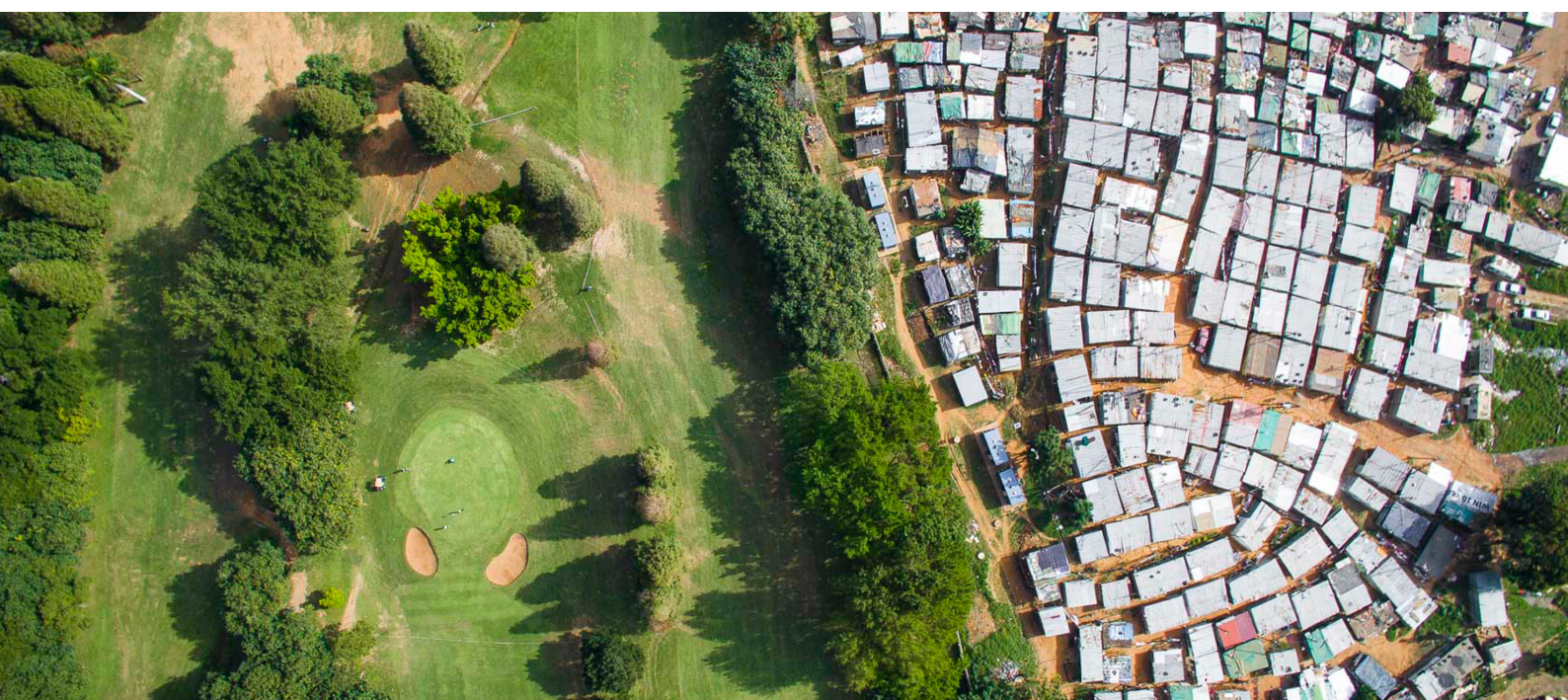
The (old) territories and bodies of the new crisis

The crisis originated by **COVID-19 sits on existing problems that both shape the pandemic and are impacted by it**. The last economic crisis from the late 2000s has still not been overcome in many countries. The fragility derived from years of austerity, precarious labor opportunities or access to livelihoods is interwoven with the new economic shock caused by COVID-19, exacerbating several deep urban inequalities that existed prior to the pandemic (Blundell et al., 2020; United Nations, 2020). Additionally, in some regions of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic is compounded by other crises, such as structural poverty or severe hunger, urban conflict and violence, natural disasters (hurricanes, floods, earthquakes), or long-term health problems (epidemics, etc.) (UN, 2018).

In urban settings, the impact of **COVID-19 has aggravated, and been aggravated by, pre-existing spatial disparities**, manifested by residential segregation, access to services and homelessness (Klugman and Moore, 2020). Deprived urban areas, peripheries, slums and self-built neighborhoods have suffered from higher COVID-19 infection rates, deaths and the economic recession due to poorer access to adequate infrastructure and facilities, housing, healthcare systems or livelihoods (Dizioli and Pinheiro, 2020).

These areas are mostly inhabited by certain socio-economic communities (the urban poor, informal workers) and traditionally discriminated-against groups (migrants, racialized communities, ethnic groups), who see how the pandemic is severely worsening their living and health conditions, and causing high death rates. Although disaggregated data (by gender, ethnicity or race) is incomplete or inaccurate, early studies in the United States showed that black patients were dying at a much higher rate (3.5 times) than white Americans (Sandoiu, 2020). In April 2020, 70% of Chicago's COVID-19 deaths affected the black population, despite the fact they only represent 29% of the city's total population (Ramos, 2020). In the same period, Michigan's black population (14%) accounted for 40% of COVID-19 deaths (Mauger, Macdonald, 2020).

A similar pattern is to be found in Brazil, where a black illiterate person is 3.8 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than a literate white person (Batista et al. 2020). In some Brazilian cities, however, the death rate of black communities can even rise to 50% more than the white population, as a recent study in São Paulo showed (Instituto Pólis, 2020).



This data demonstrates the extent to which social and health vulnerabilities are exacerbated when entangled with territorial and race inequalities.

Although low-income countries, with long-lasting fragile economies and structural social inequalities, are experiencing a very challenging situation due to the pandemic, the World Bank predicts that middle-income countries will particularly be hit by the **rise of a wave of COVID-19-driven “new poor”**. It is estimated that 8 out of 10 “new poor” will be found in these countries, increasing extreme poverty to 150 million people by the end of 2021. This group will predominantly originate in cities and urban areas (World Bank 2020, Sánchez-Páramo, 2020). When profiling the “new poor”, the World Bank basically pays attention to socio-economic variables (type of employment, sector, access to services, level of education), while an intersectional lens (race, gender, age, ability, etc.) would definitely enrich the interpretation of this phenomenon, as well as of the impact of the pandemic as a whole.

As far as age is concerned, the UN (2020b) notes that the COVID-19 pandemic “is causing untold fear and suffering for older people across the world. During lockdowns, they suffered greatly by not having access to services and goods, or to the human touch that they require. In terms of fatalities, **older persons are among the more visible**

victims of COVID-19, although they have not received enough public and institutional attention. Together with those with underlying medical conditions, older persons are at a higher risk of serious illness and death from the COVID-19 disease (death rates for those over 80 years are five times the global average). Where older persons experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, these have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, and have aggravated the vulnerabilities of older people. Women, for instance, are over-represented among older persons (UN, 2020b) and 46% of **persons with disabilities** are aged 60 and over (UNDESA, 2020). These individuals generally have more healthcare needs, including underlying conditions that make them more vulnerable to severe symptoms from COVID-19.



Box 2. Assistance to elder persons.

The municipality of **Buenos Aires** enabled telephone assistance and help with shopping for older persons through an extended network of volunteers. In **Zürich**, one of Switzerland's two major supermarket chains, Migros, in collaboration with Pro Senectute, the national organization of retired people, developed a peer-to-peer app that matched high-risk individuals with “helpers” for grocery shopping. With 20 orders per day and 81% of those made by people aged 66 or older, it quickly became the most popular online shop for older people.



In addition, evidence also shows that **women are more vulnerable to COVID-19-related economic effects** (job losses and difficult access to livelihoods) because of existing gender inequalities (Madgavkar et al., 2020).

Further to the economic impact, the pandemic has widened the gender gap broadly speaking as a result of the burden placed upon women and girls as caregivers and domestic workers, an increased risk of domestic violence during confinement, and an inadequate access to specific healthcare.

The closure of schools during lockdowns has particularly increased the care burden and limited the amount of time women could work – not to mention the severe educational disadvantage for a generation of schoolchildren. These problems exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities (e.g. greater economic insecurity for women, insufficient access to education and employment opportunities). Combined with intersectional discrimination and stigma (age, race, gender, disability, etc.), they shape a harsh scenario of intense multisectoral and gender-based disparities (UN WOMEN, 2020).



Box 3. Gender and COVID-19.

Some city governments, aware of the impact of COVID-19 in widening the gender gap, adopted specific measures to address some of the increased risks women were facing during lockdowns. **Lima** sheltered women at risk of sexual violence, while **Vienna** stepped up the resources to ensure a 24-hour helpline for women facing this threat.

Together with the territorial, socio-economic, race, age and gender impact, **the pandemic is seriously challenging democratic values and the rule of law.** Governmental emergency measures have often been taken from the top down, with insufficient dialog with key stakeholders and communities. Besides this, in at least 60 countries, COVID-19 has been used as a pretext to introduce laws and policies that violate international law and roll back human rights by disproportionately restricting the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. Likewise, the use of digital technologies have helped to monitor the spread of the disease through electronic case reporting, but have also put the right to privacy at serious risk. In some countries, governments have undertaken surveillance measures with artificial intelligence and big data to map people's movements and ensure compliance with home quarantine. Often, these measures go hand in hand with abusive police enforcement, which has sometimes been applied with excessive and unnecessary force, leading to serious human rights

violations (Amnesty International, 2020a, 2020b).

The development of the COVID-19 vaccine at the end of 2020 gave global relief and established the needed basis for the beginning of the post-pandemic recovery. However, just as with COVID-19 denial or with the protests against pandemic restrictions, the vaccine has been subject to skepticism and even politicization. Tanzania's government is still in denial about the existence of COVID-19 and rejects the vaccine (Makoni, 2021). In the United States, an alarming number of health workers were refusing the COVID-19 vaccine at the beginning of the vaccination campaign (Garger, 2021). Brazil's President initiated a geopolitical battle and national political dispute when he announced the country would not buy the Chinese vaccine Sinovac (El País, 2020), leading to 22% of Brazilians refusing to receive any vaccine in December 2020 (Reuters, 2020). Despite these difficulties, vaccination campaigns are making progress worldwide, paving the way for COVID-19 recovery.



Opportunities of the crisis

During the crisis, hundreds of collaborative initiatives emerged all over the world, aiming to support and work with vulnerable neighborhoods and families. These initiatives have played a key role in responding to urgent social needs in the face of insufficient State capacity. Although collective action has multiplied thanks to pre-existing social organization structures, particularly in informal settlements, **digital networks have also been a space for the diffusion and organization of solidarity**. In informal settlements, these expressions of solidarity have mainly revolved around food security, disease prevention and health self-care, sanitation and income relief (Duque Franco, Ortiz, Samper and Millán, 2020). In other urban areas, evidence shows that collective action has also included the provisions of psychological support; open-access collaborative cultural, educational, and sports initiatives; employment advice and cooperative economic projects; support for vulnerable groups such as immigrants, the homeless, persons with disabilities, older persons, and children at risk; and support for victims of gender violence (Blanco and Nel-lo, 2020).

In moving towards urban recovery, cities should take advantage of this human capital and networks to establish **multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms** to build back better urban territories and human settlements through the engagement of all sectors, groups and communities (see the section on Enabling Environments below). In many places, the basis of this governance framework already exists thanks to the ongoing collaboration between urban governments and civil society organizations.⁶

Post-pandemic recovery is an opportunity to maximize these experiences and give them continuity to make cities more resilient in the medium- to long-term.

Besides innovating in terms of governance issues, recovery also brings an unprecedented opportunity to make progress on certain policy agendas. First, it provides the foundations to give continuity to certain policies that played a key role in mitigating the impact of the crisis. Second, it enables some policy changes that previously seemed unthinkable to move forwards. Regarding the first issue, it should be noted that most governmental measures⁷ and collective action initiatives⁸ have focused on responding to material needs that will need further support after the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. These needs vary according to geographic location, socio-economic conditions, group and individual characteristics (gender, age, ethnic origin, ability, and so on), but they generally had to do with ensuring **access to subsidies or family allowances, healthcare, food security, livelihoods, adequate housing, water and sanitation, and urban transport**. Preserving the continuity of **economic and business activities** has also been of vital importance, as **job opportunities** depended on them. The COVID-19 pandemic further showed the importance of **digital access, connectivity and digital training** as a key means for teleworking, telemedicine, online education and shopping, access to information about the pandemic and its related restrictions, as well as communication channels with family and friends during lockdowns, and a tool to receive community or State help.

6. Some examples can be found here: www.citiesforglobalhealth.org.

7. For more information about what local and regional governments are doing, see link above and <https://dossiers.cidob.org/cities-in-times-of-pandemics/index.html>.

8. For more information about civil society initiatives, see for example <https://www.right2city.org/the-right-to-the-city-facing-covid-19/#jump4>; <https://www.synergiesforsolidarity.org>; <https://www.solivid.org/?lang=es>; and <https://antievictionmap.com>.



Box 4. Multisectoral short-term measures taken during the pandemic.

Access to subsidies. Bogotá created a Universal Basic Income scheme based on a multi-funding system, both from private donations and public funds, only targeting the most vulnerable households. Three types of subsidies were established: 1) Direct cash transfers; 2) Bonds issued in goods and services; 3) Subsidies.

Food security. In Rio de Janeiro, a Basic Basket Card was created for vulnerable households to ensure food security, while the Hortas Cariocas Program provided vegetables to the 42 communities that were part of the project. The London Community Response Fund, run by community and voluntary organizations, provided food and other essential services to those in need.

Housing. In several cities, evictions were stopped during the pandemic, such as Barcelona, Montreal and Washington D.C. In many others, moratoriums on rent payments were established (e.g. Vienna, Montevideo). Boston established a Rental Relief Fund consisting of a loan directly paid to the landlords to assist tenants in their rent. This loan was for an amount of up to \$6,000, and applicants had to demonstrate they had been economically impacted by COVID-19. Undocumented migrants also had the right to receive the fund. A similar measure was adopted in Nantes Métropole through the Dispositif d'aide au paiement des loyers, which ensured subsidies based on income thresholds that targeted those tenants who had been affected by COVID-19. This measure has been relaunched in 2021. Kuala Lumpur created 14 hotspots to shelter homeless people. In order to better address their needs, homeless people were profiled according to several criteria (health condition, gender, age and nationality).

Water and sanitation. The Turkish municipality of Izmir stopped disconnections due to the water debts of consumers. Water was reconnected to thousands of households that had been previously cut off due to water debt. Planned water outages were cancelled. The State of São Paulo suspended water supply, electricity and gas cuts during the first few months of the pandemic (until July 31, 2020) for the poorest residents who were unable to pay bills.

Digital rights. The California State Transportation Agency, the City of Sacramento and the Sacramento Regional Transit District (SacRT) teamed up to turn buses into free wireless super hotspots in communities with limited high-speed internet access during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the project Connected Educational Community (CEC), the city of Buenos Aires provided support to students, their families and teachers to carry out academic activities from home during the pandemic. In Vienna, the municipality developed free online courses that supported pupils in homeschooling and distributed 5,000 laptops.

In terms of the crisis as an opportunity to foster new policies, COVID-19 has transformed public and institutional perceptions of cities to the extent that programs or strategies that were previously unimaginable are now being considered, even by large cities or metropolises where policy change is sometimes more difficult. Many of these strategies are aligned with the Right to the City. Think, for instance, of the “**15-minute city**” spearheaded by the Mayor of Paris,⁹ according to which everyone living in a city should have access to essential urban services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride. Despite its current popularity, this is not a new concept. Feminists have been

calling for urban proximity for decades (Muxí, 2007), and Right to the City activists advocate for polycentrism, the social function of the city and gender equality; all of which relate to the vision of the 15-minute city.

Think also of the “**green recovery**” that the Mayors of Milan and Los Angeles are pushing forward in the framework of the global city network C40,¹⁰ which is related to long-standing environmental demands; or the **liberation of public spaces from cars**, an initiative aimed at making cities more livable crystallized in a number of cities.



9. Paris mayor unveils '15-minute city' plan in re-election campaign; The Guardian; available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/07/paris-mayor-unveils-15-minute-city-plan-in-re-election-campaign>.

10. See <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/09/c40-cities-covid-19green-recovery>.

Box 5. Streets for people during COVID-19.

Athens, Barcelona, Bogotá, Dublin and Mexico City are some of the cities that have pedestrianized streets during the pandemic. In ***Lima***, 46 km of cycle lanes and parking lots for bicycles were created. They were conceived as temporary however, depending on their usage, they might become permanent. In ***Milan***, the Strade Aperte plan included low-cost temporary cycle lanes, new and widened pavements, speed limits, and pedestrian and cyclist priority streets. The plan was developed in a collaborative manner and was inspired by Barcelona's 'Super Blocks'.

Think also of other debates that are currently gaining weight in a number of cities on **rent control, short-term rental regulation or zoning of areas of social interest** (Rolnik and Garcia-Chueca, 2020). These policies are very much connected with several components of the Right to the City (see figure 1), such as the need to foster sustainable rural-urban linkages and quality public spaces.

While the answer to the 2008 crisis was mainly directed at securing the banking system, **the COVID-19 crisis is being tackled by putting people at the center of the emergency response and the long-term recovery**. Post-pandemic strategies thus provide a window of opportunity for the Right to the City agenda. We are witnessing the end of an era, whereby structural models widely embedded in society, in the economy, in politics and in culture are being transformed. In Joseph Stiglitz's words (2019), we are closer to "the end of neoliberalism and the rebirth of history".

As Lefebvre argues (2009), revolutionary changes are the result of a combination of praxis and utopia: they rely heavily on our capacity to develop political transformative strategies that are feasible while, at the same time, go beyond existing limits. The Right to the City captures the spirit of this idea and thus provides a great potential model for feasible change in post-pandemic efforts to build back better cities and human settlements.

It is our duty to take this opportunity to build new, fairer futures. In such an urbanized world, these alternative futures will necessarily imply reimagining our cities and human settlements. The Right to the City can provide the framework to build these new urban utopias.

D. Recommendations for local and national governments



Structure of the recommendations¹¹

According to the Global Platform for the Right to the City (2016) and the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (2016), cities and human settlements are multifaceted phenomena that result from a specific framing of material structures, political ideas and social values. The following figure synthesizes the three dimensions of city-making:

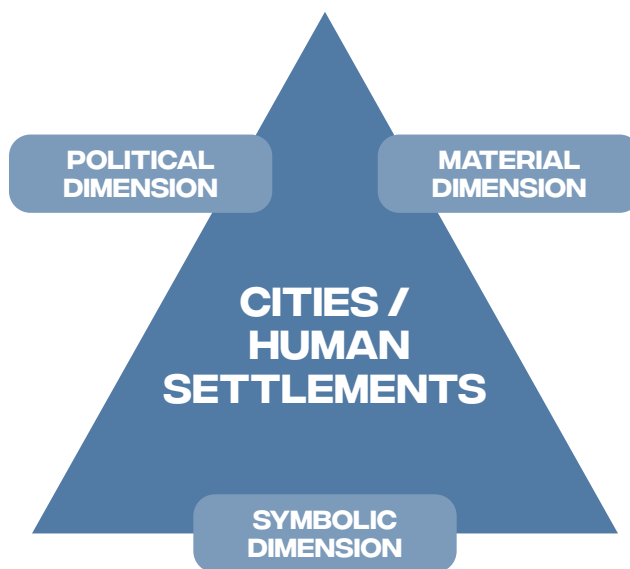


Figure 3: The dimensions of city-making.
Source: Global Platform for the Right to the City, 2016.

Against this backdrop, the Right to the City is understood as the result of three interdependent processes of people-centered city-making (material, political and symbolic), which should ensure:

(i). spatially just resource distribution (material dimension)

(ii). political agency (political dimension)

(iii). socio-cultural diversity (symbolic dimension)

The following recommendations for local and national governments will be structured on the basis of this vision of city-making. According to the specific regulatory framework and level of political decentralization in each country, the measures and policies outlined will relate to a specific level of government (local, national, or even metropolitan or regional).

The Right to the City agenda often relates to municipal policy actions (though not exclusively). However, as the COVID-19 crisis has first and foremost involved a public health global problem, the role of national governments in post-pandemic recovery will be key.

11. This paper will not develop environmental recommendations because this is the goal of the Thematic Paper on Climate Change, Global Warming and Environmental Justice authored by Álvaro Puertas.

General recommendations for national governments

Short-term measures: Establishing expert committees to monitor the state of the pandemic and give policy recommendations; establishing universal family allowances or individual minimum income schemes; ensuring public mass vaccination; guaranteeing access to essential drugs.

Long-term strategies: Increasing public investment in science, innovation and research; strengthening the public healthcare system; ensuring investment for sustainable and multimodal mobility; advancing towards a green transition.

Specific urban recommendations for governments (different spheres)

The material dimension of city-making

Fostering the social function of the city

Protecting the right to adequate affordable and accessible housing
Ensuring access to basic services

Ensuring quality, safe and accessible public spaces

Fostering walking and cycling
Promoting inclusive and green public spaces

Acknowledging and promoting other economies

Strengthening inclusive economies
Supporting the care economy

The political dimension of city-making

Enhancing local democracy and political participation

The cultural dimension of city-making

Fostering urban diversities and cultures

Ensuring equal access to urban cultural life

Protecting the cultural sector

Cross-cutting recommendations

Gender equality

Intersectionality

Inclusive citizenship

Territorial and integral approach

The material dimension of city-making

This dimension relates to how material resources are made available to residents in both urbanized areas and self-produced neighborhoods. Material resources include public space; basic infrastructures and services (e.g. water, electricity, waste and sanitation, education, healthcare); appropriate, accessible and sustainable transportation options; adequate housing and settlements;

equitable livelihoods, opportunities, and decent jobs; green spaces, preserved ecosystems and biodiversity; and natural risk-free areas.

Considering the needs exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, the first set of recommendations is directed at ensuring a socially and spatially just distribution (and recognition) of material resources.

This goal can be achieved by implementing several measures related to (i) fostering the social function of the city; (ii) ensuring quality, safe and accessible public spaces; and (iii) acknowledging and promoting other economies.



1. Fostering the social function of the city

PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO ADEQUATE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

Short-term measures: Halting evictions of tenants, occupiers and owners; sheltering homeless people; establishing rent relief programs or rent freezes; fostering social housing in empty properties.

Long-term policies: Creating more affordable housing; regulating short-term rentals; providing support to de-commodified housing options (cooperatives, self-help initiatives, non-profit housing or community land trusts); ensuring the physical accessibility of housing (using Universal Design) for all ages for all persons.

ENSURING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES (WATER, SANITATION, AFFORDABLE AND APPROPRIATE HEALTHCARE FACILITIES, PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION)

Short-term measures: Ensuring access to basic services for homeless people; giving support to community-based health systems; establishing mental health programs, particularly for care workers, children, young people and the elderly; preventing water, electricity or gas being cut-off, particularly in vulnerable households; adapting public transport operations to ensure safe mobility and reduce contagions, e.g. ensuring ventilation and hand sanitizer, removing the need to touch shared elements (door opening levers, vending machines); increasing and decentralizing the offer of public transportation; providing alternative and affordable transportation systems (bike rental, safe walking paths).

Long-term policies: Guaranteeing equal access to public, quality and decentralized healthcare; addressing the specific healthcare needs of all women (including maternal aspects); providing specific social and health support for those with disabilities and the increasing global ageing population; establishing social pricing for utilities; supporting affordable and accessible public transport; reversing the privatization of urban transportation.

2. Ensuring quality, safe and accessible public spaces

FOSTERING WALKING AND CYCLING

Short-term measures: Establishing programs to ensure the safe use of public space by women (including policing and community safety partnerships); increasing the number of pedestrian streets (permanently or during weekends and bank holidays).

Long-term measures: Expanding bike lanes; fostering urban polycentrism to reduce the need to travel by decentralizing the availability of basic services and public facilities, as well as education, culture and labor opportunities; adapting public space to better meet the needs of older residents, ensuring community voices are at the center of determining what is needed and how solutions will be implemented (e.g. by using WHO's Age-friendly Cities & Communities framework).¹²

PROMOTING INCLUSIVE AND GREEN PUBLIC SPACES

Short-term measures: Securing access to public spaces for informal livelihoods; adapting the use of public space for safe social interactions.

Long-term measures: Developing inclusive regulation and legislation to better secure access to public spaces for informal livelihoods; fostering the use of public space for social interactions and political engagement; enabling the development of popular and youth socio-cultural expressions in public space, as well as of urban diversities at large; creating more public green spaces to improve residents' well-being and mental health.

3. Acknowledging and promoting other economies

The Right to the City calls for the recognition of diverse economies operating in urban settings. These include the **informal economy**,¹³ the **social and solidarity economy**,¹⁴ the **circular economy**¹⁵ and the **care economy**.¹⁶ Women play the greatest role in these other economies, but lack sufficient political recognition and support. The Right to the City also acknowledges the important role **local and informal economies and proximity retail** play in ensuring sustainable, safe and livable cities.

STRENGTHENING INCLUSIVE ECONOMIES

Short-term measures: Supporting and protecting informal livelihoods;¹⁷ recognizing and enhancing the role of community support in providing access to goods and services for the most vulnerable.

Long-term measures: Ensuring increased financial resources for the social economy, as well as establishing adequate legal frameworks and public programs;¹⁸ providing a universal basic income; fostering circular businesses;¹⁹ and promoting local and proximity commerce through fiscal benefits or direct grants, polycentric

12. For more information, see <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/age-friendly-cities-framework>

13. According to *WIEGO*, the informal economy is "the diversified set of economic activities, enterprises, jobs, and workers that are not regulated or protected by the state. The concept originally applied to self-employment in small unregistered enterprises. It has been expanded to include wage employment in unprotected jobs".

14. According to *RIPRESS*, the social and solidarity economy is "an alternative to capitalism [...]. SSE exists in all sectors of the economy: production, finance, distribution, exchange, consumption and governance. It [...] aims to transform the social and economic system that includes public, private and third sectors. SSE is not only about the poor, but strives to overcome inequalities, which includes all classes of society."

15. According to the *EU*, the circular economy is "a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended."

16. In this paper, the care economy refers to health, education and social services, as well as domestic work, both paid and unpaid, that is provided by family and community members (mostly women), often because there is a lack of access to quality and public services.

17. Specific recommendations for each group of informal workers are available here: <https://www.wiego.org/covid19crisis>.

18. As demonstrated by a recent OECD study (2020), the social economy has played an important role in addressing and mitigating the short- and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the economy and society.

19. For more details about this recommendation, see Williams (2020).

urbanism and the pedestrianization of streets or super blocks.²⁰

CARE ECONOMY

Short-term measures: Recognizing care workers — paid and unpaid — as essential workers and ensuring their safety at work; expanding social protection for those with care responsibilities; providing a minimum level of childcare services, particularly for the children of essential workers; encouraging greater sharing of unpaid care and domestic work; ensuring support for the elderly to avoid loneliness.

Long-term measures: Creating robust, resilient and gender-responsive care systems; investing in accessible basic infrastructure and time-saving approaches; transforming labor markets to enable the reconciliation of paid employment and unpaid care; reorienting macroeconomic policies to enable the care economy (UN WOMEN, 2020).

The political dimension of city-making

The policy measures discussed above must be complemented by a second set of recommendations. As shown in [Figure 3](#), beyond the material production of the city, there is the political production of the city that, from the Right to the City perspective, entails **ensuring political agency** for all residents.

ENHANCING LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

As described previously, the COVID-19 crisis has been used by many as a pretext to curtail democratic dialog and some human rights due to restrictions that affected the ability of residents to march and protest. Against this framework, local and national governments should ensure **democratic participation and transparency in policymaking**, particularly regarding the design and implementation of post-pandemic recovery policies.

Short-term measures: Ensuring access to physical and virtual spaces for community and civil society self-organization; establishing participatory mechanisms to conceive and develop post-pandemic recovery policies; ensuring these mechanisms consider the perspectives and needs of all inhabitants and of their organizations in order to make solutions appropriate and sustainable.

Long-term measures: Maintaining participatory mechanisms to follow up and monitor the implementation of post-pandemic policies; ensuring digital training, equal access to affordable digital tools and democratic management of public data for the common good.²¹



20. See Zorrilla (2021).

21. The idea of common good is further developed in the Thematic Paper on Cities as Common Goods written by Edésio Fernandes.

The cultural dimension of city-making

The last set of recommendations has to do with the symbolic dimension of city-making or, in other words, with how urban diversities, creativity and urban cultures shape our cities. Culture not only plays a key role in education or leisure, but also in fostering encounters, social cohesion, exchanges, transformation, enjoyment, well-being, and freedom.

In post-COVID times, culture may also be a fundamental component of recovery given its capacity to imagine possible futures and contribute to the well-being and (mental) health of residents (Fancourt and Finn, 2019; UCLG Culture Committee, 2020).

FOSTERING URBAN DIVERSITIES AND CULTURES

Short-term measures: Countering discrimination against certain groups (youth, migrants, the urban poor or LGBTQI+ people, among others).

Long-term measures: Acknowledging, promoting and protecting local cultures and urban diversities as an effective way to enable the development of social fabrics and build community resilience, which are indispensable in times of crisis as they can be the basis for collective action, solidarity and support; ensuring specific support to certain groups (see above) in order to broaden mainstream culture, creativity and the arts.

ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS TO URBAN CULTURAL LIFE

Short-term measures: Reconnecting cultural institutions with residents becomes essential (through egalitarian and affordable access to cultural activities and facilities).

Long-term measures: Establishing cultural policies that address existing inequalities in access, participation and contribution to culture; strengthening culture in primary and secondary education; developing cultural programs in all urban areas, particularly in the most deprived ones, by ensuring its quality and free access.

PROTECTING THE CULTURAL SECTOR

Short-term measures: Providing relief packages to the cultural sectors, paying special attention to fragile groups and beneficiaries (e.g. small businesses, individual free-

lancers, youth, grassroots groups).

Long-term measures: Ensuring policies to protect cultural workers, as they are often self-employed or predominantly freelancers (fair remuneration, social security, participatory governance); contributing to the digitalization of the sector as a way to increase its capacity to share its work and reach a wider audience.

Cross-cutting recommendations

GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality requires adopting all necessary measures to combat discrimination in all its forms against all women, men, and LGBTQI+ people, taking all appropriate measures to ensure their full development, guaranteeing equal human rights, and ensuring a life free from violence. To achieve this goal, gender mainstreaming should be taken into consideration in all stages of policymaking (preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). Additionally, regulatory measures and budgeting should also include the gender perspective with a view to promoting equality and combating discrimination. To make this happen, establishing an action plan with specific goals, tools and responsibilities would be useful.

INTERSECTIONALITY

The **intersectional lens** helps to understand and prevent discrimination as a complex phenomenon. Excluded groups are never homogeneous. People have multiple layers to their identity and may define themselves — or be defined by others — according to various criteria, including gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, nationality, ethnicity, social status, disability, religion and so on. Often, multiple identities operate simultaneously and interact in an inseparable manner, producing distinct and specific forms of discrimination. Being aware of the existence of multiple forms of discrimination can greatly contribute to preventing them.

Necessary steps for the integration of intersectionality in policymaking includes disaggregated data collection to assess the discrimination suffered by specific groups; tailoring participatory mechanisms to listen to the voices of



discriminated-against communities; undertaking intersectionality reviews of existing policies; and mainstreaming intersectionality in new policy developments.

INCLUSIVE CITIZENSHIP

The COVID-19 crisis has also particularly affected **children, young people, older people, people with disabilities and migrants, as well as women**. Post-pandemic recovery policies aligned with the Right to the City must be free of discrimination and adequately respond to the specific needs of these groups.

Ensuring their participation in the design and implementation of policies will be key to develop appropriate and long-lasting solutions. While the policy recommendations suggested above should be addressed to all urban residents, targeted recovery programs are also required to better address the needs of these groups. ‘Catch-up’ education programs²² might also be of special importance, considering the closure of schools during the pandemic and its impact on education, and eventually on the integration of children and young people in the labor market (two key elements that will ensure their social inclusion in the future).

TERRITORIAL AND INTEGRAL APPROACH

Recommendations should be implemented with a strong territorial and integral approach. Cities are not abstract territories where international human rights standards can simply be translated locally. Urban space is a contested space where contradictions between asymmetric power relations in society are reproduced. This is why the Right to the City agenda focuses on responding to the **territorial dimension of urban problems** and hence comprises issues such as the defense of public spaces, equal and decentralized access to basic services, the social mix in different neighborhoods, employment opportunities throughout the urban territory, and so on.

Likewise, the Right to the City calls for the implementation of rights from a universal, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated approach.

Consequently, post-pandemic perspectives on cities and human settlements based on the Right to the City will necessarily imply taking action on the wide range of public policies suggested in this paper simultaneously. Isolated policy measures will not lead to the paradigm shift that is required in this time of change. Only a comprehensive integrated agenda will foster deep transformations in city-making.



22. Accelerated learning programs for children and/or young people who have missed years of schooling to complete their basic education and obtain educational qualifications.

E. Enabling environments for local action



This section identifies the implementation means to deliver the policy recommendations identified above. The following enabling environments stem from *international standards on good governance*, broadly understood as “full respect of human rights, the rule of law, effective participation, multi-actor partnerships, political pluralism, transparent and accountable processes and institutions, an efficient and effective public sector, legitimacy, access to knowledge, information and education, political empowerment of people, equity, sustainability, and attitudes and values that foster responsibility, solidarity and tolerance” (*UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights*).

1. Plural, safe and democratic institutional frameworks

are pre-conditions for the exercise of a number of rights (e.g. freedom of expression, the right to association, the right to political participation, etc.), without which the Right to the City cannot be materialized.

2. Multi-stakeholder engagement

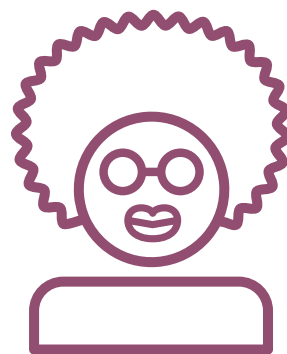
ENGAGED CIVIL SOCIETY

Urban residents have the right and responsibility to participate in the making and shaping of their city. Self-organized residents play a key role in taking the Right to the City forward. Residents’ participation in social and political processes is key (be it individually or through groups, communities and their representative organizations, e.g. residents’ associations, NGOs, social movements, trade unions, workers’ organizations, older persons’ associations, disabled persons’ organizations and other interest

groups). Such groups should enable and foster the equal participation of women. Specific attention should be given to traditionally marginalized urban groups and their organizations. The coordination of residents at local, national and global level is critical to increase their capacity to influence the political agenda, share experiences and struggles, and spread the Right to the City narrative.

ENGAGED GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

• **Local and metropolitan governments** are central to implementing the Right to the City and to establishing a strategic vision and operational framework in close dialog with urban residents. This vision and framework should be based on a previous mapping exercise of spatial inequalities at urban and neighborhood levels to shape local (and national) policies, particularly in deprived areas and slums). Data should be disaggregated (gender, age, ethnicity or race, socio-economic status) to assess health, living conditions, access to urban services and well-being. This data should be made publicly available.



In co-responsibility with national authorities and in accordance with their legal framework, local and metropolitan governments should lead on initiating or coordinating appropriate policy processes within available resources, to progressively achieve the full realization of the different Right to the City components, by all appropriate means and with the adoption of legislative, regulatory and policy measures.

Local and metropolitan governments should guarantee the involvement of residents and civil society organizations in these processes by ensuring transparent and participatory program planning, decision-making, program implementation, and policy monitoring.

Local and metropolitan governments should also provide training to public officials on the implementation of the Right to the City, particularly the staff in charge of implementing the Right to the City components; promote public awareness-raising; and develop co-produced knowledge with local communities.

Cooperation among neighboring local and metropolitan governments is needed to address not only intra-urban inequalities, but also inter-urban inequalities. Supra-local spheres of government should support these efforts and make available all necessary funding, governance structures or policy frameworks to achieve this goal.

• **National and regional governments** have the responsibility to create enabling policy and legislative frameworks that contribute to the realization of the different components of the Right to the City.

A reform of judicial laws is also needed to ensure effective and timely judicial remedy.

National urban policies aligned with the Right to the City are key to fostering and multiplying political action at the local level towards the implementation of this right. These policies should establish a participatory mechanism to facilitate policy dialogs among national and subnational levels, as well as between State and non-State actors, particularly civil society organizations representing marginalized groups of urban dwellers.

National governments also have the responsibility to provide sufficient funding and political competences to local governments, so that they can further the implementation of the Right to the City as the sphere of government closest to residents.

Adequate training and capacity building is also key to strengthen the role of local governments as catalysts of change.

National governments should work with the private sector to establish a framework to comply with human rights standards and the Right to the City, and foster training and assessment tools targeting businesses.

Some states (e.g. Brazil, Ecuador) have developed constitutional provisions to provide the highest legal foundation for this right and/or have established special government bodies and participatory mechanisms to implement it.

• **International bodies** (including multilateral organizations and global associations of local governments) can play a key role in raising the awareness of governments regarding the need to use the Right to the City as a new urban paradigm. Multilateral organizations should recognize the voice of urban governments and their associations in global governance considering their role as the frontlines of global health governance. Global agendas should pay attention to urban inequalities maximized by the COVID-19 crisis and should include urban governments as part of the solution.

International city networks should build multi-stakeholder alliances to strengthen their voices as strategic partners of global recovery efforts. They should also foster capacity building, peer-to-peer learning and political debates, as well as provide policy guidelines to implement the Right to the City at national, regional and local level; establish international monitoring mechanisms; and gather relevant information (e.g. best practices, legal frameworks, case studies).

ENGAGED ACADEMIA AND PRACTITIONERS

Educational and research centers, as well as professionals (i.e. architects, urban planners, designers, engineers, lawyers, social workers) are also placed in an important position to multiply, support, and enable the implementation of the Right to the City.

ENGAGED PRIVATE

Engaged private sector should be guided by a corporate social responsibility framework to foster social objectives and ensure inclusive and sustainable approaches to urbanization.

Private bodies performing public functions or providing basic services have a special responsibility to comply with human rights standards and should be made accountable.

Financial institutions should act in accordance with the UN's Principles of Responsible Investment (UNPRI).

ENGAGED MEDIA

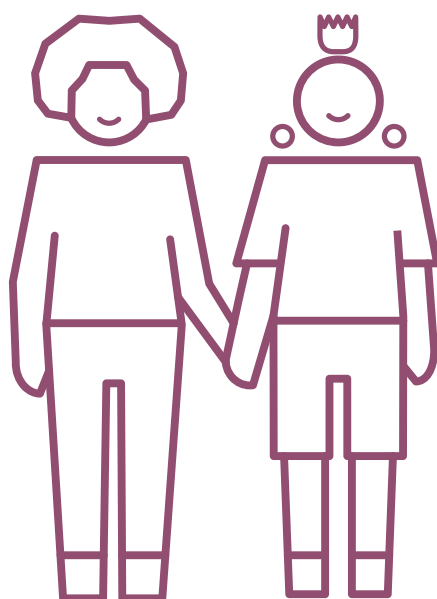
As platforms for the dissemination of information, as well as opinion makers, the media in all its forms has the responsibility to provide real news (particularly important in today's era of fake news), grant sufficient media coverage to social issues related to cities, and ensure the voices of traditionally excluded groups are also represented in the information published or broadcast.

ENGAGED CULTURAL SECTOR

Culture has the potential to transform current values and actions. If the cultural sector engages in social debates and fosters critical thinking and citizen engagement, it can become a critical lever for change.

3. Education, capacity building and training

It is necessary to spread the understanding of the Right to the City among urban dwellers so that they can assert and realize their rights. Formal and non-formal education centers can play a key role in this regard. Capacity building for the government and judiciary, State security forces and bodies, the media, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders is also crucial.



F. Annex. Selection of COVID-19 measures in cities



Africa

CITY	COUNTRY	POLICY	DESCRIPTION ²³
<i>Bamako</i>	Mali	Social	Social assistance and access to services for vulnerable groups: Special fund to provide targeted income support. Mass distribution of grain and food for livestock to the poorest households. Electricity and water supplied free of charge to consumers in the social tranche for the months of April and May 2020. A three-month exemption from VAT on electricity and water tariffs and a three-month exemption from customs duties on the import of basic food (rice and milk).
<i>Cape Town</i>	South Africa	Social	Water tanks: The Water and Sanitation Department distributed water tanks and trucks to informal settlements where residents do not have access to piped water.
<i>Cape Town</i>	South Africa	Labor Market & Economy	Social relief and economic support package: Food assistance through vouchers and cash transfers. The package included plans to partner with the Solidarity Fund (a public benefit company supported by businesses, civic society and the government aimed at funding COVID-19 relief measures).
<i>Freetown</i>	Sierra Leone	Social	Urban farming initiative: Support for communities in self-built settlements to grow their own vegetables. Training to individuals and youth groups on planting, watering and composting. Work is underway to make water available outside of the rainy season.
<i>Kampala</i>	Uganda	Digitalization	Response Hub: Geo-referencing confirmed cases for real-time monitoring to better address the needs of the community with public health resources.
<i>Kampala</i>	Uganda	Labor Market & Economy	Preserving the Continuity of Public Services: Revocation of trading licenses of those retail outlets and shops that increased the price of goods disproportionately during the pandemic.
<i>Lomé</i>	Togo	Sanitation	Plan de Risposte COVID-19: Different measures mainly focused on the containment of the spread of the virus with special emphasis on sanitation.
<i>Nairobi</i>	Kenya	Labor Market & Economy	Tax relief package: Full income tax relief for persons earning below the equivalent of \$225 per month, reduction of the top pay-as-you-earn rate from 30 to 25 percent, reduction of turnover tax rate on small business from 3 to 1 percent.
<i>Tetouan</i>	Morocco	Sanitation	Anti-COVID-19 sanitary measures: Adopted in reservoirs, purification centers, and administrative buildings, and towards employees and users. Awareness campaigns about protection against COVID-19.

23. The tables contained in this annex have been developed by the author with information gathered from the following sources: IMF 2021, Kramer 2021, Peleg and Naama 2020, Wittenberg 2020 and WHO 2020, as well as the websites <https://www.citiesforglobalhealth.org> and <https://dossiers.cidob.org/cities-in-times-of-pandemics/index.html>.

Europe

CITY	COUNTRY	POLICY	DESCRIPTION
<i>Barcelona</i>	Spain	Housing	Social housing: Empty short-term rental units have been used to provide social housing to vulnerable families through 1- to 3-year contracts.
<i>Berlin</i>	Germany	Labor Market & Economy	Subsidies to businesses: Emergency fund of more than €1 billion to support small businesses and sole proprietors. Measures include tax deferrals, financial support for short-time work (Kurzarbeit) – a program to subsidize employees' salaries while their working hours are cut due to reduced activity – and special conditions for loans.
<i>Brussels</i>	Belgium	Sustainability	Be Circular: Pre-pandemic participative project to fund those entrepreneurial initiatives that follow a circular approach and are focused on the needs of local citizens. The Be Circular project was adapted and reinforced since the outbreak of COVID.
<i>London</i>	UK	Mobility	Mayor's Streetspace Plan: Transformation of London's roads to be fast-tracked, giving space to new cycle lanes and wider pavements to enable social distancing. Landmark locations to benefit from temporary bike routes and more space for walking to reduce pressure on the Tube and buses.
<i>Milan</i>	Italy	Mobility	Strade Aperte: The plan includes low-cost temporary cycle lanes, new and widened pavements, speed limits, and pedestrian and cyclist priority streets. Collaborative model that followed the example of 'Super Blocks' in Barcelona.
<i>Nantes Métropole</i>	France	Housing	Dispositif d'aide au paiement des loyers: Subsidies based on income thresholds that target those tenants who have been affected by COVID-19.
<i>Tallinn</i>	Estonia	Digitalization	Tracing app: The collaboration of a dozen enterprises led to the creation of a smartphone tracing app that ensures privacy. The decentralized system calculates the exposure using only devices without the need for a central system.
<i>Vienna</i>	Austria	Gender	Against gender violence: Stepping up resources to ensure a 24-hour helpline for women facing the threat of sexual violence.
<i>Zurich</i>	Switzerland	Labor Market & Economy Culture	Basic income: Subsidy for self-employed workers who had to close their businesses and artists who can no longer perform. They receive 80% of their daily income up to a maximum of CHF196 (€186) per day. Also available for people who have to take unpaid leave or cannot work because they have to take care of their children or are under quarantine.

Latin America

CITY	COUNTRY	POLICY	DESCRIPTION
<i>Bogotá</i>	Colombia	Housing	Arriendo Solidario: Three-month non-conditional transfer targeting the following social groups: older than 60 years old; women-led households; people with disabilities; armed conflict victims; households with members older than 60 or younger than 18, aimed at covering housing expenditures.
<i>Bogotá</i>	Colombia	Labor Market & Economy	Renta Básica Bogotá: Universal basic income (UBI) based on a multi-funding system, both from private donations and public funds, only targeting the most vulnerable households. Three types of subsidies: 1) Direct cash transfers; 2) Bonds issued in goods and services; 3) Subsidies.
<i>Buenos Aires</i>	Argentina	Sustainability	Environmental and Anthropological Urban Plan: Comprehensive agreement with great PPP involvement to design the Urban Plan in a sustainable way. The Urban Plan has an inclusive perspective that covers different aspects, for example promoting the cultural and architectural heritage, granting citizens access to fresh air and sanitized water, enjoying green spaces, etc.
<i>Lima</i>	Peru	Housing	Albergue Casa de la Mujer: Hosting homeless women at risk of sexual violence during pandemic.
<i>Lima</i>	Peru	Sustainability	Green mobility: Creation of 46 km of cycle lanes and parking lots for bicycles. They are temporary but, depending on their usage, they may become permanent.
<i>Mexico City</i>	Mexico	Housing	Reduction and suspension of the fees for water and energy supply . A discount is also applied to every household regardless of their income.
<i>Montevideo</i>	Uruguay	Labor Market & Economy	Programa de tareas temporales: Three-month contracts for people in need to develop tasks related to the maintenance of the city services with quotas for social groups at risk of exclusion.
<i>Montevideo</i>	Uruguay	Housing	Case-by-case analysis and interview of the applicants for grants to cover housing expenditures.
<i>Rio de Janeiro</i>	Brazil	Social	Basic Basket Card: Card granted to vulnerable households to ensure food security.
<i>Rio de Janeiro</i>	Brazil	Housing	The Municipal Secretariat of Finance adopted a decree that established a discount for the full payment of property and urban land tax .
<i>State of São Paulo</i>	Brazil	Housing Social	Access to basic services: The State of São Paulo suspended water supply, electricity and gas cuts until July 31, 2020 for the Brazilian state's poorest residents who were unable to pay bills during the coronavirus pandemic.

North America

CITY	COUNTRY	POLICY	DESCRIPTION
<i>Baltimore</i>	USA	Sustainability	Design for Distancing Ideas Guidebook: “Collect 10 plans for creating temporary, low-cost spaces that permit physically distant social interaction in urban environments such as streets, alleys, vacant land, and parking lots” (Wittenberg 2020).
<i>Boston</i>	USA	Housing	Rental Relief Fund: Loan directly paid to the landlords to assist tenants in their rent for up to \$6,000. Applicants must demonstrate they have been economically impacted by COVID-19. Undocumented migrants also have the right to receive the fund.
<i>Chicago</i>	USA	Social	Providing shelter to the homeless: Fearing an outbreak among the city’s sizable homeless population, it rented out hotels to serve as makeshift homeless shelters.
<i>Montreal</i>	Canada	Housing	Ministerial Order 2020-052: The order nullifies the decisions made by the Tribunal administratif du logement regarding housing issues and evictions.
<i>New York</i>	USA	Housing	State’s Tenant Harbor Act: The measure prevents eviction in case of tenants enduring hardship. However, it also allows landlords to enact evictions if this declaration is not submitted.
<i>Sacramento</i>	USA	Digitalization	Wi-Fi Bus: Sacramento authorities have introduced wireless Wi-Fi connection on buses for those communities that do not have access to high-speed internet.
<i>Sacramento</i>	USA	Housing	COVID-19 Rental Assistance Program: Three-month program with an average fund of \$750 per household. Criteria mainly based on income threshold. Afterwards, landlords must confirm the transfer from tenants. Citizens must not be receiving other social assistance and demonstrate hardship as a result of COVID-19.
<i>Washington D.C.</i>	USA	Housing	Proclamation by the Governor Extending and Amending 20-05, 20-19, and 20-19.120-05, 20-19, 20-19.1: Prohibition of evictions affecting residential dwellings and commercial rental properties.
<i>Washington D.C.</i>	USA	Mobility	Vision Zero Enhancement Omnibus Amendment Act of 2019: “If a road segment undergoing construction has been pre-identified as a candidate for a protected bike lane, bus-only lane or private-vehicle-free corridor, then it must be rebuilt with that new feature” (Kramer 2021).

Middle East and West Asia

CITY	COUNTRY	POLICY	DESCRIPTION
<i>Dubai</i>	UAE	Digitalization Sanitation	Montaji: A smart app developed by the municipality that enables customers to check the safety and health conditions of the products purchased. The app introduced information regarding sterilization procedures since the outbreak of COVID-19.
<i>Hebron</i>	Palestine	Digitalization Governance	E-government: The Public Service Center in the municipality has developed a special electronic system through which applications can be submitted and followed up online.
<i>Istanbul</i>	Turkey	Social	Food security: Free shopping cards and 500,000 food packages for the most vulnerable. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality kitchens served three meals for several thousands of people. (Cities for Global Health, 2020).
<i>Izmir</i>	Turkey	Sustainability	Green areas: Izmir Metropolitan Municipality planned how to increase urban green areas and how to establish connections between the city and surrounding rural areas.
<i>Madaba</i>	Jordan	Social	Social assistance: Supply of basic services to 3,500 families including medicines, food, fuel, etc.
<i>Shiraz</i>	Iran	Mobility	Contact with Chinese authorities to regulate metro traffic and learn from their experience. In addition, limiting the flow of traffic coming into the city.
<i>Tel Aviv</i>	Israel	Mobility	Pedestrianization of streets: The City Council pedestrianized 11 streets and different malls in the city.

South-East Asia

CITY	COUNTRY	POLICY	DESCRIPTION
<i>Daegu</i>	South Korea	Labor Market & Economy	Subsidies for businesses: Financial support for households and local small and medium enterprises, recovery measures for local business and mitigation packages.
<i>Daegu</i>	South Korea	Social Digitalization	Fostering online education: The Daegu Office for Education granted \$6,000 to schools in order to buy electronic material for online classes.
<i>Hong Kong</i>	China	Transparency Digitalization	COVID-19 press conferences and website: Daily press conferences led by a soft-spoken doctor and website with live information on the development of COVID-19 to mitigate the “infodemic”.
<i>Hong Kong</i>	China	Labor Market & Economy	Subsidies: Allocation of HK\$290 billion (US\$37.2 billion) to subsidize peoples’ salaries and direct payments of HK\$10,000 (US\$1,282) to each citizen.
<i>Hong Kong</i>	China	Social	Anti-COVID-19 equipment: Several civil society organizations, along with public and private institutions, made donations or provided disinfection equipment to people in need or affected shops.
<i>Kuala Lumpur</i>	Malaysia	Labor Market & Economy	Development Control: Extension of payment deadline by the City Hall from April 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020, including several services such as Development Charge, Improvement Services Fund, Deposit and Contribution Fund.
<i>Kuala Lumpur</i>	Malaysia	Social	Homeless Shelter Management: Creation of 14 hotspots to shelter the homeless. The mechanisms profiled homeless people to address their needs in a more concrete way. The profiles were the following: a) Healthy; b) Unhealthy; c) Foreigner; d) Women & Children.
<i>Taipei</i>	Taiwan	Governance Participation	GO Smart Forum: Representatives from eight cities and government units were invited to share their experiences and policies on fighting the pandemic, while nine vendors also shared their epidemic prevention-related solutions.

Figures and Boxes



Figures and boxes

Figure 1. Right to the City components.

Figure 2. Government responses to the crisis.

Figure 3. The dimensions of city-making.

Box 1. Access to water in deprived neighborhoods.

Box 2. Assistance to elder persons.

Box 3. Gender and COVID-19.

Box 4. Multisectoral short-term measures taken during the pandemic.

Box 5. Streets for people during COVID-19.



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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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