

CITIES FOR ALL: WHAT RIGHT(S) TO THE CITY



The rapid urban growth expected between now and 2050 in developing and emerging countries, exacerbated by population displacements, raises concern of an unprecedented explosion in inequalities and conflicts that threatens the cohesion of societies. The issue of inequalities is therefore at the heart of strategies for sustainable urban development. In order to reduce or even eliminate inequalities, public policies will have to be based on principles that are both strong and unifying, such as the right to the city. The crosscutting nature of the concept means that it can embrace and link up the key issues in the international debate on urban development.

France has a territorialised vision of the right to the city, within the framework of public policies for planning and urban and social cohesion. In accordance with this original and horizontal vision of partnership-based public urban policies, France promotes a view of the right to the city that reinforces the role of local authorities as the legitimate and appropriate actors, linked with other levels of public authorities, to lead the strategies for sustainable urban development. Implementing those strategies makes it possible to respond to the economic, social and environmental development issues.

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY FOR DEMOCRATIC URBAN MANAGEMENT

The right to the city against urban inequalities

Towards the end of the 1960s, in his work *Le Droit à la ville* [The Right to the City] (Paris éditions Anthropos, 1968, 3rd edition 2009), Henri Lefebvre analysed the process of industrialisation as a driver for social transformations leading to the replacement of the city and urban reality as a **use-value**, by the city and industrial reality as an **exchange-value** that generated urban inequalities. This

analysis remains relevant in the current context of redistribution of power between public and private stakeholders.

The contemporary city cannot be reduced to the commodification of spaces, to land and property speculation, without taking into account the transformation of the traditional urban-rural relationship, the rural exodus, the formation of informal settlements. Furthermore, the redistribution of the benefits of growth, when it is insufficient, cannot reduce economic, urban and social inequalities. The latter are then reinforced, through the exposure of the poorest to environmental risks and by the continued exclusion of the greater part of the

world's population from political decision-making processes.

The right to the city is enlisted as part of the urban demands and mobilisation led by civil society. It demonstrates the determination to promote the use-value of the city, in opposition to the mechanisms of inequality and its reproduction. These demands are deployed locally and are part of the international debate¹. They convey a representation of the city as a collective space belonging to all, with no social, community or gender distinctions and providing the necessary conditions for lives that are dignified on the social, political, cultural, economic and environmental levels². Four principles, which are formalised in the world Charter for the Right to the city (2004), constitute the heart of the demands: fair distribution of benefits and responsibilities, respect for the social functions of the city and for property, distribution of urban income, democratisation of access to land and to public services.

These demands are formulated in the global spaces for exchange and dialogue - World Urban Forum in Rio (2010) and Medellín (2014) - and led, in 2014, to the emergence of the World Platform for the Right to the City and the formulation of a declaration³ affirming the capacity of this right to make cities fairer, more democratic and more sustainable, linking respect for democratic principles to a necessary inclusion of the social, cultural, and environmental interests of all social groups.

The challenges of the right to the city for local authorities

The right to the city addresses urban issues, in particular those of the occupation of space and the distribution of the resources produced. In this sense, it enlists the responsibility and the actions of local authorities that need to take the following issues into account:

- democratic management of the city and the capacity for an urban independent assessment, fight against corruption;
- joint-production of the city by the inhabitants and the project carriers, social function of the city and of urban property;

- equality of rights and exercise of urban citizenship for all social groups;
- promotion of an economic development that creates employment and guarantees social rights, including within the informal sector;
- processes of urban planning and territorial strategies that enable equitable access to urban services and reduce spatial segregation and inequalities;
- right to a city that is sustainable, liveable and safe, notably through a reduction of vulnerabilities and protection against social, political, economic and environmental risks;
- right to mobility to avoid any exclusionary effect on people with reduced mobility or of social and spatial segregation due to the lack of means of transportation in deprived or sparsely populated areas;
- capacity to form high quality multi-level partnerships, capacity for local authorities to appropriate and enforce regulations.

FRENCH EXPERIENCES AND TOOLS THAT CAN BE MOBILISED INTERNATIONALLY

France has three kinds of expertise and tools at its disposal that could prove useful in the international exchanges relating to Habitat III, especially regarding the implementation of the urban agenda.

At the national level:

- the enforceable right to housing (DALO), the application of which is monitored by a partnership-based High Committee;
- the implementation of the policy on the city, which includes, as part of an integrated approach: urban, economical and social rehabilitation of degraded neighbourhoods. In this area, the implementation of actions provides the opportunity to capitalise on those experiences, whether from an operational, political or conceptual point of view. The recent actions undertaken to strengthen, including via legislation, the place given to the territorial project and the effective participation of inhabitants in the projects, appear promising;

1 1Habitat International Coalition (HIC), Forums on land rights in Egypt in 2012 and 2009

2 The European Charter for the Safeguarding of Human Rights in the City (Saint-Denis, France, 2000); the World Charter on the Right to the City, drafted by social movements gathered in the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil (2001); the Gwangju Human Rights Charter (South Korea, 2012); CGLU Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City (2011)

3 Declaration of the Global Platform on the Right to the City (gpr2c) on the principal messages for Habitat III, World Habitat Day 2015

- local authority intervention in land management has been strengthened by the creation of adapted tools (public land establishments) that are equipped with financial and regulatory means.

ORIENTATIONS OF FRENCH AID FOR THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

National Governments can promote the right to the city as a guiding principle for public action by facilitating its inclusion in national regulations on urban development. The right to the city can be promoted by listening to the demands raised by social movements, by supporting existing networks and platforms, as well as by adopting a strategic approach that deals with the various aspects of the right to the city. The following orientations and actions place the accent on the need to consolidate the real powers and rights of citizens.

Orientation 1:

Affirming a political commitment to sustainable urban development, and against segregations and the reproduction of inequalities

- Guarantee public interest in the policies for urban and territorial planning;
- Fostering the dissemination of all forms of land use control and constituting a common good that can be mobilised by the inhabitants and the project leaders;
- Paying attention to the needs and demands of all sections of the population, particularly women and vulnerable groups;
- Promoting social urban contracting in planning operations to ensure that the interests of the inhabitants are taken into consideration.

Orientation 2:

Reinforcing capacity and complementarity of national and local governments to reduce segregations and inequalities

- Supporting the deepening of democracy in the decentralisation processes;
- Providing support for the formulation and evolution of public policies and reinforcing the capacity of national governments to build more inclusive public policies;
- Building the capacity of local authorities in the fields of urban planning, fighting climate change and fostering local consultation;
- Affirming the right to services for all;
- Supporting the consolidation of the rule of law everywhere.

Orientation 3:

Translating the right to the city into urban development projects

- Offering financial mechanisms that link the resources of all stakeholders who make up the city (public, private, civil society), and use them to reduce urban inequalities;
- Recognising negotiated planning as an alternative to traditional planning;
- Setting up effective mechanisms for citizen control over private investments and the urban fabric.

Orientation 4:

Making the city inclusive, liveable and sustainable for all as rapidly as possible

- a.** Ensuring a balanced development of public space, one of the principle of social mixing;
- b.** Building the capacities of the inhabitants and supporting their initiatives, as well as strengthening the capacity for influence of social actors;
- c.** Promoting property rights that conform to the uses and needs of the inhabitants and to urban development, particularly in terms of housing;
- d.** Prioritising rehousing that fosters a harmonious social mix, as part of urban regeneration operations;
- e.** Protecting buildings and people from risks and ensuring air quality;
- f.** Developing a multimodal approach for the planning of transportation that is equitable across the whole territory.

Orientation 5:

Promoting the production and exchange of knowledge

- a.** Encouraging research both in the Global North and South, link up programmes within and between countries and strengthen exchanges between actors in research, in training and practitioners;
- b.** Promoting North-South as well as South-South cooperation between actors in order to capitalise on experiences and create new dynamics of exchange and sharing.