

## **HLPF 2020**

### ***Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.***

#### **Theme 6: Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation**

---

**Co-convenors:** UN-DESA, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UNECE and UNESCAP

**Corresponding GSDR Entry point:** Urban and peri-urban development

**Specific lens:** COVID-19 impact and responses

---

Please provide written inputs to the following questions:

1. How can transparent urban planning and design help in creating inclusive access to housing, basic services and infrastructure, environmental sustainability, improved air and water quality, and healthier communities?

It has been demonstrated that the planned use of the space and resources guarantees a more equitable redistribution of the benefits of urbanization: proper urban planning, that takes into consideration the local context and cultures and aims at a sustainable use of the resources, can provide communities with adequate places and services to enjoy city's life, in particular for people in vulnerable situations.

Transparent urban planning and design ensure an adequate provision of living spaces, access to basic services, including transport and health, to all persons. In particular, transparent urban planning and design helps in preserving the natural, cultural and heritage assets and in making a more efficient use of resources such as land, water, etc.

***Example of best practice:** In the last weeks, some cities have prepared plans for a quick response to coronavirus's impact on transport in countries where the restrictions are starting to be lifted: cities (i.e. Paris, Milan, Brussels, etc.) are quickly planning and realizing significant increment of biking lines and networks to promote sustainable transport modes while preserving social distancing. This will reduce the number of passengers that use public transit and cars.*

Housing, in particular, is a basic need that has been under stronger stress. In the last decade, financialization of the housing market and the use of the housing stock for short touristic rental jeopardized access to housing for those people who do not meet the criteria for accessing social housing but cannot afford to pay more<sup>1</sup>. Cities, in cooperation with other authorities and stakeholders, can sustain access to safe and affordable housing to communities in vulnerable situations, also considering ageing populations and different kind of housing needs.

Housing also became the first protection against the spread of the Coronavirus in 2020. Cities provided shelters to homeless people demonstrating the need but also the capacities to address this long-time issue. In countries where big share of population lives in slums, this need is also very urgent. Unplanned neighbourhoods and slums make much more difficult for the city dwellers to maintain social distance and

---

<sup>1</sup> Van Heerden, S, Barranco, R., and C. Lavalle (eds), [Who Owns the city? Exploratory Research Activity on the financialisation of housing in EU cities.](#), EUR 30224, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, ISBN 978-92-76-18956-5, doi:10.2760/07168, JRC120776

high hygiene standards. Moreover, slum dwellers are also the ones that have poor access to health services and that therefore are more exposed to the pandemic.

2. How can transparent urban and territorial planning and development support economic growth which is diverse, balanced, inclusive, safe, green and sustainable?

Cities are complex systems that rely on the functioning of all sectors of society. Economic activities are more easily allocated in pleasant, safe and diverse cities, where they offer better living conditions and attract talents and skilled workers. A city that works well, providing good living condition for all, while preserving the social and environmental sustainability, also attracts investments, stimulate diverse and inclusive working environments and share the benefits of urbanization with all.

3. What is the role of science, technology, communication and innovation in the transformation to sustainable and equitable urban systems, which also incorporate and address informality and help overcome the digital divide?

The GSDR 2019 highlights that “A new, robust science of cities can give urban policymakers around the world access to a body of knowledge and good practices”. Urban sciences need to encompass novelties of the urban and peri-urban phenomena relying on robust and sound evidences. This means that urban science should have an evidence-based approach that takes into consideration timely and comparable data and input for the analysis.

***Example of best practice:** the Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies of the EC has developed the Urban Data Platform Plus, which enables the integration of data produced by the Joint Research Centre with data collected from other sources through API protocols, using harmonized geographical unit definitions. At the current state, it openly and freely hosted a number of indicators at urban scale from official statistics, modelled projection and data from Earth Observation (EO).*

At the same time, policy makers and scientists have to manage the raising expectations that come with the progress and advances of data sciences. In this sense, cooperation among science and research institutions is key.

***Example of best practice:** the proposal for a people-based definition of city, initiated by the European Commission, has been recently approved by the UN Statistical Commission. This definition will help in assessing urban transformations in a comparable way for statistical purposes, enabling a deeper study of urban phenomena and the calculation of urban SDG indicators in a comparable way.*

4. How can local and national governments work together to ensure adequate resources are available for sustainable, inclusive, safe and transparent urban development? How can local government financing be made more predictable and robust?

Multilevel governance is key for achieving not only a sustainable, inclusive, safe and transparent urban development, but also the SDGs in general. It has been demonstrated that all SDGs have an urban component and that local governments need to coordinate with national governments to achieve a proper and effective implementation of policies<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, initiatives of cooperation among cities and local governments on exchanging good practices and experiences, help cities in building a path towards sustainability, learning from each other.

***Examples of best practice:** Partnerships for sustainable cities 2020 (European Union). The aims of the Partnerships programme for sustainable cities is to promote integrated urban development through partnerships built among Local Authorities of the EU Member States and of partner countries.*

*The International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme developed by the European Union aims to enable cities to link up and share solutions to common problems. It is part of a long-term strategy by the European Union to foster sustainable urban development in cooperation with both the public and private sectors.*

Each question will be examined from the lens of Policies, actions and trade-offs; Leaving no one behind; Knowledge gaps; Means of implementation and partnerships; and science, technology and innovation.

---

<sup>2</sup> Siragusa, A., Vizcaino, M., Proietti, P. and Lavalle, C., [European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews](#), EUR 30067 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2020, doi:10.2760/670387