

GOLD VI

**Case-Based Contribution
to Chapter 5: Caring**
*GOLD VI Report on Pathways
to urban and territorial equality*

Local governments' shifting

approaches to urban security:

The role of care in advancing peace

culture and social justice

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Local governments' shifting approaches to urban security: The role of care in advancing peace culture and social justice

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CHAPTER

5: Caring

SUMMARY

The modern city has always “enjoyed” a central place in civic safety discourses and practices, with perspectives ranging from considering the city as an insecure place infested with crime to the city as a place of conflict and a platform for revolutionary emancipation.

Hegemonic discourses, especially in the previous century, strongly relied on the implementation of punitive measures to address crime (see the “Broken windows theory”) which usually overlooked (or willingly incorporated) strong racist, class or sexual biases.

Contemporary paradigms, however, tend to better recognize and highlight (to therefore better address) the intrinsic relationship between urban security and urban equality: that is, the social and economic rationale behind crime, safety or opportunity for personal and collective progress.

The following contribution dwells on the role of these paradigms in fostering renewed territorial action, focusing especially on present day policies implemented by local governments.

Indeed, this ongoing shift is currently contesting long-term prejudices about the city to push for an unprecedented transformation to security discourses: bringing peace and safety to the day to day lives of people by making the places where they live, cities, fairer and more inclusive.

A key emphasis is devoted to policies inspired by caring and reconciliation approaches, which seek to address insecurity through its causes and recognize long term forms of oppression and inequality.

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Framing urban security under care and human rights lenses



Children of Grigny participating in a public event on peace culture. In the wall behind one can read Aristide Briand words "Pour faire la paix, il faut être deux : soi-même et le voisin d'en face" (In order to achieve peace, you must have two people: Yourself and your neighbour in front)
Source: Grigny City Council

Even though urban security can be framed under many paradigms, this contribution focuses on its relationship with different forms of inequality, including socio-economic, territorial and gender-based.

When looking at the last century of urban history, one will see urban safety policies as an expression (and a key support platform) of the existing political and social power balance.

Over time, this has derived into repression of political dissent; segregation of urban areas due to ethnicity; subsequent scrupulous control by police or army officers; criminalization of slum dwellers and minorities in public space; and the promotion of stigma around city life from a suburban perspective... or vice versa, depending on the geography.

Most of these issues are still topical today, and reflect in a way the always hegemonic "realistic" approach to the security of the state, inspiring public action to deal both with potential foreign aggressions to conceivable inner enemies.

In spite of its entrenched nature, **cities and local actors are increasingly contesting this paradigm,**

either by shifting mainstream perceptions about conviviality, living together and social justice, or by reclaiming recognition and retribution for past and present human rights violations linked with security or the lack of it.

Through these practices, security as a concept is in itself evolving, incorporating as key, interconnected conditions rights-based notions such as freedom from fear and need, non-discrimination or access to an adequate standard of living. Only in the last decades, the world of city networking has seen the emergence of new initiatives based on this shift of paradigm: see the Mayors for Peace initiative, the European Forum for Urban Safety,¹ the World Forum for Cities and Territories of Peace...²

Fundamentally, **this process is contributing to reclaim cities as places and local governments as actors that care for all residents and create the conditions for a safe society.** The narratives of all these initiatives are marked by a reinforced emphasis on the entrenched causes of inequalities and look at transformative approaches to address them, instead of embracing securitarian approaches only.

1. European Forum for Urban Security. Efus.net. <https://efus.eu/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

2. Foro Mundial de Ciudades y Territorios de Paz. Ciudadesdepaz.com. <https://www.ciudadesdepaz.com/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

Changing institutions: The role of municipal administration and staff

On a first level, this contribution explores several examples of how **local governments are contributing themselves to this shift through internal, administrative change**. In other words, so that they “lead by example”, making sure public administration promotes civic safety rather than distress. Good examples of this trend can be found first among human rights city inspired policies such as the local ombudsperson institution, which means creating a local institution allowing residents to monitor government action and access justice when their rights have been violated.

On one hand, in **Chihuahua** (Mexico) the “Guardianes Ciudadanos” initiative allows city residents to monitor how public resources are spent and contributing to the wellbeing of popular neighbourhoods;³ on the other hand, in **Seoul** (Republic of Korea), the city’s human rights committee and ombudsperson system allows residents to report human rights violations directly to a shared jury of local authorities and human rights defenders.⁴

In line with its local human rights policy, the same capital of South Korea carried out an extensive human rights training program

which reached more than 40,000 public officers. Indeed, **training municipal staff is essential to ensure local administration cares and is better equipped to address the needs and gain the trust of all residents**.

After the uprising caused by the George Floyd killing, many cities in the United States focused on better training police officers. While **Atlanta** adopted specific protocols to prevent police brutality,⁵ **Oakland** implemented a community-driven and place-based approach to violence prevention which greatly included inputs from communities.⁶ On a different level, **New York** shifted 1 billion dollars from its police force to civilian agencies working on public safety and reinforcing youth centers.⁷

Mexico City (Mexico) recently implemented an online academy training police officers on the specific issue of violence against women and girls.⁸ **Seine-Saint Denis**⁹ (France) and **Barcelona**¹⁰ (Spain) focused on producing intelligence about discrimination at the local level: a key, often invisible issue which is deeply connected to public administration beyond the same local government.

Changing perceptions: A local roadmap on peace culture

On a second level, **local governments have a role to play in fostering peace culture and shifting perceptions on belonging and conviviality so the conditions for safety are met**. To this end, we also see local governments’ policies very much inspired by the notion of care: caring for residents, for everyone and for each one. In **New York** (USA), the city’s Human Rights

Office has for instance promoted various public campaigns celebrating the city’s diversity and all residents’ contributions to civic life. The “I Still Believe in our City” campaign is a good example of this city’s effort.¹¹

Vancouver (Canada) on other hand focused on countering anti-Asian hate spurred by the COVID-19 pan-

3. Observatorio Internacional de la Democracia Participativa. OIDP.net. <https://oidp.net/distinction/es/record04.2020.php> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

4. UCLG-CSIPDHR. “Seoul’s quest to bring human rights closer to citizens lives: Interview with the Human Rights Department of Seoul’s Metropolitan Government”. Uclg-cisdp.org. <https://uclg-cisdp.org/en/news/latest-news/seoul%E2%80%99s-quest-bring-human-rights-closer-citizens-lives-interview-human-rights> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

5. New York Times. “With New Policies, Cities Seek a ‘Seismic Shift’ in Policing”. Nytimes.com. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/15/us/rayshard-brooks-george-floyd-video.html?auth=linked-google> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

6. UCLG. “Guillermo Céspedes, chief of violence prevention at Oakland City”. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvzuQAPitIs&t=252s> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

7. Braktkton Booker. “De Blasio On Shifting \$1 Billion From NYPD: ‘We Think It’s The Right Thing To Do’”. NPR.org. <https://www.npr.org/sections/live-updates-protests-for-racial-justice/2020/07/01/886000386/de-blasio-on-shifting-1-billion-from-nypd-we-think-it-s-the-right-thing-to-do?t=1594651563340&t=1617805858182> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

8. Ciudad de México. “Formación policial”. Formaciónpolicial.cdmx.gob.mx. <https://formacionpolicial.cdmx.gob.mx/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

9. Seine Saint Denis. “Discriminations : le Département de la Seine-Saint-Denis publie une étude inédite”. Seinesaintdenis.fr. <https://seinesaintdenis.fr/l-essentiel-du-departement/espace-presse/article/discriminations-le-departement-de-la-seine-saint-denis-publie-une-etude-inedite> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

10. Ajuntament de Barcelona. “Observatori de les discriminacions a Barcelona”. Ajuntament.barcelona.cat <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/oficina-no-discriminacio/ca/observatori-discriminacions> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

11. New York Human Rights Commission. “I Still Believe in Our City Public Art Campaign”. Nyc.gov. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cc/hr/media/pair-believe.page> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

12. Craig Takeuchi. COVID-19 in Vancouver: Anti-racism campaigns launch to counter anti-Asian assaults and vandalism. Straight.com. <https://www.straight.com/covid-19-pandemic/vancouver-anti-racism-campaigns-launch-counter-anti-asian-assaults-vandalism> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

demic by launching the campaign “It’s a Health Issue, not a Race Issue”.¹² Through its membership in the Rainbow Cities initiatives, **Amsterdam** (The Netherlands) advanced a mainstream policy to prevent violence against the LGBTQI+ community¹³ involving interventions in the public space and the school system (promoting a safe and tolerant environment).

Local governments also have a long experience in promoting peace culture through awareness-raising campaigns in schools, mass media or public space.

Grigny (France) is implementing a local action plan on peace culture developed in the framework of its active involvement in the Mayors for Peace initiative.¹⁴ The plan involves

mainstreaming peace culture in public events, the built environment or academic curricula of schools and youth clubs.

Mexico City (Mexico) focuses on making it possible for its residents (children in particular) to map peace episodes in their own neighbourhoods. Through its “*Cartografías de Paz*” initiative, the local governments aim is to highlight the city as a place of conviviality, inspired by solidarity values and where all points of view are recognized and respected.¹⁵ Urban storytelling is therefore used to shift mainstream perceptions about peace and security and cities, giving voice to urban residents or scenarios that are normally not that well heard.

Changing the conditions: Building urban equality

Ultimately, local governments are taking an even more ambitious role in transforming the conditions behind civic distress and insecurity. On a first level, addressing the issue of historical memory and past trauma stands out as a key priority for many cities. Gwangju (Republic of Korea) has promoted daring human rights policies and memorial events to foster democratic values and promote truth and reparation for the victims of the 1980 Democratic Uprising and mass repression by the former Military Junta of the Republic of Korea.¹⁶

Bogotá (Colombia) addressed the country’s collective memory of the past civil conflict through its *Observatorio Distrital de Víctimas del Conflicto Armado*, which seeks to gather information about the conflict, propose policies that favour reconciliation and support local stakeholders working on this issue on the ground.¹⁷

Memory is in fact an integral part of the built environment of a city, from statues and public monuments to the name of streets.

In order to support British local governments’ deal with the place of past racist events and individuals currently celebrated in public spaces, the **Local Government Association of the UK** developed a set of guidelines to support local governments respond to calls for public realm changes.¹⁸ The guidelines show good practices from cities such as **Liverpool** (UK), which set up the International Slavery Museum and is planning to hang plaques on streets whose names are associated with the slave trade.

Granollers (Spain) relied on the city’s traumatic experience during the Spanish Civil War (with the massive bombing of the city by fascist forces) to build a comprehensive strategy on local cultural peace policies (see the local civic centre

13. Rainbow Cities. [Rainbowcities.com. https://www.rainbowcities.com/cities/amsterdam/](https://www.rainbowcities.com/cities/amsterdam/) [Accessed May 31, 2021].

14. UCLG-CSIPDHR. “Grigny’s Mayor Call: For local governments that commit to defend the right to peace from the grassroots to the global level. [Uclg-cisdp.org. https://uclg-cisdp.org/en/news/latest-news/grigny%E2%80%99s-mayor-call-local-governments-commit-defend-right-peace-grassroots-global](https://uclg-cisdp.org/en/news/latest-news/grigny%E2%80%99s-mayor-call-local-governments-commit-defend-right-peace-grassroots-global) [Accessed May 31, 2021].

15. Lilian Reyes. “Cartografías de paz: Historias de nuestras ciudades. *Revista Ciudades de Paz*. <https://www.ciudadesdepaz.com/revista-ciudades-de-paz/> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

16. WHRCF. “Human Rights Policy”. [Whrcf.org. http://www.whrcf.org/bbs/board.php?bo_table=eng_p4_05_2020](http://www.whrcf.org/bbs/board.php?bo_table=eng_p4_05_2020) [Accessed May 31, 2021].

17. Alta Consejería para los Derechos de las Víctimas la Paz y la Reconciliación de Bogotá. *Victimasbogota.gov.co*. <https://victimasbogota.gov.co/observatorio> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

18. Local Government Association. “Responding to calls for public realm changes”. [Local.gov.uk. https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/community-safety/statuses/responding-calls-public-realm-changes](https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/community-safety/statuses/responding-calls-public-realm-changes) [Accessed May 31, 2021].

Can Jonch,¹⁹ which strongly relies on civic society engagement) as well as active engagement at an international level (including the consolidation of the Mayors for Peace Catalan and European branches).²⁰

But civic distress is most of the time linked to far more complex social and economic conditions which require long term planning.

Many of the already mentioned cities incorporate ambitious policies on this issue. **Mexico City** (Mexico) has for instance redistributed budgetary priorities so that usually more deprived urban areas receive priority attention, including the

improvement of public spaces and basic facilities, lighting or new employment opportunities.

From the point of view of a poor, peripheral city within the Grand Paris metropolitan area, **Grigny** (France) developed sound advocacy efforts to shift the national government priorities so that more resources are devoted to urban territories most affected by the COVID-19 crisis.²¹ A similar example of this trend can be found in efforts led by Spanish working-class municipalities such as **Rivas Vaciamadrid**.²²

How is care connected to these approaches?

These examples reflect the myriad of pathways by which local governments are promoting alternative approaches to urban security. They can be considered as such because, **rather than understanding security as the result of punitive action, they focus on understanding and ultimately transforming the conditions behind insecurity.** In more concrete terms, the interventions addressed above highlight how the current urban security agenda of many local governments addresses also non-discrimination issues and mainstream peace culture and feminist approaches to urban planning.

Affirming that, among these alternative perspectives, the notion of care plays a central role can be justified by following at least three arguments.

- First, because the efforts in making local institutions more inclusive and accessible show that cities intend to become more accountable as institutions as well as shift residents' perceptions towards the local government and its staff as a potential ally, rather than an institution they should fear.
- Second, because local governments have a key role to play, from public campaigns to political declarations, in advancing the public and mainstream recognition of diverse social needs and conditions as key to conceptualize and address urban security policies: a fact so many times linked to specific scenarios of insecurity, such as racism, violence against women or sexual minorities....
- And third, because local government policies, especially those on social attention, have the potential to address the key causes of insecurity, such as long entrenched inequality or forms of discrimination.

19. Ajuntament de Granollers. "Can Jonch: Presentació". Granollers.cat. <https://www.granollers.cat/can-jonch/objectius> [Accessed May 31, 2021].

20. Ajuntament de Granollers. "Alcaldes per la Pau". Granollers.cat. <https://wp.granollers.cat/alcaldesperlapau/> [Accessed May 31, 2021]. For more information on the Mayors for Peace network, see www.alcaldesperlapau.cat and <http://www.mayorsforpeace.eu/>

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CARING

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In particular, the present paper has contributed to Chapter 5 on “Caring”, which focuses on the multiple actions that promote the care of diverse groups within society through safety nets and solidarity bonds, and the ways in which local and regional governments can promote caring practices that support structurally discriminated and/or vulnerable groups, as well as those that have historically “taken care” of others.

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